**Kate**  Good afternoon, this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is July 5th 1994 and I'm in Rock Springs, Wyoming at the home of Elsie Pandalis who was born to a native Finnish mother in Michigan in 1912 and was brought back to Finland in 1914 for medical treatment with her mother and came back to the United States in 1915 with her mother when she was three years old. Why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth please?

**Elsie:** Elsie Pandalis.

**Kate:** And your birthday?

**Elsie:** August 12, 1912.

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

**Elsie:** Elsie Soderlund.

**Kate:** Could you spell Soderlund please?

**Elsie:** S-O-D-E-R-L-U-N-D.

**Kate:** And where were you born?

**Elsie:** Bessemer, Michigan.

**Kate:** B-E-S?

**Elsie:** S-E-M-E-R.

**Kate:** Alright. B-E-S-M-E-R?

**Elsie:** B-E-S-S-E-M-E-R.

**Kate:** Okay good, great. We're good. What size town was that?

**Elsie:** It was a very small mining town.

**Kate:** It was a mining town. What was your parent's hometown in Finland?

**Elsie:** My mother's was Harma and my dad's was Hamme.

**Kate:** Alright. And Harma is spelled?

**Elsie:** H-A-R-M-A.

**Kate:** Right and Hamme is spelled?

**Elsie:** H-A-M-M-E.

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

**Elsie:** John Elias Soderlund.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Elsie:** He was a miner.

**Kate:** Describe what your father looked like.

**Elsie:** He was a big, husky man. They used to call him Big John.

**Kate:** What color eyes did he have?

**Elsie:** Green.

**Kate:** Green eyes? What color hair?

**Elsie:** Sort of light brown.

**Kate:** What about his personality and temperament? How would you describe your dad?

**Elsie:** He was a comedian, when he was young.

**Kate:** In Finland?

**Elsie:** Even in Finland. Everybody always laughed when he was around at his stories.

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

**Elsie:** Yes, he used to write songs and then at the Finn hall he would sing them to the audience and he got a great big applause.

**Kate:** Did he play any instruments?

**Elsie:** He played the [unknown 00:02:54], accordion.

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

**Elsie:** Yyyna Madea Yliluoma.

**Kate:** Could you spell that please?

**Elsie:** The last name?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Elsie:** Y-L-I-L-U-O-M-A

**Kate:** How about the first name again Tyyna?

**Elsie:** T-Y-Y-N-A.

**Kate:** What was her occupation?

**Elsie:** Housewife.

**Kate:** What did she look like, you mother?

**Elsie:** She was a lot smaller than my dad, I mean in height, and my dad used to call her my little one.

**Kate:** How tall was your father by the way?

**Elsie:** 6 foot.

**Kate:** And how about your mom? How tall do you think she was? 5 feet, 5'2"?

**Elsie:** Something like that, yes.

**Kate:** What about your mom's personality and temperament?

**Elsie:** She was always laughing. She was always joking with my dad. They were always teasing each other.

**Kate:** What were her chores around the house?

**Elsie:** Housework, cooking.

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

**Elsie:** Well, I would say the story that when I was a baby and the doctors in America could take me to Finland, so she wanted to take me to Finland to a good doctor.

**Kate:** We'll get back to that. It's one of the reasons why you came to Finland and came back to the United States.

**Elsie:** Oh, but that's the wrong-

**Kate:** No, it's okay. [Inaudible 00:04:54] That's a good one. That's a very good one. What about your brothers and sisters? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**Elsie:** I only had one brother.

**Kate:** Was he younger or older?

**Elsie:** Younger, 10 years.

**Kate:** 10 years younger? What was his name?

**Elsie:**  Edwin.

**Kate:** Edwin. Is that his full name?

**Elsie:** Edwin John Soderlund.

**Kate:** What about your house? You have two houses now, your house in Finland and a house in the United States. Do you remember anything about the house in Finland?

**Elsie:** I don't remember the house.

**Kate:** And what about your house back in Ironwood? What was your first house?

**Elsie:** It was a beautiful home. It had seven rooms. There were four rooms downstairs and three rooms upstairs and a big, big basement.

**Kate:** What was it made of, the house?

**Elsie:** The foundation was cement and it was made out of lumber.

**Kate:** How did you heat the house there in Michigan?

**Elsie:** With a furnace. We burnt coal.

**Kate:** Was there a garden?

**Elsie:** Yes, a vegetable garden.

**Kate:** And what did you grow?

**Elsie:** Potatoes and peas.

**Kate:** What kind of plumbing did you have in that house?

**Elsie:** - Out in the country so the plumbing wasn't like in the city.

**Kate:** Did you have an outhouse or in-house?

**Elsie:** Yes, we had an outhouse.

**Kate:** What about the water? Where did you get the water?

**Elsie:** We had a well.

**Kate:** How far was the well from the house?

**Elsie:** It was right in the yard.

**Kate:** What kind of furniture did you have in the house?

**Elsie:** We had nice furniture. I thought it was nice furniture.

**Kate:** Was it store-bought or was it homemade?

**Elsie:** No, it was store-bought.

**Kate:** Do you still have any of that furniture?

**Elsie:** No, I don't.

**Kate:** You said that the house was a little out of town. How far out of town was that?

**Elsie:** It was five miles out of town, out of the middle of town because we could take the streetcar from where we lived to go to town.

**Kate:** And that's in Ironwood?

**Elsie:** Ironwood, Michigan.

**Kate:** There was street cars there?

**Elsie:** Oh, yes. Even in those days.

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

**Elsie:** We had a cow and a pig and chickens.

**Kate:** Did anyone else live with you besides your brother and mother and father?

**Elsie:** My grandmother came to visit us from Finland. Both grandmothers came to visit us.

**Kate:** What kind of lighting did you have in the house?

**Elsie:** We had electricity.

**Kate:** You had electricity there?

**Elsie:** Well I was a little girl when electricity came in.

**Kate:** What did you have before that? Do you remember?

**Elsie:** Lamps. Those oil lamps.

**Kate:** How did you get around like to town and things?

**Elsie:** My dad had a car and the name of that car was Briscoe.

**Kate:** Briscoe?

**Elsie:** B-R-I-S-C-O-E.

**Kate:** What year was that he had the car? What years did he have that car? Do you remember?

**Elsie:** Let's see. I was about 10 years old when he got that car.

**Kate:** What did you do before that, before you were 10, for transportation?

**Elsie:** We had a neighbor that had a car and he would take us to uptown, but a lot of times, we did a lot of walking. I walked to school every day.

**Kate:** Where was the school?

**Elsie:** It was about a mile out in the country. It was a country school.

**Kate:** How big was the school?

**Elsie:** Well we had four grades in one room and I think we had two rooms, so that was about eight grades we had in there. So there wasn't very many kids in that school.

**Kate:** How many kids in each class about?

**Elsie:** I'd say about... Each room, you mean? I'd say about 10 in each room.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking in the family? You mentioned your mother.

**Elsie:** Yes, my mother did most of the cooking.

**Kate:** Did you help her at all?

**Elsie:** I used to wash dishes.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food as a child?

**Elsie:** Mojakka.

**Kate:** Nice. What was your brother's favorite food?

**Elsie:** Pastia.

**Kate:** Finnish pastia?

**Elsie:** My mother made good pastia.

**Kate:** What about the kitchen? Describe the kitchen in the house.

**Elsie:** The kitchen was big and we had a dining room but the family always ate in the kitchen. I remember my mother used to scrub that floor on her hands and knees because she wanted that floor to-

**Kate:** And did you eat meals together or apart? How did you eat the meals?

**Elsie:** No, we had regular mealtime always with the family.

**Kate:** Who were you closest to in the family?

**Elsie:** When I was a kid?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Elsie:** I had a girlfriend that lived right next door. She was very close to me.

**Kate:** Was there a family member who was close?

**Elsie:** I loved my brother, but he was quite small when I was a kid. There was plenty of distance.

**Kate:** Do you have any stories about your brother or other family members, your grandmother or somebody when you were young?

**Elsie:** This is the story that he hasn't heard this story either. He was very small, my brother. He was learning to walk but he wasn't really walking yet. One day he was playing on the porch. My mother had a screen with a [inaudible 00:11:10] so won't fall out of the porch and I was supposed to be looking after him. Well when I went out on the porch to look for him, here he had his diaper all folded up because he had wet his pants.

**Kate:** My how times change.

**Elsie:** [inaudible 00:11:33] and I couldn't imagine how he got those... They were [inaudible 00:11:40] with safety pins. I wonder how he got them open. I still don't know how he got them open but they were on the floor.

**Kate:** What about religious life? Was your family religious?

**Elsie:** Well, not too religious. When my grandmother lived with us, she would read from the bible to Soren and me.

**Kate:** Prayers? Did you say prayers before you went to bed?

**Elsie:** When my grandmother was there.

**Kate:** Did you say grace before dinner?

**Elsie:** No.

**Kate:** What about did you go to church on Sundays at all?

**Elsie:** Yes, when my grandmother was there.

**Kate:** Where was the church that you went to?

**Elsie:** It was in town.

**Kate:** In town?

**Elsie:** Mmm-hmm. We used to take the streetcar to go.

**Kate:** Were you're parents politically inclined at all?

**Elsie:** Yes, they were Democrats, definitely.

**Kate:** Here in this country Democrats, right?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Kate:** Were they at all in Finland aligned politically? Remember they used to have the old halls like a red hall and then another hall.

**Elsie:** In Finland... In those days, my mother was real young then when she was in Finland.

**Kate:** Did your parents have any ideas about drinking? Any strict laws about that?

**Elsie:** I can't remember. Did we have beer in the house at all?

**Man:** Yes. [Inaudible 00:13:11]

**Elsie:** Did we have beer?

**Kate:** They made their own beer?

**Man:** Yeah.

**Elsie:** It wasn't root beer?

**Man:** [inaudible 00:13:2]

**Elsie:** It wasn't this beer that we drink.

**Kate:** Was it kalja?

**Man:** Yeah, I guess so.

**Kate:** Home brew, yeah. Kalja. What was your favorite holiday?

**Elsie:** I can't...

**Man:** Christmas.

**Elsie:** Oh, yeah. Christmas.

**Kate:** Why Christmas?

**Elsie:** Well when I was a little girl I kept hearing about Santa Claus and Santa Claus, and I thought, "Gee, I'd like to see Santa Claus. Tell me, when is Santa Claus going to come in our house?" My uncle happened to be in town so my mother had my uncle get dressed up in a Santa Claus costume and he came and knocked on the door so we could see the Santa Claus.

**Kate:** Did Santa bring you gifts?

**Elsie:** Oh, yeah. He did.

**Kate:** Did you have anything special at Christmas like a tree or anything like that?

**Elsie:** Oh, yes. We had a tree.

**Kate:** And how did you decorate the tree at home?

**Elsie:** It was candles but my mother was real worried about lighting it. Very seldom, if we did light it, we had to watch it real close. This was before the electricity came in.

**Kate:** Then what did you put on the tree as ornaments.

**Elsie:** We used to do this in school. They made chains out of this sort of trace paper it was, make a chain and we'd use that.

**Kate:** You mentioned school. What was the first language that you spoke at home? What was the language that you spoke to your parents?

**Elsie:** Finn.

**Kate:** Finn, so you spoke Finn at home. When you went to school, did you know any English?

**Elsie:** Not a word.

**Kate:** So, how was school? Were other children in the same boat as you?

**Elsie:** Yes. The whole street where I lived, they were all Finn people.

**Kate:** What street was that?

**Elsie:** McKinley. This was in Ironwood, Michigan.

**Kate:** So how did you learn English?

**Elsie:** I learned it in school just by listening to the others. It was very difficult for all of us because we didn't know what the teacher was telling us but she was very patient with all of us.

**Kate:** Did you speak Finnish in school at all to other children?

**Elsie:** Outside, at recess.

**Kate:** Do you remember any anecdotes about learning English?

**Elsie:** No, I can't think of any.

**Kate:** Did anyone ever call you any names for being a Finn? Were you ever called bad names for being Finnish?

**Elsie:** No.

**Kate:** By anyone? Did you even suffer any prejudice for being Finnish?

**Elsie:** No. No. No prejudice.

**Kate:** Okay. What did you do for entertainment as a child?

**Elsie:** What did I do?

**Kate:** What kind of games did you play and things?

**Elsie:** Oh, we used to play hide and go seek and we played ball. In the summer, were always playing outside.

**Kate:** Did you play any particularly Finnish games as a kid?

**Elsie:** Not that I remember, no. Although there was a lot of Finnish children out there, but I don't remember.

**Kate:** How did your mother and father adapt to life out here? Did they speak English?

**Elsie:** My dad, I don't know how he learned English but he got along with the English people very well. He was real smart and just picked it up himself because he didn't go to school.

**Kate:** And your mom? Did she learn any English?

**Elsie:** No. She was kind of bashful about speaking up. She was afraid that she won't say the words right.

**Kate:** Did she have any Finnish friends or-?

**Elsie:** Oh, she had a lot of Finnish friends.

**Kate:** Do you have any stories about your parents learning English? Any anecdotes at all?

**Elsie:** Do you remember anything like that? I can't remember.

**Kate:** How did your parents adjust to life here? Do you think that they were- their decision...? How did they feel about their decision to come to this country?

**Elsie:** Oh, they were Americans. That's the way they felt. They loved their country, America.

**Kate:** Did your father belong to union?

**Elsie:** Yes, at the workplace.

**Kate:** At the mining. Was he ever in any accidents at all?

**Elsie:** Yes. He was in an accident at the mine, but he wasn't injured too seriously.

**Kate:** How involved were you in the Finnish community here or how long were you in Michigan?

**Elsie:** I was entering the high school being a freshman-

**Man:** 1927 when we came here.

**Kate:** 1927 when you came out to Wyoming?

**Elsie:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Let's go back to why did your family come to the United States?

**Elsie:** You mean my mother and my dad?

**Kate:** Yeah. Who came first and why?

**Elsie:** As far as I know, my mother came first because I never did really find out when dad came. Did he ever talk about that?

**Kate:** You don't know which one necessarily came first. Why did your father come here?

**Elsie:** To get a better life than in Finland.

**Kate:** And what was the life back there for them then?

**Elsie:** He had two, three brothers and his dad died when they were quite young. Their mother worked for some people to make a living for the boys, so they weren't really well off. Not as well off as my mother was in Finland.

**Kate:** What was your mother's situation in Finland?

**Elsie:** She had a good home and although it was a big family, they seemed to just get along real well. They didn't seem to suffer any...

**Kate:** Did either of your parents suffer from hunger in Finland before they came?

**Elsie:** I don't think so because they never said anything like that.

**Kate:** When they spoke of Finland, where they came, what was their attitude about it? Were they homesick? Did they-

**Elsie:** They missed their relatives, yes. They did miss... Like my dad had a lot of brothers in Finland at that time. In fact, he was the one that guaranteed the two brothers to come over here. You had to guarantee somebody to come over and the two uncles of mine came that way to America.

**Kate:** Did either of your parents ever want to go back to live in Finland?

**Elsie:** No. They never mentioned that. They missed their relatives and their friends, but they never said that they'd like to go back and live there.

**Kate:** Let's go back. Originally who sponsored your father then to come over here?

**Elsie:** Do you know?

**Man:** I have no idea.

**Kate:** How did he get the money to come over? Does anyone know?

**Elsie:** Oh, my father had a cousin in Helsinki. He sent him some money.

**Kate:** What cousin? Do you remember the cousin's name?

**Elsie:** But I can't remember his name.

**Kate:** But he had a cousin in Helsinki who sent him money?

**Elsie:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Do you remember your father leaving?

**Elsie:** Leaving where?

**Kate:** Leaving for the United States? Do you remember him leaving?

**Elsie:** I wasn't born yet.

**Kate:** Oh, you weren't born yet. So he left before you were born. What year did he leave in?

**Man:** We don't know.

**Elsie:** I can't remember. He was in this country before [unknown 00:21:38] was. So it had to be before my mother came.

**Kate:** So he came here before you were born and you think it might have been financed by the cousin's money in Helsinki?

**Elsie:** Yes, I think so.

**Kate:** Did you know your father before you came to this country? Had you ever seen him?

**Elsie:** My mother and dad were married here in this country.

**Man:** She was born here.

**Kate:** You were born here, that's right.

**Elsie:** The only reason I went to Finland was to see the doctor.

**Kate:** Okay, that's right. I had- Theresa is looking at me here. So your father came here first and then your mother came here. Now you told me a story about how your mother got here and what story, she gave you the story.

**Elsie:** Yes, that was the story.

**Kate:** Why don't you tell it for us here?

**Elsie:** She had a cousin or somebody down here that wrote and told her that she had a chance to come down if she would marry this man because he was in jail.

**Kate:** Where was this now? This was in?

**Elsie:** Ishpeming, Michigan.

**Kate:** In Ishpeming, Michigan, there was a man in jail and your cousin said if she promised to marry him, she could come to the United States?

**Elsie:** Yes. He would finance her.

**Kate:** And what happened?

**Elsie:** Well when she saw him, she didn't like him.

**Kate:** But she was already here.

**Elsie:** But he did get out of jail. He did get out of jail though after she came to this country.

**Kate:** What year was this? Do you know?

**Elsie:** It had to be about... Before I was born, she'd been here almost five years before I was born.

**Kate:** Move on to your mom and dad, married then in Michigan and they had you. Now how did you get back to Finland and why?

**Elsie:** Oh my dad paid the fare. My dad got the ticket.

**Kate:** Your dad got the ticket. Tell me why your mom wanted to take you back to Finland. What was the thing about going back to Finland?

**Elsie:** Because I was ill and my mother wanted to take me to this doctor.

**Kate:** You were ill with what? Do you know? Anemic?

**Elsie:** Anemic, yes.

**Kate:** You mentioned you were anemic. Okay, so you were anemic and why couldn't doctors here take care of it?

**Elsie:** My mother took me to the doctor and he gave some kind of medicine or something and it didn't work.

**Kate:** You mean here?

**Elsie:** Yes. So my mother didn't have any faith in this doctor. She wanted to go to this doctor in Helsinki because he was a good doctor, and he had been a doctor of the family for many years before.

**Kate:** What was his name? Do you know at all?

**Elsie:** I don't remember that.

**Kate:** Okay, you went all the way from Michigan to Finland again with your mother?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Kate:** Did she ever tell you about that trip? You were only two years old.

**Elsie:** Yes she told me that when the [inaudible 00:25:05] I said, "Hurry. Let's go because the boat is going to sail." I was just a small child.

**Kate:** And you don't remember anything of this, do you?

**Elsie:** No. I don't remember the trip.

**Kate:** What is your first memory?

**Elsie:** About the trip?

**Kate:** About anything as a child.

**Elsie:** My first memory. I think I told you before, but I was 10 years old then so that couldn't have been my first memory.

**Kate:** No. Can you remember anything?

**Elsie:** Oh, I think I do remember. I think I was about six years old. We went uptown, we used to went uptown on Saturday, my mother, my dad and me and my mother took me to, she had to buy something at a clothing store. They had a red flannel cape about my size because that was in style then I guess.

I saw that cape and I wanted that cape so bad. My mother went and [inaudible 00:26:12] and my mother said no, it cost too much. So I started crying and crying then my dad came over and he could see me crying so he went over and bought it. I remember that so distinctly like it would have happened yesterday.

**Kate:** So your mom brought you all the way back to Helsinki for treatment, what happened with the treatment there? Would she talk about that at all?

**Elsie:** Oh, yes. I got well.

**Kate:** Do you know how they treated you? Did she ever say that?

**Elsie:** No, no. She just kept saying that he was a good doctor that's all.

**Kate:** And you stayed how long in Helsinki then?

**Elsie:** I think it was almost a month.

**Kate:** Did she have a round trip ticket? What type of ticket did your mother have?

**Elsie:** That I don't know. I really don't know but I know that my dad bought the ticket.

**Kate:** Where did you stay in Helsinki? `

**Elsie:** With... Let's see. You know where we went to visit [unknown 00:27:25]? He was a cousin to my mother but they were very close friends.

**Kate:** [unknown 00:27:37]

**Elsie:** So that's where we stayed. They came and picked us up.

**Kate:** Do you remember that?

**Elsie:** I don't remember that but my mother told me.

**Kate:** You were there at least a month.

**Elsie:** Yes, right there at the house.

**Kate:** And you had to come back... Did your mother talk about this ocean trip at all?

**Elsie:** Well see, it was the people over there that start telling my mother that, "You should be going home pretty soon because there's going to be a war. It would be harder to travel later on." Then my mother got worried about that and we left soon after that.

**Kate:** So we're talking about 1914 then?

**Elsie:** Yes, it could be.

**Kate:** Yeah, I suppose it is.

**Elsie:** 1914 I think.

**Kate:** Yeah, 1914 and she stayed a shorter time because of the threat of the war?

**Elsie:** But she felt confident that I would be alright because I was improving.

**Kate:** So you came by ship back again?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Kate:** And did she tell you about the accommodations on that ship? Did she ever tell you about the voyage? Was it a rough voyage or a smooth voyage or the conditions?

**Elsie:** No. She never did talk about that. Ooh, she did. She said, "Everybody got sick except me, except Elsie." and there was throwing up and...

**Kate:** Did she say about the conditions where she was in the boat at all?

**Elsie:** No, she didn't mention the conditions.

**Kate:** Did she ever mention anything about Ellis Island to you? She ever say anything about the Statue of Liberty?

**Elsie:** I can't really remember but I'm sure that she might have said something like that, but I just can't recall.

**Kate:** Alright. That's alright. Tell me a little bit about your life then from then on, your childhood. You said you stayed in Ironwood, Michigan.

**Elsie:** From Bessemer, that's where I was born. We moved to Ironwood, then my dad bought this house with five acres of land.

**Kate:**  Is that the one you described?

**Elsie:** Yes. That's where I grew up and my brother.

**Kate:** Was your family involved in Finnish activities?

**Elsie:** Yes. They used to have a hall in Bessemer, what they call the Finn hall and they used to have plays and programs. Then they have intermission, they would serve coffee and rolls down in the basement.

They had these women that belonged to the... It was like a women's club or something. They were the ones that furnished the rolls and cooked the coffee and served the people. They had big long-

**Kate:** Did your parents participate in the plays?

**Elsie:** Oh yes. My mother was star quite a few times.

**Kate:** Do you remember the names of the plays?

**Elsie:** They were very... Well no... She played against some of the best actors too of the Finn actors. I don't know where those actors came from. Maybe they came from Finland. They had to have.

**Kate:** We're going to change the- Now you mentioned your parents considered themselves Americans but yet they were very much involved in the Finnish society at Ironwood.

**Elsie:** Yes, well that was more for amusement because they would have dances after the programs. Even when they had the play, after the play was over, they clear out the seats on the sidelines and have a dance. Both of them loved to dance.

**Kate:** What type of dances did they loved to dance?

**Elsie:** They had polkas and polka music.

**Kate:** Any other?

**Elsie:** Foxtrot but they call foxtrot... In fact, my dad was the one that taught me to dance when I was 10 years old at the Finn hall.

**Kate:** What did he teach you?

**Elsie:** The shodice first.

**Kate:** Oh yeah. Is the [unknown 00:32:03]

**Elsie:** [unknown 00:32:06]

**Kate:** You mentioned before we began, your mother comes from a very famous town in Finland.

[Crosstalk 00:32:21]

**Elsie:**  Oh yes. It's on the [unknown 00:32:24]

**Kate:** Is that a song?

**Elsie:** Oh, they did write a song. Yes, there is a song.

**Kate:** What is it? Do you know it?

**Elsie:** Did you want me to sing that song?

**Kate:** Yeah, go for it.

**Elsie:** [sings in Finnish].

**Kate:** Did your mother go back to her town ever?

**Elsie:** After that period. No, but two of my grandmothers came to live with us.

**Kate:** In Michigan?

**Elsie:** In Michigan, both my dad's mother and my mother's mother.

**Kate:** Now round about the time that your brother was born, or a little after, you said he was five years old or so when you moved to Wyoming, why did you move out west?

**Elsie:** Let's see, I was already a freshman in high school before we came to Wyoming. I was entering to be a freshman in high school because we were building-

**Man:** [inaudible 00:33:54] I was five when we must have move. You were 15.

**Kate:** You were 15 years old. Now why did your family come out here?

**Elsie:** Because the friends my dad's-

**Man:** [inaudible 00:34:09]

**Elsie:** And they said that they were better wages than what they were making over there.

**Kate:** In the coal mines here in [unclear 00:34:16?

**Elsie:** They were making better wages than the coal miners even iron miners.

**Kate:** How did you get here to Wyoming?

**Elsie:** In a car, the Briscoe. It was the Briscoe.

**Man:** [inaudible 00:34:30] by that time. We had a new car every couple years.

**Elsie:** Oh, I thought it was still the Briscoe.

**Kate:** Okay. So you came by car. What did you pack in that car? What did you do with your house and everything at home? What happened?

**Elsie:** Well they left it with real estate agency that was going to sell the house and then they had an auction and sold all the furniture at an auction and that gave them more money for the trip. They knew they'd have to have some money to start with after they get here.

**Kate:** What did they keep? What did you take with you?

**Elsie:** Just clothes.

**Kate:** Anything special in terms of... Anything, special articles of the family?

**Elsie:** Did we ever take? My dad's skis. Did we take dad's skis?

**Kate:** Your dad's skis?

**Man:** No. [Inaudible 00:35:34]

**Elsie:** The ones that he make.

**Man:** Oh, no. I don't think so.

**Elsie:** He was quite a craftsman.

**Kate:** Did you bring any furniture with you?

**Elsie:** No. We sold all the furniture on that auction to get the money for what we need.

**Kate:** Did you bring anything special yourself? Do you have anything left from your life in Ironwood?

**Elsie:** No. No, nothing.

**Kate:** Okay. You came out here, what was your impression of life out here when you first got here?

**Elsie:** When I first came to Rock Springs, I thought do people have to live in a place like this? The sand was blowing, it was in your eyes, in your ears, in your nose and it was a desolate-looking town. At that time, Rock Springs was just a one-stop... I don't know what to call it, but it wasn't like it is now.

**Kate:** The houses and things, what did it look like?

**Elsie:** The houses weren't too bad but it was that wind and sand that would-

**Man:** No trees, no grass.

**Elsie:** No grass and no trees.

**Kate:** Where did your father go to work then?

**Elsie:** The first place we went to was Kemmerer, Wyoming when we first came because the people that recommended and told him about the wages lived in Kemmerer and they were the ones that helped my dad get a job. We came with two other families as a caravan.

**Kate:** But different cars?

**Elsie:** Yeah, three cars.

**Kate:** Were they Finns?

**Elsie:** They were Fins, and they had families in their cars just like gypsies.

**Kate:** Where did you spend overnight on the trip?

**Elsie:** We carried tents. We pitched tents.

**Kate:** Was that trip fun?

**Elsie:** I thought it was fun.

**Man:** I don't remember too much, but it must have been fun. There weren't too many motels and things in those days.

**Kate:** What year was that then?

**Man:** 1927.

**Kate:** 1927?

**Elsie:** Mmm-hmm.

**Kate:** So you came here and what happened in your life? Did your parents get involved in the Finnish community here then?

**Elsie:**  Oh, yes.

**Kate:** So there was a Finn hall here?

**Elsie:** There was a Finn hall here, yes.

**Kate:** I heard that in this town there were two churches, one was a church that was sort of against drinking and one that was for drinking or not for drinking, it didn't have a policy against it. There were two different churches here in town, they said. Is that true?

**Elsie:** At that time, you mean, when we got here? Do you remember? Yeah the Catholic Church that was-

**Man:** You're talking about Lutheran Churches?

**Kate:** Yeah, Lutheran Churches.

**Man:** But we didn’t go to church [unclear 00:38:25].

**Kate:** Your family when they came here out to Wyoming, were they religious at all?

**Elsie:** Well, my mother was religious but my dad really wasn't and the reason that he wasn't religious because when he was a boy, he had to be an altar boy and he had to wear these dark garments when he was an altar boy. Then he had to stand there and there was no air coming in and he just about choked to death every Sunday.

**Kate:** This is in Finland?

**Elsie:** That's when he decided he wasn't going to go to church anymore after he got home. He told us that story. It's [unknown 00:39:05].

**Kate:** So they were involved in the Finnish community here and were you?

**Elsie:** Oh yes. I belong to the young people's league, I turned.

**Kate:** You were in high school here then, right?

**Elsie:** I started high school here as a freshman.

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

**Elsie:** I didn't finish high school here because when I was a junior in high school, the doctors told my dad that he has to go to Arizona. He had black lung, he developed black lung. It was already started in Michigan, I think, but after the coal dust got in, it turned into black lung.

Then the doctors recommended to go to Arizona and that's when we left here and went to Arizona, we buried dad in Arizona. My mother wanted to come back to Rock Springs because all her friends were here. I knew how to drive, we had a car and I knew how to drive, so I drove the family back to Rock Springs on my own.

**Kate:** How long were you in Arizona?

**Elsie:** Until I graduated from high school.

**Kate:** So a few years?

**Elsie:** Three years.

**Kate:** Three years you were in Arizona?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Kate:** What did your mom do then after your dad died?

**Elsie:** My mother got a job in a restaurant washing dishes. I don't know how she did it, but she raised us kids. Then when I was in high school, during the summer, I got a job in a laundry worked in a laundry for a while. But I didn't like that job, so then I got a job in a cafe being a waitress and I liked that better.

**Kate:** How did you meet your husband?

**Elsie:** In this building. My mother went and got a job as a cook at a timber company, lumber company where they were cutting trees. I had to be in charge of my brother. We gave up the apartment that we lived in and my mother rented this room over here. It was just a bedroom.

**Kate:** On K Street then?

**Elsie:** No, right here.

**Kate:** What's the address here again?

**Elsie:** 149 K Street.

**Kate:** 149 K Street then.

**Elsie:** So I took care of my brother and I worked at the Western Cafe and he ate his meals at the Western Café but my mother sent us the money. I wouldn't have been able to do it on my waitress... I only-

**Kate:** Where was your mother that time?

**Elsie:** At the lumber camp, cooking.

**Kate:** Oh, I see. How far was that lumber camp from town?

**Man:** It was what? 150 miles.

**Elsie:** Yeah, it was north.

**Man:** Out of Kemmerer [inaudible 00:42:11]

**Elsie:** It was out of Kemmerer about-

**Man:** [inaudible 00:42:13] it was up there.

**Kate:** So you actually helped raised your brother?

**Elsie:** No I just took care of... He was already old enough to take care of himself. He went to school and I went to work at the cafe.

**Kate:** And how did you meet your husband?

**Elsie:** His mother owned this place and I happened to see him and we got acquainted and that's how it started.

**Kate:** What nationality was he?

**Elsie:** Greek.

**Kate:** Did he speak Greek?

**Elsie:** He could speak Greek, oh yes. They spoke Greek at home just like we spoke Finn at home.

**Kate:** Did his mother approve of you because you weren't Greek?

**Elsie:** No, she wanted him to marry a Greek. She wanted him to marry a Greek girl.

**Kate:** Did your father want you to marry a Finn?

**Elsie:** Yeah, my dad wanted me to marry a Finn.

**Kate:** All the Finns are like that.

**Elsie:** Isn't that true, though? The Finns do believe that way too and the Greeks believe that, you should marry within your nationality. There is a picture of my grandmother and my grandfather on my mother's side. See that little picture? That's a real old picture.

**Kate:** You met your husband in the cafe, and how long before you married then?

**Elsie:** Oh, I think about two years, don't you think?

**Kate:** So his mother got used to the idea about you being Finn?

**Elsie:** No, we just got married. We didn't get no permission.

**Kate:** Where did you get married?

**Elsie:** My aunt and uncle were standing for us. They were our witnesses. We went to this.... Where's that place in Utah that everybody went and got married?

**Man:** Manila.

**Elsie:** Manila.

**Kate:** So you went to Manila?

**Elsie:** Because everybody I always went down there to get married. They didn't get married in church.

**Kate:** Oh, so you got married in Manila?

**Elsie:** Manila, Utah.

**Kate:** Was your husband on speaking terms with his mother about this?

**Elsie:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. She forgave us afterwards. There was nothing she could do.

**Kate:** How about your mother? How'd she feel?

**Elsie:** My mother she didn't care. She wanted me to be happy that's all.

**Kate:** So what happened after that? What does your husband do for a living then?

**Elsie:** Let's see. Where was he working at that time? Do you remember?

**Man:**  I can't remember.

**Elsie:** I can't remember.

**Man:** [inaudible 00:44:54]

**Elsie:** Huh?

**Man:** The bakery?

**Elsie:** Oh yes. He was driving at the Parisian Bakery and it was run by a Greek. That was where he was working, funny how I forgot that.

**Kate:** Then what happened? Did you have children?

**Elsie:** Oh yes. Mary May, that's one. She was our first born.

**Kate:** How many children did you have?

**Elsie:** Three.

**Kate:** What were their names in order?

**Elsie:** Mary May, Andrew, and John.

**Kate:** What do they do for a living now?

**Elsie:** John has a store right down here. Remember I told you to stop at the little store?

**Kate:** Yeah, yeah.

**Elsie:** Andy is working at the Ford garage as credit manager.

**Man:** Mary May is in Las Vegas and she's working at the Sands Casino under tourists. She gives out these coffee mugs for the tourists.

**Kate:** I was just there.

**Elsie:** Were you at the Sands Casino? Did you get a coffee mug?

**Kate:** No, I didn't but I was at the counter, pardon?

**Man:** She retired and she's working social security for I think...

**Elsie:** For 20 years but the job, they were shorthanded and she got stress.

**Kate:** Did you speak Finnish or Greek to your children at all?

**Elsie:** No, that's where I made a mistake, Greek, but not Finn.

**Kate:** And did you learn Greek?

**Elsie:** No, I learned enough so that I knew that if Jay cursed me out, I knew that I was being cursed out.

**Kate:** What was your language at home then between your husband and you?

**Elsie:** At home, English.

**Kate:** English, right. Did your children speak to your mother at all? Was your mother alive long enough to know your children?

**Elsie:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** Did they speak in English or Finnish to her?

**Elsie:**  No, Mary May is the one that spoke the most Finn. Mary May and Johnny. Johnny was my youngest son and Andy was the oldest. But Johnny and Mary May were the ones that picked up Finn from my mother real easy. They understood her when she'd always talk Finn to them. She never spoke English to them.

**Man:** And they used to speak Finn pretty good. Greek too, don't they?

**Elsie:** Oh yeah. They all learned to talk Greek because they were with grandma Pandelis a lot because I used to work at the club. They had a night club later on, the folks did. The Log Inn, it's still standing there but it doesn't belong to the Pandalises anymore. But that's where we worked. I worked and Gus worked there as a bartender. I worked as a waitress.

**Kate:** When you look back on your life now, your family has come from Finland and you've lived a long life in different places, what do you think of your parents, and you said you'd been back to Finland too. What is your idea about your parents’ original decision? Was it a better life here than it would have been in Finland?

**Elsie:**   A better life here than in Finland? According to my mother, she would say that we had a better life here.

**Kate:** Was there ever any doubt or any question of you going back to live there yourself, to Finland?

**Elsie:** I never thought of going back there to live. I wanted to go there and visit which I did with my aunt and uncle.

**Kate:** In her old age, did your mother ever want to go back and live in Finland?

**Elsie:** She didn't want to go back and live, but she did want to go back and visit, but she never did have a chance to go and visit. I wish that she could have gone like I was able to go with my aunt and uncle because I enjoyed that trip and I enjoyed visiting with my cousins.

**Kate:** What were your impressions of Finland having gone back and seeing your home?

**Elsie:** Oh, Finland is a beautiful country and those people have a very nice life over there. Almost as good as us here, don't you think?

**Man:** Oh, absolutely. They live pretty good.

**Kate:** When you think of yourself now in terms of nationality, how do you identify yourself?

**Elsie:** I'm a Finlander.

**Kate:** Do you consider yourself an American too?

**Elsie:** Oh, yes. I'm an American Finlander.

**Kate:** Well I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us by speaking with us today. We'll send you a copy of this as well. This is Kate Moore on July 5th, 1994 for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.