**Paul**: This is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Friday October 27th 1995. I’m at the Norwegian Christian Home in Brooklyn and I’m here with Victor Johnson. Mr. Johnson came from Norway, what year did you come Mr. Johnson?

**Victor**: 1923.

**Paul**: How old were you when you came?

**Victor**: 16.

**Paul**: Present also in the room is Mrs. Johnson, Edna Johnson. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**Victor**: My birthday, August 11, 1906.

**Paul**: Where were you born?

**Victor**: In the Handal, Norway

**Paul**: Can you spell Handal?

**Victor**: Handal, Norway.

**Paul**: Where in Norway is that?

**Victor**: It’s in the south.

**Paul**: In the southern part of Norway?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Can you describe the house that you grew up in for me? What did the house look like that you lived in in Norway?

**Victor**: It was like any ordinary house, nice looking house.

**Paul**: What was it made out of? What did they build the houses out of in Norway?

**Victor**: It’s wood.

**Paul**: What color was the house?

**Victor**: White.

**Paul**: How many rooms did it have?

**Victor**: About seven.

**Paul**: Was it a farm? Did you have a farm?

**Victor**: Yes.

**Paul**: Did you keep animals?

**Victor**: Yes.

**Paul**: What kind of animals did you keep?

**Victor**: Cows, chickens.

**Edna**: Horses.

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Mrs. Johnson just said horses. What was your job on the farm?

**Victor**: It was helping out with everything. It was farming, all kinds of work.

**Paul**: What kind of work had to be done on the farm?

**Victor**: After so many years, how can I explain that?

**Paul**: Did you grow vegetables?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Do you remember what kind of vegetables that you grew?

**Victor**: Potatoes, carrots, all types of …

**Edna**: Turnips, everybody had turnips.

**Victor**: Cabbage yeah.

**Paul**: Mrs. Johnson just said turnips. Did you have to take care of the animals?

**Victor**: Yes.

**Paul**: Which animal did you take care of?

**Victor**: Cows and chickens.

**Paul**: What did you do with the cows? Why did you have cows?

**Victor**: Why do you ask question?

**Edna**: To get milk from the barn.

**Victor**: Milk and butter.

**Paul**: What was your father’s name?

**Victor**: Andy.

**Paul:** Andy?

**Victor:** Andreas, that was his name, Andreas.

**Paul**: What did he do for a living?

**Victor**: Most of the time I was here he was like a carpenter, farmer.

**Paul**: Was he a carpenter in Norway too? Did he come to America at some point?

**Victor:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul:** Do you remember what year he came?

**Victor**: When he [inaudible 00:04:40]?

**Paul**: Yeah.

**Victor**: How can I explain that? That was before my time.

**Paul**: Were you born when he came to America? Had you been born when he went to America?

**Edna**: You were eight year old when he died, so you were born before he went to America. You were eight year old when he died.

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: What was your …

**Victor**: Well …

**Paul**: Go ahead. What was your mother’s name, name was, before she was married?

**Edna**: Larsen.

**Victor**: Larsen.

**Paul**: Larsen, L-A-R-S-E-N?

**Edna**: S-E-N.

**Paul**: S-E-N, Larsen. What did your mother do on the farm?

**Victor**: That’s some questions.

**Paul**: What kinds of things did your mother do on the farm? What work did she do on the farm?

**Victor**: She’d take care of the animals and house work and everything.

**Edna**: Washing clothes.

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

**Victor:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul:** How many?

**Victor**: We were seven all together.

**Paul**: How do you fall into that? Are you the oldest or the youngest or?

**Victor**: Youngest one.

**Paul**: You’re the youngest of the seven of children?

**Victor:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul:** Did you go to school in Norway?

**Victor**: Yes.

**Paul**: How old are you when you begin school?

**Victor**: Maybe I was …

**Edna**: Probably seven years old.

**Victor**: Seven years old, started public school.

**Paul**: Was there a school building in your town?

**Victor**: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul**: Do you remember what it looked like?

**Victor**: Big wooden house, you might as well say.

**Paul**: What did they teach you in school? What were your subjects in school?

**Edna**: What subject you had, you had everything.

**Victor**: Everything, writing and everything.

**Edna**: [Inaudible 00:07:20] arithmetic and you went to business school in Norway.

**Paul**: Mrs. Johnson said you went to business school in Norway?

**Victor**: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul**: What do you remember about going to business school? What did they teach you at business school?

**Victor**: It was -What do you call it?

**Edna**: They called there, it’s the same thing [inaudible 00:07:46] arithmetic because its business for business.

**Victor**: Business school yeah [inaudible 00:07:50].

**Paul**: Mr. Johnson, why don’t you come up closer to the microphone so we can hear you on the tape?

**Edna**: You don’t want to hear me, do you?

**Paul**: its okay, I’m going to interview you also, but if you can help Mr. Johnson that’s fine.

**Edna**: No, but I don’t like you doing business school [inaudible 00:08:04] business school here you know what they do, mostly for businesses mostly arithmetic and …

**Paul**: Is that what you learned in business school, arithmetic?

**Victor:** Yeah.

**Edna**: [Inaudible 00:08:15] very good at that.

**Paul**: Do you remember what food you ate in Norway?

**Edna**: A lot of potatoes.

**Paul**: A lot of potatoes Mrs. Johnson says.

**Edna**: Homemade bread.

**Paul**: Okay hang on wait. When I interview you, then you can tell me all of that.

**Edna**: Okay.

**Paul**: If you know things that will help Mr. Johnson to remember, by all means. Do you remember the kinds of food that you ate?

**Victor**: Bread, potatoes, all kinds of …

**Edna**: Vegetables.

**Victor:**  Vegetable.

**Edna:** [Inaudible 0:08:55].

**Victor**: Meat, fish.

**Paul**: What kind of fish? Tell me about the fish that you ate?

**Edna**: Normally codfish and …

**Paul**: Hang on. Tell me about the fish.

**Victor**: Codfish.

**Paul**: Where did the fish come from?

**Edna**: They fished right outside of their door.

**Paul**: Did you fish?

**Victor**: Yeah of course I did, yeah.

**Paul**: That was near where you lived?

**Victor**: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul**: You got codfish, you fished for cod?

**Victor**: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul**: What religion were you in Norway?

**Victor**: Lutheran.

**Paul**: Was there a church near your home?

**Victor**: Yes, not too far away.

**Paul**: How often did you go to church?

**Victor**: When I was a kid, mostly every Sunday.

**Paul**: Were there any ways that you worshipped at home, in your house? Did you worship at all?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Did you say prayers?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: When would you say prayers?

**Victor**: My family did, my mother did yeah.

**Paul**: Mr. Johnson, why did you want to come to America?

**Victor**: Why I wanted to come?

**Edna**: Because you were young.

**Victor**: I was young and I was maybe there was a better job here, I believe.

**Paul**: Did you have a job in Norway before you came to America?

**Victor**: No, I was only 16 when I come here. I work on the farm.

**Paul**: Did you have any relatives in America before you came here? You said your father was here? He had died?

**Victor**: He died before yeah, my brother and sister.

**Paul**: Your brother and your sister?

**Victor:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul:** Where were they living in America?

**Victor:** In Brooklyn.

**Paul:** What was your brother doing for work in America?

**Edna**: Carpenter, he was a carpenter there.

**Victor**: Yeah as she’s said, carpenter yes.

**Paul**: Your brother was a carpenter? What did you have to do to get ready to leave Norway?

**Victor**: What I had to do?

**Paul**: Did you have to go to a doctor before you left Norway?

**Victor**: Not at that time, no.

**Paul**: Did you have to get special papers to leave Norway?

**Victor**: No.

**Paul**: What about a passport or a visa?

**Victor**: Passport yeah.

**Paul**: Where did you go to get that?

**Edna**: You went to [inaudible 0:12:35] you said that in Norway, you went to the sheriff. In Handal you went there and got the …

**Victor**: Yeah in the town...

**Paul**: The sheriff?

**Edna**: Yeah.

**Paul**: You went to the sheriff?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: How did your mother feel about you leaving Norway?

**Edna**: He was dead.

**Paul**: The mother was dead?

**Edna**: The father was dead when he was eight years old.

**Paul**: Right, but was your mother still living?

**Edna**: Yeah.

**Victor:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Paul**: How did she feel about you leaving?

**Victor**: You can figure that yourself, how she felt when...

**Edna**: She was not too happy.

**Paul**: Do you remember what you packed to take to America? What did you take with you to America?

**Victor**: Only clothes [inaudible 0:13:36].

**Paul**: Where did you go to get on the big ship?

**Victor**: In Oslo.

**Paul**: What was the name of the ship that you took to America?

**Victor**: Stavanger ferry.

**Paul**: Had you ever been on a big ship before?

**Victor**: No.

**Paul**: What did you think when you were getting into this big ship?

**Victor**: What would you say when you board a big ship? I’d feel the same way you know that.

**Paul**: I’ve never been on a big ship. I don’t know what it would feel like.

**Victor**: Then you can figure that yourself what will happen if you go into a big ship?

**Paul**: How long did it take to get to America?

**Victor**: Almost seven days.

**Edna**: Eight days.

**Victor**: Yeah, seven, eight days.

**Paul**: Did anything happen on this ship while it was coming to America?

**Victor**: Nothing as far as I know.

**Paul**: Did you get seasick?

**Victor**: No.

**Paul**: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship came into New York?

**Victor**: How can you not answer that question?

**Edna**: [Inaudible 0:15:13] Statue of Liberty [inaudible 00:15:16]. No you [inaudible 00:15:17] you didn’t see the statue, you didn’t think.

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Do you remember going to Ellis Island when you came into New York?

**Victor**: I remember that yes.

**Paul**: What do you remember about Ellis Island?

**Victor**: I know we landed in 30th Street in Brooklyn. I was taken in on the boat going to Ellis Island.

**Paul**: What happened at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: I was only 16 then. I was maybe I felt all right, but I was skinny, but when I in Norway I eat good and everything. Nothing [inaudible 00:16:18], but I was skinny. I was taken over to the hospital at Ellis Island. The next day they let me out.

**Paul**: You had to stay overnight?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: What did they do to you while you were at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: They maybe checkup [inaudible 00:16:57], but I don’t remember that. I know I was. There must have been some hospital I guess. Many at that time on the ship had something that bothered me, lice, what do you call them?

Because I was taken in to a room, there was a big bathtub, very big bathtub. There was two men, one in each end in the bathtub, with warm water. I thought I was in [inaudible 00:17:49], something happened on the ship. That’s what happened.

**Paul**: Where was the bathtub? Where was this bathtub? Was this on the boat or at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: Ellis Island, in the hospital there where they brought me.

**Paul**: That’s where you had to take this bath, was at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Did they feed you at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: Yeah, not too good though, no.

**Paul**: Do you remember what it was that they fed you?

**Victor**: I had mostly bread. I don’t remember what kind of foods.

**Paul**: Do you remember what it looked like, the room where you had to sleep?

**Victor**: No, I don’t remember that.

**Paul**: Do you remember if anyone could talk Norwegian to you?

**Victor**: No.

**Paul**: Did someone come and meet you at Ellis Island?

**Victor**: No.

**Paul**: Where did you go when they released you?

**Victor**: They let me out and I went on the ferry and I come over through that way. I had a piece of paper with my name and address on, to my brother who lived in Brooklyn. I gave that to a policeman. He told me to take the subway but I didn’t know what that was. He got a taxi and that took me over to Brooklyn. That’s all.

**Paul**: When was the last time you had seen your brother?

**Victor**: How can I [inaudible 00:19:57], after so many years.

**Paul**: It had been a long time since you had seen your brother?

**Victor**: No, I don’t think it was. I couldn’t say that.

**Paul**: Where was your brother living in Brooklyn?

**Victor**: 330 41st street.

**Paul**: You said he was a carpenter in Brooklyn?

**Victor**: Yeah. [Inaudible 00:20:27].

**Paul**: When did you get your first job in America?

**Victor**: That was in Staten Island, I guess, [inaudible 00:20:52] yeah.

**Paul**: How long did it take before you got your first job?

**Victor**: It couldn’t be take long.

**Edna**: [Inaudible 0:21:03] first.

**Paul**: Did you go to school in America?

**Victor**: I went to a school to learn and I wanted to learn English.

**Paul**: Can you tell me what it was like to learn English?

**Victor**: I can’t tell you that, you know that yourself. If you were going to pick up another language, how long will that take?

**Paul**: Do you remember what your first words were that you learned in English?

**Victor**: No. That’s all I can tell you. That’s all everything. That’s all.

**Paul**: Thank you very much for letting me ask you these questions, I appreciate it. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Victor Johnson, on October 27th 1995. Thank you.