**Paul**: Good afternoon this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday October 26th 1995. I am at the Norwegian Christian home in Brooklyn and I am here with Steinar Rasmussen.

Mr. Rasmussen came from Norway in 1923 and he was 23 when he came. Present also is Peter Ham who is running the digital recording equipment. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

**Steinar**: July 11, 1900.

**Paul**: And where in Norway were you born?

**Steinar**: I was born on the island named Laneoy near Mandaal.

**Paul**: Can you spell that for me please?

**Steinar**: N-A-N-B-A-O-Y that means island.

**Paul**: Laneoy?

**Steinar**: Laneoy.

**Paul**: Can you tell me a little bit about where that is in Norway?

**Steinar**: Well, that’s a mile east of Mandaal, city of Mandaal.

**Paul**: Can you spell that please?

**Steinar**: M-A-N-D-A-A-L

**Paul**: Thank you.

**Steinar**: Mandal.

**Paul:** Can you tell me what it was like to grow up on an island?

**Steinar**: Well, we had a very free life. Very independent. And chicken, we went to school and fishing and-what do you want to call it? Well, the farm, farming everything that was when on the island.

**Paul**: Can you talk a little bit about fishing specifically, about what kind of fish, that sort of thing?

**Steinar**: Well, a season, salmon, [unclear 00:02:31] in the summer time there and they have a net dabbed for that and we do have a net for Mackerel that’s also seasoned fish in the summer time. Started that time and they started around 15th of May, in May, and on to December and fishing Mackerel.

**Paul**: What kind of a boat would you use?

**Steinar**: We have an open boat, row boat. There was no motor at that time. Yes. Special, so we had a row boat and we had in the middle of the boat and two men was [unclear 00:03:26] and two men was holding the net out. One with the [unclear 00:03:30] and one with the float went out on the side and the Mackerel come sharp like that and you can see it you make a little wave, they say you’re going alone and we ring it, pulling in, pulling the net that had sunk down and bail it out and fill up the boat [unclear 00:03:56] 24 tons at a time some time.

**Paul**: These are whole schools of fish travelling?

**Steinar**: School. Yeah. More like it.

**Paul**: Ok I see.

**Steinar**: More like it.

**Paul**: You said salmon and Mackerel, what other kinds of fish?

**Steinar**: Well, we have lobster, that a season too, that mostly in fall. The season, we have a big pot for that and tay pots and open down fall and save the options and the distance about six feet between each pot put that around the net racks on the bottom we know where they are-

**Paul**: What was the biggest lobster that you can remember back then?

**Steinar**: One pound. One kilo.

**Paul**: Kilo which is bigger than a pound?

**Steinar**: Yeah, oh yeah.

**Paul**: What would you do with the fish and the lobster?

**Steinar**: Well, we get ready until fishing was finished, then we sold it to the buyer, and he distributed it wherever he had business.

**Paul**: Was this a way of making extra money?

**Steinar**: Yeah, that was for cash, mostly for cash. We lived on the farm, we grow all what we want on the farm, wheat and all- and then the meat had the cows, sheep, pigs and chop the oxen, feed them up and good good and fat and then kill them and salted them before they winter.

**Paul**: Whose job was it to kill the animal?

**Steinar**: Most of the farmers couldn’t do it themselves, but there was people going around and do it.

**Paul**: You would hire someone to come in?

**Steinar**: Yeah, mostly they had that one who could be able to cut it open-

**Paul**: Can you describe your farm for me, the buildings that made up the firm?

**Steinar**: The house where we lived in, then we had the barn for the cows and the pigs and the sheep, different rooms [unclear 00:07:03] cows was in one end and the pigs and the sheep was in the other side in the same room.

**Paul**: How many of each animal did you have?

**Steinar**: Well on the island, there was one or two farms could fit two cows but mostly it was only one. Most of the farms had only enough ground for one cow.

**Paul**: So you had one cow?

**Steinar**: A long as my father was able to have the farm, we had two.

**Paul**: Two cows?

**Steinar**: Yeah, and my father he was a pilot. Sea pilot at that time, younger days, went out to the see, worked for the ship coming took them into the port and to [unclear 00:08:05].

**Paul**: Did he have his one boat?

**Steinar**: Yeah, he had big boat and it had a cabin in it and they were sleeping there and they could cook the maize and locked up because some time they went out there [unclear00:08:29] took them a couple of days, sometime at the time.

**Paul**: So he was in a small boat that was guiding the big boat- was it like a tag boat? What we would call a tag boat?

**Steinar**: Yeah, a big- ocean linear.

**Paul**: But the boat that he was in was a smaller boat?

**Steinar**: Yeah, oh yeah.

**Paul**: I see. What did he do with the farm when he was?

**Steinar**: Well, kids had to work it and then leave it and all the women they had to do lot of work on it. Clean the cows and milking the cows and putting out hay- the men were seriously cutting the hay and the kids, ladies we had to work it and lie it and get it lie before we could put it in the barn and store it., for the women.

**Paul**: How did the men cut the hay? How did they do it?

**Steinar**: Well, we had a big stick, with the two knobs and like a [unclear 00:09:45] I guess you call it here-

**Paul**: Sickle uh huh..,

**Steinar**: You use when cut it down and leave it out on the grass then lay it down.

**Paul**: All done by hand?

**Steinar**: All by hand. Yeah

**Paul**: Can you describe the house that you lived in for me? The farm house?

**Steinar**: Well, in the kitchen there was open fire. No stove or anything like that we used an open space and we cooked fish. We had a big hook and on different one high and low and so on. [Unclear 00:10:33] the heat when cooking and hanging on the pot, mostly steam cast iron pots we had at that time.

You know at that day it was open fire and we had wood. Cooked with wood and kept- in the homes they had some kind of stove there also wood and [unclear00:11:19].

**Paul**: What was the house made out of?

**Steinar**: It was all wood, lumber. In the later years they had dressed lumber. In the old days, in the 1800 and so on and before they used the whole tree, they lay one on top of the other and this was of divided they different homes.

**Paul**: Well. What your house made out of? Dressed lumbar?

**Steinar**: Dressed, yeah, we had [unclear00:12:11] was about 100 years old I guess, so we could still say, we had one room, what we call the dining room or every day’s room. That we could see the looks open.

**Paul**: So you could still see the logs?

**Steinar**: When the other homes are kind of more dressed up we had panel that down, so that was painted then the different color or what you want, the women.

**Paul**: Was the house outside painted? What color was the house on the outside?

**Steinar**: Usually white, paint.

**Paul**: And what kind of floor did the house have inside?

**Steinar**: Ordinary floor, floor boards.

**Paul**: Wooden?

**Steinar**: We have vinery in the nowadays. I am talking of the 1800, before that we had bigger, more like a plank.

**Paul**: And what kind of a roof did the house have? A roof?

**Steinar**: That was some- they were pits like an ordinary house and we had some kind of made stones. Stone. You would say they were locked in between when lining up in there. They were locked in between this other. Locked one another in you went little hollow so they were no running over. Well, he said there were now off the roof.

**Paul**: A pitched roof with this interlocking stone things on top.

**Steinar**: Yes.

**Paul**: How did you light the inside of the house?

**Steinar**: That was kerosene lamp.

**Paul**: Can you describe for me the process of using a kerosene lamp?

**Steinar**: Well, the lamp itself was different shapes sometime and glass. In the middle there was a glass, that we lift up and light it. We had some kind of wick there that went down in the oil. In the bottom there was a box there that we had the kerosene in and that wick we call it, was in there and it come up and we screw that if we want the light. And sometime we screwed up a little bit we got more light.

**Paul**: Did any accidents ever happen?

**Steinar**: Oh, yes, sometimes. If you knocked the lamp over, the kerosene will run out and take a fire.

**Paul**: Did that ever happen?

**Steinar**: It wasn’t often that we had that happen. I don’t know, it did happen at some places at some time and they were very silent. In the island I can’t remember any house went on a fire. I can’t remember that.

**Paul**: Did your house ever get converted to electricity?

**Steinar**: We did, 1920. 1920 we got the electricity out to the island.

**Paul**: How did they convert the house into electricity?

**Steinar**: Well, the same as here, you have the wire in different places. We have a box there for the meter or the fuse, the fuse box. That one goes through some time you had supply-

**Paul**: What about the wires? Where did the wires go?

**Steinar**: The wires was open mostly-

**Paul**: You mean on the outside?

**Steinar**: Yeah, open on the wall, in the ceiling...

**Paul**: Uh huh?

**Steinar**: So you could see them. At that time. Later in the years you know they were covered and new houses they [unclear00:17:21] in the later years.

**Paul**: Did you have running water in your house?

**Steinar**: No, we had a well. We had a well outside. We had a bucket. We had to go fold the bucket several times when we want to- for cooking, washing and whatever.

**Paul**: Was there a bathroom in the house?

**Steinar**: No, that was outside in the barn.

**Paul**: What about taking a bath? How did you take a bath?

**Steinar**: Well we, we used to have to stay up there and dipped it head down and got to it and washed yourself and depends where you are going.

**Paul**: How often was-

**Steinar**: Well you couldn’t go in there, we hadn’t had no tap at that time, we probably had a big bottle there we stay on and the warm water went down. I know what to say is, [laughter] when those kids we were not bathing in the summer time and all [unclear 00:18:32].

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

**Steinar**: Salve Rasmussen

**Paul**: Can you spell that?

**Steinar**: S-A-L-V-E

**Paul**: Salv-

**Steinar**: Saav salve- you have a pen?

**Paul:** Yeah, right here. Figure it out there.

**Steinar**: Where can I, put it on?

**Paul**: That’s ok. S-A.

**Steinar**: Salve, Salve.

**Paul**: Tell me what your father personality was like? What was his character and temperament?

**Steinar**: Well, I don’t know how you can explain that. I don’t know how to explain that but he was a pilot, a sea pilot and he was out in the sea and all kinds of weather and tough and rough and farming when he were home.

**Paul**: What were some of the things that he enjoyed doing for entertainment when he wasn’t working?

**Steinar**: Well, there wasn’t much, we didn’t have pleasure or entertainment because there was mostly- we had always had something to do all the time until we got something we went to bed. We didn’t have much time for any paly or any enjoyment really.

**Paul**: Just a lot of work?

**Steinar**: Yeah.

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

**Steinar**: Martine

**Paul**: Martine?

**Steinar**: Yeah.

**Paul**: And her maiden name?

**Steinar**: [Unclear 00:21:04].

**Paul**: Could you spell that? Spell it out on paper.

**Paul:** Knutsen you said her name was

**Steinar**: Martine

**Paul**: That’s M-A-R-T-I-N-E.

**Steiner:** K-N-U-T-S-E-N, Knutsen.

**Paul**: Tell me a little bit about what your mother was like as a person.

**Steinar**: Well, they two was very regular people and no special. She was good hearted and kept the house clean and a lot of work with the kids. We were 12.

**Paul**: 12?

**Steinar**: Seven boys and five girls.

**Paul**: How do you fall into that?

**Steinar**: I was the last one of the boys or the second one from the bottom. Yes only two left. I was number 11 and I had a sister after that 12.

**Paul**: Wow! That a big family [laughter].

**Steinar**: Yeah, and they the boys grow up and got confirmed then you was a man you had to protect yourself, make your own doings, of course I always worked on the farm.

**Paul**: What were some of the things you had to do on the farm?

**Steinar**: I don’t know, the hay and going to water the cows and move them, so they could go better eaten up on something. We had to move them to different places on the ground. Tied up, we couldn’t let them go loose because there was vegetable garden and things like that they liked to get in into that and get some carrots and that stuff, yeah.

We had to tire them up and we had a big home they were eating around and then that was over we moved them till they had enough. In the summer we had a big farm, forest like big mountain here and we let them go by themselves. We took them down and let them go.

They had themselves a water hole for them, water enough for the whole summer and they would gather their own food and came down when the night time came, they know when that time, they stood with the gate and waiting till the ladies came and milk them and let them go.

**Paul**: Did women always milk the cows? That was women’s work?

**Steinar**: Well, men was different. The men went out too sometime but it was usually the women’s work.

**Paul**: Can you tell me what you remember about world war one? 1914 to 1918 and how the war affected your family, if it did?

**Steinar**: You know we was- Norway was neutral at that time, so there wasn’t too much in the men. We were just ordinary regular, we went to work.

**Paul**: Were there any shortages for instance of food or anything like that?

**Steinar**: No, well there was import like the coffee and sugar maybe, yeah. There was a little- we always, we had enough.

**Paul**: Living in the farm helped probably?

**Steinar**: Later in the sea they were harder, they felt the more because they didn’t have the farming, they didn’t get the milk and the egg and all that stuff, cold inside. So to see this people they felt a little bit more of the hardship.

**Paul**: What do you remember about going to school in Norway? How old were you when you started?

**Steinar**: We started six years I think, six or seven, we started. And then 14, seven years schooling.

**Paul**: Did you enjoy school?

**Steinar**: Yes [laughter].

**Paul**: A little bit [Laughter]?

**Steinar**: A little bit yeah, [unclear 00:27:51] of course we had to go there. See in 1909 or 10, my father got permission to come over to see the pilot not me, I say the pilot no, that meant he moved to Kazasun and talked the ship out of the port and the sea took them outside, and gave them the course whenever they want to go German, France, England, America, wherever they want to go.

**Paul**: And that was a promotion from what he have been doing?

**Steinar**: Yeah, he was home he was regular before he had to go after the sea and battle there. but, when the [unclear 00:29:03] we were six years old, we he was still on the island then he had his pile a boat, the all the boys had to go put them out on the ship and go with them.

They were two pilots and so on and then we were six years old we was allowed to go with and see how things were going and we were eight and nine years old we had to go with and sometime we had to take the boat home alone, nine years old, we had to go [laughter] and of course we moved to Kazasun.

There was a little easier but still I had to go with him many attires I had to put them aboard and escape and sometime there were emotion. You lay there the row boat and the ship , big ship come bearing down on you, they raid[unclear00:30:14] because they had thrown a line to me I had to make that fast in my boat, and stir reach out the sides of it, of the ship .

I was nine, eight nine years old sometime there, I was a kid and see a big sea boat come bearing down on you and lying there and waiting to get the line and whatever. 1921, I was 21 years old, and so that-I was old. We had six pilots in the city, and there was six ships ready to go out, they all want a pilot. When we had a hurricane come up, really storm, big storm. A hurricane so, they all [unclear 00:31:32] when the ship that my father was assigned to, it was a German ship, and the captain, meant that he was a on a German now and he could make go home.

This was the day before Christmas Eve. Two days before Christmas and he say he couldn’t get home, he never had had a Christmas home since he grow and up went to sea, and now he was there he was gone go. [Unclear 00:32:14].

He insists he want to go. Alright, you go, I go, I’ll take out. So he came home, oh it there was snow and you couldn’t see across the street, and the wind was just blowing. You couldn’t navigate it, gets stuck too many times you took one step and then two back[laughter] the wind was too strong.

Well, he came home and started saying, you go with me. Oh! I won’t go out today, see this weather? Blowing like that snowing? You couldn’t see across the street. Well, mother tries to help me out to get me home, to stay home, and she meant that they were enough kids lost. I’ll lose one not two for Christmas. Well he said, “Steiner go with me,” he said we go, “We will be home for supper.”

Well there were father, I couldn’t resist, and I said, “Alright I go with and I don’t know why you have five pilots you can pick and is better than expert storm than I am.” “No I want you.” So I had to go with him and that was tough. Thing was when we got out, the ship, the captain got scared, he said, “Take me in.” I went back, won’t go [unclear 00:34:31].

“You want to go? “You want to go home for Christmas? “You go on then,” he said, “Opt to go, I am not taking you back, well, you got to go with me to German.” “I am afraid,” he said, “I can’t take.” He said, “You were told before you left, and you want to go you go. I am not going to Germany, I am not taking you back, and I have my son lying on the open boat, he going to see that to German?” [unclear 00:35:22] we taking the boat and get your boat up on the deck somewhere sometime, he says, “Best thing for you is go, and if you make it good and well, I gave you the course and if you keep that course, you will get to German.” And that was it, so my father come and launch to the railing, it was going to come down to [unclear 00:36:00] I was going up to get him.

That why he want me because he knew exactly what I want to do and don’t do, so waiting and getting inside, though outside I had a white [unclear 00:36:29] wave and see what’s, go between the waves, pick them up and out, that time there was sail no motors. The motors were made, my brother had it. We were sailing, said come check it out that am sailing, “Oh no,” he said, “you sail, you sail,” in the hurricane, you could hardly see it. The water used to [unclear00:37:13] even went sweep it down just like a smoke, the whole ocean.

**Paul**: Did you make it out safely?

**Steinar**: [laughter] yeah.

**Paul**: The good grace of God, you made it back safely?

**Steinar**: You can say that again. Well, he would, I didn’t sail hard enough, fast enough for him he say, “You got have more speed on it" I say, “If this is slow, I can’t do no more. I thought I had done good.” “No you do fine,” he said, “We got to have more speed, you know I told mum we would be home for supper and if you don’t sail hard we won’t make it,” he said.

All of the times we had to go we used to get into the main land and put the boat there get up on the highway, and take the taxi home. But that time we made it home [unclear 00:38:22].

**Paul**: Tell me why you wanted to come to this country?

**Steinar**: Well, that was another thing, if I had stayed-I had a good job in the city, I was always interested in boat motors, and I worked on the factory where we made them. Fix them up and cut them in shape and put them on the boat and things like that.

And when after father retired, pilot, he wanted to go home to the island, he bought a home, house there that was for sale, put [unclear 00:39:12] not too much, enough. And he want me to go with and say they was nothing, I am fishing, yeah, we were fishing and there wasn’t too much-for them they had to farm and fish, they were good.

It was alright. [Unclear 00:39:38] that had no farm, no ground to dig in and go fishing. They were hard to leave on the fishing alone. Well [unclear00:39:57] we refused to get it and we wouldn’t go big. buy big boat, cover deck , real big boat net, and then take the Mackerel and [unclear 00:40:20] before he got near land so we couldn’t get around with the net, we had to learn to open the net around them, and then pull them in and now we wanted so we could take them in the open sea, used to ring them and we had a big boat for that and a small boat plank like we put one up first and the whole boat and an open boat and left them there and went with the big boat, and then put the bottom together and then haste it open and chopped the fish.

We couldn’t make good on that and my brother didn’t make good and I could never make it. I came over [unclear 00:41:26] my father will put up my share for the big boat want to go and get started. Don’t go there Mark you will never come back. We have four brothers that left home, I never know, they were gone before I was born, they was over here. Four. They never came back, they never wrote home. Mother didn’t know if they lived or they were died or whatever until I came over.

**Paul**: What did you know about America before you got here? How did you think about America when you lived in Norway?

**Steinar**: Well, we know what it was a country that you could make it. There was lots of opportunity to make good. The thing was with me, I was scared, and I was frightened to take to the chances to go at it. So when working here if you get the big money you had to go to union and for you to go to union you had to be citizen, or attempt to be citizen.

We had what we call the first paper. We attempt to be citizen of United States. We had to have a paper and then wait five years and then we would become citizen. Well I could not tell United States to join the union I had a citizen or intend to get the papers and I couldn’t ask for that because I couldn’t tell United States I have attempt to be citizen of this country.

**Paul**: You didn’t know whether or not you wanted to? To be that?

**Steinar**: Oh yes, yeah, I had no reaction in that. When you say that time all was in my mind, I get the money enough I go back and I couldn’t tell United States that. I would like to be citizen all the time I had a mind to go back and I never did because I had to follow the radius and then join the union before I got married then I know I won’t get back to Norway.

**Paul**: Tell me what you had to go through to get ready to leave Norway? What procedures did you have to go through?

**Steinar**: Well, we had to seek permission from the government to leave the country, Norway, and no I don’t think America had any objection I think they were free, we could as long as you came in the regular way, but permission on the two countries.

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

**Steinar**: We had that in Norway, we go to the city office or whatever, to the lawyer and things like that and don’t tell them that you are communist, don’t tell that you are socialist and things like that. America didn’t want any part of that. Like they know anybody comes in

**Paul**: Did you have to undergo medical examination in Norway?

**Steinar**: Yeah, we had to see the doctor and get the vaccination. They want to know a little bit about you before [unclear 00:46:18] and of course in my case I was healthy enough to do anything. I had no trouble with that.

**Paul**: How long did that whole process take?

**Steinar**: It wasn’t- I don’t know, it wasn’t long, a week or two maybe.

**Paul**: But what about waiting for the permission from the government to say you could leave?

**Steinar**: No, they didn’t take long. It’s like the mail you know you had a letter, and it goes, takes a long time to get there and then the office look at it and so on and send it back and a couple of weeks. Two three weeks I guess.

**Paul**: Where you still living with your parents when you left?

**Steinar**: When I left yeah.

**Paul**: Tell me how your mother felt about you leaving? You said your father wasn’t all that happy about it.

**Steinar**: No, he’s the one of them who would like to see me go. It wasn’t that- it was a hard to get back up and go. And that wasn’t enough. If we take total I was 21-22 thinking of getting married someday, there wasn’t enough money in the fishing. To start it and get married to have a wife or children and so on.

**Paul**: What did you pack to take with you to America? What did you pack?

**Steinar**: Well, you couldn’t take too much but what we need, shift of underwear and a suit or two, and we had to come real pretty light over here.

**Paul**: Is someone traveling with you to America?

**Steinar**: We usually had [inaudible 00:48:44] always somebody when footing back and they had to over here before, know the rules and regulations and so on. And now I had two brothers over here, in New York. When I came and so they were assisting me with that. And I had a sister that was married and had a home. So I stayed with her and my brother in Staten Island. He was singing in simple voice on Staten Island railroad that time.

**Paul**: Did your parents give you like a goodbye party, some kind of a gathering when you left Norway?

**Steinar**: Well, I don’t know. I usually went myself [unclear 00:49:35] my sisters and brothers around me and say goodbye to them. I went usually alone.

**Paul**: How did you feel about having to say goodbye to your family?

**Steinar**: Well, it was sad. You were wondering if you ever see them again or be back again. It was sad. Then we had to have a look at we had that’s was the way our life and we had to do it, go.

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

**Steinar**: We went to Oslo.

**Paul**: How did you get to Oslo?

**Steinar**: We had the cruise boat, same when along the coast stopped at the different cities-

**Paul**: This little cruise boat-

**Steinar**: Yeah.

**Paul**: And then in Oslo, how long did you stay in Oslo?

**Steinar**: I think we had two, three days I think.

**Paul**: What did they do in Oslo? Or what did you do in Oslo while you were waiting to get on the ship?

**Steinar**: We was in hotel there that’s all. And I had no relatives, I know no anybody in Oslo to them I travel with knows some people there and we went visit them, and always in the hotel. Walked to sleep and came over.

**Paul**: Had you been to Oslo before?

**Steinar**: No.

**Paul**: This was your first time in Oslo.

**Steinar**: That was the first time I-

**Paul**: Does something stick out in your mind from being in Oslo something that you remember made a real impression on you.

**Steinar**: Well, not really I don’t think. There was a couple of girls from home that worked in Oslo and let’s just say one of them travelling companion knew and we went to visit them. Well I got tangled up with one there I liked her very much. I asked her for a date and I got it, mainly because I- and they say, “You stay out the hotel I come get you,” they said, “Because you going to get lost you are not alone.”

Well that’s the way they went and other girl there was. I didn’t see he before that time. She called [unclear 00:52.35] so we came, we were three or four, together from our place home town. Come to the hotel and say, “Who is Steinar?” I sneak behind everybody else and got open a room, “Here, what the heck was me? I haven’t done nothing.”

He gave me the telephone number for me to call the other one, the thing was I had two girls at night and I couldn’t get one of the other boys to get one. Oh that good. You make it. You know I had two of them. I was wondering why, I was going to take [unclear 00:53:56], one left.

**Paul**: So you had some fun in Oslo then? Anyway?

**Steinar**: Yeah, it was ok.

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

**Steinar**: That was United States. There was the Danish ship, Danish Company. United States.

**Paul**: And where did you sleep on that ship?

**Steinar**: Well, we went third class. Not too far down but it’s all decked down I guess.

**Paul**: Do you remember how much that cost?

**Steinar**: Oh no, I can’t remember that.

**Paul**: What time of the day did you get on the ship?

**Steinar**: Nothing, I don’t know either. I can’t remember nothing. [Unclear 00: 54:41] middle of the day or morning or something like that.

**Paul**: Had you ever been on a ship as large as this?

**Steinar**: No, no

**Paul**: What sticks out in your mind about the trip across the Atlantic?

**Steinar**: It was interest. We had good food and good meal and as I said the Danish people because the sea didn’t bother me or anything I was used to that, you’re three year old and stooped down and that didn’t bother me. And other people got sea sick vomit and so on and sick and they not that time the whole time I went with the Norwegian line, so one of you and gets as on and oh we had nine days coming over, either it was six or seven days we have on it big storm.

**Paul**: How long when you were on the United States, how long did it take to go across the Atlantic?

**Steinar**: Well, I think it was seven or eight days I think. Seven days.

**Paul**: Do you remember when the ship came into New York harbor?

**Steinar**: We came into Hoboken.

**Paul**: Into Hoboken. Do you remember seeing the statue of liberty?

**Steinar**: Oh yeah.

**Paul**: Did you know what that was?

**Steinar**: Well, I guess we know, we heard about it and knew about it and learned about in school I guess-

**Paul**: And then what happened? The ship docked in Hoboken and then what happened?

**Steinar**: Well, me, it was a holiday. The day after we docked was a holiday. And there was no work going on, so we wasn’t allowed to go off. Because we were green horn then we didn’t know nothing. So we stuck to the ship anyway. So we went to the Ellis Island from Hoboken.

**Paul**: How did you get to Ellis Island from Hoboken?

**Steinar**: Ferry, ferry boat, came to Hoboken nearby we matched into the ferry I don’t know the whole passenger ship we went. We got to Ellis Island and in the big home there and I think we saw the doctors there. I had to pay the head tax, I think it was $8. I had to pay before come in.

**Paul**: Did everyone on you ship have to go to Ellis Island?

**Steinar**: Oh yeah. That time you had to go to Ellis Island and then from there we went in to the Battery Park, you know the south ferry, the Staten Island ferry from New York to Staten Island. There was a big house there, a big building next to and then we got in a big room and we had iron fence in front there a big iron gate.

We all matched in and stood there in that big room and we all were sent there they locked the door. Padlocked it and we couldn’t get out and we had to walk around there waiting to people that was supposed to pick us up, take us to their home. Like my sister was supposed to pick me up, come and meet me there and take me home.

And the way they turned out some way she got very much delayed. I had to wait and the people for the other group on the island they came was going to pick up so they talked with me-

**Paul**: Mr. Rasmussen, we going to have to stop for just one second so that peter can put in another tape into the machine. So I don’t mean to interrupt your story but this is the end of tape one with Steinar Rasmussen.

**Paul**: Ok, this is Paul Seacrest and we are beginning tape two with Steinar Rasmussen who came from Norway in1923 when he was 23 and it is October 26th 1995 and Peter Ham is running the equipment’s alright peter. You were telling as that your sister got delayed and she didn’t come to pick you up, so what happened?

**Steinar**: Yeah, so people from the island they asked me if I want to go with them. Then I say I guess I have to, I couldn’t stay there, something serious had to happen to the sister and couldn’t get there. And they lived in Hoboken and my sister lived in Jersey City. And it wasn’t too far out of the way. But they had sign for me after they took me out there.

Of course the fellow asked me in English if I want to go with them. I didn’t know what he said, I didn’t know, so they asked me I said yeah, yeah, [laughter] I would meet them home and my sister picked me up there and I was alright then.

**Paul**: Excuse me let me just asked you a couple of questions about Ellis Island. This place where everyone was, where the gate was, where you were waiting, was that on Ellis Island? Where was that room where you were all waiting?

**Steinar**: Well, it was on the main floor, main entrance.

**Paul**: But it was at Ellis Island?

**Steinar**: Yeah

**Paul**: Ok

**Steinar**: I think the doctor came too and we had exam and I had to pay my head tax we called it?

**Paul**: Head tax?

**Steinar**: I think it was $8.

**Paul**: Did anyone ask you any questions at Ellis Island?

**Steinar**: I don’t think so-

**Paul**: No-

**Steinar**: Except where we was going- pick as up and that all.

**Paul**: Can you describe what it looked like on the inside?

**Steinar**: Oh no, I can’t. It was just a big room to me and there was nothing.

**Paul**: Did you eat anything while you were there?

**Steinar**: No. I don’t think so. No I don’t think we did. Even in New York in Battery place there. We didn’t have anything before we came. It was only couple of hours, an hour or two on the island I don’t know what we- signed something I think.

**Paul**: Signed something. Did you have you luggage with you?

**Steinar**: Oh yeah. Suitcase. I had that. Carried that with me and then when I think I left Norway I say well, “I am going to quit the sea and the storm and winds. Now I going to get the easy job, good job inside on land anyway and I don’t have to bother that thing anymore.” The way it turned out I got the inside job. In a piano factory up in the Bronx. Now you see I’m a fisherman sitting all day long we all pulling in the net [inaudible 01:04:05] that wasn’t for me.

**Paul**: Was that your first job that you got the piano factory?

**Steinar**: Yeah, that was the first job but lasted two weeks, then I got lost for the sea.

**Paul**: How did you get the job at the piano factory?

**Steinar**: Brother to my sister in law who marry my brother and had the farm left before I left kazasun the brother bought the farm, and her brother she wrote to him and we got the address and I told him, I wrote to him I say, now, I am here in the United States and would like to see him and if he thought he could get me a job.

**Paul**: Where were you living at this time?

**Steinar**: Jersey City.

**Paul**: With your sister?

**Steinar**: Jersey City.

**Paul**: Do you remember where in Jersey City?

**Steinar**: Place they call Greenville?

**Paul**: Greenville u huh?

**Steinar**: I think Greenville they call it.

**Paul**: So you were commuting then from Jersey City to the Bronx? How did you do that?

**Steinar**: Well, my sister had to take me to town something, we had to go take the bus to Boulevard, Hudson Boulevard, to General Square, and then the subway to Cockle street, and the had to go down there and walk up to fourth street and took the subway there to 125th street.

**Paul**: It’s a long way to go for a job?

**Steinar**: Yeah and didn’t know English. Couldn’t talk. I didn’t know where I used to look at the light at the subway and know what subway to take. Oh I got lost sometime.

**Paul**: Had you ever been on a subway before? What were your impressions of being on a subway the first time you rode on the subway?

**Steinar**: I got scared. We know we went from south ferry in Watson street I think- isn’t that what it’s called, in New York? In Hoboken and I go down the stairs there and I say what happened and then I got scared, I was scared to go down there and come in the subway and all that noise and the speak [unclear 01:07:10] there must be another way on top of the ground, and now I was very scared.

And we got to Hoboken and from Hoboken to Jersey City. There was a street car a bus. Street car you had at that time, so that was alright so long as I was up on the ground or out in the open, I was ok

**Paul**: You were happy above ground and unhappy underground?

**Steinar**: Oh boy! I was scared. I didn’t like subways I have long time before and that was the only way I could go.

**Paul**: Tell me what the next job was that you got? After you quit the piano factory?

**Steinar**: Yeah, we had to get back to sea, of course me always know somebody and as I come and working also passenger ship. Know they all [unclear 01:08:23] called Fall River line?

**Paul**: The Fall River line? Going to Boston?

**Steinar**: Yeah, we went to [unclear 01:08:26] Fall River line New Port. I noticed the maid on that ship, he came from near town mainland of course and we know very well. I know her family, I didn’t know him but I know his family. Took his sister something couple times on a date so we [unclear 01:09:01] that way. So he was working there as the sea men-

**Paul**: Tell me how you learned English when you first got to this county?

**Steinar**: Well, that was hard thing for me because I was getting used before I know what it was. Because if you can remember, green horn didn’t know the English they come in, the men in here they like to tease you. They liked to tell you things you wouldn’t use otherwise I couldn’t use any ordinary conversation.

**Paul**: Did that happen to you?

**Steinar**: Oh! They told me anything and when you see I was working one time with my brother on Staten Island, he was saying, I remember they was trying to say, I always say never use that to say no, forget that, that’s the way I had it scared to use the English that took long time for me to learn and till I got married.

**Paul**: Do you remember some of the first words that you learned?

**Steinar**: Oh no I don’t think so.

**Paul**: Was anyone particularly helpful to you while you were trying to learn English?

**Steinar**: Oh yeah, my brother. He did.

**Paul**: Your brother spoke English?

**Steinar**: Yeah, and my family because they were tight too. When I really got into it and got married and met a girl I went with, he would pound it on me. She didn’t mind my broken English whatever. So she didn’t mind that one he pound on me. So the little bit English I can talk now that’s more kind to her.

I was sailing on the yacht, for I went home, 1929, I got lonesome for the family again, so I went home for a year, come back in 1930 to the depression, couldn’t get no job, no but I were lucky I was talking with a fella from home we stood and talked about here in Brooklyn and one fella come along and said, “Who want to go with me?” he said, “On the yacht, I was selected mate, on the yacht.”

He simply was captain. And this fella had never been on the boat, he didn’t know nothing about it. Now he was a mate. He simply was the captain. So he said, “I am going to hire some men,” he said, “There is one here,” he said, “Take him, I have worked,” he said “Take him with you.” So we took a little while and said, “I haven’t been on a yacht, been on a boat.” “So alright I will meet you so day, tomorrow at so time we go to the captain and what not. If he say ok you are hired. Come with me,” he said.

So we went we meet the captain, and we talked a little while forth and back I say, “I admit I hadn’t been on a yacht. I don’t know what it looked like been and on a boat, I know seaman ship can do.” He said, “Alright, you will do,” he said. The thing was, that we had to go Philadelphia to pick up the yacht, the owner had just bought it and he was landing in Pennsylvania, and we had to go there and say one ship sat there and pick it up and for us to fit them out so we could use [unclear 01:14:11] to New York. Not complete many enough [unclear 01:14:19] we need so on in place. Well I had to study it up what to do and know what to use, so the captain came after a couple of weeks and we was- he [unclear 01:14:37] he said, “You said you never been on a yacht?” “No,” I say, “I haven’t.” I look, he said, “you have done very good job. Now we can come and take it out to New York and check it out.” So we went up and New York- I know the name and I can’t get it out. [Unclear 01:15:12] Nyack.

**Paul**: Nyack?

**Steinar**: Yeah, that was the ship that ship-

**Paul**: Were you married at this time?

**Steinar**: No.

**Paul**: This is before you got married?

**Steinar**: Yeah, yeah it is this is 1930, I got married in 1934. I met the wife doing that time in 1930, but not before. But I had meet them before I went to Norway in 29, one or two days the time we had together, and I felt there was something special. I hadn’t had that feeling with any other girl. So I said-

**Paul**: Was she American born?

**Steinar**: No, she was born in Norway. Was come over here with the family when they were three years old so she was educated over here.

**Paul**: What was her name?

**Steinar**: Gudrun Johnson, they came from under they would come from under her father was a mate in the sandsripts.

**Paul**: Gudrun is spelt G-U-D-R-U-N and Jansen J-A-N-S-E-N?

**Steinar**: Yeah.

**Paul**: And what year did you get married?

**Steinar**: ’34.

**Paul**: 1934. And what was it that attracted you to her.

**Steinar**: Well, she was said to be honest, fear and easy to go along with.

**Paul**: And did you have children?

**Steinar**: We had four.

**Paul**: Could you name them please?

**Steinar**: Well the first one lived only five days, he was eight months pregnant. She tripped and- walk up on the when tripped and he hit and went down on the knees on the side walk and that brought it out so he was born eight months pregnancy. I was on the ship then and I didn’t know-

**Paul**: What were the names of the children?

**Steinar**: Janet, that was the first kid and the other second one, that lived we call her Janet. And boy second boy was Edward, and the third girl she that would be the fourth but the one that died five years old but we never had a home- was Dorothy.

**Paul**: Dorothy?

**Steinar**: Yeah, so we had the first one we didn’t have a home and we didn’t get a name, because- the doctor told me you claimed I was well on the heart that didn’t close and he told if you give him blood transfusion, he would close, and ok alright, I told the maid this and I listen, the wife was in the hospital but he had given birth, so he say, “Yeah why don’t you go?”

He said, “Go ahead and if you need a night there let me know,” he said,” Stay over.” Trip every other day in New York and I come to the hospital and there was the whole family. I go oh boy oh boy, hey father, the husband has come, so the doctor heard that he grabbed right away before I could talk to the mother in law or anything, he got me in another room and I came to me and the blood transfusion didn’t do any good and she died in five days.

**Paul**: Perhaps we could talk about when you become a citizen and what you had to do to become a citizen?

**Steinar**: Well, I had to learn how the laws was made and what the congress was doing, what the congressman and the different things. I went to school, for that. Learn that much English I could get the paper. I had to have a witness so I could go for the second paper I had to go up to the judge, and the thing most when I was there, I got mixed up, and arriving time and leaving time.

I arrived New York before I left Norway [laughter] had the date mixed up. The judge was alright and the clerk, he said, “Hey, talked to Joseph, you think am going to reject the citizen paper because the date is mixed up?” He says, “You have the dates. The date is there,” he said. “If you put the left first and the rest, I am not going to deny him that.” So I got the paper.

**Paul**: How did you feel when you became a citizen?

**Steinar**: I felt good and satisfied I think we will be alright.

**Paul**: Do you think of yourself as being an American or being a Norwegian? How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

**Steinar**: Well, you have to feel the joy of American you have to live that way. Because you know you was only 23years, in Norway, so I called in the Norwegian style and said you had to forget that and- they thought the wife, she was American, was an immigrant when she was three years old and I felt that I belong to America.

**Paul**: Can you speak some Norwegians for us on tape? Perhaps recite a prayer that you know, or a poem or something in Norwegian? Or sing a song?

**Steinar**: I can’t sing. I can’t sing. That’s the one thing I never did even in school.

**Paul**: Is there a prayer perhaps you could say for as in Norwegian?

**Steiner:** Well you have the 'Fader var' we call it, the Lord’s Prayer.

**Paul**: Could you say that?

**Steinar**: Well, I did that in English and Norway. Fader var, now you got me mixed up. No, I don’t think I can get that now.

**Paul**: [laughter] okay. It’s alright. What kind of-what are your secrets for your a long life? If you had to give advice to a young person who said tell me how to lead my life happily what would you tell them?

**Steinar**: Well, the day last long, very first year in America I learnt I was very lonesome and longing for home and very lonesome and didn’t know America. When I became a Christian and got saved, the lord took care of me, so I do lean on the lord now more than ever.

I am 95 years old now and he have saved me through among many jobs, the last job I had for the railroad I worked for the lighter captain for the railroad. And the butlers you know they took the cargo from the railroad to the ship on a boat and I was there for two other years. I was lighter captain and I had a lot of experience with that different things.

And I always thought that the only way to be happy and content is in trying to please the lord. In doing what he would want you to. That’s the only way you can.

**Paul**: I think that’s a very good place for us to end**.** Steinar thank you very much. For letting us asked you all these questions about your life.

**Steinar**: Yeah well, I have to give the lord credit of what happened to me after that.

**Paul**: This is Paul Seacrest, signing off, with Steinar Rasmussen, on Thursday October 26th 1995 here at the Norwegian Christian home in Brooklyn. Thank you very much sir.