**Kate:** Good evening. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 29th of July 1994. I’m in Bucyrus, Ohio at the home of Lydia Loliger who came to the United States from Switzerland in 1906 when she was two and a half years old.

Why don’t you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth please?

**Lydia:** My full name is Lydia Loliger.

**Kate:** What was your maiden name?

**Lydia:** My maiden name was Witschi.

**Kate:** How do you spell that?

**Lydia:** W-I-T-S-C-H-I.

**Kate:** When were you born? What’s your date of birth?

**Lydia:** January 25th 1904.

**Kate:** Where were you born?

**Lydia:** In Bern, Switzerland.

**Kate:** Could you spell that?

**Lydia:** B-E-R-N, of course it’s a capital. Switzerland, you want me to spell that?

**Kate:** No, that’s fine. If you bend backward do you remember anything about Switzerland? You were still young when you came.

**Lydia:** I don’t remember anything before we came over here but I’ve been over there several times.

**Kate:** How would you describe Bern?

**Lydia:** Bern is a very interesting city, especially the arcades and the shopping area.

**Kate:** How about the major industry of Bern?

**Lydia:** The industries? I can’t tell you too much -I think it’s quite [verifiable 00:01:36].

**Kate:** What would you say is the population of Bern when you were a child? Do you remember?

**Lydia:** I don’t know. I haven’t kept track of those things.

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

**Lydia:** John.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Lydia:** He was a cabinet maker.

**Kate:** Could you describe what you father looked like?

**Lydia:** He was a normal looking man. I think he had nice features. He had a nice pointed nose and not flat like mine. He was a good looking man.

**Kate:** What about his personality and temperament, how would you describe him?

**Lydia:** I would describe him as a very stern person.

**Kate:** Is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood?

**Lydia:** Not in particular, just little things that might have happened around the home.

**Kate:** For example, what would that be?

**Lydia:** We had to walk the chalk line, that’s for sure, every one of us.

**Kate:** What was your mother’s name?

**Lydia:** Marie, although over here she was always called Mary.

**Kate:** By the way what do you mean by walk the chalk line? What do you mean by that?

**Lydia:** He had strict rules and that was it.

**Kate:** What would a rule be for example?

**Lydia:** They were good rules. I would say one of the things he was really strict about was honesty. Believe me, if you weren’t honest you felt it someplace.

**Kate:** Your mother’s name again was?

**Lydia:** It was Marie, but over here they were told Marie over here is Mary but that’s not true. I was just thinking that’s something I found out later.

**Kate:** Marie in the old country, and did they call her Mary here?

**Lydia:** Yes over here they called her Mary.

**Kate:** What was her maiden name?

**Lydia:** Wildi, W-I-L-D-I. Do you have a record of that stuff?

**Kate:** No. What was her occupation?

**Lydia:** My occupation?

**Kate:** Your mother’s occupation.

**Lydia:** She was a seamstress.

**Kate:** How would you describe what she looked like, your mom?

**Lydia:** She was a beautiful woman.

**Kate:** How tall would you say she was?

**Lydia:** Probably five feet and a quarter or maybe five and a half, five feet maybe an inch or two. She was a short like I am.

**Kate:** Eyes and hair?

**Lydia:** I never paid any attention really. We never paid attention to physical features in our family, those weren’t important but she had long beautiful hair, always long enough to put it around in two braids and could wrap the whole back of her head -Cover the whole back of her head with her braids.

**Kate:** What about her personality and her temperament, how would describe her?

**Lydia:** She was a very easy going person. She was very adaptable to almost everything, I guess she had to be, she had a large family.

**Kate:** What were her chores then? You said she was a seamstress, what did she do housework as well?

**Lydia:** She was not a seamstress over here. She was a seamstress in Europe. Over here she just take care of her family and sewing for her family. She made practically all of our clothes while we were in school and things like that.

**Kate:** You said for all of us, brothers and sisters in order?

**Lydia:** I can’t give you all the ones who died but the ones who grew up. Felix, Werner, Lydia, Theodore, Victor, Bertha, I left one out. Felix, Werner, Lydia, Ed, Theodore, Victor and Bertha, there were seven of us who grew up.

**Kate:** Where were you in the order?

**Lydia:** Felix, Werner, Lydia, I was third but then there were some who died in between.

**Kate:** Was Ed after you or before you?

**Lydia:** He came after me, Felix, Werner, Lydia, Ed. He was a year just about 18 months younger than I was. He was the youngest one when we came over.

**Kate:** You said some children died, what did they die of the children? Do you remember?

**Lydia:** I really don’t know. Children’s’ diseases I think as far as I know.

**Kate:** Did any children die here in the United States?

**Lydia:** Yes, one in Pittsburgh and one in Mansfield.

**Kate:** Again do you remember at all what the reason was?

**Lydia:** The one in Pittsburgh they thought it was malnutrition. Maybe it’s because we didn’t know what to -Although we tried, she tried. I know we gave him special milk. I remember they said he wasn’t getting enough nourishment and the doctor recommended them giving goat milk. My father actually bought some goats so that we would have goat milk for that baby but the baby did die.

**Kate:** Is there a story about your mother that you associate with your childhood?

**Lydia:** Nothing in particular except that we just worked together. The whole family of us worked. You haven’t asked me where we moved to first, that comes later.

**Kate:** Tell us anyway what you were saying.

**Lydia:** Anyway since you asked about childhood. We did hard work. When we first came over here we moved to Pittsburgh and my father always -That’s the one thing I remember. I remember the first house we went into, a friend of his showed us evidently, they had made arrangements then showed us where it was.

I remember going there. My younger brother and I we were -Like parents do they send the little ones ahead. They said, “That’s the place up there.” We hurried and the two of us together. All I remember was a big white house.

Soon after that, my father managed to buy a house. He always felt he had provided a roof over our heads and he did. Then he did a lot of remodeling and one of the big things he wanted to do was have good water supply and he built a, I guess we called it a well or maybe a spring. It’s probably a well because a spring would come naturally right out of the hill.

He had to dig deep and he did. Not only that, he wanted good drinking water so he cemented it so that there wouldn’t be mud, just water out of the ground. He cemented that. Then he even built a wall in between where the water came in for it to filter through to the other side. That’s the part that we drunk.

**Kate:** Where was this exactly?

**Lydia:** It’s in a place that doesn’t exist anymore. It was near East Pittsburgh, of course East Pittsburgh is still there.

**Kate:** Pennsylvania?

**Lydia:** Yes, Pennsylvania. It was within walking distance of East Pittsburgh where my father worked at the resting house there. Turtle Creek is also within walking distance, it still exits. We lived on a hill called Oak Hill. It just had about three rows of houses and it really …

**Kate:** Is that the first place you went to after you came here?

**Lydia:** At the first place we went to, where we lived.

**Kate:** If we move back a bit, did your parents tell you why they came to this country?

**Lydia:** I think my father was dissatisfied over there. I think it might have been a bad time over there and probably he wasn’t getting ahead like he wanted to. I think just the fact that everybody was talking about coming to the United States and opportunities over here.

**Kate:** Back home do you remember anything about, or do you anything about the dwelling that you lived in, the house that you lived in or the apartment, whatever?

**Lydia:** I don’t remember where I lived. No I don’t remember that, it was an apartment. Later on I saw where my father grew up.

**Kate:** Where was the place that you came to United States from? What town was that?

**Lydia:** From Bern. We lived in Bern at that time.

**Kate:** Do you know how big that apartment was or anything?

**Lydia:** I don’t know anything about this, probably not too large. None of them are really very large over there from what I’ve learned.

**Kate:** What was your father doing in Bern just before he left? What occupation? Was he employed?

**Lydia:** As far as I know he was a cabinet maker all the time over there. He was an apprentice, learning it as an apprentice. As far as I know that’s what he did as long as he was over there.

**Kate:** Did your parents have anyone over here who sponsored them?

**Lydia:** There must have been someone but I don’t know who. The only one that I would know would be this person who arranged for where we were going to live, but I don’t remember who that was.

**Kate:** Who was that person?

**Lydia:** I don’t know.

**Kate:** You’re only two years old on the voyage over. Do you have anything that remains from what you packed for the voyage? Do you have anything left from your old residence in Bern that you brought with you?

**Lydia:** We brought a few things over. Of course we brought a lot of bedding along. One of the things that I always remember was the big wicker baskets. We had two big wicker baskets then. When I was in Ellis Island, a couple of years ago, I wanted to see if there were any just like that. There wasn’t one like the ones we had.

The ones we had seemed to be larger and the covers were different. They were wicker but they had a lid that came down about four or five inches down over the basket. I don’t remember how they kept them closed shut but my mother used them for years to store her bedding in.

**Kate:** What did she bring over in those baskets?

**Lydia:** I really don’t know what they packed. All I know at home then, until she died, we always used those baskets to store linens.

**Kate:** Do you have any old pictures or records or anything left from that time in Switzerland?

**Lydia:** We did not. In the first place my father belonged to a religious sect that didn’t believe in pictures.

**Kate:** What was that religious sect?

**Lydia:** I think they called them [unclear 00:13:18], I really don’t know. They’re probably something like the Baptist but yet they were more like the Amish.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever experience any religious persecution?

**Lydia:** No, not that I know of.

**Kate:** You said your father belonged to this religious sect. Did you mother come from the same?

**Lydia:** She didn’t come from it but then she also joined, she went along with him and joined.

**Kate:** What were the outer forms of that sect? How could you recognize them?

**Lydia:** There’s a branch of it over here even now over here in Mansfield. In fact that’s where my mother went for years. The outer forms, as I’ve said, they’re limited in the clothing they wear, nothing fancy, no fancy hairdos, no pictures shows, not too much education. Those were the things that I know was very prominent in that religion that they practiced. It affected my life too.

**Kate:** From what I know about the Amish, they were actually Anabaptists.

**Lydia:** What does that mean?

**Kate:** It had to do about adult baptism.

**Lydia:** Do they have baptism at all, the Amish?

**Kate:** I think adult baptism if it is [inaudible 00:14:54].

**Lydia:** This was too definitely about baptism. Anyways, you had to be an adult to become a member of that church.

**Kate:** Do you think that your parents -How can I ask this? The motivation you mentioned was for opportunities but do you think it in any way related to religion that your parents came here?

**Lydia:** No, I don’t think so because I don’t think they even knew whether they’d find this type of sect over here.

**Kate:** What about your grandparents, what religion were they?

**Lydia:** I really don’t know. I don’t remember my grandparents at all.

**Kate:** When you were a child, did you abide by these rules of the sect?

**Lydia:** I even joined a church [inaudible 00:15:50].

**Kate:** You mentioned clothing restrictions. What type of clothing were you allowed to wear?

**Lydia:** We were allowed to wear just plain things, hardly ever anything store bought. For instance, my mother would make clothes for me, even when I was 16, out of material that mainly would be used for making men’s shirts rather than some fancy women’s designs.

**Kate:** What colors were they basically?

**Lydia:** Nothing too bright, especially red. My mother bought me a red hood one time- winter hood, I had to take it back it was red, that wasn’t for a little girl to wear.

**Kate:** How did you worship here? How often?

**Lydia:** He went in streaks. He was temperamental when it came to religion.

**Kate:** Were there church meetings? What type of gatherings?

**Lydia:** Yes, they had the church services, morning, a couple of hours in the morning. May be two more hours or more so in the afternoon, had lunch.

**Kate:** Everyday?

**Lydia:** Not every day, on Sundays. In fact the church at Mansfield was known as the milk can church because farmers would bring in their milk in cans and they would be committees and they’d serve usually bread, butter, coffee and milk and that would be it.

**Kate:** What did your family tell you about your coming to the United States about the boat trip? Was there any type of stories they told about coming over?

**Lydia:** The only thing they said they came third class, and it was crowded. That I know they told me.

**Kate:** Did they mention being sick or not?

**Lydia:** No, they didn’t mention that. They knew that we’d be examined at Ellis Island and they were afraid they might find some little thing that would keep them from being accepted. They had that fear. They told me they really had that fear.

**Kate:** How long did they stay at Ellis Island?

**Lydia:** I really don’t know.

**Kate:** You, you were part of they, you were there too.

**Lydia:** I know but I don’t remember what they said actually. I know they went through all this type of thing that we read about. In fact, I have an article right there that tells every different things that my parents talked about.

**Kate:** For example what would you say? What did they talk about?

**Lydia:** About being so crowded and having to wait. In fact, they say we were crowded in like animals in these little stalls. I think that must have been where they used to have to wait for their examinations.

They mentioned that more than anything else, that’s one thing I remember that they did talk about. I remember they never complained about the food.

**Kate:** Did they ever mention the name of the boat you came on?

**Lydia:** No, but I have the name of it. They mentioned it, there were two boats that they mentioned, it’s either Carmania or Laconia. I have it on my certificate of citizenship which I got for myself.

**Kate:** What port did you leave from then?

**Lydia:** We left from La Harbor, is that the way you pronounce it France, we drove through Paris. I just remember one thing, I didn’t like the bathroom there, I thought it was just a great big pipe where I was going to fall down into.

**Kate:** In France you mean?

**Lydia:** Pardon.

**Kate:** In France?

**Lydia:** In France. Then of course that was on the way after we left Switzerland, we went through Paris.

**Kate:** How did you go through? How did you get to the….?

**Lydia:** As far as I know it was by train, I haven’t heard of anything else. Then from there we went to Liverpool in England and that was probably by channel, I don’t know. How else and then I know we were delayed there for some reason, they talked about that.

I don’t know how long but we were delayed for some reason before they left. Then I think they talked about, they did experience some rough sea on the way over. My mother talked about that, it seemed very scary.

**Kate:** Did they ever mention anything they had never seen before on that voyage?

**Lydia:** That they’d never seen before- not in particular. Did the Statue of Liberty exist at that time? They never even talked about that.

**Kate:** Their account of Ellis Island, how would you summarize it in terms of their attitude toward Ellis Island?

**Lydia:** How would I summarize it? I can’t say anything from what I remember there myself.

**Kate:** What they said.

**Lydia:** From what?

**Kate:** What they told you.

**Lydia:** They didn’t really complain, that’s the way it had to be because [inaudible 00:21:48]. They didn’t complain about anything like that.

**Kate:** You mentioned the children, how many of the children went on this voyage?

**Lydia:** There were four of us, Felix, Werner, myself and Ed. Then an aunt came along too.

**Kate:** Did Lydia come?

**Lydia:** Lydia? I am Lydia.

**Kate:** Sorry, you have another sister.

**Lydia:** Yeah, but she was born over here.

**Kate:** Did your family ever talk about what your grandparents thought of you coming here?

**Lydia:** They never talked about that. I’m pretty sure it was my father’s decision to come over here and the rest mother just went along with it.

**Kate:** When he first came to this country, what work was given to him?

**Lydia:** It seemed as if he had no trouble at all getting work. He got started as a cabinet maker right there at the resting house. Although, a year later, that same year there was a depression in the United States and he was laid off part of the time there. I remember when he walked from town to town looking for work at that time.

We all learned to do things for ourselves [inaudible 00:23:33] my older brother somehow, he found out that there was a bakery some place where you could get stale bread. He went there and came home with a big bag of stale bread and rolls and things like that and dumped them on the table. We went after that like little animals.

**Kate:** What year would that be about?

**Lydia:** It was right the first year we came, 1906 I think was when that depression was over here. You hear about it every once in a while.

**Kate:** What language did you speak at home?

**Lydia:** We talked our Swiss dialect at home.

**Kate:** Swiss dialect of?

**Lydia:** German dialect, German- Swiss.

**Kate:** Did your parents learn English then?

**Lydia:** Not right away. My father had to at work, he just picked it up as best he could and he managed to get along.

**Kate:** How did your mother manage?

**Lydia:** She didn’t try. She never got away from home very much.

**Kate:** You spoke most of your childhood life to your parents in …?

**Lydia:** As we were quiet young, yes.

**Kate:** In German?

**Lydia:** Yes. German- Swiss. The Germans wouldn’t understand us, we can understand the German if they speak a -Certain dialects you don’t understand either.

**Kate:** When you went to school first, did you know English?

**Lydia:** No.

**Kate:** Did your brothers and sisters know English when they went to school?

**Lydia:** No.

**Kate:** How did you learn English then?

**Lydia:** You pick it up without any trouble. You learn the language you don’t -In a short time nobody knows you have another language.

**Kate:** Were you ever called any names or?

**Lydia:** Sure all of us were called dagos

**Kate:** Were there other children in the same boat at school?

**Lydia:** Yes there were some others but the thing is, once in a while we would for instance a -I still remember, once in a while one of an aunt or someone would send us handkerchiefs. They were bordered, pretty bordered.

That wasn’t a style at that time over here. That was enough to tell you you’re a little dago, and they’d make fun of you. You tell your mother, the kids made fun of you and little by little she didn’t make you take them to school anymore.

Over in Europe even now little girls wear an apron over their dresses, when they go to school. We had to do that too, I had to do they too. They just kept making fun of me and my mother didn’t realize how bad it was. I finally used one for a rug and never brought it home again.

**Kate:** Were there other children from Switzerland in your area at all?

**Lydia:** Not in the area, I think there were some German people who lived next -There were quite a few Irish in that little burgh, but not …

**Kate:** The name of that burgh again was?

**Lydia:** Oak Hill. The town does exist but there’s an Oak Hill road that goes up there. In fact, I met someone recently who lived in Turtle Creek and he knew about that place. He’s the only one I’ve ever met who ever heard of Oak Hill.

**Kate:** You went to school and learned English from school?

**Lydia:** Yes, after all you learn from scratch. You learn your ABCs, you learn your phonetics, you learn your sounds. You learn to read and you memorize everything that you read and I do even now. First graders, I think most of them, memorized every word that it’s in that book. You read it two and three and four times in a row.

**Kate:** Did your other brothers and sisters have as easy a time learning English as you did?

**Lydia:** I don’t think they had any more trouble than I did. We did a lot of talking to each other in English, but not in front of our parents.

**Kate:** Why not?

**Lydia:** They didn’t want us to because we’d be home they’d want us to speak the Swiss language at home.

**Kate:** What language did you use at church?

**Lydia:** At that church they used German. For years they used German then, oh my goodness, took quite a long time before they even had any English Germans at all.

**Kate:** The church that you went to, were there other people from Switzerland?

**Lydia:** Yes, Swiss and German and also Hungarians. That was right over here in Mansfield, we moved to Mansfield in 1910.

**Kate:** Mansfield, Ohio?

**Lydia:** Yeah, right over here, 20 miles from here.

**Kate:** Why did you move to Mansfield?

**Lydia:** I think my father found opportunity of work over in Mansfield and then there was an established church over here, there wasn’t where we were.

**Kate:** Describe the house that you had in Mansfield then?

**Lydia:** We had a nice square house in a very nice location at that time. It was on a corner house and my father also bought a lot next to it. [Inaudible 00:29:15] corner from us was what they call, John’s Park, it was nothing but an open area surrounded by four streets. I just recently learned it’s quite developed now. It was just in our paper recently.

**Kate:** What was your house made of?

**Lydia:** Pardon.

**Kate:** What was your house constructed of?

**Lydia:** It was a frame house.

**Kate:** How many rooms inside?

**Lydia:** Beg your pardon.

**Kate:** How many rooms inside?

**Lydia:** It probably had a living room and a kitchen downstairs and a bedroom downstairs. There was a little room that my mother used for a sewing room and then my father later put in a bathroom. Upstairs we had two large bedrooms and more of an open room when you first came upstairs. No, we had three bedrooms.

**Kate:** When you first moved into Mansfield then did you have indoor plumbing?

**Lydia:** Not right away.

**Kate:** Did you have indoor plumbing in your first house that you moved to when you were a child?

**Lydia:** No.

**Kate:** How was your house lit in Mansfield? How was the lighting?

**Lydia:** At that time we still used gas with the gas mantle. We used coal lamps too before we even had gas.

**Kate:** How did you heat your house in Mansfield?

**Lydia:** Heat- it was coal, we burned coal.

**Kate:** When you think back on your childhood, what do you remember most fondly?

**Lydia:** Fondly?

**Kate:** What do you remember most? How about just that?

**Lydia:** I just remember that we were at home, we didn’t socialize with people much, we weren’t allowed to. We never played with neighbor kids and things like that. We were just pretty much of a home bunch and we played with each other. What games and things we learned, we learned at school and then we’d do some of it -Continue it at home. Then the rest of it was work, we had duties to do.

**Kate:** Did you keep any animals?

**Lydia:** In Mansfield we did, yes. In Pittsburgh we had the goats I told you. Then in Mansfield we had chickens, my father had rabbits and he also had pigeons. That supplied part of our meat.

Here we were eating high class squab, isn’t that what they call pigeons? Squab, that’s the high class food and here we had that kind of food. We have chickens and all those things that we have and a huge garden, wonderful garden.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever think of going back?

**Lydia:** No, I don’t think so.

**Kate:** How do you think they viewed their original decision to come here?

**Lydia:** I don’t think my father regretted about coming here. I don’t think my mother really did either because we got along fine. I think she regretted that she was torn away from her family the way she was.

My father I don’t think minded it at all. I think he wanted to be away from his family. I think a lot of people came over here for reasons like that over the years.

**Kate:** How did you maintain your old country ways here besides language? You mentioned the food you had and …

**Lydia:** I don’t know that our food was particularly Swiss. I think we just kept plain food the kind we have over here. My mother didn’t do much [inaudible 00:33:14] baking. In fact, her father was a baker, but she herself never learned baking.

Then little by little we’d come home with recipes. On the way to school we’d get acquainted with, we talked to people on the way –We kids would do that. Anyway we just did it because we enjoyed talking to other people because we didn’t get to, except the church people. They’re the only ones we get too really.

I’d talk to neighbors and once in a while I would get a recipe from them. I’d bring it home and my mother would try it. [Inaudible 00:33:56] cleaning wallpaper, my brother came home one day, we had wallpaper in one of the houses, and he came home and said, “I found out there is a way to clean wallpaper.”

He talked to somebody about that. He told us what it was, wallpaper cleaner. [Inaudible 00:34:16] say, “Well let’s clean the wallpaper.” That’s how my mother learned things from over there [inaudible 00:34:21] through her kids.

**Kate:** You mentioned that you weren’t allowed to socialize with other people except for people at church. You mentioned …

**Lydia:** And of course we got the ones at school.

**Kate:** People at church were basically German speaking. How do you think you were viewed as a family by your neighbors or other people?

**Lydia:** How they looked at us. They always respected us because we didn’t bother anybody at the yard. We didn’t run over other -We weren't allowed to do that, we stayed to ourselves. I think people respected us. They sort of looked out for us too.

We weren’t model kids [inaudible 00:35:05] once in a while, my mother, when one of my older brothers would have to go up town with her to help her talk to the store and get what she wanted. I know some of the younger kids did things we shouldn’t do.

I remember one day my father was doing some cementing, he was always fixing things. He had a pile of sand down at the end the lawn porch. A couple of us, my younger brother and I, we decided to crawl out one of the windows, walked down the porch and jumped down on that pile of sand.

One of our neighbors saw, it didn’t take long and she came over and told us to stop. Fortunately, we didn’t break our legs or we would have gotten killed otherwise.

**Kate:** Tell me a little bit about your life then, you said that your family’s religion didn’t really like a lot of education. Did you continue on in school or?

**Lydia:** My brothers stopped working quite young. I’ve seen my oldest brother finished the eighth grade. The next one, I think, he finished the seventh grade and then he worked for the steel mill over here. Although my older brother worked for a [unclear 00:36:30] some place, he was a core maker.

Then I was the next one in line. That’s another thing, this church didn’t believe so much in education, but they believed in hard work. As far as girls were concerned, they were supposed to turn out most -They expect them to be a real good maid in some good, rich family.

That even became one of my ambitions because you thought, well there were nice people and we thought well, “That’s the way it is. I would have to stay that way.” When I finished my seventh grade I saw an ad in the paper for somebody who wanted someone to work for them. I answered it.

I’m surprised that my mother let me do that, but she did. Those days that’s the way you learned. She had no objections to it and I used to go back and forth by bus.

**Kate:** What was the family that you were working for?

**Lydia:** Their name was Hakstol. They lived over here in Mansfield. They had a big influence on me. They had three grown children, two daughters and a son. The older daughter was a music teacher and she gave music lessons in that home, I just loved to hear those kids come and play that music.

The younger daughter was not home very much, she was a kindergarten teacher. Then she also had work down in Tennessee. Their son was a medical student at Harvard when I first went there.

**Kate:** What did the parents do?

**Lydia:** Mr. Hakstol was a secretary and treasurer of the [inaudible 00:38:36] tailor company in Mansfield which was a farm implement factory. In fact, my father worked there for a while too in Mansfield.

While I was living there I had to go to a different school then, I had to finish my eight grade in a different part of town. It was during that year that my parents moved to the farm towards spring in March, March 1918 they moved.

**Kate:** What farm was that?

**Lydia:** A farm down on Possum Run Road, 160 acre farm.

**Kate:** Did they buy it, that farm?

**Lydia:** Yeah, my father never rented very long or anything, he bought it yes. He always said, “I buy where we’re going to live nobody can shoo me out with a bunch of kids.” No matter what he always figured [inaudible 00:39:48] had a roof over our heads and he did.

**Kate:** You mentioned the family that you work for influenced you. How did they influence you?

**Lydia:** I think being influenced most in the matter of education and my whole way of living because I was living in a very elegant home. They weren’t the richest people in town but they had amenities that I’d never known off.

**Kate:** Like what?

**Lydia:** Just the way they talked to each other, the way they entertained other people. I did all the work there believe it or not, I did. Right off the bed I learned to take care of breakfast, lunch and supper, their full meals.

All they had to do is tell me what to do and show me what, just tell me and I did it. It was something I would never had learned at home because I never had to do that much. I’d help with things, but never had to do it.

I learned things like that. They had nice parties that I had to help serve. Not only that, they had sometimes huge parties where they had to have other help in in things they were caterers.

Those are things I would never have learned, never. Even now a lot of people that I know of lived in surroundings like that. Nevertheless, I went to school during my eighth grade there until when we moved to the farm and then I had to split there and go home.

**Kate:** Why?

**Lydia:** My father said, “You’re needed at home to help work on the farm.” We didn’t say no, we didn’t argue with him. I told the lady I had to leave, I had to go home. I wasn’t old enough to quit school, so I ended up going to the country school the last few months of my eighth grade.

This is a story that is really amazing, the whole fun there, it’s really funny and amazing buy anyways, it’s because of that short time in the country school that I managed to get to high school which is something those kids from the church didn’t get to do.

**Kate:** You went to high school?

**Lydia:** I did go to high school. The way it came about was because during those three months it was going towards spring and the kids were given projects to do. I ended up with about a dozen eggs [inaudible 00:42:35] hands.

During the summer, the county superintendent came around to see what we were doing with our project. I was the only one in that eighth grade down there in that little country school, I could just go as fast as I wanted. I had made a good impression. I enjoyed it because I loved school from the very first day that we got over.

Anyways, he asked my father whether I was going to high school in the fall. He hadn’t even given that a thought, for some reason. I wasn’t old enough to quit school and he decided to let me go, I did. In the meantime this Mrs. Hakstol would write occasionally to see if I was coming back, she’d like to have me back. He always said no.

Nevertheless, when going to high school let me just call her and ask whether she could take me back. She was just glad to have me come back. I did. Going to high school, I’d get up in the morning, I’d do certain jobs.

I had to get breakfast for Mr. Hakstol. Every morning I’d dust the dining room and the big living room and the big foyer that they had. Had dishes washed up. Then I’d run to high school, I’d run.

**Kate:** Did you finish high school?

**Lydia:** I eventually did, but that’s a story in itself. I went to high school. When spring came, my father came into the high school and he wanted me to quit. He thought I could just walk out of there and quit. I just told him I couldn’t.

Somehow he let me finish my freshman year without saying anything more. Then I kept on went into the summer a little bit and that’s when my brother got typhoid fever out on the farm. I don’t know where we picked it up.

He was in the hospital a couple of weeks and when he went home, he thought I should come home now and help with the work. Because he had to be in bed and he thought I should help my mother more.

I did, I went home. That was midsummer. There I was again out on the farm helping with the farm work. Of course I got a little taste of farm work that way. I’m glad I got it when I look back. Anyways, she kept writing again whether I was coming back and he kept saying no.

Fall came, time for school to start, then I didn’t go back. It went into the fall, maybe October or something like that, and one of my younger brothers had his coat torn while playing. My father thought we should do something about that, to think that they had a playground where kids get their coats torn.

One Saturday when we were taking stuff to this town, milk and eggs and things like that. He had me take that coat. Take it to the superintendent’s house. He lived right on the way on Main Street in Mansfield. Take it to his home and tell him what happened.

I just started telling him, I said, “My father wanted to bring this in to show you what happened on the playground.” He felt pretty bad about it and of course he couldn’t do anything about that. He didn’t give me much time on that subject, but he wanted to know if I was in high school. I said, “No.” He said, “Would you like to be?” I said, “Yes.”

The following Monday the children officer was out there after me to get me back to high school, to get back to school. You know what my father did? He sent me back -I wasn’t quite 16, I was going to be 16 in January, at that time 16 was the age not. He sent me back to the country school until I was 16.

Believe it or not, while I was down there I picked up a germ and I didn’t know I did, I picked up diphtheria. That was right before Christmas vacation. I was home those two weeks, we three kids matched down through the woods, down the road to the school. When we got there, the school was closed because of diphtheria.

A boy next door had died during the winter, we didn’t know, we didn’t have contact with people. We came back home and as we were coming back home he was heading through the woods to go to Bellville with a small load of hogs. He was surprised to see us coming home from school.

We told him what had happened. He said, “Well, if any of you will have a sore throat or anything I want to know right away.” You wouldn’t believe it, that same day I felt this funny tickling in my throat, like you get when you’re getting a sore throat right at the very beginning. I washed it and I was very conscious of any changes. By evening my throat was white.

There I was. I told my mother and we got to tell my father so we did. He had a cure for that, swab your throat with coal oil and use a chicken feather and swirled it with coal oil. He thought that was a cure, it didn’t help any.

I began to chill and felt miserable. I didn’t dare tell him I was feeling sick, that’s something we didn’t dare do, we get sick. By having a cold that was just a cold finish we lived through that. To really be sick and shivering, I don’t remember anybody ever being that sick, but I was.

Here I was standing in front of a wood stove in one of the rooms. It was a cold day and everybody was in that room then. All at once he said, “What are you doing there? You’re apron is burning and smoking.”

Here I was up so close trying to get warm that I never really realized how close I was. It actually was smoking. I was getting myself caught on fire. I was probably leaning up against it and didn’t know. I told him I was shivering and then he said, “Well go to bed.” That was it.

**Kate:** You mentioned you were able to finish high school anyway?

**Lydia:** This is all part of the same story. There I was sick and that was winter time and it went into spring I was as weak as a half dead horse I could hardly lift my hands or lift my feet. Then when at the time, summer came and I couldn’t work, I couldn’t even saw, my eyes were bad, my throat was bad.

That whole summer went by and it went clear into fall again, into October. This lady kept writing, [inaudible 00:51:48] every so often she had asked for me to come back. When he realized I wasn’t doing much he said, “Well you might as well go back in there worked for her.”

I went. It was so much warmer there and nicer there. I recovered in no time. The first thing she said was, “Are you going back to school?” I said, “I’d like to.” She said, “Well before we do anything else you must go down there and register.” I was a mess. I was starting my sophomore year about six weeks late and from there on I just stayed on.

**Kate:** You married later too? What age did you marry?

**Lydia:** Pardon.

**Kate:** What age did you get married? Did you marry?

**Lydia:** Did I marry?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Lydia:** I didn’t get married I went all the way through college.

**Kate:** What college did you go to?

**Lydia:** Ohio Wesleyan.

**Kate:** What did you major in?

**Lydia:** That’s another thing. I majored in Bible and Religious Education. Partly because my people were such religious people and then we had to take one required course and that opened my eyes, I realized there’s something more to religion than what I’ve gotten. I stuck to that. I had a minor in German because I wanted to read more German.

**Kate:** Were there many women enrolled in the college at that time?

**Lydia:** Quite a few by that time.

**Kate:** Did you continue that into a profession then?

**Lydia:** Yes. I finally got my job right during the depression and I got a job in a church. I was prepared to do Religious Education in public schools, but to tell the truth I never liked it. I had my practice teaching in it but I didn’t like it.

**Kate:** You got a job in the church?

**Lydia:** Beg your pardon.

**Kate:** You got a job in a church?

**Lydia:** Ohio Wesleyan was a Methodist college. I got a job in a reformed church which was again German and Swiss people but I made sure it was a type of a church that would stand for the type of thing that Ohio Wesleyan would go along with.

In fact, I was practically finished with my interview with the minister and I thought to myself I never asked him. I went back, I’d already been out of the house and I went back and asked him that question. He said, “Well I’m sure that church would be like that.” They were so I did. At that time, few churches had secretaries and …

**Kate:** You worked as what in the church then?

**Lydia:** I worked as secretary and young people’s director.

**Kate:** This is your profession, when did you marry then?

**Lydia:** I worked at the church six years then I got married.

**Kate:** Did you have children?

**Lydia:** I have three children.

**Kate:** What did your husband do?

**Lydia:** He was a rail roader with Timken. He was not a professional man. I wouldn’t want a professional man he’d never fit in with my family.

**Kate:** What was his background, in terms of ethnic background? Was the German, Switzerland?

**Lydia:** He was from Basel, Switzerland.

**Kate:** He was born abroad too?

**Lydia:** Yes, I met him in the church.

**Kate:** What did you speak with him as a language?

**Lydia:** That’s amazing. It’s general of Swiss people in general. That is when they’re over here they don’t try to -Just do their own language like the Spanish sometimes want to or some Italians they do more of that.

We spoke English together. The only time we used our Swiss was the joking around besides he had a different dialect than I did. Even over in Switzerland the people that use different cantons they make fun of each other. We did the same.

**Kate:** You’re 90 years old now and you have three children, you came over and you’re two. How do you view your parent’s original decision to come over here?

**Lydia:** How do I view them?

**Kate:** Yeah, that decision to come here, was it?

**Lydia:** I think its fine as far as I’m concerned. Although when I go over there, when I’ve been over there his family didn’t do so bad staying over there. In fact, one of his youngest brothers invented something that is used on farms and he became quite a wealthy man.

Some of them remained farmers but they are all in good shape, the ones that I’ve met. They put their children through school and college and things like that.

**Kate:** Did your children ever learn German or Swiss?

**Lydia:** No, that’s one of the sad things, you don’t do that now. At that time we didn’t do languages like we do now, now we wish everybody had more languages to speak. I’m one of the unusual ones, happened because I kept up my German, at least to some extent. I’ve kept up my Swiss. I can go over there and talk Swiss anytime I want to without any trouble.

I’ve kept up my English and I think I studied my English quite well. I’m very fortunate in that. Then when you go to school and kids make fun of you, you try not to have your own kids be in that situation.

**Kate:** Just out of curiosity, you’re 90 years old now, what advice would you give young people today?

**Lydia:** I think they have to do what they want to do, but I still think they should keep up -Have some moral standards. Which I think all my grandkids do believe me, I think they’re just outstanding. They are, because I’m telling you they give me time.

For instance, this coming Sunday, they’re not going to the reunion they have other things to do. The reunion is on Saturday, but now on Sunday they are willing for me to be with them. I’ll be in church over there with them. My son will probably take me over there.

I talked about going out to dinner and I don’t know who will pay for what. I told them, I’ll be willing to pay for as much as I need to. Probably the ones that are working I figured they’re rich enough to pay their own. Now they’re two, Ruth’s family, who are still in school, I’ll definitely offer to pay theirs but maybe even some others.

Anyways, they are willing to spend their time with me. They could have something else to do. The thing is they have good morals, in fact, one of Ruth’s boys, the younger son, next to the oldest. He has a job over at that church where he does a liturgical part every Sunday, that’s his job this summer. He goes to Heidelberg College up here. He’s finished his first year.

**Kate:** You lived a plain life when you were younger. Have you maintained any of that plain living?

**Lydia:** In some ways yes. For instance, I still like a wooden table without any table cloth, something I can wash off. I don’t want carpeting on my floor I want something I can clean easily. I don’t go for styles. I wear my clothes forever before I get something new. I don’t like things that are too modern. I don’t buy any more clothes than I need to.

I live a very frugal life. In fact I’m not a rich person, since I’m alone I’ve never paid social security tax, my income’s that low. I’ve been to Europe four times. I’ve taken trips here in the United States. I’m going on a short one, now I’m only taking short trips, going on one this coming September.

I belong to social organizations over here like the Current Events Club. I belong to the AAUW American Associating for University Women. I belong to Kings Daughters which is a benevolent organization. I actually have been church.

**Kate:** Did you ever entertain the idea of going back to live in Switzerland?

**Lydia:** No.

**Kate:** Why not?

**Lydia:** Because I’m satisfied over here. My family is over here, my oldest brother’s family moved out to Illinois during the depression. He stayed out there and his whole family and descendants are out there.

On the second of July, believe it or not, there again one of my grandsons drove me out there for the wedding of one of my great great nieces. What more do I want?

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us by telling us your story. We’ll send you also a copy of this for yourself.

**Lydia:** Really?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Lydia:** I’ve had an interesting life over here. I have no regrets, my goodness why should I? We’re a wonderful country over here. What bothers me is and I’m not the only one, you hear it on television, you hear it every place, you read about. Is the fact that the violence that we’re having and the immorality they we’re having and seeing is just too bad. We’re going to be losers if we don’t get ourselves straightened up.

**Kate:** With that I’d like to sign off for Ellis Island?

**Lydia:** I guess I could talk too long about this.

**Kate:** No, we’re interested in that.

**Lydia:** I enjoyed Ellis Island, I enjoyed the wall. I have certificates of the people whose names are on the wall. Then one of my nieces also is a [inaudible 01:02:53] and she has her husband’s father’s name put on the wall.

**Kate:** Is your name on the wall?

**Lydia:** Yes. But they’re not by families, some other names stuck in between there some places, Witschi, but it’s not one of our Witschi.

**Kate:** I’ll have to go check that out for you.

**Lydia:** I think they should have kept our family names together without another one in between. Don’t you?

**Kate:** Yeah, I will look it up when I go back.

**Lydia:** Yeah it’s there.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you again. This is Kate Moore signing off in where I’m I anyway? Bucyrus, Ohio on the 29th of July?

**Lydia:** Yes.

**Kate:** 1994, for the Ellis Island oral history project.

**Lydia:** I wish I could remember more about Ellis Island, but when you’re that young you don’t remember things.