

EI-442/PEDERSEN

EI-442

MAISIE (MARY) LINDSAY DALY PEDERSEN

BIRTH DATE: OCTOBER 23, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 1994

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 55:04

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 4/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 11/1996

SCOTLAND, 1924

AGE 18

PASSAGE ON "THE BALTIC"

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, February 26th, 1994.

I am here in the Shore Drive Senior Citizen's Center in Brooklyn with Mary Pedersen. Mrs. Pedersen is generally known as "Maisie" to everybody. Mrs. Pedersen came to America from Scotland in 1924 when she was eighteen years old. Present also is Kevin Daley who is running the equipment. Anyway I want to thank you for letting come to your house...

PEDERSEN: What's his last name?

SIGRIST: Kevin's last name is Daley. An Irish boy.

PEDERSEN: That was my first husband's name. Daly. I was first Mrs. Daly. I have a grandson, Sean Kevin Daly. (they

laugh) He's a twin.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Pedersen, can we begin the interview by you giving me your birth date?

PEDERSEN: October 23rd, 1906.

SIGRIST: October 23rd, 1906. And where in Scotland were you born?

PEDERSEN: Greenock.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PEDERSEN: G-R-E-E-N-O-C-K.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about Greenock and what it was like?

PEDERSEN: Well, it was a seaport town. Very pretty and very nice, you know. And all my family were all seafaring people. Boats, boats everywhere. That's...

SIGRIST: Whereabouts in Scotland is Greenock.

PEDERSEN: Well, it's in the west of Scotland. In the west.

SIGRIST: Right on the coast obviously?

PEDERSEN: Practically. On the River Clyde.

SIGRIST: On the River Clyde. Tell me a little bit, was, was the only industry in the town fishing mostly?

PEDERSEN: No. Fishing, seamen, and there was the sugar refineries, and there was mills. There was a lot of diff-, and, of course, they were great for the ship building, you know, the great ship building. The Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, were built there. And finally they had to go to, the Clyde was so narrow that they had to get through and finish up the rest of the boat in England. But it was really started to built on the Clyde. Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that your family were all seafaring people...

PEDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about that and, and what details...

PEDERSEN: Well, my father went to sea, and when the sailing ships, remember the sailing ships? You wouldn't remember. But each Scottish sea--, and the ship, and he even went to Australia on the, I think he was at sea since he was a boy. And his last trip was, he'd be home once in a while, maybe go to London, worked out of London, but his last trip he took ill, and they took him, on the ship took him to Vancou-, Vancouver. Then they sent him from there home, where he passed away when he got back home. But he was, uh, he'd go, sometimes you wouldn't see him nine month, a year. Long trips he made, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you ever remember him telling you stories about some of his voyages, some of the things he experienced?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah, many, many times.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of those stories?

PEDERSEN: Well, he used to go 'round the Cape Horn and all those things, you know, because I never was much interested. My two younger sisters were. They were more interested. Me, I was at the age I didn't want to listen, you know. Because I'd heard so many times. (she laughs) But he'd tell them over and over again, especially if he had a beer in him, you know. Very quiet man, but he liked his glass of beer, and that's when he'd come out with all his stories.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

PEDERSEN: James.

SIGRIST: And, and what was his last name, your maiden name?

PEDERSEN: Lindsay.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PEDERSEN: L-I-N-D-S-A-Y.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me a little bit about his family background?

PEDERSEN: Not so much about my father's family. I don't know much about them.

SIGRIST: Did you know his parents?

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

PEDERSEN: But I knew my mother, I knew my grandfather, my mother's side. I knew him very well.

SIGRIST: Okay. We'll talk about him in minute.

PEDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality? You said he was quiet. What else was his personality?

PEDERSEN: Well, every time he went to Germany he always brought back one of those accordions. We used to call them

melodians. Every time he went, and he used to bring, to bring them back, different things from all the foreign countries he went to, you know. He always brought something back. Well, really, they added up through the years in the family, interesting. Very interesting.

SIGRIST: So you had a whole collection of...

PEDERSEN: Oh, Lord, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the other objects that he brought back? You mentioned accordions.

PEDERSEN: Well, no, one of the, one of the trips he was on, it must have been a very long trip, he made a rep-, replica of the ship that he was sailing on. It was in a great, I'll always remember, it was in a great, big glass case in our house, you know. I guess it took years for him to make it. That, that was his hobby. Making ships.

SIGRIST: What did he make it out of?

PEDERSEN: Gee, don't ask me. I don't know.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

PEDERSEN: That was really interesting, you know. That was, that was some ship. In fact, I don't know, so many people wanted to buy it, but he would never part with it. Though I don't know if ever what happened after I came out here. I think my brother got it.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

PEDERSEN: Her name was Mary Hardie.

SIGRIST: Hardie was her maiden name?

PEDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Hardie?

PEDERSEN: H-A-R-D-I-E.

SIGRIST: And let me ask you the same kinds of questions. What was your mother's personality like?

PEDERSEN: Oh, she was a very jolly person. Very cheery. Loved to sing, loved to dance. I took after her. Very cheery person. And very active.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did she do?

PEDERSEN: Well, where we lived it was a street they called Wart Street, ca-, called after James Wart. And, of course, it, it was one big happy family. Any-, anybody that was sick, or anybody needed a doctor, anybody, the kids, anything happened, they'd say, "Run for Mrs. Lindsay. Run for Mrs. Lindsay." She was very active in helping people.

SIGRIST: Did she know how to treat people's illness.

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the ways she would treat people, or like if you were sick as a child, how she would treat you?

PEDERSEN: No, she was, in fact we were very seldom sick. And

when you were sick, real sick, she used to give you at night, which we hated, a small glass of brandy and water. If you had a cold, that was always good for you. Of course, we used to, "Yee!" (she makes a face of disgust). Of course, never don't feel as bad about that, you know. Don't taste as bad.

SIGRIST: It's an acquired taste.

PEDERSEN: Yeah. But...

SIGRIST: Tell me about your mother's family background. You mentioned that you remember your grandfather...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about her father?

PEDERSEN: I remember him. He was a coach, he worked for as you say a coach builder. He worked up until the end, he was eighty, retired, and then her twin aunts who lived with him, well, they lived near, next house to him, I always remember them. He was from a big family, but I don't remember too much. It's only my twin aunts I

remember most.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about them. What sticks out in your mind when you think about your aunts?

PEDERSEN: When I think about my family?

SIGRIST: When you think about your twin aunts.

PEDERSEN: Oh.

SIGRIST: What, what, what do you remember specifically about them?

PEDERSEN: Well, one was just like my mother, very cheery. The other one was very quiet. Never married. We used to kid her. My other aunt had three children. We used to adore them. And, of course, she lived in a different town, and it used to be a great event when they came down. It was like, you know, big family party when my mother's people would come down to visit us, or we'd go up to visit them. It was really, we really enjoyed, I really enjoyed my childhood.

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about your grandfather. Tell me, is there a certain story that you remember about him specifically?

PEDERSEN: No. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: What was he like as a person?

PEDERSEN: He was quiet. Loved to read like everybody else. A great reader. And, of course, was always talking about the coach building, always talking about his trade.

SIGRIST: What did he look like?

PEDERSEN: He was a very handsome looking man. (she laughs) But my niece was, lives in North Carolina and she bought, she had a townhouse down there. She just bought her own home. And the first time I went down to see it, I'm looking around and, my sister was there at the time. My sister says to me, "Maisie, who does that look like?" "Oh," I says, "my uncle, Grandpa Hardie." And he had his Bible and this little cat beside him, which we hated cats, we loved dogs. But it was just

the spitting image of him with a beard, grey hair.

SIGRIST: Did you go and, and stay with your grandfather...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...when you were a child? What was his house like?

PEDERSEN: Well, he had a two bedroom house. And it didn't seem very large compared to here. Though there was always enough room for everybody. But, and some kitchens back in the other, in Scotland, some has one bed in the kitchen and some kitchens have two beds. There was always plenty of room.

SIGRIST: Why would there be beds in the kitchen?

PEDERSEN: I don't know. Don't ask...

SIGRIST: Because it was warm maybe, or...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Yeah. But they were so, built into the wall as I remember, you know. We used to call them "the hole in the wall." But of course, they had them draped

with curtains and, very pretty. The kitchen sometimes, used to use your kitchen more than you used your living room. That's where everybody gathered was in the kitchen.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the kitchen in the house that you lived in?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. The kitchen, house I lived in was a great big kitchen, and the living room, we called it "parlor." One big bedroom. And there were seven of us at that time, you know. Well, I lost my younger sister six weeks before I came out here. From an accident. She was twelve years old.

SIGRIST: What did she die from?

PEDERSEN: Well, in the back yard we had fences, and the kids were climbing on the fences. My aunt lived in the next house. She called them to come go to the store. Two kids jumped off the fence, and of course, she was ripped inside. Never recovered. She was only twelve years old. That was six weeks before I came out here. And when I came out here I was in mourning. See, you

know, you're into mourning in those days. They don't now. And I was up in black. Nice black coat. And I landed here the 7th of December. I was like freezing. And the first job I got, I got fifteen, fifty dollars a month. And the first thing I did was buy a winter coat. (she laughs) It was so cold.

SIGRIST: When, when your sister died, what else do you remember about that experience? Do you remember for instance the funeral or any of that kind of thing?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. I remember because at that time they, they didn't have so many funeral parlors. They were just opening funeral parlors. She was buried from the house and laid out in the house. And I always remember the first time I ever saw them be dressed when they were dead was when I came to this country. But back home they laid them out in what we called shrouds. A white shroud. I always remember her being laid out in the living room, remembered, you know. But see, women don't go to funerals as much over there as they, as they do here, you know. I remember her being buried.

SIGRIST: Was this diff-, this was difficult for your family?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah, very difficult. My father was at sea at the time, and he happened to be in Germany. And, of course, they, somebody said, "Wait till he comes home and let him know then." Our minister said, "The doctor says no. Let him know now." They let him know, and just by good luck there was a boat leaving that night to come to my home town which was a seaport town. And he got on that boat. But by the time he got there she was already buried, you know. Of course, first thing next morning he was at the cemetery, you know. It was sad. Then I lost another brother. He was twenty years old.

SIGRIST: Was that before you came to this country?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did he die of?

PEDERSEN: Pneumonia. In those days he was in what they call the National Guards. And they didn't have the huts, they had tents. And of course, it rained the two weeks

they were away, pneumonia. He passed away. He was twenty.

SIGRIST: How old were you at that time?

PEDERSEN: I was about fourteen.

SIGRIST: Was that common at that time? Did a lot of people die from pneumonia...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...in those days?

PEDERSEN: It was. I think it was. In fact, we, I don't ever remember going to a doctor. I don't remember seeing a doctor, but before I came here you saw plenty. Boy, did you go through the first degree. When you think, I'm thinking how they come here now. No examinations, no nothing. Boy, they made sure you were healthy.

SIGRIST: When you were, when you were a little girl did your mother or father ever tell you anything about when your mother gave birth to you? Are there any stories

about...

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: ...about when, when she was carrying you or giving birth to you?

PEDERSEN: No. No. They never talked much in those days about that. Here they talk about it. In fact, when you're having a baby, if you have a, a child knows, the older child knows right away. They never spoke about those things. Or they, very modest, I think too modest.

SIGRIST: When your, was your mother ever pregnant when you were growing up with brothers and sisters?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. Two younger sisters and me. And tell you the truth, I don't even remember her ever being pregnant. I don't remember the baby being born, and they were all born in the house. But we were sent, I guess, to somebody else, some neighbor's house when the baby came. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: So it was all very sort of quiet and...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Interesting. Tell me a little bit about school...

PEDERSEN: Oh, Lord.

SIGRIST: ...going to school in Scotland, and what that experience was like.

PEDERSEN: Oh, we went to school, we had, we went to school nine o'clock till twelve. And then you come home from twelve to one for lunch. Then you're back to school at one o'clock till four. And you went to school, over there you went to school to learn, you know. (she laughs) No nonsense. And every morning, of course, you always said the Lord's Prayer, which I realize they don't say it here anymore. But that...

SIGRIST: Can you describe the school building for me?

PEDERSEN: Well, I went to school, which was in the lower part of town. It's quite a walk. Then you built a brand new school not too far from where I lived. I remember

going to, I guess it just must have been a couple of years starting school. But we went to school when you were five. And we keep on going, I left school when I was fourteen. But...

SIGRIST: Were you parents educated people? Could they read and write?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yes. Great readers. (unintelligible) but always my mother, my mother used to say, "You'll read yourself blind," which I almost did. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your religious life there. What religion were you?

PEDERSEN: I was Protestant.

SIGRIST: And what, what Protestant sect? Presbyterians?

PEDERSEN: Presbyterian.

SIGRIST: You were Presbyterians.

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Oh, you had to go to church every Sunday. And

then maybe in the afternoon, Sunday school...(a bell rings)

SIGRIST: Excuse me. We're going to pause just for a moment.
(break in tape) We're now resuming with Maisie Pedersen. Mrs. Pedersen, you were telling us about your religion.

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said you were Presbyterians.

PEDERSEN: Presbyterian. We belonged to this church, and it was a great big church. And over there you paid so much a year, or a quarterly for your seat. You always had your own seat in the church. This was a big church we belonged to. And, of course, most of the time we had to go Sunday morning. Then usually in the afternoon there'd be Bible class or Sunday school. Then Sunday night you would get...(a telephone rings)...let it go. You wouldn't dare sew, or do anything like that, and...

SIGRIST: We're going to just pause for a second. (break in

tape) All right. We're off again with Maisie Pedersen. Mrs. Pedersen, again, you started telling us about church.

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: And that you went to church frequently.

PEDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: And I wanted to ask you, how did you practice your religion at home?

PEDERSEN: Well, I don't know how to put it, but we never got preached much because you got it mostly in Sunday school. But I used to win so many prizes, you know. Things like that. And, of course, there were bookcases all around our living room. And half of them I never got a chance to read, you know. But, uh, my people were very religious.

SIGRIST: Were there ways that you practiced your religion at home?

PEDERSEN: Oh.

SIGRIST: Were there, did you...

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: ...pray at home or...

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: ...do anything like that?

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No. Always at church?

PEDERSEN: Yeah, always at church.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how you celebrated Christmas?

PEDERSEN: Well, we did celebrate Christmas much. We celebrated
New Year morn.

SIGRIST: Oh, well, explain that for us.

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Well, like New Year, Scotch people are very superstitious. And whoever was your first foot as we called it, the first one that came to your home, the first of the year, if you came empty handed that was bad luck. He had to have something in his hand, even if it was a lump of coal. We were very supersti-, and that was a big time, was. We used to hang our stockings at, at New Year. Not at Christmas. Christmas was you're more in church, more Sunday school, more religion. That, it wasn't as commercial as it is here, you know.

SIGRIST: Would there be some kind of, of a dinner...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...a New Year's dinner or something like...

PEDERSEN: New Year's dinner and a Christmas dinner.

SIGRIST: What would, what would, what would be served at Christmas dinner?

PEDERSEN: Oh, mostly roast beef. We never went in much for turkey on the other side. Hams. And of course, there are always, every week you had soup.

SIGRIST: What kind, how did they make soup?

PEDERSEN: Oh, you name it. Everything but the kitchen sink in it. I always remember as a kid if I didn't go to church in the morning, I was the one that always had to chop every kind of vegetable you could think of. There was everything but the kitchen sink in that pot, in that soup. That's what we grew up on. And then every morning, before you went to school you had to have your oatmeal. Your milk. Tea. We never drank coffee.

SIGRIST: Who did the cooking in the house?

PEDERSEN: Oh, my mother done all the cooking.

SIGRIST: Was there something that she made...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...maybe a special dish that she made that was your favorite?

PEDERSEN: Well, she used to make, at Christmas time she always made, and New Year's, she always made her own cakes and her own shortbread, which was really Scotch made with pure butter. Made all her own cakes, cookies and everything like that. But I kind, we liked everything she cooked, because in those days there it is, you got to eat it.

SIGRIST: Now, you said there, there were seven children in the house.

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you name all your brothers and sisters?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. My older sister Ella.

SIGRIST: Ella?

PEDERSEN: She died this past June. She was ninety-six. My older sister, Jean. She's ninety-two. She's in North

Carolina, too. Then my brother, John. He died when he was twenty. Then I had another brother, Bob. He died, oh, just during the war. He couldn't go to war because he had an accident when he was a child, and he had a boot with a steel on it. So he was an air raid warden.

SIGRIST: Which war was this?

PEDERSEN: World War Two.

SIGRIST: World War Two.

PEDERSEN: He was an air raid warden, so he died during the war.

And of course, the air raid wardens are the last ones to get in the shelter. Because I remember one time I went home after the war, and I would say, "What's that across the street?" It used to be a laundry where I used to work. That was where they had the shelters when they get the siren, you always had to have a little bag handy and went to the air raid shelters. So, and then, I said to my sister, "What's the matter with your windows?" She says, "Maisie, we had a black out. The windows were blown in." We had it terrible in my home town.

SIGRIST: So who was, who was the child after Bob?

PEDERSEN: Me.

SIGRIST: You.

PEDERSEN: And then the one that called the youngest sister.

SIGRIST: What is her name?

PEDERSEN: Margaret. We call her "Ret." And then Emma was the youngest one.

SIGRIST: And she's the one who died?

PEDERSEN: Yeah. But it's funny. My brother that died right during the war, he was five years married, and his wife was expecting a baby. And the baby was born ten days after he died. And I went home. I saw that little girl. She's about five or six, maybe a little older. And my sister-in-law said to me, "Maisie, don't tell her who you are," because she had remarried, and she had two little boys of her own, you

know. That almost broke my heart.

SIGRIST: That is sad.

PEDERSEN: I thought that was terrible.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

PEDERSEN: I never saw her husband, but, and it's funny. She got married. She didn't know, she thought her step-father was her own father till she went to get a death certificate. And she said to her mother, "Who's Robert Lindsay?" Her mother said, "That was your father." Then she told her when she was born and how he died. I never heard from that girl until about a year, two year, a year and a half ago. She grew up, mind you, in my home town. Not far from our home town, but half an hour away. And never knew her relatives on, on my side. And one time she was working in this hospital, a volunteer, working, and she asked this old lady she worked with, "Did you ever know a Mrs. Lindsay?" She says, "Oh, yes, I knew, I think everybody knew Mrs. Lindsay if she came from Wart Street." So she told her, it was her story, you

know. She says, "Oh, she's dead, but she had a daughter." Told her where my niece lived. So the both of them got together. Now they're friendly and everything has changed, but she's, after all these years, now I never heard from her until she was married and had a son married. Now we correspond.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you when you were a girl, what do you remember about World War One?

PEDERSEN: World War, what I remember most was there was a fort near where we lived, Fort Mathilda, because all the soldiers were in training, and they always passed up, used to run to the end of our street. They always passed up the street, big street we called Nelson Street. Used to march there, you know, all right around, you know, to the next town for their training. I always remember that.

SIGRIST: Is there anything else about what you remember about that time, 1915, 1916, 1917, how your own family was effected in any way? For instance, did your father have to...

PEDERSEN: Oh, my father...

SIGRIST: ...have to fight, or...

PEDERSEN: No, my father, he was a sea at the time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember food shortages perhaps, or...

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No?

PEDERSEN: Not so much then. Not in the First World War. I don't remember. We always had plenty to eat. That's one thing that the Scotch people, they always make sure you had plenty to eat. They're a great one for eating.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about what you knew about America when you were a little kid.

PEDERSEN: Well, I didn't, I didn't know too much about America. In fact I, I had an uncle came here. In fact, just a couple of years ago, my son was going through certain

things, and he said, "What's this, Mom?" And it was, I had an uncle came here in 1903, three years before I was born. And he died here. And they buried him in potter's field. And then they must have taken him out of there and buried him in Evergreen. Because when I was back home I was visiting my cousin, which was her fa-, her father. And she gave me her father's death certificate. She says, "Do, do you know where that cemetery is, Maisie?" I said, "Yes, right in Brooklyn. Not too far from where I live." And they buried him in Evergreen.

SIGRIST: So he was in America...

PEDERSEN: But, but that was before I was born. But to that date nobody else, my father had been in America quite often on different trips, you know.

SIGRIST: Had he ever told you anything about America, what it was like here, or what, what impressed him, or...

PEDERSEN: Well, not really. I never tend to listen, because when I was old enough I wanted to go dancing. Let my two younger sisters listen. Not me.

SIGRIST: Is that what you did for fun when you were growing up, dancing?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: For a young lady?

PEDERSEN: Loved to dance.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, about how, how you went dancing and where you went dancing, and...

PEDERSEN: Well, there was different clubs in the town. Masonic club there'd be. And of course, some people were very prejudiced. Masonic clubs, you know, were Protestant. The were the Knights of Columbus, there'd be different clubs, we used go there to dance. Then different churches had different affairs. Then there was the, the town hall. And there were different halls in the town that ran dances. So wherever there was a dance hall I was there no matter what religion, Masonic, Knights of Columbus or whatever.

SIGRIST: As long as you could dance...

PEDERSEN: As long as I was home at ten o'clock. Very strict.
My parents were very strict when you had to be home.

SIGRIST: Well, now, what kind of dancing would you do? Were
you doing popular dancing...

PEDERSEN: Oh, popular...

SIGRIST: ...or traditional Scottish dances...

PEDERSEN: Popular dancing and the, all the Highland Fling and
Highland dancing, you know, like square dances. Like
what they call here sometimes line dancing. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: So all of that was popular among the young people in
Scotland?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. That was all popular. The fancy waltzes,
foxtrots, things like that, you know.

SIGRIST: Were there chaperons at these dances...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...because of all the young people?

PEDERSEN: There always, there was always a couple used to lead it off. And there were all of them, there was always a couple lead it off. And of course, the more you went around, the more you get to know the different ones, the more you get to know the best dances. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little why you wanted to come to America.

PEDERSEN: Well, I had a girlfriend, I was, since we were this high. (she indicates) And her and her mother and her brother wanted to come out here. They came out. So when they came out here, they asked my parents if I would come out. And they said no, no way. But finally they gave in and let me come. So I was supposed to come out to my girlfriend, her mother and her brother. Well, when I got to Ellis Island, my girlfriend ran off and got married. Her mother was working in Jersey for a woman that was very ill. So

she sent her son and another friend. Two fellows. They wouldn't let me off the boat because I was only eighteen. They wouldn't let me off the boat. Well, then, that was why I had to stay in Ellis Island overnight.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me about, did you want to come to America?

PEDERSEN: Yeah, I did. Of course, my parents thought, "Oh, she'll be right back." They didn't think I would stay. They thought I'd be homesick, I'd want to come back home. So they told me, "Whenever you want to come back home, just let us know." But, no. Oh, many a time I felt like going back. Can you imagine coming the 2nd of December. The first job I got was with a Jewish couple. Russian Jews.

SIGRIST: What did you expect about, before you came...

PEDERSEN: I didn't really know what to expect. I didn't expect it to be as, as big as it is, you know. I didn't expect it to be as big, especially New York.

SIGRIST: It was just going to be something different to do.

PEDERSEN: And in fact, and Brooklyn was so different. You know, Brooklyn was so big to me then. My first job was with Jews, and I wanted a cup of tea. And, of course, the drank a lot of coffee. I thought one day I'm going to make myself a cup of tea, the hell with them. So I found a little pan, put the tea in it, made myself tea, and when I was finished with the tea, because we were great ones on the other side for tea. I'd come in, make tea, my sister, but you had to make fresh tea. They wouldn't take what I left. It had to be fresh tea. But this couple I worked for, the old lady couldn't speak English. And when she saw me pour the rest of the tea out that I didn't drink, you know, that was in the pan, she nearly went crazy. So I come in, and I says, "What's the matter?" She said, "What'd you do with the tea that was left in the pan, Maisie?" I says, "I wasn't going to drink it again. I had my, out." They had a pot like this in the stove. (she indicates) I was supposed to pour the extra tea in there. I thought to myself, "Gee, is that how you drink tea?" But I was only there a month. A couple of months...

SIGRIST: Wait, wait, let's, let's wait till we get you to America to we talk about your jobs here.

PEDERSEN: Yeah, okay.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the process of getting your papers together and all of that when you were in Scotland? Getting your visa and whatever you needed?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. We had to, I had to go from my home town about an hour on the train up to the city in Glasgow. Most of the time I had to go up there, you know, for your papers and different things you had to go through.

SIGRIST: Was it a difficult process to get all your papers or not...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Why was it so hard do you think?

PEDERSEN: Well, I don't know. They asked so many questions, and you, sometimes you wouldn't know what to say. Then

your health, about your health, they were very strict about your health.

SIGRIST: Did you have to have an examination when you were still in Scotland getting your...

PEDERSEN: Oh, gosh, yes. We had to have an examination before you left. They don't let even board the ship. In fact, I left from Liverpool...

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you packed with, what you took with you? What did you pack when you came here?

PEDERSEN: Well, we, at that time you had what we called a, a steamer trunk. You had a steamer trunk. Most of it was packed in a steamer trunk. You didn't have suitcases like you, you had then. That most of them were in there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took specifically?

PEDERSEN: Well, all I can remember it was mostly spring clothes.

No winter clothes, you know. But I seemed to have enough clothes. But it was so cold when I came here.

I didn't realize, I guess my parents didn't realize how cold it was.

SIGRIST: Did anyone give you a present to take to America as a...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. My sister was manager of a store and the girl that worked under her, I had a sister right in Brooklyn, Fifth Avenue here, would I take a package out. So she came up to our house that night. I brought the package, it almost filled my steamer trunk. Because this woman had two children, she was saving woolen sweaters, knitted woolen socks and everything like that. However I, I delivered the package in time, and of course, a girl from my home town. I knew the family. I knew this woman. That's where I met my husband by it.

SIGRIST: Did someone give you like a good-bye dinner or some kind of little celebration to commemorate your leaving?

PEDERSEN: No. My family did. And most of my friends were there at the dinner. And of course, I got different presents. One I really liked was a beautiful pocket book my aunt gave me. And little gifts you got. You never got an awful lot.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the day that you left your house?

PEDERSEN: No, I don't. But I remember I had to go to Liverpool. And a friend of my father's had been in America. I think he lived in Texas. And I travelled on the train with him to Liverpool. My parents didn't come with me. I went with him to Liverpool. And I think he was going on the same boat. I came on The Baltic. But when I got on that boat I don't remember seeing him because I was seasick half the time.

SIGRIST: How did you get from Greenock to Liverpool?

PEDERSEN: By train.

SIGRIST: Is that a long train ride?

PEDERSEN: Yeah. It was a long train.

SIGRIST: And, I'm sorry, did you say you were travelling alone or you were travelling or you were travelling with somebody?

PEDERSEN: I was travelling alone, but he was travelling on the same train and was supposed to look out for me.

SIGRIST: Did he get on the boat also, or he was...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. He was going on the same boat. But I didn't see much of him on the boat because I was so seasick half the time.

SIGRIST: You, what was the name of the ship?

PEDERSEN: Baltic.

SIGRIST: The Baltic. And, well, tell me, was this the first you had ever been on a big ship?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Coming from a seafaring family...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Oh, I was on lots of ships, you know, river steamers and things like that. It was the first time I was on big, big ship like that.

SIGRIST: Tell me about being sick on the boat and what that experience was like.

PEDERSEN: Oh, it was a terrible experience. I never was sick now, the very nice young woman in the same cabin. I just forget how many people were in the cabin. And she was so nice. One time she says, "Miss, you have to eat something." I remember she came down with a bowl of rice. I made for the deck. I never looked at rice. In fact I don't like rice pudding to this day. "Oh, but you got to eat rice, you got to eat." (unintelligible) she was, I was very fortunate to have somebody so nice, you know.

SIGRIST: So you were in a cabin with several people.

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Another woman, her two little girls, she was very nice.

SIGRIST: Were they all Scottish?

PEDERSEN: Yeah. They were all Scottish. So one just tried to help the other, you know.

SIGRIST: And you said, what time of the year is this?

PEDERSEN: That was the 2nd of December I arrived here.

SIGRIST: December you arrived here. What else do you remember about the boat? Do you remember the dining room? You might not.

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes?

PEDERSEN: The dining room was one great big hall, you know. Great, all tables, you know. Not set up, all long

tables. I remember that. It was, you know, for the few times I was in the dining room.

SIGRIST: How long did the, the voyage take.

PEDERSEN: Oh, I think it took ten days...

SIGRIST: Do you...

PEDERSEN: ...at least.

SIGRIST: Do you remember maybe safety drills on the boat?

PEDERSEN: Remember what?

SIGRIST: Safety drills?

PEDERSEN: Yeah, they had, yeah. They had...

SIGRIST: What were those like?

PEDERSEN: Well, I wasn't able to go. I was seasick. But of course, I think once I went up. But they gave you instructions; which lifeboat to go to, which sections

to go to. And you had to put on your life jacket.
Oh, they gave us a life drill. I was able for that.

SIGRIST: Did they have activities on the boat for the
passengers to, to participate...

PEDERSEN: If they did I don't remember.

SIGRIST: You were down in the cabin?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember arriving in New York Harbor?

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: What, what's your first memory once the boat gets to
New York? What's the first thing you remember?

PEDERSEN: Well, I remember the Statue of Liberty.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about seeing the Statue of
Liberty?

PEDERSEN: Well, I just saw it, but I don't know whether, I didn't see very much of it, just for a glimpse because you were going, we had to go through the doctors and through all your papers at that time, and we were all below. So we didn't see too much. I didn't really see much of it until my girlfriend's brother and his friend came to claim me. And I remember us coming up, they got on the boat, and they, when they explained who they were, my girlfriend's mother couldn't come, her re-, brother, had his friend with him. And he said, "My mother will be down tomorrow to say she's your aunt." Because my girlfriend's mother was taking care of somebody in Jersey. She couldn't leave. And I thought, oh, boy, I'm going to be good liar. So his mother come down, because this woman had known, she had known me since she was a kid. So when she came down, she, they asked me, "Is she related to you?" I says, "Yes. She's my aunt." Because he told me to say she's your aunt. "What's her name." I told her name. "And which side is she related, your mother or your father's." Well, I said my mother's, (correcting herself) father's side, because this woman came from my hometown. My mother came from a different town. So they let me off with her.

SIGRIST: What, what do you remember about being taken to Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: I don't remember much about that. But all I remember in Ellis Island is when I did get there all you see was a lot of people in bunks, all were in great big place with all bed bunks, you know. Oh, I thought it was so horrible. (she laughs) Awful.

SIGRIST: Now you had to stay overnight in Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: Overnight there. Just overnight there. Then I got off the next day. Then I went to stay with my friends on Fifth Avenue, Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being fed at Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

PEDERSEN: I don't remember what we ate.

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you slept? You mentioned the bunks.

PEDERSEN: Oh, the bunks. They were comfortable enough. You know, they were the double bunks some of the kids have nowadays, you know. There were bunks like that, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of medical exams...

PEDERSEN: Oh.

SIGRIST: ...at Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What did you have to go through at Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: Well, they examined your eyes. They examined them, and your feet. Oh, you went through some examination. Your heart, your eye, everything, before they let you, that's one thing, can't understand people coming in now. They can just come in from other countries. No examination, no nothing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you got off of the boat?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. I was wearing a black coat, and a little black hat, and I think I had black shoes, because I was in mourning six weeks after my sister died. And it was cold, believe me. December, it was a spring, really a spring coat, what we would wear over there in December. It's not that cold over there.

SIGRIST: So the woman came who was the mother of...

PEDERSEN: Of the...

SIGRIST: ...the friend?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And she said that, you said that she was your aunt...

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and they let you off of Ellis Island?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did they take you?

PEDERSEN: They took me to her apartment on Fifth Avenue. Right here on Fifth Avenue in the Seventies. And I stayed with them until I got a job. And I lived in with this Jewish couple. Fifteen, I got fifteen dollars a month.

SIGRIST: What did, do you remember how you spent your first night in America? Did they give you a dinner or something...

PEDERSEN: No. No.

SIGRIST: Was, was their apartment crowded? Were there other people in apartment?

PEDERSEN: Well, in those days in Fifth Avenue in the Seventies it was what they called a cold water flat. There seemed to be a lot of rooms, but you didn't have the, I think it was what, rough stoves in the middle of the

living room, or middle of the kitchen. They didn't have the heat, steam heat and oil like they do now. I used to, I thought the place was so cold.

SIGRIST: Did they have electricity in the apartment or did...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. They had electricity.

SIGRIST: Tell me about how you got the first job? How did you got about getting the first job?

PEDERSEN: Well, I just think I got it through the paper. Looked at daily paper, got it through the paper. And I was there three months. Then my girlfriend's mother, she come back to her own apartment. But the woman she worked for, her brother lived in Bayridge here. 86th and Colonial. He was a sea captain. And he also was superintendent of the Ellem and Bucknell [PH] line of ships. So she asked me if I'd like to work for her brother in Brooklyn near my friends. I says yes. So I went to work for them. Right here at 86th. The house is still there but the family had gone. So, I went to, there was four children. And they, of course, naturally he was a Scots sea captain, he came

from the highlands in Scotland. And I was just treated like one of the family. There was two boys, two girls, and I was there until I got married. I was married from their house. And I was very, and when it came to outfit the kids for Easter, I don't know if you remember Wanamaker's Store. Used to go over to Wanamaker's, rig the kids out for Christmas and she used to rig me out, too. And I had my own room up in the attic. My own bed, my own bedroom, my own bathroom. It was all very comfortable.

SIGRIST: When you first got to, to New York, did you miss Scotland...

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and your family?

PEDERSEN: I miss, I missed my family very much. And many a time I wanted to go back, but I says, "No, I'm not going back. I'll stick it out." And I did.

SIGRIST: What, what were some of the things that you really liked about New York? Different things that you

really thought were wonderful?

PEDERSEN: Well, what I couldn't understand at first was the subway. In fact, they had to take me, my friend's son had to take me back and forth from my job when I worked the three months on 56th Street. What I couldn't remember was the subway. We'd come off one train and get on the other, and both trains were going in the same direction. I says, "Why do we have to get off of this?" "Well, you get off the Local, you go onto the Express." You know, we weren't used to that in Scotland, you know. The subways fascinated me. But, you know, you had to get used to all that.

SIGRIST: What did you do...

PEDERSEN: And I loved New York.

SIGRIST: What did you do for entertainment in those days. You know, on your day off, if you had a day off, what, how would you spend...

PEDERSEN: Well, I usually came to my friends. And then, you know, I used to go visit them. And, you know, diff-,

then we'd go different places, belonged different clubs. There was one club opened up, (unintelligible) and West of Scotland. Joined that. So my friends belonged to Knights of Columbus. I used to go with them. Wherever affairs were on, I always went, you know.

SIGRIST: Now, did other family members come to America in, in those first couple years? Did, did you send money to Scotland?

PEDERSEN: Yeah, once in a while I'd send money. But my, my other sister older than me, she came after me. And then my younger sister came. So two sisters came out to me. One older, one younger.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever want to come?

PEDERSEN: No. Oh, yes, my mother did. In fact, my mother was over twice on a vacation. In fact, I was married in January...

SIGRIST: Of what year?

PEDERSEN: '27. 27th of January, 1927. And I had planned to go home the coming summer. So, of course, I was expecting a baby, and my mother said, "Well, I hope that don't keep you from coming home." I says, "No, I'll come home." So I went home with the intentions of staying home until I'd had my first baby. But one day I was, I wasn't feeling good. I said to my mother, "I think I'll go home." She says, "You think you'll go where?" She thought I never should have called anywhere else but Scotland home. Because I was already married, and my husband kept after me, "Don't wait. I'm home," and jiminy he wanted me back. So I came back and I told, but she says, "Well, if you're going home, I'm going home with you." So my father had just came home from a long trip from sea. So he had the money, and my mother came with me. We came back in October, and she stayed till my baby was born the following January.

SIGRIST: What did your mother think of America?

PEDERSEN: She loved it.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things she liked about it?

PEDERSEN: Well, she loved being near the water, you know. And every morning she'd be down to the ferry, and she'd walk from the ferry, 69th and all the way to 100th Street and all the way up around. How she found her way I'll never know. She used to say, "I've a good Scotch tongue in my head. If I get lost I'll ask somebody where you live." But she really loved it here.

SIGRIST: Do you think that she would have moved here had it not been for your father?

PEDERSEN: No, I don't think so. I don't she would have moved. But she was out...

SIGRIST: It was a nice place to visit?

PEDERSEN: She was out twice. She came out again. She came back after the, you know, when was it, '48, '49, she came back, and she loved it.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your husband. What was his name?

PEDERSEN: His name was Pat Daly. He...

SIGRIST: And...

PEDERSEN: He came...

SIGRIST: ...how did you meet him?

PEDERSEN: I met him in this friend's house, the woman gave me the package. "Take this to Mary Gallagher." I took to her on Fifth Avenue. So, of course, I'd known this woman from my home town. Knew the whole family. So I kept visiting her, and it was in her house that I met my husband. He came from about, Glasgow, about twenty miles where I came from.

SIGRIST: And that's Daley, D-A-L-E...

PEDERSEN: D-A-L-L-Y.

SIGRIST: L-, D-A-L-Y?

PEDERSEN: (to Kevin Daley) Is that how you spell your name?
How do you spell it?

DALEY: With an E.

PEDERSEN: D-A-E-...

DALEY: L-, -L-E-Y.

PEDERSEN: D-A-L-E-Y? Or was it E-L-Y?

SIGRIST: And you said he was Scottish?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Was there a big Scottish population in Brooklyn at that time?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah. There was a big Scottish population in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Were they all from different parts of Scotland, or...

PEDERSEN: Different parts of Scotland. There used to be a delicatessen, the captain, this Isbister I work for used to go to. And they used to have a lot of

imported things from Canada. And, of course, he had four children. And he used to go there on Saturday, and he used to come with all these imported things. So, he told, this was a German couple that had the store. Two brothers. And he said, "Why don't you get more of this stuff because there are so many Scotch people here." Well, you have no idea how their business built up with all the Scot, then he employed a Scotch baker and a Scotch butcher, you know. There were so many Scotch and Irish and English in this neighborhood.

SIGRIST: And they all sort of employed each other...

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...you were working for a Scottish...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. And they, they employed, as I say, a Scotch butcher who knew how to make all the stuff that we would use on the other side. Scotch pies, steak pies and all like that. Different cakes and, he really made out good.

SIGRIST: Well, I should ask you, when you worked for the Jewish when you first arrived, those first three months, what did you find very unusually about the way they lived?
Now, obviously they found some of...

PEDERSEN: Well, they...

SIGRIST: ...your ways unusual.

PEDERSEN: Ways.

SIGRIST: How, what, what, what did you find unusual about them?

PEDERSEN: Well, I really can't say. But they're the type you never even contacted with them much. You know, you worked for them, they just told you what to do. And, and those two little kids, two little girls, I took care of them. But they, they never would take the kids out. That was my job, you know. They came up, they used to take us out, take us different places when we were children. That used to strike me funny.
Don't they ever take their own kids for a walk, you know, that struck me.

SIGRIST: Did you do any cooking in that house?

PEDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: They had a...

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...servants...

PEDERSEN: They were real Orthodox Jews. Because sometimes I didn't like their cooking. Where I went, when I went to Captain Isbister...

SIGRIST: What was his last name?

PEDERSEN: Isbister.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PEDERSEN: I-S-B-I-S-T-E-R.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

PEDERSEN: They came from, he came from the highlands of Scotland, him and his wife, both. And her brother was a minister in Scotland. I'd heard of him often. The (unintelligible) was there until I got married. And I liked it ver-, the house is still there, but, of course, they're all married and gone.

SIGRIST: And you probably felt more comfortable...

PEDERSEN: I did.

SIGRIST: ...living in a Scottish family.

PEDERSEN: I did. And I done the cooking, laundry, I done everything there. And the first time I ever saw a dish washing machine was in these houses. In the kitchen, of course, the top was like, not like the machines now. And on my day off it was always the two boys jobs, you know. Clear the table, do the dishes. And that, of course, next morning when I had to open up the machine, look at the dishes, I said, "Come here. Joey, come here. Did you do dishes last night? Put them on again. They aren't half washed." You know, I used to get after them.

SIGRIST: What did a dish washing machine look like in the 1920's?

PEDERSEN: Well, it was, it, the top was like a big table top. You lifted the top up like you'd lift the top of your stove, and the dishes went in there, you know. That, I, that was the first washing machine, dish washing machine I ever saw. I thought it was...

SIGRIST: And the water just...

PEDERSEN: It was, yeah, it was great with the, you know, it was four kids. There was six in the family. It was great.

SIGRIST: So this sea captain was very comfortable?

PEDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

PEDERSEN: Very com-, and the kids were very nice. You know, they were brought more so the way I was brought up

myself, you know. So...

SIGRIST: Now, did you and Mr. Daly have children?

PEDERSEN: Yeah, I had two sons.

SIGRIST: What, what are their names?

PEDERSEN: One in Patrick Daly, and the other is, well, we called him "Morris." Morris Daly. But his named is spelled M-A-U-R-I-C-E. That's Irish. But the Jewish spell it M-O-R-R-I-S. His middle name is Robert. He used to hate the name of Morris. He used to, he was always in a fight. They used to say, "Morris Finkelstein, Morris Rubenstein." They thought he was a Jew. He was always, as he grew up he took the name of Bob. He, I'm the only one who calls him Morris. Everybody calls him Bob Daly.

SIGRIST: And then when did you marry Mr. Pedersen?

PEDERSEN: Well, about five years after I was a widow I married him.

SIGRIST: When did Mr. Daly die?

PEDERSEN: 1966 he died.

SIGRIST: And then what was Mr. Pedersen's first name?

PEDERSEN: John.

SIGRIST: John Pedersen. And then was he Scandinavian?

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Was he from...

PEDERSEN: He was from, he was from Norway. But I, he was the type, if I went out he had to be with me. He had to know everywhere I was going. Going out to the store, "Where were you? When will you be back?" That didn't last long. I didn't live long with him. I just walked out on him.

SIGRIST: I see.

PEDERSEN: And that was the end, end to that.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you this question. What do you think would have happened to you if you had stayed in Scotland?

PEDERSEN: Well, I don't know. I guess I would have worked...

SIGRIST: How did some of your girlfriends turn out? You know, some of the kids that you had played with as children and who stayed in Scotland, how did their lives...

PEDERSEN: Oh, their lives all came out very nicely, the few that are, that I keep in touch with, you know, up until my later years. Their husbands got good jobs, and they were pretty comfortable. They all seemed very happy. But I, my niece over there, and different ones, they, a lot of people think well, you just live in a room and kitchen over there. They, you get such wrong impressions. Like here they call it a condo. But my niece, my relatives, they have their own, they call it a flat over there. They have their own flats. Like here you call it your own condominium, right?

SIGRIST: Did you ever regret that you came to this country?

PEDERSEN: No. No, I don't. I don't regret coming here. And I had a good life. But during the war my husband was a ship builder by trade. On the other side you've got to sail your five year apprenticeship before you become what you call a journeyman. He served his apprenticeship, he's a full journeyman, the war came on, you know, everyone's in the ship yards. But he worked for the Edison at the time, and he was bothered a lot with ulcers. Because he, he'd be off, off and on with his ulcers. The war came on and a couple of his friends would say, "Why don't you go in the ship yard?" One of his friends was a boss over in the federal, they're looking for ship builders. "Why don't you go back to your own trade?" But he thought it over, we talked about it, I says, "Well, when the war is over, they're working night and day making big money, the war is over, you'll still have your job in the Edison. So half a loaf's better than none." We were brought up to be very independent, you know. Not greedy. So I said half a loaf's better, and when the war is all over I say they'll be looking for jobs, which was right. The Depression came, people used to say to me you're lucky your husband has a job. "Well," I said, "he has a job. He wasn't making big

money during the war like some of you people." But still half a loaf is better than none. So I was glad he stuck with the Edison. He was still with them when he, when he died.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Pedersen, I want to thank you very much for letting us come over and, and ask you all these questions about Scotland...

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and picking your brain...

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Well, it was very nice to be with you.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Maisie Pedersen...

PEDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...on February 26th...

PEDERSEN: 26th.

SIGRIST: ...1994 here in Brooklyn at the Shore Drive Senior
Citizen's Complex. Thank you.

PEDERSEN: Yeah. Well, thank you very much.