**Paul:** Good afternoon this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday October 25th 1995. I’m in Brooklyn, New York at the Norwegian Christian Home. I’m here with Oline?

**Oline:** Oline.

**Paul:** Oline.

**Oline:** That’s an E in the end.

**Paul:** O-L-I-N-E. Oline Hansen Mathisen. Mrs. Mathisen came from Norway in the 1920s and we’re going to interview her about that experience. Present also is Peter Ham who’s running the equipment and the social services person, Kari K-A-R-I, who has been with us throughout the day. We’re just going to pause for a second.

After a slight pause we’re now resuming. I just want to say for the sake of the tape that Kari has produced some information so that we can be more specific about Mrs. Mathisen’s arrival and age of arrival.

We believe that Mrs. Mathisen arrived in this country in 1925 from Norway when she was 18 years old. We deduced this because we found her marriage certificate which says she was married in 1927. We believe she was 20 at that time. Anyway, we’re off and running.

**Oline:** You find the tape on the [inaudible 00:01:23]?

**Paul:** That’s right. Mrs. Mathisen, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please.

**Oline:** My birth date now?

**Paul:** Yes.

**Oline:** That I know for sure?

**Paul:** Yes.

**Oline:** February the 24, 1907.

**Paul:** Where in Norway were you born?

**Oline:** I’m born from Lista Norway. Hauge my home town is farm.

**Paul:** How do you spell Lista?

**Oline:** L-I-S-T-A.

**Paul:** Hauge, just before the interview began we spelt that out, that’s H-A-U-G …

**Oline:** U-G, Hauge

**Paul:** H-A-U-G-E.

**Oline:** Yeah, that’s the farm we own.

**Paul:** That’s the farm?

**Oline:** That’s the farm’s name.

**Paul:** Where in Norway is this in terms of the country?

**Oline:** Lista?

**Paul:** Yes. Where is Lista in terms of the country?

**Oline:** This is Norway and I’m born in the great end point.

**Paul:** The very southern …

**Oline:** Southern Norway.

**Paul:** Southern part of Norway.

**Oline:** That I know.

**Paul:** What can you tell me about the area where you grew up? What do you remember as a child of that area?

**Oline:** We were farmer. I’d be milking the cow and the hay. My father was in America and made money.

**Paul:** Can you tell me about the buildings, what it looked like in that part of Norway?

**Oline:** Ordinary, the house was and the barn, like two. The house and the outhouse built all over Lista, together.

**Paul:** You mean the barn is attached to the house?

**Oline:** Attached, yeah.

**Paul:** What is it constructed of? What did they make the house?

**Oline:** Wood. No brick houses.

**Paul:** Are they painted, the houses?

**Oline:** Yeah. Most of them are white house.

**Paul:** Was your house white?

**Oline:** White and the barn that was attached were red.

**Paul:** The barns were red?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How many rooms did your house have?

**Oline:** We had three and four upstairs and then the living room, the [inaudible 00:03:55], the kitchen, two more upstairs [inaudible 00:04:02] store I recall it and [inaudible 00:04:04].

**Paul:** What were those other smaller rooms used for? The [inaudible 00:04:09] and the …?

**Oline:** [Inaudible 00:04:11] we have electric stove there and most of the time we cooked here. We have a table right by the window and we had a dining room for ourselves. When we have company we have to have the dining room too next to it, dining room.

**Paul:** Is there a piece of furniture that sticks out in your mind from your childhood that was in that house?

**Oline:** My father made all the furniture there, he was a carpenter. He made a dining room set. When he came from America he had an organ, played an organ. In that organ there was, what do you call an old? Paper accordion played all kind of music.

**Paul:** What kind of furniture did your father make?

**Oline:** He made the bed. For the mattress we had, not hay, but what do you call? [Inaudible 00:05:19]. He took that we made homemade mattress and later on we had the mattress.

**Paul:** Early on it was homemade?

**Oline:** Early from the first.

**Paul:** Did you have electricity in the house?

**Oline:** No we had lamp. Later on we have electricity, the whole house electricity.

**Paul:** Do you remember when the house was converted to electricity?

**Oline:** Yes, I did.

**Paul:** Can you explain to me how they did that?

**Oline:** It’s about a year, my father come home from America and we were going to have electricity. They hardly have that in Brooklyn but we got it in Lista.

**Paul:** How did they go about putting the electricity into the house?

**Oline:** They put a big pole outside and they took [inaudible 00:06:13] come from that into the house. Then he put in all the rooms electricity and then we cook. When then we have use too much they had something they would shut off, I don’t know, meter, the meter.

**Paul:** Kari, you can you talk, just speak full voice though.

**Kari:** The switch on it, they turned the switch off?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Kari:** They just shut off …

**Oline:** If you use too much they stopped, they get dark, they put out the electricity.

**Paul:** I just wanted to say, Kari you can speak just answer the question just one word or two words and say it loudly so that the transcriber can get it all. When the house was converted to electricity, where did the wires go? When they came into the house where …?

**Oline:** In the end of the house all the wire, my father done the electricity and all the wire, they have electricity in every one.

**Paul:** Inside the rooms, where did the wires go?

**Oline:** From the upstairs, the bedroom.

**Paul:** Were they on the outside of the wall? Did the wires come down on the outside of the wall or were they inside?

**Oline:** They come inside.

**Paul:** They put the wires inside.

**Oline:** Yeah, we get the main thing from outside and then inside in the bedroom there.

**Paul:** Do you remember how old you were when they converted the house to electricity?

**Oline:** How old could I be? I don’t know.

**Paul:** Were you a child or were you?

**Oline:** Yeah, I went to school.

**Paul:** You were a child?

**Oline:** About six or seven years old. Of course my father was in America and came home and he want electricity. Then he come home I be about seven years old.

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

**Oline:** Andreas.

**Paul:** What did he do for a living? He said he was a cabinet maker?

**Oline:** Carpenter.

**Paul:** Was that the only thing he did?

**Oline:** He worked on Brooklyn Bridge, he built the Brooklyn Bridge because dad was here for many years, he worked here.

**Paul:** Was he going back and forth between America and Norway then for a long time?

**Oline:** Yeah and my mother was here in America too. They were married here.

**Paul:** They were married in America?

**Oline:** They married in America. In Elizabeth Port, New Jersey.

**Paul:** Do you know how they met, your parents?

**Oline:** I don’t know. They met there in church I think.

**Paul:** In Norway?

**Oline:** In Norway, yeah. [Inaudible 00:09:05] in Norway.

**Paul:** Did your mother or father ever tell you any stories about your birth? About what happened the day you were born?

**Oline:** No, but my mother told when she was married. She said they had a [inaudible 00:09:22] in Elizabeth Port. They was going to have a little party, you know how you wash and dress, and then she forget the flower when she come. The church was right across like a farm in Elizabeth Port.

They one that was cooking home they made dinner, the one was cooking home and they took the flower and went after her. He was already up by the altar but then my mother walks slowly up and he said and handle my mother. People in the church they thought it was something new. That she told me.

**Paul:** Just the fact that there was a farm across from the church in Elizabeth Port gives you an idea how long ago this was.

**Oline:** Elizabeth Port, New Jersey. I still have the picture of the church.

**Paul:** What was your father’s personality like?

**Oline:** I don’t know.

**Paul:** What was he like as a person?

**Oline:** He loved to go hunting and invite people for dinner for hare, roast, birds and things like that. One day I was home for a visit and he invited, he see a, not a [inaudible 00:10:46], a hare.

**Paul:** A hare?

**Oline:** Hare yeah and invite them for the dinner. My mother said, “You can’t do that.” He say, “I know where is it.” Took the gun and bang, bang, bang, he come home with two of them. They have host hare.

**Paul:** Was he in America when you were a young girl growing up?

**Oline:** Yeah, he was in America most of the time. I would say yes he was.

**Paul:** What was he doing in America? What job was he working at in America?

**Oline:** Building houses, carpenter.

**Paul:** Where in America was he?

**Oline:** Lista.

**Paul:** In America? Where was he living in America?

**Oline:** Oh we lived on Hauge and a farm.

**Paul:** When your father was in America and you were in Norway when you were a kid and your father’s in America, where was he living in America?

**Oline:** Brooklyn, I think, in Henry Street.

**Paul:** Henry Street in Brooklyn?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did you see your father very much when you were growing up?

**Oline:** Yeah, after he come home and I went to school. He never went back to America.

**Paul:** He came back and then he stayed?

**Oline:** He works home, built house and then prepared the houses and get paid that way.

**Paul:** How was life different for you in Norway when your father came back to live?

**Oline:** There wasn’t anything different. Because he didn’t even know the cow, he was a carpenter, he didn’t know from the cow to the lamb. He didn’t know the difference, he don’t know farming.

**Paul:** He wasn’t much of a farmer?

**Oline:** No he wasn’t and didn’t care for farm.

**Paul:** Did you have animals at the house?

**Oline:** We had four cows, a brown horse, four or five sheep and 25 chicken.

**Kari:** Do you have any stories that you’d like to tell about the animals on the farm?

**Oline:** My sister she liked the horse like anything, she took the horse out. I was always afraid of that but I were milking the cow.

**Paul:** How do you milk a cow?

**Oline:** Like that.

**Paul:** You’re making hand gestures up and down.

**Oline:** Then we went to the silo with the separation of the cream and the milk. Then we went put them in the can and then a car came every day and picked up the milk. We sold the milk. I don’t know how much we got.

**Paul:** That was extra income for the family?

**Oline:** Income. Then we have butter, my mother had such a good butter. We have a cow

**Paul:** How did your mother make the butter?

**Oline:** With the …

**Paul:** You’re making a circular motion with your hand.

**Oline:** Hand and then you pull it. The [churne 00:14:03].

**Paul:** The churn?

**Oline:** Churn.

**Paul:** It was all done by hand then?

**Oline:** Yeah sure. We have no machine, we have sheep. The separation from the milk in the silo. That was the only thing.

**Paul:** What time of the day would you milk the cow?

**Oline:** Not like now, they go by the clock but 8 or 8:30 in the morning. Then in the night, six or seven o’clock.

**Paul:** How did you feel about having to milk the cow?

**Oline:** I don’t like it. We like to go out. In front of our house we have a kind of berry, the long berry with the red there. We were there picking the, what do you call it?

**Paul:** These berries that are …

**Oline:** Berries.

**Paul:** You’d rather be picking the berries than milking the cow?

**Oline:** Yeah, I didn’t care for milking the cow.

**Paul:** What about the other animals on the farm, did you have to take care of those?

**Oline:** No, we didn’t have any -A cat we have.

**Paul:** Do you remember the cat’s name?

**Oline:** [Las 00:15:22] and Tobias.

**Paul:** [Las 00:15:26] and Tobias. You had two cats?

**Oline:** Yeah.

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

**Oline:** Martine.

**Paul:** Marta?

**Oline:** Yeah.

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

**Oline:** Tønson

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**Oline:** Tonsen, Thompson. She called herself Thompson when she come to America but the name is Tøneson.

**Paul:** How do you spell Tøneson?

**Oline:** T-Ø-N-S-E-N

**Paul:** That’s T, the O with the line through it?

**Oline:** The Ø with a line like that, that’s why [unclear 00:16:11].

**Paul:** It’s T-Ø with a line through it?

**Oline:** Yes.

**Paul:** N-S-E-N.

**Oline:** All the Norwegian is S-E-N.

**Paul:** Tonsen.

**Oline:** Pena, the last name of Pena, P-E-N-A.

**Paul:** Pena?

**Oline:** Pena.

**Paul:** What was her personality like, what was she like?

**Oline:** Happy and gay, she was very happy.

**Paul:** What was some of the things she liked to do with the children when you were young?

**Oline:** We went to the bazaar.

**Paul:** To the bazaar?

**Oline:** To the bazaar. One day my grandmother gave me fifty half krone and I get the number [inaudible 00:17:06]. I won and I was so happy. Then my girlfriend we carried her home my father didn’t believe it that I got my -won it in a bazaar. Before I wasn’t allowed to go to the bazaar, we could only go to the Salvation Army. That was his main things when he went into the Salvation Army.

**Paul:** What would you do at the Salvation Army? What was there to do?

**Oline:** We were singing and we meet, all we meet in Salvation Army. It wasn’t far from our house.

**Paul:** You said you weren’t allowed to go the bazaar. Can you describe what the bazaar was and why you weren’t allowed to go there?

**Oline:** The bazaar for Salvation Army, the money went to the Salvation Army.

**Paul:** The money that they made at the bazaar went to the Salvation Army?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What were they doing at the bazaar to make money?

**Oline:** They had [inaudible 00:18:12] they had a meeting once a week, made tablecloths and things like that. Then they have coffee

**Paul:** It was a social gathering place?

**Oline:** Yes, that I would say.

**Paul:** What were some of your mother’s responsibilities?

**Oline:** She knitted old bedspreads and things like that. Made all of our clothes, we didn’t buy any clothes in the store.

**Paul:** Do you remember a suit of clothes that you had as a child that sticks out in your mind for some reason?

**Oline:** No because we got all the material from USA. [Inaudible 00:19:01] and my father bought it over here and sent it Norway. He worked on a boat too where he made extra money.

**Paul:** What religion were you?

**Oline:** Lutheran, nothing but.

**Paul:** Was there a church nearby where you came from?

**Oline:** Where I come from there’s a lot of [inaudible 00:19:28], they call it, [inaudible 00:19:33]. Do you interview with Leigh [inaudible 00:19:38] we were neighbor?

**Paul:** No.

**Oline:** Leigh [inaudible 00:19:42], he was the first caretaker would build up this. We were the same age, no he’s not older he’s younger than I am.

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

**Oline:** We did Christmas, Easter and the big holidays.

**Paul:** You just went to church on the big holidays?

**Oline:** Yeah, but we went to Sunday school.

**Paul:** What was that? Where did you have to go for that? To the church?

**Oline:** No to the [inaudible 00:20:21] house or [inaudible 00:20:22] I would say. We went, just down the road where I live.

**Paul:** Do you remember your Sunday school teachers or?

**Oline:** One of my Sunday school teacher was Leigh’s David Marble. The Marble work here, his father was Sunday school teacher and he was so good. One time we was going to sing Christmas song [inaudible 00:20:53] you know when your kid start laughing then he took that slap his -Don’t put that in, and slapped his face because he was so strict.

**Paul:** Sunday school was a strict?

**Oline:** Yeah, very strict.

**Paul:** What about at home, how did you practice your religion at home?

**Oline:** Hardly nothing. Read Fader vår and then when we’re going to eat, start with the Jesu navn går vi til bords.

**Paul:** Can you say that for us in Norwegian, the prayer?

**Oline:** In Jesus name, we go to the table.

**Paul:** Can you say it Norwegian?

**Oline:** In Norwegian, you now go Fader vår, you know the Lord’s Prayer that way.

**Paul:** You had to say the Lord’s Prayer?

**Oline:** Yeah, every night.

**Paul:** Did you say that in Norwegian? Did you recite that in Norwegian?

**Oline:** Yeah everything, we couldn’t speak English.

**Paul:** Can you do that for us now on tape. Can you say the Lord’s Prayer in Norwegian?

**Oline:** [foreign 00:20:07]. Amen.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**Oline:** That I can.

**Paul:** What about school? How old were you when you first started attending school?

**Oline:** Seven years old. We all Norwegian have to start when they’re seven.

**Paul:** What sticks out in your mind about attending school in Norway?

**Oline:** Walking back and forth.

**Paul:** The school was a distance away?

**Oline:** Yeah, it took a half an hour to walk. I can say it was 50 -Half an hour now because when you’re a bunch of kids together, you stop there and blah, blah, blah, for a little bit.

**Paul:** When you were at school what were some of the subjects that you were taught?

**Oline:** What do you mean?

**Paul:** What were some of the subjects that you learned in school?

**Oline:** We learned Mathematic, we learn everything. We have a very good teacher. He was the best one for the whole Lista. His name was [inaudible 00:23:49]. There were nobody a [inaudible 00:23:55], what do you call that [inaudible 00:23:57].

Didn’t make the test when they have exam, they were all in that class pass. At a place in this study didn’t make the test because that day we have exam, we were not allowed to know the test before you started it.

**Paul:** Everyone did well in his class?

**Oline:** Yeah in his class nobody [inaudible 00:24:26] went down.

**Paul:** No one failed?

**Oline:** Went down.

**Paul:** No one failed?

**Oline:** Yeah failed.

**Paul:** What kind of food did people eat when you were a kid growing up?

**Oline:** We had oatmeal [inaudible 00:24:43] and bread. When my son was home he said, “You can’t hold the right plate.” And stamp, we say stamp, “I grow stamp.” He said, because he learned to talk Norwegian. Talking half and half my son.

**Paul:** What time did you eat breakfast in the morning?

**Oline:** We have no clock. we don’t go by the time.

**Paul:** Did you have to do chores before you left for school?

**Oline:** No. You just dressed and went to school.

**Paul:** Did you come home for lunch after school?

**Oline:** No, there were too, some time we did, here we did, nice weather.

**Paul:** What kinds of food did you eat? You mentioned oatmeal, what would you be eating for your big meal of the day?

**Oline:** Meat soup, stew, I would say, we had plenty of meat. After supper, I don’t know.

**Paul:** What kinds of meat did you have?

**Oline:** Lamb, because we had sheep and we killed them, put them in a bowel and cooked pea soup and lamb stew with [inaudible 00:26:06].

**Paul:** How did you kill the lambs?

**Oline:** I never see it. They get blood and then they save the blood and they make blue pudding, blood pudding. What do you call it? Blue pudding and what do you call it? [inaudible 00:26:27]. My son is Polish but he never been there, but he said he’d come to Norway this summer and he serving me [inaudible 00:26:41].

That was good. He love [inaudible 00:26:44] staked covered with lamb fat and bacon with that. For dinner he said, “What are we going to have dinner?” He said when he come, I say, [inaudible 00:26:56] I will use [inaudible 00:26:58] but he love it.

**Paul:** Who did the cooking in the house?

**Oline:** My mother.

**Paul:** What would she cook for a special occasion? What was a special meal that she would make?

**Oline:** Roast pork.

**Paul:** How would she prepare the roast pork?

**Oline:** In the stove, roast it.

**Paul:** I mean did she do something special with it?

**Oline:** No, put it in and I don’t know. [inaudible 00:27:30] meat soup [inaudible 00:27:33] the lamb.

**Paul:** Lots of soup?

**Oline:** Lots of soup, yeah.

**Paul:** Did you celebrate birthdays in Norway?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** No?

**Oline:** They didn’t have that.

**Paul:** What was the big holiday that you celebrated?

**Oline:** There was Christmas day and Easters.

**Paul:** Can you describe how you celebrated Easter for me?

**Oline:** We had eggs Easter’s morning. we all have breakfast together with cooked egg. The kids didn’t have coffee, we have milk, of course we had plenty of milk and coffee and that’s …

**Paul:** How else would you celebrate Easter? What ceremony was there?

**Oline:** They went out cooking, outside, outside we have parties and cooked the egg outside. That was Easter. Then we went to the church in the morning, Easter Sunday, we went to church. I don’t know about the [inaudible 00:28:41] egg for Easter, but we was out in the farm cooking the eggs, all of us like a party.

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

**Oline:** We were five girls and one brother. he was five years old on me.

**Paul:** Are you the youngest?

**Oline:** I’m the oldest.

**Paul:** You’re the oldest of the children?

**Oline:** Yeah. My brother is five years old on me and then …

**Paul:** You’re the oldest girl?

**Oline:** Girl, yeah. Five girls.

**Paul:** Your brother is five years older than you? Was there somebody in the family that you were the closest to?

**Oline:** Yeah one of the girl, Elizabeth her name is.

**Paul:** Elizabeth?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a story about maybe something that you and Elizabeth did as children together.

**Oline:** We didn’t do anything. She was singing very good but I don’t sing. She is so much younger than me, but she is the best of us all five.

**Paul:** Do you remember when she was born?

**Oline:** Yes. I remember I had to go from the school to my grandfather. They live in [inaudible 00:30:06] and grandmother she stayed here a few days, till everything was over. Here it’s one or two days but there it was over a week when you had a baby.

**Paul:** When a woman was pregnant did she go out in public back then?

**Oline:** Yes, just like before. Some got the baby even the same day they didn’t …

**Paul:** There was no big fuss made about …?

**Oline:** No fuss no nothing.

**Paul:** When you were growing up what did you know about America?

**Oline:** I know everything because we get all the cloths from America and shoes. My uncle, he was a construction farmer, he bought shoes and sent home to my sister. We had a hole in the ceiling so the heat could go up in upstairs and the bedroom.

**Paul:** Why did you want to go to America?

**Oline:** To make money.

**Paul:** Did you have a job in Norway?

**Oline:** Yeah, I have a few months in my mother’s cousin and they had five kids. I was going there to take care of the kids. Then all of us will go and that’s my mother’s cousin in Lyngdal. Then I went to America to make money. I got a good job over here.

**Paul:** What was your cousin’s name? Linda?

**Oline:** Lyngdal.

**Paul:** Lunga?

**Oline:** Lyngdal.

**Paul:** Spell that please.

**Oline:** Lyngdal.

**Kari:** Lyngdal is the place her cousins lived in.

**Paul:** Did you come to America with one of your cousins?

**Oline:** No, I come with - [inaudible 00:32:08] shore.

**Paul:** I thought before the interview started that you said that you had come to America with one of your cousins. That a cousin came with you to America?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What was …?

**Oline:** I didn’t go with him, I come alone.

**Paul:** You came alone?

**Oline:** My brother was here.

**Paul:** Your brother was here.

**Oline:** My brother was …

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

**Oline:** My brother have a farm at home, he’s dead now.

**Paul:** Where was he living in America when you …

**Oline:** In Court Street, Brooklyn.

**Paul:** What was he doing for a living here in New York?

**Oline:** Like the same old in Norwegian, carpenter.

**Paul:** He was a carpenter?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How did your brother like living in America before you came over?

**Oline:** He liked it. He was electrician because he pulled all the electricity in our house before he left. Then maybe he started over here, that I can’t say and help people building houses.

**Paul:** He enjoyed America when he came here?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave Norway?

**Oline:** That I don’t know.

**Paul:** Did you have to go to a doctor?

**Oline:** No, we never go to the doctor in Norway. Not before the day we die, that’s what doctor say. He said you have to have to open when we call for the doctor, they didn’t believe in the doctors. Even my granddaughter is a doctor, but they didn’t -Years ago nobody went to the doctor.

**Paul:** Do you remember home remedies that your mother made in the kitchen that would take care of illnesses that the children had?

**Oline:** No, I don’t think so.

**Paul:** If you had a bad cold, how would your mother take care of you when you were a kid?

**Oline:** Stay home in the bed. No, we didn’t have anything. We have the whooping cough, we have the mumps.

**Paul:** Mom didn’t make special medicine?

**Oline:** No, there was no special.

**Paul:** Did you have to get papers together before you left Norway? Did you have to get like a visa and stuff like that?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Not that you remember?

**Oline:** Nothing.

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

**Oline:** Couple of dresses, a coat, that’s all and some shoes. We didn’t have much because when I came home my brother bought everything. My uncle he dressed me up [inaudible 00:34:57] the hair because he was the tunnel construction foreman. He had plenty of money.

**Paul:** Was there a difference between the way women dressed in Norway as compared to how they dressed in America at that time?

**Oline:** I don’t think so. I didn’t notice it.

**Paul:** It looked the same to you?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did your family give you a goodbye gathering of some sort when you were getting ready to leave?

**Oline:** No, that story from when we were born. We have to listen [inaudible 00:35:36] say a prayer before we eat and then the Fader vår. Then we went to bed, that’s all. Then I went to Sunday school.

**Paul:** The day that you left your family to go to get on the ship, did they give you a little goodbye party of some sort?

**Oline:** No, there was no such a party.

**Paul:** No?

**Oline:** No.

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

**Oline:** In Kristiansand.

**Paul:** How did you get from your town to there?

**Oline:** How did we go? With a boat.

**Paul:** Did any of the family go with you?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me what it was like to say goodbye to your family?

**Oline:** At 14 you were growing up, had to take care of yourself. 14 or 15 you were growing up taking care of yourself.

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

**Oline:** The Bergensfjord, it was quite big, no not before.

**Paul:** What was the name of the ship that you got on to come to America?

**Oline:** That was Bergensfjord.

**Paul:** The Bergensfjord?

**Oline:** Bergensfjord, yeah.

**Paul:** Tell me what you thought when you were going up the gangplank looking at this great big ship?

**Oline:** Didn’t think of anything. I think my sister went with me to [Flekkefjord 00:37:04] to the big town where we come from [Flekkefjord 00:37:09].

**Paul:** She went with you part of the way?

**Oline:** She went to where there was the [inaudible 00:37:19]. the little boat went into Kristiansand. Then when we come to Kristiansand we went to Oslo, to the big -There we get Bergensfjord and Bergensfjord …

**Paul:** You’re making way [inaudible 00:37:32] …

**Oline:** Stavangerfjord was much better but Bergensfjord was [inaudible 00:37:40].

**Paul:** Why are you talking about the Stavangerfjord? When were you on that ship?

**Oline:** When I come back again.

**Paul:** That’s a later trip?

**Oline:** Yeah, it was a better ship.

**Paul:** When you were in Oslo waiting to get on the Bergensfjord, did you undergo any kind of examinations?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Did you have to stay overnight in Oslo before you got on the Bergensfjord?

**Oline:** No, we went right on the Bergensfjord.

**Paul:** Right on the Bergensfjord?

**Oline:** Right on the boat, from boat to boat.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me where you slept on the ship?

**Oline:** We got a tiny little room with the bed upstairs, two nail beds.

**Paul:** Now you’re saying we, is it just you or is someone with you?

**Oline:** They were four on the bed. Four in …

**Paul:** In the cabin?

**Oline:** In the cabin, small cabin.

**Paul:** Did you know the other three people in your cabin?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Did you like them?

**Oline:** Yeah, I never had problem with people I didn’t like, never.

**Paul:** How long did the ship take to get across the Atlantic?

**Oline:** Seven or eight days.

**Paul:** Tell me what sticks out in your mind about being on the ship? Nothing?

**Oline:** I could tell you a terrible story.

**Paul:** I love terrible stories.

**Oline:** I went to the bathroom and the boat went down and we didn’t have a closed window. Then I got [inaudible 00:39:11] that I’ll never forget and there were …

**Paul:** Hit you right in the head?

**Oline:** On the boat I had to go in the cabin and change clothes. That I’ll never forget.

**Paul:** Did you get sea sick?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Where did they feed you on the Bergensfjord?

**Oline:** What?

**Paul:** Where did they feed you?

**Oline:** We had to go into the dining room, big dining rooms they have. They have good food. I remember the oatmeal was so good. We didn’t have sugar [inaudible 00:39:50] here, we had [inaudible 00:39:52].

**Paul:** Do you remember being on the deck of the ship?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What did you do up on the deck?

**Oline:** Nothing, just look.

**Paul:** What did you see?

**Oline:** Nothing but water.

**Paul:** You said the ship was rough?

**Oline:** Yeah, rough.

**Paul:** Do you remember anybody else getting sick on the ship?

**Oline:** No. It [inaudible 00:40:25] small bed, it was not bigger than that sofa there.

**Paul:** Just a small little thing?

**Oline:** Yeah, but long but narrow, you couldn’t have two in around.

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

**Oline:** No that I don’t remember.

**Paul:** The Statue of Liberty, tell me, you said you went through Ellis Island?

**Oline:** Yes I did.

**Paul:** What do you remember about being [inaudible 00:40:51] …?

**Oline:** I remember before going into the -We had two small girls from Arendal. They look at the color people they get so scared, they were crying like anything, was so scared for them. They didn’t examine me, doctors examining anything, but they comb my hair and see if it had lice. It was clean and no anything about [inaudible 00:41:21].

**Paul:** How did you feel inside when they cut your hair and …

**Oline:** I didn’t cut my hair.

**Paul:** When they were looking for the …

**Oline:** I had long hair there and then after I cut it.

**Paul:** How did you feel when the doctors were looking for lice?

**Oline:** I feel terrible. I thought that was terrible to see if I have lice in my hair.

**Paul:** How long were you at Ellis Island?

**Oline:** We had just come in there, went to a big long table. There was somebody to comb your hair and looked for. Then we went out and then my mother’s cousin she lived in 16th street, picked me up there. My brothers were waiting in that pier, how do you call that pier now?

**Paul:** There are lots of piers.

**Oline:** Yeah, but we come there, its South street.

**Paul:** Battery Park

**Oline:** With the ferry yeah. Then we took the subway from 6th till 16th [inaudible 00:42:24] and there Fifth Avenue.

**Paul:** Did they examine anything else at Ellis Island?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Just looking for lice?

**Oline:** Just look for -Yeah.

**Paul:** Did anyone ask you any questions?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** Did you see anything that you had never seen before when you were at Ellis Island?

**Oline:** We went to ice cream parlor, they had banana split and I never did have that before. That’s the only thing. We had been up there for supper and potato salad and things like that, I never ate before. The girl was home, my second cousin, they have the kids in a round the kitchen table, have their potato salad or cold cuts and everything. I never had salad before.

**Paul:** Did you like it?

**Oline:** Yeah I always like food. You can see that on me.

**Paul:** Tell me about, you said you got on the subway and went to Brooklyn.

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Was that the first time you’d ever been on a subway?

**Oline:** Yes we have no subway for Lista.

**Paul:** What was that like for you to be on the subway?

**Oline:** I don’t know, I can’t say that, nothing. We went fast, one, two, three, we was home.

**Paul:** Did you have any impressions of New York and Brooklyn and what you were seeing?

**Oline:** No, my father had big pictures of the bridge.

**Paul:** The Brooklyn Bridge?

**Oline:** Brooklyn Bridge in Manhattan, for all the places big pictures we have in our wall, saved it up to the late year. He had with home everything.

**Paul:** You knew what it looked like in a way before you got there?

**Oline:** Yeah, that’s it. They talk about New York and they talked, my mother and father talk English together so we don’t understand it when they were going to do something.

**Paul:** How did you learn English then once you got here?

**Oline:** Here everybody else did it and then I went to the [inaudible 00:44:45] school and then I learned a few words there.

**Paul:** Did you get a job when you came to America?

**Oline:** Yeah, house work.

**Paul:** How long did it take you to get the job?

**Oline:** A week.

**Paul:** Just a week.

**Oline:** I get it right away.

**Paul:** How did you get the job?

**Oline:** Through my cousin’s family and they know somebody. I was there and they were too dirty to wash the windows then I quit. Then when we’re going to eat they gave us chicken soup with the feet of the chicken. I was going to throw up and I didn’t like that chicken soup. Not noodles in this plain soup or something.

**Paul:** That would be enough to make anyone want to quit.

**Oline:** Yeah and chicken feet I think they [inaudible 00:45:42] or something but that I never forget when we had chicken soup with the chicken feet.

**Paul:** This was the first place that you went to work?

**Oline:** Yes.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a little bit about that family that you went to work in their house?

**Oline:** I was there for two months maybe. I had very good pay, $45 a month.

**Paul:** $45 a month?

**Oline:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did you live with them?

**Oline:** Yes.

**Paul:** What were some of your duties in the house?

**Oline:** Everything.

**Paul:** Which is what? Tell me what you had to do?

**Oline:** Cleaning, vacuum clean, clean the window, washing the tab and their kitchen, washing clothes. They sent their cloths out to the -I dry the cloths and iron it. We work like slaves.

I send a letter home to Norway to my cousin, I said, “Here it’s so easy I can go in the night and lie down and go back to work, it’s nothing.” I always like America. My brother was here before and he had a farm in 52nd street or 50.

**Paul:** Were you living with your brother?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** When you first came here?

**Oline:** No.

**Paul:** You were living in the house?

**Oline:** I lived with my mother’s cousin in 16th street.

**Paul:** You got married in 1927 we decided right before this all started. Tell me how you met your husband to be?

**Oline:** Should I tell you in a dance.

**Paul:** At a dance.

**Oline:** He played accordion and violin, he’s a musician. He came from a town named Sandefjord that’s near Oslo.

**Paul:** What was his name?

**Oline:** Meidel, M-E-I-D-E-L, Mathisen.

**Paul:** What was it about him that you liked? What was the attraction?

**Oline:** I don’t know, I forgot that. He’s been dead now two years. He was a nice fellow.

**Paul:** What do you remember about getting married? Can you describe the ceremony for me, what you wore?

**Oline:** I had a brown dress. I danced the whole way and married at 46th Street.

**Paul:** When did you become a citizen?

**Oline:** The time we bought a house so they say you better be a citizen. In 57th street on Eight Avenue, we bought a two family house. I said to the [inaudible 00:48:38] I want to cut out my second name, [inaudible 00:48:42] Martine. He said, “Martine is a good American [inaudible 00:48:46]. I said I don’t like it the name, that I remember so good.

**Paul:** Did you have children?

**Oline:** Yeah, I have a boy and a girl.

**Paul:** Their names?

**Oline:** One is Edward Meidel and the girl is, what’s her name now? She’s 47 this month, my daughter. I think he’s 67, something like that, I can’t remember the date.

**Paul:** There’s big age difference.

**Oline:** It’s a big, he was in the navy. My grandson come home from the navy and say, “That’s a nice young husband you have.” He thought that was my husband.

**Paul:** How do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Norway?

**Oline:** Be a farmer, I don’t like farming.

**Paul:** You’d be milking cows now.

**Oline:** Yeah I don’t like that. Then I don’t know, supply milk in the big -I don’t know what you call it.

**Paul:** When you think about yourself, do you think of yourself as being American or being Norwegian or how do think of yourself?

**Oline:** I think of myself as being pure Norwegian. That is born in me and nobody can help it. I mix it up with Norwegian and talk Norwegian and never gave up Norwegian.

**Paul:** Did you always have Norwegian friends throughout your whole life?

**Oline:** Yes, my neighbors.

**Paul:** You’ve been back to Norway, yes?

**Oline:** Yes.

**Paul:** How many times?

**Oline:** Over five times, back and forth.

**Paul:** The first time you went back how did it feel to be back in Norway?

**Oline:** Same thing, like I had been there for always.

**Paul:** Like you hadn’t even left?

**Oline:** Yes.

**Paul:** That’s interesting. Did your parents ever come to America to visit?

**Oline:** Yes, my mother was over here and she loved it. She was always she went home but my grandfather want them to come home and that’s why they bought a farm, on my father’s side.

**Paul:** I mean when you were here in America, did your parents ever come to visit you here? I know they had been in America before but …

**Oline:** Yeah they …

**Paul:** After you were here, did they come?

**Oline:** Not my father, but my mother was a couple of times.

**Paul:** You said she really liked it?

**Oline:** She loved it.

**Paul:** I guess I don’t have any more questions. I think that we’ve put you through your pacing’s for the day.

**Oline:** I guess so.

**Paul:** Mrs. Mathisen …

**Oline:** All the five girls is married in Norway.

**Paul:** You mean the other children?

**Oline:** Yeah that’s side, my sisters.

**Paul:** Your sisters?

**Oline:** One is in with a Danish guy. his name is [inaudible 00:52:00]. The rest is Norwegian.

**Paul:** Mrs. Mathisen thank you very much for letting me …

**Oline:** You are welcome.

**Paul:** You did a great job. You have a good sense of humor. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Oline.

**Oline:** Oline, yeah.

**Paul:** Oline Mathisen on October 25th 1995. With Kari and Peter in attendance at the Norwegian Christian home in Brooklyn. Thank you.

**Oline:** Thank you.