**Female:** Immigrants on tape project of the American Museum of Immigration at the Statue of Liberty in New York City taped at the apartment of Mrs. Emilia Green at 162 East 80th Street. Interview with Mr. George Jacobsen, President of the Danish Brotherhood of America, June 9th 1982 at 6pm. Mr. Jacobsen when and where were you born?

**George:** I was born in Denmark on January the 20th 1928, in a small town by name of Troense.

**Female:** How do you spell that please?

**George:** T-R-O-E-N-S-E, it’s a small town, it’s an old seafaring town.

**Female:** In which part of Denmark?

**George:** It’s on a small island south of Funen, Funen being the second largest island in Denmark, the island in which [inaudible 00:01:22] located.

It’s the small island just south of that main island. It’s the kind of a town where most people were expected to go to sea at some time in their life. My father was a seaman and my grandfather was a ship builder.

**Female:** What do you most clearly remember about the hometown as a child? What comes back to your mind?

**George:** The most vivid thing I’d say would be my grandfather’s shipyard because …

**Female:** A shipyard?

**George:** He was a ship builder. He built through [inaudible 00:02:00]. As I recall he built some where’s close to the 25 wooden ships in his lifetime, the last ones being launched in the early 1900s.

After that wooden ships were replaced by steel hulls. They just became extinct, but the facilities and the old tools used in building the wooden ships were still [inaudible 00:02:31] some great extent. As a child that was one of the intriguing things to play in old houses and the old [inaudible 00:02:42].

**Female:** Did your grandfather build houses too?

**George:** My grandfather was not building them when I was a child. He died in the early 1930s; I think it was 32 or 33, so I barely remember him. The building of ships hadn’t taken place for maybe 25 years prior to his death.

What was left there was just basically the property, the land down to the water. The facilities, the old saws, the little railroad cars he used to move ships and [inaudible 00:03:19] on. It was all pretty well dilapidated, run down, but for a child it was great.

**Female:** Did you live nearby?

**George:** My grandmother lived across the street from it. My aunts lived across the street. I basically spent every vacation from school there as I was growing up. We moved to another town, I guess when I was rather young, maybe five, six, seven years old.

Every vacation was spent in the hometown where I was born, with my aunts, uncles, and grandmother, etcetera. It was a second home, that’s not where I lived everyday as I was growing up

**Female:** Was this in Troense?

**George:** This was in Troense yes.

**Female:** Where did you live as a child?

**George:** I moved to a city called Nyborg, which is a seaport. That’s one of the two towns connected by ferries, when you travel between the two largest islands in Denmark; Fyn and Sjaelland.

You take ferries that run between Nyborg on Fyn and [inaudible 00:04:40] which is on Sjaelland or Zealand as you probably would call it in English. I lived there as a child and grew up there and went to school there.

**Female:** How do you spell that [inaudible 00:04:52]?

**George:** N-Y-B-O-R-G. It translates directly into English as New Castle, NY means new and byorg means castle.

**Female:** Please tell me something about your mother and father. What kind of work did your father do?

**George:** My father was a seaman. He was a captain in the Danish Merchant Marine. He was born in Troense where I was born. As a child in the early1900s or I guess maybe during World War 1. He started his seaman apprenticeship, subsequently went to seaman school. He sailed for [inaudible 00:05:49] line.

As luck would have it, when the war broke out in Europe, in 1940, when Denmark was occupied in 1940 by the Germans. His ship happens to be in the Far East or possibly in the Pacific somewhere.

For the duration of the war, he sailed for the allies between the United States, Australia and any other Far Eastern force. They were still using, considering Japan into the picture [inaudible 00:06:31], he was there during the war. Myself, my brother and sister and my mother were in Denmark during the war.

**Female:** While he was in Nyborg?

**George:** He was sailing on his Danish ship wherever that ship took him that’s where he was.

**Female:** You were [inaudible 00:06:50].

**George:** We were in Denmark yes

**Female:** Your mother was a housewife?

**George:** Yes she was at the time, she’s dead now but she was a housewife. That’s all she did [inaudible 00:07:02].

**Female:** Must have been concerned about your father being so far away?

**George:** Yes we were. Then again a normal life of a seaman that sails on foreign [inaudible 00:07:14] is that you journey away from home at least a year. Then you’re home on vacation about three months. This one [inaudible 00:07:23] became a little bit longer because I think the last time he was in Denmark was 38 or 39, 1939. Denmark was occupied on April the 9th 1940.

**Female:** How old were you then?

**George:** 1940 I was 12 years old.

**Female:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**George:** One of each, older boy and a younger sister.

**Female:** Their age and their names?

**George:** My brother is two years older; his name is Erik, E-R-I-K. My sister who’s 12 years younger, she was born 1940, she was 12 years younger correct. She was born just about a week before the Germans occupied Denmark.

**Female:** What do you remember about family life and growing up before your father went away when you were 12? Your early life, growing up, what do you remember?

**George:** Vacations spent in Troense, as I mentioned earlier, because that was always, let’s say, fun when you’re there. [Inaudible 00:09:07] vacation is fun, playing such as I told you.

Both sets of grandparents came from the same town. Vacations were generally split between the place where I mentioned ships were built at one time. My other grandfather was a forest, I guess you’d call it a forest ranger possibly; he was the caretaker of the forest.

He lived out in the middle of the forest, in a very [inaudible 00:09:42] home. As such, when you played there it was in the woods, and climbing trees and sailing a boat, because both places were just down to the water.

**Female:** [Inaudible 00:09:57]?

**George:** Yeah. For a kid I was [inaudible 00:10:01].

**Female:** What kind of education did you have in Denmark?

**George:** I finished grade school. I finished the in between school, which would be I guess the equivalent of high school. After that I took three more years of, what in Denmark was considered advanced education.

The degree you received was [inaudible 00:10:34], which is, I don’t know the equivalent over here, somewhat below a college degree but somewhat above a high school education.

**Female:** I think they call it advanced high school here.

**George:** Possibly, I don’t know. I have not gone to school in this country, all my education was in Denmark.

**Female:** When did you learn English?

**George:** In school, it was a compulsory language. I would say for probably four or five years you had to learn English, some German. Those were two compulsory languages in Denmark. They had a few optional ones, French would be one but I never took that.

Today I would say my German is getting pretty rusty, because if you don’t keep up with a language for 30 or 40 years then you tend to forget it.

**Female:** What did they teach you in school about the United States?

**George:** I would say from my childhood, I don’t have any vivid recollections of ever really studying American history as such. Yes geography you would certainly know and you would learn towns and states.

The history [inaudible 00:11:58] revolution, their history I don’t think was really emphasized to any great extent. Unless I forgot it, I don’t recall it now. The main history you would learn would be, first of all Danish history and after that European history in general. The United States was a bit foreign I …

**Female:** You had a picture of America as a far off land?

**George:** I would say so, as a child it’s a far off land where Indians and cowboys were the best known things.

**Female:** Indians and cowboys?

**George:** Gangsterism in Chicago, I think those would be my childhood impressions of the United States.

**Female:** You expected to see Indians and gangsters?

**George:** I don’t think by the time I came I expected it, but as a child that’s really what America’s [inaudible 00:12:46] for as a child in Denmark.

**Female:** Could you describe, in whatever detail you care to, about how you came to leave Denmark and came over here?

**George:** Yes, I didn’t come really by choice. I came because my family moved over. I was young enough not to really fight it if I had wanted to.

**Female:** They came because your father was here?

**George:** My father was here during the war. At the end of the war, he decided to seek a position on land, instead of sail the rest of his life. At the end of the war he secured a position as a port captain connected with maritime industry. He decided it would be nice for the family to come over to the United States. We left, all of us, in 19 …

**Female:** He settled here in New York?

**George:** He settled here in New York, yes.

**Female:** You must have been very excited to [inaudible 00:13:56] during this coming over. Seeing your father, you hadn’t seen him for a while.

**George:** I hadn’t seen him for- I came in '46 so that means for seven years I have not seen my father.

**Female:** Did he write to prepare you for what [inaudible 00:14:14]?

**George:** I don’t think so. It so happens that my mother and sister and brother came over here about six months before I did. I stayed behind to finish my education in Denmark. They came over here in 1946.

**Female:** Who did you come with?

**George:** I came by myself.

**Female:** By yourself at the age of, let’s see how old you were.

**George:** Age 18.

**Female:** At 18, you were young.

**George:** Yeah, I wasn’t too concerned about that. They came in February of 46 and I came the end of August 1946.

**Female:** You arrived in New York and Ellis?

**George:** I came on the Danish Merchant ship. It left from Amsterdam, so I took a train to Amsterdam in Holland. From there we sailed to Baltimore. It was a cargo ship with just room for eight or 10 passengers as I recall. It wasn’t full. I think we were maybe five or six passengers on board ship.

I don’t think that’s done today anymore, but in those days I think [inaudible 00:15:30] subsidize the trip a little bit and covered some of the expenses. I also think it was probably a little cheaper than going on one of the passenger line. Maybe that’s why my father suggested I take that, I don’t know.

It was a pleasant voyage. It took about eight days to get across and we landed in Baltimore. That was my first impression of the United States. Some dirty buildings …

**Female:** Baltimore is not a very …

**George:** A very dirty port I would say [inaudible 00:16:07] …

**Female:** No gangsters or cowboys.

**George:** Kept going through some very undesirable neighborhoods once you left the ship, and getting to the rail road station. It wasn’t a very [bright 00:16:19] reception I would say. From there we took the train to New York …

**Female:** The family must have been happy to meet you there.

**George:** I hope they were I hope they were happy to see me. They already had settled in Brooklyn and that’s where we moved.

**Female:** You didn’t settle in Baltimore?

**George:** No, they came down from New York to meet me because the ship was going to Baltimore not to New York. We settled in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. We lived over there until 1950, until 1950 we were up in Bay Ridge, a couple of locations.

Generally the area was Scandinavian settled, anywhere else from the 60th Street and all the way to Fort Pemberton, from the waterfront up to maybe sixth, seventh avenue. That’s the area where many Scandinavians …

**Female:** Was the area your father worked too?

**George:** He worked in Manhattan but he commuted easy by [inaudible 00:17:28] from there to Manhattan. I lived there till I joined the army in 1950.

**Female:** You were young, 18. You were looking forward to seeing your family together again. Did you have any goals in mind about your education or work in coming here?

**George:** No, I didn’t.

**Female:** It was just to be with the family?

**George:** I had not worked in Denmark, I had just finished school. I think my mind was open to see what would happen.

**Female:** It was an adventure?

**George:** Yes I think so. To be able to leave Denmark so shortly after the end of the war was in itself a novelty. Because unless you had relatives in the United States there was no way you could leave Denmark and come to the United States quite that early.

**Female:** Your first neighborhood then was Bay Ridge in Brooklyn?

**George:** Yes.

**Female:** What other cities and neighborhoods in this country have you lived in?

**George:** I joined the army in 1950 and served two years during the Korean War …

**Female:** The army in the Korean War.

**George:** When I came out of that I settled in [inaudible 00:18:54] for a few years, and got married in between. Then we bought a house in Long Island in Lynbrook in Brooklyn …

**Female:** What was the date of your marriage?

**George:** May 19th 1951.

**Female:** Do you have children?

**George:** Pardon me?

**Female:** Do you have children?

**George:** Yes I have two children, age 19 and age 25.

**Female:** Do either of them know any Danish?

**George:** Not fluently, they know words of Danish, they know sayings and expressions. They understand a lot more than I probably give them credit for. They would not [inaudible 00:19:42] a conversation in Danish, no.

**Female:** Do they ever go back …?

**George:** Have they visited Denmark do you mean?

**Female:** Do you ever take them back to visit? Have you kept up any friends back there?

**George:** I have so much family back in Denmark, yes. They’ve been there; both of them have been there twice. As a matter of fact in two weeks we’re going back to Denmark to visit. My son who is now 19 will be joining my wife and I on that trip.

Yes they look forward to it, they keep their Danish roots. We observe naturally Danish holidays and traditions, and they’re quite familiar with them.

**Female:** Speaking of Danish holidays and traditions. Could you tell me something about how you and your family keep up Danish holidays and traditions here?

**George:** I can mention some of them, of course Christmas being a major holiday in most of the countries. In Danish it’s, I would say, the biggest holiday we have.

I would say we celebrate it possibly similar to the way most Americans would. It’s always a family holiday where families get together. We have traditional foods that are always prepared in advance of every Christmas ranging from the baking which is quite extensive.

I know my wife bakes cookies for maybe a week solid sometime in December and then the last two or three weeks [inaudible 00:21:41] about but [inaudible 00:21:43] we bake thousands of cookies, six or so different varieties that we look forward to every year.

The Christmas feast is generally traditional, it’s not turkey, it’s either roast animal or its roast duck. Again it’s with the things that go along with it for a meal. Every year it’s the same meal that says a traditional Christmas meal.

We celebrate Christmas Eve more so than Christmas day. Christmas Eve is when you exchange presents in Denmark. Christmas morning is, that’s just a continuation of it. The eve is our main celebration time.

We have another Danish tradition called Fastelavn, which comes around February. It drew its name from the fast that was observed maybe in the early days, its tradition.

It’s a children’s tradition today mainly, where you fill a wooden barrel with candy and goodies and a cat. Today we use the stuffed cat. At one time a live cat was used, as tradition tells the story. The point was to break the barrel with a bat, by hitting it in rotation. When finally the cat fell out of the barrel or jumped out of the barrel. You’d crown that individual as the cat king and award him additional prizes.

It’s a tradition that’s used in many Danish organizations. Adults take part in this today. You may have a barrel for adults; you may have one for children. It’s a fun event and our children have enjoyed it.

**Female:** This takes place in February?

**George:** Yes, it’s traditionally in February. I can’t give you the exact dates.

**Female:** A folk holiday?

**George:** It’s a folk holiday. Other holidays celebrated would be the Danish Independence Day. Same as you celebrate the 4th of July, the Danes would celebrate the …

**Female:** What is the date of Danish Independence Day?

**George:** The fifth of June.

**Female:** You just celebrated it?

**George:** Yes, as a matter of fact we just had a festival this past Sunday. We don’t celebrate it exactly on the day, in this country we probably pick a Sunday closest to it, so you get a better turnout.

This year it was celebrated up in Croton-on-Hudson at a Danish home for the aged. They happen to have a pretty large piece of property and just the ideal facilities for that type of a gathering. It involves a few prominent speakers.

This year we had there’s one speaker, the former ambassador for Denmark, Warren Manshel. We had a well know Danish singer, [inaudible 00:25:10] Hansen who came over to perform. We had a [inaudible 00:25:14] orchestra from Jersey, under the direction of Professor [inaudible 00:25:21]. We’ve had a few other speeches and singers in between.

It’s a Danish country for most people, we get there about 10 o’clock then we leave maybe four, five o’clock in the afternoon. This year we got hit with a [inaudible 00:25:38], but despite that I was say 500 or more people showed up. On a good day we would have had [inaudible 00:25:47] 1,500 people out there.

Again it’s a fun affair. It’s one in which you’re reminded a bit [inaudible 00:25:59]. Some of the songs naturally would be in Danish. Speeches would all be in English so everyone can understand. It’s a tradition.

Other Danish holidays, [inaudible 00:26:20] there’s one in the middle of the summer which is the Midsummer festival that comes in June.

**Female:** Seems to be true of most of the Scandinavian countries.

**George:** This one also had its roots way back when. It involves a bonfire on which a witch is generally placed, and as it burns the witch burns too. The tradition is that now the witch is flying back to where she originally came from which is a certain place in Germany. Where witches traditionally live, on a mountain in Germany, I think its Hartzen, H-A-R-T-Z-E-N.

It’s a festival where you sit around a bonfire, and you sing traditional midsummer songs. You roast usually potatoes in the fire as its burning down and you may dance. It’s generally held near the water. These bonfires were built of driftwood and branches and straw whatever.

As a matter of fact, from the hometown in Troense where I was born, which is a community strictly near the water. You would see these bonfires on that particular evening, burn all along the shoreline.

It was [inaudible 00:27:58]. I think this is strictly a Danish tradition, I don’t know of any other country that maybe is celebrating that particular tradition.

**Female:** Let’s come back for a moment, you said your wife is Danish also?

**George:** Yes, she was born in Denmark as well. She came here in 1949. We met here; we didn’t know each other from Denmark. We met through one of the Danish churches as a matter of fact, where we both attended some functions; young people [inaudible 00:28:37] functions.

**Female:** Her family had come all together?

**George:** She’s an only child. They came here in 1949 as a family.

**Female:** Your two families did not know each other?

**George:** No, we did not. What else would you like to know about them?

**Female:** No, that’s [inaudible 00:28:57]. Now coming back to yourself, you were telling me about that you came here 18. You just mentioned the army and did you do anything else, any other sorts of work?

**George:** I should hope so. I’ve made a living since I came out of the army in 1952.

**Female:** No, I mean you came here and went into the army shortly after?

**George:** No, I came in 46 and I was drafted 1950, so that’s four years later.

**Female:** What did you do from 46 to 50?

**George:** I started to work in a company that sells supermarket equipment. I started to do, I would say, menial jobs. Stocking merchandise, painting shelves, whatever had to be done. As I learned the language and I started learning some skills. I’ve been to that same [inaudible 00:30:00] since 1946, that’s 36 years today.

**Female:** The name of the [inaudible 00:30:06] is?

**George:** I don’t know if that’s important at this point.

**Female:** No it’s not important, no.

**George:** If its [inaudible 00:30:11] …

**Female:** You were drafted into the army.

**George:** Yeah.

**Female:** Tell me, what was the reaction of your fellow soldiers to the fact that you had come from Denmark?

**George:** Really no reaction that I recall. I think by then I knew English fairly well. I don’t recall that being an issue at any time really.

**Female:** Were any of them interested or?

**George:** No, I don’t recall that either. I think as a soldier you just …

**Female:** Did your work and …

**George:** You just become buddies with the ones that you take to and that you have a rapport with. The nationality factor didn’t enter the picture if I recall now. We all had to go through the same basic training and through the same schoolings etcetera.

**Female:** Mr. Jacobsen, we were talking about keeping Danish traditions and customs alive here in this country. Now let’s go on to talking about the Danish community in this country, as a way of keeping Danish immigrants in touch with their country. What are your observations about the Danish American community here?

**George:** There is of course a Danish American community. There are many different organizations ranging from Masonic Free Masons, trade associations, professional associations. There’s a Danish Brotherhood in America and there’s a Danish Sisterhood in America.

Many of these organizations go back to before the turn of the century. The Danish Brotherhood for instance was started in Omaha, Nebraska in 1882. That is one that I’m particularly familiar with.

**Female:** 1882?

**George:** We just celebrated our Centennial year this year as you can see and …

**Female:** Tell me something about your association with the Danish Brotherhood of America?

**George:** I'm currently the national president of it. It’s an organization today with a membership of approximately 11,000. It was started by immigrants, as I said, in 1882.

**Female:** In what part of the United States was it started?

**George:** It was started in Omaha.

**Female:** In Omaha, in which city?

**George:** Omaha is a city state.

**Female:** In what part of Omaha [inaudible 00:33:41]?

**George:** [Inaudible 0:33:42].

**Female:** Geography, by immigrants?

**George:** By immigrants.

**Female:** With a purpose of?

**George:** I guess mainly to help each other, because at that time...

**Female:** Mutual aid.

**George:** Yes. Farmers were coming over, young craftsmen were coming over, and I guess couldn't speak the language to a certain extent. I guess out of self-preservation they joined together.

Language would be a common thing, traditions, memories, whatever you have. To help each other find a job, through sickness, through death of a member of anyone's family. It was started, I would say, out of need more than anything else.

It was their successors who were veterans of societies that had existed prior to that. The veterans, I think, were basically from two wars. It was from the Civil War in this country, and from probably two wars between Denmark and Germany, one being in 1848 and the other one 1864.

Veterans of those three wars had joined into a veteran society. As things got more peaceful, I guess you couldn't constantly find new members to join the organizations. Because normally veterans were created if there are no more wars.

They decided to change it from a veteran’s organization to a brotherhood organization. This is really what happened in 1882. You no longer had to be a veteran to join it. You have to be Danish born man. That was the first requirement.

Since that time, eligibility rules have been eased up somewhat. You no longer have to be native born; you had to be related to someone born in Denmark. That again was for self-preservation. The immigration to this country is where we [inaudible 00:35:58] today.

If you have to rely on immigrants coming in, you wouldn’t perpetuate any kind of organization. You had look for second or third generations or beyond that to support any ethnic organization, the brotherhood being one of them.

We are the largest one today, in the United States. Since its inception in 1882, over 90,000 members have belonged to the organization. It’s through lodges located in many states of the union. We have the Lodges California, Pacific North West, all through the Midwestern States. Our early...

**Female:** Does the Midwest represent the larger proportions of this [inaudible 0:36:54] Scandinavian [inaudible 00:36:55]?

**George:** Yes it does represent probably the largest, [inaudible 00:36:58] take the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois. Those states, I would say, have the heaviest early Danish immigration.

Our earliest lodges was founded in that area. Our Lodge #1 is in Omaha and that’s still in existence today, it’s one of our larger lodges. Lodge #2 is not in existence. #3 is in Davenport, Iowa. #4 is in Racine, Wisconsin.

Just those few lodges gave you an idea where Danes had settled at that time in the 1880s. The expansion went from there in all directions. Although it was mostly in the middle of the country and on either East or West Coast.

For some reason the south was not a place where the Danes went to. We did not have lodges in any of the southern states. Let’s say, below the nations [inaudible 0:38:05] maybe. We’ve never had lodges in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Georgia, West Virginia, any of the southern states, no. I think the Danes settle...

**Female:** What is the name of the lodge in the New York City area?

**George:** In New York, we have a Lodge that meets in the Danish Athletic Club in Brooklyn. We have one in Long Island that meets in Franklin Square.

**Female:** They’re several in the New York area?

**George:** Yes. They are several in Northern New Jersey, [inaudible 00:38:44] around New York. The lodges were settled pretty much where you had a heavy Danish population. [Inaudible 00:38:58] one time, I think was predominantly Danish town as I was told. Many Danish craftsmen wound up in [inaudible 0:39:04]. It’s only in, I guess the latter years that other ethnic groups moved in and replaced them.

Racine, Wisconsin, as I mentioned before, Lodge #4. Racine is such a typical Danish town. When you look in the telephone book in Racine, I think half the population will have a name that ends with S-E-N. When you see that it’s a typical Danish name for us.

**Female:** Which lodge did you first join as a young [inaudible 00:39:44]?

**George:** I joined the one in Long Island.

**Female:** The one in Long Island?

**George:** That’s the one I joined and that’s the one I stayed in. Once you join a lodge, you'll generally stay with that even if you move away to...

**Female:** That’s how you came to this high post?

**George:** That’s how I became involved and I guess took a little more interest in it. Subsequently went through the chairs as you might call it. You go through the chairs in your local lodge to become an officer, to become president.

Then you become involved in the district, the district in this case is about 20 lodges on the eastern seaboard. After that, you’re in national government board that’s elected every four years, for a four year term. I was elected the president in Vancouver British Columbia in 1979 so my term will expire next year in September.

**Female:** Does this position require much traveling throughout the country to see the lodges?

**George:** Not to visit every lodge, but it involves traveling when you have district conventions. Other districts, we have seven districts, a board member or an officer will visit that district. If a lodge has their own birthday such as a 75th anniversary or 90th, and they request representation. We provide one of the seven national officers to go there on the occasion. In this our centennial year, involves a little bit extra travel. We manage.

**Female:** Is there much difference between the lodges in different parts of the country? Are some more, so to speak, Danish than others?

**George:** Yes. I think we still have either one or two where Danish is spoken in the lodge and if you speak...

**Female:** Danish spoken in the lodge?

**George:** Yes. Its [inaudible 00:41:46] unique today, most lodges will speak English of course during the business meetings. Danish is spoken afterwards for social events. I would say probably half of our members today would speak Danish fluently. I guess that half is the ones who are originally born in Omaha.

We have members that have belonged to this organization for as much as 65 or 70 years. They attended the 65th Anniversary Banquet [inaudible 0:42:31] just two weeks ago. At that function I had the honor of presenting a 60 year membership pin, three 50 year membership pins and a couple of 25 year membership pins.

It does show a great loyalty to the organization. They are proud of their membership, for someone to belong 60 years. It’s not an awful long time. We have many old time members of the Danish Brotherhood.

**Female:** Very interesting. What about the Danish newspaper?

**George:** Today there are only two newspapers left in the United States that publish in Danish. One is published in Los Angeles, the name of that is Bien, B-I-E-N. This translates directly to Bee, B-E-E, the insect the bee. That one is …

**Female:** Busy as a bee?

**George:** Busy a bee maybe in other words. That newspaper, this year, celebrated its 100th anniversary also, same as the Brotherhood celebrated theirs. They print and publish strictly Danish.

It’s a newspaper that comes out once a week. Would have 10 or 12 pages. Will be divided into, usually the first, two, or three pages will be news from Denmark, highlights of current events. The rest of the paper is devoted to activities in the Danish communities.

They operate through correspondence. They’ll have a correspondent in Seattle, Washington who will submit a column every week. [Inaudible 0:44:15] in San Francisco, various towns will have a correspondent. He in turn will write about what’s happening in the Danish communities. [Inaudible 0:44:29] you’d want to enjoy.

The other one is The Danish Pioneer, that’s published in Chicago. That newspaper today is 115 years old. It’s part Danish, part English. Some articles though have they’re writing it in Danish only and then they’ll have a translation, a caps all translation in English.

Again it works pretty much in the same principle, current news and then news for various communities. The first one I mentioned, Bien, is published on the West Coast. The main distribution would be in California, Pacific North West, maybe as far as Nevada. Whereas the Pioneer is, I think, distributed pretty much nationwide. It’s actually a struggle …

**Female:** This [inaudible 00:45:32] must be very helpful for a new comer to this country from Denmark, to feel at home here.

**George:** It enables them to find organizations, because most of them will advertise in these papers. For instance, the Danish Brotherhood, many of the lodges will carry an ad in every issue. Sometimes they'll even publish the officers and secretaries of every lodge within a district. It’s helpful.

Inaddition to the brotherhood, there are so many other Danish organizations today that avail themselves [inaudible 00:46:20]. You mentioned immigration. Immigration today is, in my opinion, very low.

The immigrants you get today may not be here for the rest of their lives. They come over here for specific purposes, whether it’s education, whether it’s to work for an American family, maybe a branch of the Danish firm that’s doing business here.

I think their hope eventually is to go back to Denmark after they've gotten what they expect from this country. I don’t think you get many of the immigrants have come here with a view towards spending the rest of their life here, and making this their new home.

**Female:** Of course it’s had a special incentive after World War 2.

**George:** Yes. I think after going through five years of German occupation and the rationing, and the shortages. I think at that time anyone could get out and get to the United States, wanted to do it. [Inaudible 0:47:47] and so forth. Not that many came out even in those days.

I can tell you the figures, I’ll have to schedule calls for it. You're talking about smaller amounts as compared to the immigration that took place in the 1800s. When land was made available, when gold was found, when the overpopulation of the farms forced people to leave the country.

At that time Denmark was an agricultural society, there was no industry in the 1800s to speak off. You had craftsmen and you had farmers. If a farmer had six kids, only one could inherit the farm and that was usually the oldest son.

The rest of them had to do something else. Get a piece of land, if they could afford it, work for someone else or leave the country. It was only as industry developed city grew, that someone that grew up in the farm there was hope for another life.

You’re talking about different situations today. When someone leaves the country today, I think it’s mostly for adventure. I don’t think its so much need any more [inaudible 0:49:17] you could leave Denmark. It’s a darn good country. They have everything that we have today.

Their standard of living is equal to the United States. The social system is far greater and far better than the United States. The social welfare system, I think, is one of the best in the world. Someone leaving Denmark today, I would visualize, would be just to better themselves in some way and then [inaudible 0:49:47] return to Denmark.

**Female:** The younger generation of immigrants doesn’t really have that much contact, say, with the Danish Brotherhood of America?

**George:** No, they don’t. We do have some that come over here to stay and make this their future home. Yes, we have young members that have immigrated in, let’s say the 50s or the 60s, even the 70s. Yes, we have those people, but it’s [inaudible 0:50:16] between, there aren’t that many of them coming today.

**Female:** Do you have any thoughts on how Denmark, the Danish people and Danish culture is presented to American students? You’ve raised children here and they’ve gone to school?

**George:** Yes. You say to the American students?

**Female:** Yes. I mean from what your children told you about what they learn in school?

**George:** What they learn in school about Scandinavian or about Denmark?

**Female:** Yes, about Denmark.

**George:** I'm afraid I can’t tell you, because they have not particularly mentioned that to me and I haven’t asked them. I presume on the social studies they learn a little bit about many of the European countries. I don’t know to what extent how deep they go into it.

I think they know about Denmark through their parents. How their classmates look upon it, I have no idea. They’re both born in this country, they’re American, and they are proud of the Danish ancestry.

**Female:** I guess most Americans know about Hans Christian Andersen.

**George:** That’s one name that if you’re a child, I think sooner or later, you’ll stumble on Hans Christian Andersen books.

**Female:** [Inaudible 00:51:51] frankly do a question about contributions that Danes coming over here have made to American life?

**George:** I would say this. I think most Danes who came here have become good citizens of the United States. I think Danes have a way of blending in easy. Maybe not be as [inaudible 0:52:15] as some other nationalities.

That I’ve heard time and time again. I believe that to be true, because as an individual, I came to this country in 46 as I mentioned. It was not until 1963 that I joined the Danish Brotherhood.

In the 17 year period, I saw no need to join any ethnic organization. I was perfectly happy to be an American, and to get involved in whatever was happening in my community. We attended a Danish church, but outside of that I didn’t belong to any organized group.

I think many Danes are in the same situation. The contribution they’ve made, I would say, I think Danes basically have a reputation as being honest, as being hardworking, and blend in and easy to get along with. I have found that to be true in …

**Female:** This [inaudible 00:53:27] what you were telling me earlier, that Denmark is so advanced in social thinking and welfare. Maybe that same thinking has carried over to the people who come here. Maybe that’s the contribution. You [inaudible 0:53:43] social talents and abilities and lots of welfare too.

**George:** Quite possible. I think you're brought up to, let’s say, to make an honest living if you will. That no one is going to hand anything to you, you have to earn it. I think that’s the bottom line.

The welfare system in Denmark [inaudible 00:54:19] today of course has [inaudible 00:54:21] a great deal to the senior citizens. The older people are taken care of wonderfully in Denmark. As far as the younger ones, I think they are expected to work the same as they are in this country. Yes unemployment of course is a factor today, but it’s the same over here today.

The basic philosophy, I think, Danes are not lazy people. They are industrious people. They have made contributions, let’s say the corporate movement I think started in Denmark a lot sooner than over here.

We’re talking about corporate movement within the farming community. This enables many small towns in the Midwest to form their own dairies, to start their own silo combines and whatever you have.

They knew that as an individual farmer you are lost [inaudible 00:55:23] we got together. Yes, you have some [inaudible 00:55:25], and you have a means to do things, to distribute what you produce. I think those things have contributed greatly to the American agriculture and the Midwestern states and the dairy states such as Wisconsin.

Danish craftsmen are volatile of the many industries [inaudible 00:55:46] craftsmen. Not only carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, builders, they’re not [inaudible 00:55:59]. Inside of the arts, just mentioned that the sculpture of Mount Rushmore Monument in the Black hills of North Dakota was the son of the Danish immigrant.

**Female:** I didn’t know that, his name?

**George:** His name was Gutzon Borglum, B-O-R-G-L

**Female:** B-O

**George:** B-O-R-G-L-U-M, Borglum. Gutzon, G-U-T-Z-O-N. I guess you called him a sculptor. When you see the scale on which he worked, it’s unbelievable how one man could conceive chiseling four heads out of a mountain. He started it and his son finished it. That’s one.

There has been some well-known Danes over the years, Jacob Riis, for whom Riis Park on Rockaway was named, was a very well-known Danish journalist, author.

**Female:** [Inaudible 00:57:25] social welfare?

**George:** The social welfare in the slums of New York and the sweat shops in the city. I think it was Teddy Roosevelt that called him America’s most useful citizen. For his exposure of the conditions such as they were. [Inaudible 00:57:48] today is one of the better known names but he’s a …

**Female:** [Inaudible 00:57:51].

**George:** He’s of course a contemporary. He came to this country right after World War 2. Made quite a name for himself, [inaudible 00:58:01] of the earlier generation. He’s a Danish farmer who made good in this country.

I don’t know any number of the people that have excelled in various fields. I say basically the contribution, Danes who made for this country have been just [inaudible 00:58:28] citizens. Who became part of the community they lived in, whose interests, first and foremost, to the United States by being proud of where they came from.

I think that pretty much expresses my feeling [inaudible 00:58:44]. As a naturalized American citizen, America is my home, America is my country. Plus it’s the soft spot in my heart [inaudible 00:58:53]…

**Female:** You served during the Korean War?

**George:** I served her [inaudible 00:58:56]. The soft spot in your heart is always that you came from Denmark and your roots are in Denmark.

I’m extremely proud of that because the history they have go back 1,000 years, not just 200 years. In the town I grew up, the castle in that town was from 1100 and something. Castles and other houses from 1200, 1300 is very common in this country.

Once you go back to 1700 or 1600 you’re talking about a [inaudible 00:59:29] something that’s almost falling apart. Those drawings over there are 8, 900 years old and they are still standing. History is a bit worldwide.

**Female:** Is there much connection between Denmark and the Danish Brotherhood? Are there lodges in Denmark?

**George:** No, we have one lodge in Denmark. That lodge was set up 60 years ago roughly by some members that had returned to Denmark for a time. It was a link, I guess, with the brotherhood. They’re still considered members of the Danish Brotherhood, but they are rather inactive.

We still have a lodge and over maybe 100 members, with an office in Copenhagen or with a mailing address in Copenhagen. Today we operate with approximately 130 lodges in the United States and one in Vancouver, Canada.

**Female:** Are there any other organizations, besides the Danish Brotherhood?

**George:** There are many organizations. The Masonic Organizations, there’s a Free Mason Organization. Both of these were started well before 1900 also. They may be close to 100 years old the same as the Danish Brotherhood is today. Those I think are the older ones.

There’s one I might mention now. There’s one organization started in 1912. It was started for the express purpose of honoring the 4th of July celebration in Denmark. Every 4th of July, in a town called Rebild [inaudible 01:01:38] called Rebild, R-E-B-I-L-D. The Danes and Danish Americans meet.

**Female:** [Inaudible 01:01:49] in Denmark?

**George:** They meet in a place called Rebild National Park. It’s a plot of land, in its native state. It was deeded in 1912 by Danish American immigrants. It was deeded to the king of Denmark at that time, to be a meeting place where the 4th of July should be celebrated every year.

Since 1912, Danes and Danish Americans and their friends have gathered there every year for a celebration. I understand that it’s the largest 4th of July celebration held anywhere in the world outside of the United States. In the peak years they’d have as many as 40,000 people attend.

**Female:** 40,000?

**George:** In the latter years, 10,000 or more is a realistic figure. They will have speakers generally from the United States and there are speakers from Denmark. This year [inaudible 01:03:07] will be speaking for the United States and the director of the Danish Royal Opera will be speaking for Denmark.

This year’s theme happens to be cultural exchange, that’s why these two individuals were picked. Other years they’ll be a different subject that will be covered. Over the years many prominent Americans have appeared there. Ronald Reagan was there one year when he was still governor of California. [Inaudible 01:03:41] was there as a vice president, Nixon was there, many prominent Americans have appeared, Danny Kaye.

**Female:** Of course, he was Hans Christian Andersen in the movie.

**George:** Yes. [Inaudible 01:03:57] has been there on more than one occasion. It’s a meeting place for Danes that come home, or Danish Americans I should say, who come back to the old country can meet in very nostalgic circumstances.

Every function starts with a raising of the stars and stripes and the Danish flag called Dannebrog, with the national anthems played.

After that they’ll have a two or three hour program involving dancing, singing, etcetera. It’s quite moving for someone coming back on an occasional visit to Denmark to see it. I happen to be going to Denmark in two weeks myself.

One of the places we are going to visit will be Rebild [inaudible 01:04:52] Park. I’ll be there because of the centennial of the Danish Brotherhood primarily. If it wasn’t for that and I was going to Denmark I would have gone there anyhow.

**Female:** These people who organize to celebrate it, are Danes or [inaudible 01:05:11] or?

**George:** The organization is called the Rebild National Park Society. They have members, both in United States and in Denmark. The local festivities are arranged by the Danish portion of the society.

I would say the governing board of the society is probably divided equally between United States and Denmark. Out of, I think a 15 men governing body, they break it down in the middle pretty much.

I certainly look forward to it. I’ll be bringing greetings from the United States to Denmark on that occasion, and from the members of the Danish Brotherhood that’s here. Any other questions you haven’t [inaudible 01:06:15]?

**Female:** Yes. I just wonder do you have any thoughts on relationships between the Danish American community here and other Scandinavian groups.

**George:** Such as Danes, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic. I think the spirit of cooperation exists between them. The northern countries are all very close culturally. The language very close, and in some cases, Norwegian and Danish is very close.

**Female:** Their seamen [inaudible 01:06:57] work together?

**George:** The what?

**Female:** The seamen work together, don’t they?

**George:** I don’t know if you can say the seamen work together, they are …

**Female:** I mean they have a common trade.

**George:** Yeah, we have a Danish Seamen’s Church. We have a Norwegian Seamen’s Church, a Swedish Seamen’s Church. I think they will generally congregate in their national church and national organizations.

We work on common things, like Scandinavian festivals. Next year, 1983, there’ll be a Harbor Festival in which the Scandinavian countries will be featured participants. In that, the five northern countries will again, will [inaudible 01:07:49] mostly together.

There is only excellent relationships between the northern countries. You can travel between them without a passport. I think we all look upon each other’s as brothers.

**Female:** In this country too?

**George:** In this country too, yes. That’s my feeling. I don’t know that many Icelandic people or Finnish people. Norwegians and Swedes, I know a number of them and we have excellent relations.

**Female:** Is there anything that you particularly would like to reflect on, that might be of interest to the Museum’s Immigration?

**George:** I think it may just be repetitious. I would say that as a foreign born citizen of this country I’m extremely happy that I immigrated to the United States. I will defend the United States policies, and attitudes, and the whole make of the United States to any foreign that would knock it.

[Inaudible 01:09:33] throughout the world, for many reasons that maybe misinformation. People don’t realize that this is a democratic country. That whatever happens is because of individuals, it’s because of individual policies. All of those things can be changed if they’re wrong, in an orderly manner.

That every citizen has the right to speak out and to criticize, it hurts when a foreign country criticizes you unjustly. When you already know that people in this country are criticizing you if they think that a wrong has been done.

If it has been done, we go about correcting them in our way; we don’t need outsiders to tell us what to do. That works with the Danish [inaudible 01:10:29] in the United States is doing, I feel bad about it.

It’s your right to [inaudible 01:10:37] go in any direction of the law, but still, you sometimes feel that you don’t have all the information and they do admit.

**Female:** We have ample opportunity [inaudible 01:10:49] go back to some.

**George:** Yes.

**Female:** [Inaudible 01:10:51].

**George:** Yes. With the occasional [inaudible 01:10:55] situation or these [inaudible 01:11:01] situation now, anything that happens throughout the globe. Also the Danish press is quick to form opinions, the same as any other nationality is [inaudible 01:11:13].

When they judge the United States unfairly, I don’t like it any more than you do. It’s a free country, so is Denmark a free country. They can express themselves, without any fear, the same as we can do.

We just hope sometimes they will be a little more fair towards the United States. We are the largest and it sucks that we are going we’re going to be hit with more stones from an insignificant country such as Denmark.

**Female:** True.

**George:** Be fair. The problems we have here with so many nationalities, Denmark has does not have to live with. Because in Denmark you are basically a Dane and you all speak the same language. You didn’t come from 50 or 100 different countries speaking 50 or 100 different languages. In Denmark everyone speaks Danish.

[Inaudible 01:12:26] over here, you’d have nationalities pulling in various directions for various selfish reasons in many cases. You have to understand that. It’s hard sometimes for another country to realize how the United States is made up and what makes this country safe.

**Female:** This thing is [inaudible 01:12:57] make an effort to set yourself to be a good American.

**George:** I’m just happy with the country. I think the country has been good to me. It has to be a two way street, it can’t be just take, take, what do you do for me? Kennedy said it better than anyone I think, ask not what the country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.

I think that’s very appropriate for anybody coming here as a foreigner. It should be the same for anyone native born. It’s a great country. I’m proud to be an American.

**Female:** I think America should be very happy to have you here. I want to thank you on behalf of the museum very much. This is going to be a very good interview.

**George:** Okay.