

EI – 546

NAME: WILHEMINA ROGERS
BIRTHDATE: JULY 29, 1908
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 1994
AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 86
RUNNING TIME: 34:27
INTERVIEWER: ELYSA MATSEN
RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM
INTERVIEW LOCATION: LONG BEACH, CA
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JESSICA GONZALEZ
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THE NETHERLANDS, 1923
AGE: 15

SHIP: BELGENLAND
PORT: ANTWERP
RESIDENCES:

- **THE NETHERLANDS: KEOWA**
- **THE US: SIOUX FALLS, SD; CHICAGO, IL; SANTA ANA, CA**

Matsen: Good morning, this is Elysa Matsen from the National Park Service, Today is the 15th of September 1994 and I'm in the home of Mrs. Wilhelmina and Ray Rogers. Mrs. Rogers came from the Netherlands in 1923, when she was fifteen years old. Mrs. Rogers can you give me your full name and your date of birth to start?

Wilhelmina: My full name, Wilhelmina Katerina Vandergwore, you want me to spell it?

Matsen: Um, if you can spell Vandergwore.

Wilhelmina: Vandergwore.

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: V-A-N-D-E-R-G-W-O-R-E.

Matsen: Ok, and when were you born?

Wilhelmina: Koewa in, in Zeeland.

Matsen: And, and, but what was the date?

Wilhelmina: 1908.

Matsen: 1908. Can you tell me what your town looked like?

Wilhelmina: It wasn't much of a town, it was more of a, they called them burgs, there was just no town at that time, it was close to the dikes, that's where I was born, that's where I lived.

Matsen: Do you remember what your house looked like?

Wilhelmina: My, where I was born, I don't remember ever, known anything about that, don't, the only thing I remember there were a lot of tached roofs, straw roofs, that's the only thing I, cause it was that small a town.

Matsen: What, can you spell the name of your town for me, just spell it so that...

Wilhelmina: The name of the town?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: K-O-E-W-A- give me pencil, koewa, koewa,

Matsen: Well, let's go on, we'll get back to that.

Wilhelmina: Just the way it sounds, koewa.

Matsen: Tell me, what was your father's name?

Wilhelmina: Let me see, Jacobas.

Matsen: Can you spell that?

Wilhelmina: Jacobas isn't that, I don't know, I'll have to write it.

Matsen: Is that a name like Jacob?

Wilhelmina: Most of the names are, are Spanish names.

Mr. Rogers: Jacobas.

Matsen: J-A-C-O-B-A-S.

Wilhelmina: Yeah.

Matsen: What did he look like, can you tell me for the tape what he looked like?

Wilhelmina: What he looks like?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: He was tall and dark, he was handsome, brown eyes, and he shaved his hair, because he worked in the coal mine, but I wrote to him and I told him, "If you come to America, you better have some hair because they think you from a jail and you're a convict."

Matsen: Can you tell me what his, what his personality was like?

Wilhelmina: My father?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: Umm.

Matsen: Or, can you remember a story being a small child?

Wilhelmina: No, no, he was the kind, he was kind, yes.

Matsen: Any stories when you were growing up that you can remember about your father?

Wilhelmina: I beg pardon.

Matsen: A story with you and your father in it, that you can remember, growing up.

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: Ok, tell me what your mother's name was.

Wilhelmina: My mother?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: She was uh, I don't remember. The only thing I remember she had a baby every year

Matsen: What was her name?

Wilhelmina: Maria. Mary Louise. Mary Louise.

Matsen: Ok, and do you remember doing chores in your house, did your mother do the chores, the cooking?

Wilhelmina: Oh, I never did, my mother done all the cooking.

Matsen: How about your brothers and sisters, can you tell me their names and, and a little about them?

Wilhelmina: You want names of all them?

Matsen: Yeah, well what you can remember.

Wilhelmina: Ten of them.

Matsen: Ok, you tell me.

Wilhelmina: Ok, I'll start with myself and I was Wilhelmina, Augusta, no Peter, Augusta, Madelyn, Mary, Frank, Anthony, Jake, Albert and Henry.

Matsen: Terrific.

Wilhelmina: Ten of them.

Matsen: Large family, large family. Do you remember having a garden?

Wilhelmina: A what?

Matsen: A garden, do you remember a garden growing up, did you have a garden, a vegetable garden?

Wilhelmina: Yes, we had to have a vegetable garden with, that many people.

Matsen: What did it look like? Can you tell me what vegetables, what did it look like?

Wilhelmina: It wasn't, it wasn't by our house, at that time ground was real scarce in Holland and when they found a little plot someplace, somebody had a big garden there but it wasn't near the house.

Matsen: Do you remember what you'd grow in the garden?

Wilhelmina: Oh, beans and potatoes, just vegetables in general.

Matsen: How about a flower garden? Did you have flowers?

Wilhelmina: No, we tried but...

Matsen: Do you remember what type of furniture was in your house? DO you remember the inside, what it looked like?

Wilhelmina: We had a lot of beds, we had a four-bedroom house, in fact after all this time the house is still there like it was built yesterday, it was a colony, the house was brick and the roof was tile.

Matsen: Who did the cooking in your house?

Wilhelmina: Huh?

Matsen: Who did the cooking?

Wilhelmina: My mother.

Matsen: Do you remember some of the things she used to make for dinner? Can you tell me what a dinner would be like? What would she make?

Wilhelmina: No, I think our main, I think our main meals were meat and potatoes and things like that, there was nothing, no baking done.

Matsen: No breads or baking? What was your favorite thing that she would make?

Wilhelmina: The favorite?

Matsen: Yeah.

Wilhelmina: That she made?

Matsen: Hm hum.

Wilhelmina: I don't think I had any favorites.

Matsen: You didn't have any. Do you remember your grandparents?

Wilhelmina: Yes I do.

Matsen: What were their names?

Wilhelmina: My mother's folks, I don't know the first names, it was Dewvoss. I have it I have the whole thing someplace here.

Matsen: Do you know how to spell the last name?

Wilhelmina: Dewvoss, M, and that was on my mother's side, my father was, I don't even know their first name, its just Vandergwore.

Matsen: Vamdergwore, how about the last name on your mothers side, do you remember how to spell that name?

Wilhelmina: Dewvoss?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: D-E-W-V-O-S-S.

Matsen: Great. Thank You.

Matsen: What was um, can you describe a holiday for me, what was Christmas like in your house?

Wilhelmina: At Christmas?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: We don't have, no, we have Christmas, we don't have Santa Claus.

Matsen: Ok.

Wilhelmina: But we do have Christmas,

Matsen: Do you have a tree in your house?

Wilhelmina: No, we never did have a tree, I don't know why, the neighbors had trees, you see, it was the Germans that really celebrated Christmas and they had Christmas trees, we got Christmas presents for Santa Claus and that was in December, I think the 6th, but Christmas didn't mean anything, except going to church

Matsen: Can you tell me about going to church Christmas time, do you remember?

Wilhelmina: No, we bel...we went to a Catholic school, we were Catholics and they had Christmas, but nothing like here. It wasn't anything like its here.

Matsen: Do you remember special music or food? Did you have special food in your house at, during Christmas time?

Wilhelmina: At Christmas time.

Matsen: Hm hum.

Wilhelmina: Yes they do, they have something they call, no, that's on New Years.

Matsen: Well tell me about New Years then.

Wilhelmina: Oli, they call it Olibron.

Matsen: What's that?

Wilhelmina: It's, a fritter in oil and that's...

Matsen: Made with potatoes, made with...

Wilhelmina: Nah, just, it was like almost like a donut, it was boiled in oil with sugar around it. But...

Matsen: And they would have it New Years?

Wilhelmina: Any what?

Matsen: They would have that at new yor [sic] New Years?

Wilhelmina: Yes, but we did, Santa Claus, we did put our wooden shoes out, with straw in it and carrots for the, for his horse and we got toys and fruit, we got an orange, we got and some candy in our wooden shoes.

Matsen: And you would put those outside?

Wilhelmina: Beg pardon.

Matsen: You put them outside, out the door?

Wilhelmina: No, you put them inside, no not outside.

Matsen: Can you describe for me going to school when you were in Holland?

Wilhelmina: We went to a private school, it was a, a convent.

Matsen: Do you remember your teachers, do you remember the nuns, do you, can you tell me any stories about going to school?

Wilhelmina: No, I, uh, oh. I remember some things but no, it was a, they call it a pension vit [English: "pension out"] where they have rich girls. They, they lived there and ever once in a while they pick out a favorite one to come out and play with the girls and I was one of them to let.

Matsen: They picked you out to go and, and play with the girls who lived there?

Wilhelmina: That lived there, yes huh, cause they were lonesome and they like to have some, they had quite a playground.

Matsen: And you would play in the playground? Do you remember any games that you played as a child?

Wilhelmina: No,

Matsen: Any of the games?

Wilhelmina: We just well, you mean did we stay there?

Matsen: Well, when you went to play with these children what games did you play?

Wilhelmina: We didn't play any games because they had a, a large merry go round and they had swings and we did, really didn't play any games.

Matsen: You play on the merry go round.

Wilhelmina: Yes, heh, see I was uh, I was I must have been about twelve or thirteen at that time because I was fifteen when I came but I was still a child.

Matsen: Tell me about coming to America. Can you tell me who decided that you would go to America and why you decided to come to America?

Wilhelmina: Because my, I had aunts and uncles in South Dakota and they wanted my father to come. I think he was their only brother to come to America because he was working in the coal mines in Holland and they sent for us, but they couldn't get a visa but they could get one for three of us because we had to go to school here so the three of us came to this country

Matsen: Now who were the three? It was you and?

Wilhelmina: Peter, me and Peter and Augusta and we came by our self.

Matsen: Do you remember the name of the ship?

Wilhelmina: Belgenland. I think it's written on there.

Matsen: Yes,

Wilhelmina: It's the Belgenland.

Matsen: Do you remember what it looked like, the boat? Do you remember seeing it, what it looked like?

Wilhelmina: Yes I remember. I had a picture of it but I think I give a lot of those things to this girl.

Matsen: What, what did it look like, can you describe it for the tape?

Wilhelmina: You mean, the boat?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: The boat was so enormous that you can't believe, its like, it was almost as big as the Queen Mary. It was that big and we were just kids.

Matsen: Were you scared?

Wilhelmina: Scared to death because my sister was thirteen no, yes, and my brother was fourteen and I was fifteen, I was a big sister, yes I was scared. And how my mother ever let us come I never know.

Matsen: Do you remember where you left, which port you left from?

Wilhelmina: Antwerp.

Matsen: And how did you get there from were you were living?

Wilhelmina: Well I got a map here. I imagine it is about 500...

Matsen: Did you take a train?

Wilhelmina: Mile, oh no, we, train...

Matsen: Train?

Wilhelmina: Yes, uh huh.

Matsen: Who brought you to the train station?

Wilhelmina: It was quite a ways from the train station, but I don't remember how we got with our luggage and everything and when we came my father had a sore back and he walked way stooped over and he took us to the boat.

Matsen: Do you remember seeing him off?

Wilhelmina: I don't know how we ever got there.

Matsen: Do you remember what you took with you? Do you remember packing to come?

Wilhelmina: A what?

Matsen: Packing your luggage, do you remember what you took with you?

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: No. Do you remember what you were wearing, the clothes you were wearing?

Wilhelmina: Well I didn't wear wooden shoes, I left them home but I wore, it was a dress something like this, a plain dress and I had long hair, I had braids, they were short ones, but...

Matsen: What, what can you tell me about the voyage, being on the ship once you left the port and your on the ship. What was that like?

Wilhelmina: It wasn't a very, we, we went, we came steerage. I think you noticed that and it was, we came with an uncle and he was a doctor. Well he left us

there, we met him when we came on the boat but we never saw him again cause he was in second class and we were in steerage. It was crowded.

Matsen: Do you remember where you slept on the boat?

Wilhelmina: Yes, we had a cabin but we shared it with another couple.

Matsen: Where were they from?

Wilhelmina: I don't know. There were some, people were from all countries, they were from all over. I don't remember where they were from, but it was exciting because they had a lot of activities. Those immigrants had parties like you wouldn't believe the way they, they had a good time aboard ship.

Matsen: What would they do at a party? Can you describe one?

Wilhelmina: Oh, they played accordions and they played music and they just danced, they had a good time, but we just sat there because we were kids and we had nobody.

Matsen: Did you speak English at all?

Wilhelmina: Beg pardon.

Matsen: Did you speak any English?

Wilhelmina: No, no, no, I did, we didn't but when I came to this country it didn't take me very long because I think I was reading before I was here a month. I was reading, The Book of Knowledge. Anything I can get a hold of because before I came to this country I loved to read and they told me when I got

here, you can't read, you can't read their books. So I didn't want that to happen. I wanted to read.

Matsen: So you learned very quickly.

Wilhelmina: Yes I learned.

Matsen: How long were you on this boat, do you remember?

Wilhelmina: I think it must have been about ten days.

Matsen: And do you remember eating on the boat, do you remember going to meals?

Wilhelmina: Yes.

Matsen: What would you have?

Wilhelmina: Uh, it was, served, what would you say, big tables a lot of people ate there.

Matsen: What would, what would they serve you for dinner, let's say? Or what would you have for lunch? Do you remember any meals?

Wilhelmina: No, I don't, anything, the only thing I know that they served peaches and my brothers name is Pete and we called him Petchen [?], well we thought that was funny because they sell peaches but you didn't take an, didn't take anything with you. A slice of bread or egg, cookie or anything when you were eating, they took it away from you, you couldn't take it. But there was plenty food.

Matsen: Do you remember if the boat was, if the sea was rough or, or smooth sailing or...

Wilhelmina: I didn't get that.

Matsen: Was, was there any storms, were you sea-sick when you were on the boat, were you sea sick?

Wilhelmina: I wasn't but my sister was real seasick. She was sick.

Matsen: Do you remember going out on deck and, and looking?

Wilhelmina: Oh, yes. I remember sitting on the deck when the waves were so high, they swept over the bench and we had no business sitting out there but we were yes, it got rough and you had to walk up instead, instead of straight. It was, it all seems so far away.

Matsen: Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

Wilhelmina: Yes, I, that's the first thing we saw, was Ellis Island.

Matsen: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

Wilhelmina: The what?

Matsen: The Statue of Liberty.

Wilhelmina: [Laughs] Ok.

Matsen: I think there's a story to tell here.

Wilhelmina: Well, I was fifteen years old and I never paid much attention to boys because I never, no one ever paid any attention, but there was a young sailor there and he brought me a half of watermelon. I had never seen a watermelon. I thought it was some kind of a fish, so my sister and I threw it overboard.

Matsen: What a great story!

Wilhelmina: We didn't, we wouldn't eat it.

Matsen: Cause you just didn't know what it was.

Wilhelmina: I didn't know what it was. I think that was the first time I tasted American ice cream, too.

Matsen: And what did you think of that?

Wilhelmina: Which was real good, he brought it to me and I was, as I said, I was still a little girl.

Matsen: So do you remember the Statue, Statue of Liberty?

Wilhelmina: Yes, I do, I do, but then we didn't pay much attention toward it, we knew it was there and that was it.

Matsen: Now what did you think when you, when you arrived at Ellis Island, were there doctors that came on the boat to see you? Did you get right off the boat? How long did you have to stay?

Wilhelmina: I don't remember so much about it. I do remember we got off the boat and got on Ellis Island and I remember land, landing there. You see nobody

paid any attention to us, we had money but it was Dutch and French money, so when we landed, here we were with our luggage, nobody to take our luggage. We didn't have any money to pay to have it taken away. So someone felt sorry for us and had it put on, on a ferry, I think it was a ferry to Ellis Island and then once we got there we got in trouble, because aboard ship we were supposed to have shots, which we didn't get, so when we get, and they had a card that we were suppose to show it but when we got to Ellis Island we didn't have the card stamped so they kept us there.

Matsen: How long did you stay?

Wilhelmina: Seven days, while somebody was waiting in New York to take us back to South Dakota and Ellis Island was another thing a lot like on a boat. There were so many people there from foreign countries and they all had a good time. They all celebrated and danced and but I remember there was great big windows and they were high up and you couldn't look out. I used to stand on my brother's back, he stood on my back so we could look out of the windows to see America.

Matsen: Did the doctors on Ellis I... do you remember seeing doctors when you were on Ellis Island?

Wilhelmina: Yes, we, we had, we had to have the shots.

Matsen: So you remember that? Were the doctors...

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: Nice to you?

Wilhelmina: I don't, I don't remember we had to stay there. It was about six or seven days. I know it was a week or so that we...

Matsen: What did you do during the day when you were staying at Ellis Island?

Wilhelmina: Just, just there.

Matsen: Where did you sleep?

Wilhelmina: Nothing to do.

Matsen: Where did you sleep?

Wilhelmina: Well they had, this sounds funny. Maybe I was dreaming, I don't know. Their rooms, I saw pictures of it already. It was a great big dormitory but they weren't beds like this. They were stacked, they were, but there were wire like cages almost it was, the whole, it was a big room full of those beds and that's where we stayed.

Matsen: Do you remember playing on Ellis Island, going outside, did...

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: You stay inside...

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: Most of the time.

Wilhelmina: We never were left out of the room. We never come outside. It was almost like being in jail I guess but we didn't know any better.

Matsen: Did you ask, do you remember meeting any people at Ellis Island?

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: How about eating at Ellis Island? Do you remember going and having food there? Lunch or dinner? No?

Wilhelmina: No, you mean on Ellis Island?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: No, you know, we were, we were shy, we didn't even dare talk to anybody. I think that was it and scared.

Matsen: So you were scared...

Wilhelmina: And scared too.

Matsen: What can you tell me about when you were allowed to leave Ellis Island?

Wilhelmina: When I what?

Matsen: When you were allowed to leave Ellis Island?

Wilhelmina: Yeah.

Matsen: Tell me about that, what did they, they told, they came in and told you...

Wilhelmina: Honey I didn't get that.

Matsen: Tell me about leaving Ellis Island, leaving Ellis Island, who came to pick you up?

Wilhelmina: My uncle, he didn't come pick us up at Ellis Island, we took the ferry again to New York and he picked us up there and we stayed in a hotel for a couple of days, I think. The name of the hotel was Hollandia, Hollandia and he took us to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Matsen: Do you remember, what did you think of New York?

Wilhelmina: It was just too big to imagine and coming from a little tiny country it was really something.

Matsen: How did you get to Sioux Falls?

Wilhelmina: By train, by train and we had a berth on the train. But Gussie and I slept together and you could imagine two of them sleeping in the same tiny bench and fighting because we were just kids and they, we had meals, beautiful meals. I remember eating corn on the cob, which I never had before and it had two little things on the side, didn't know how to eat them.

Matsen: What else did you have to eat on the train, do you remember?

Wilhelmina: No I don't.

Matsen: Just the corn on the cob and who was in Sioux Falls when you got there?

Wilhelmina: My father's two sisters lived in Sioux Falls.

Matsen: Now what were their names?

Wilhelmina: Shomet and Billiam, Mary Shomet and Corly Billiam and they took us in, but we didn't stay with them. My brother stayed with them. My sister and I had to go to school but we went only, we went to school in the afternoons and I went to live with a doctor and my sister went to work with this uncle that come to get us. She went to stay with him. Well I stayed with this doctor for five years, his wife died right after I got there and I kept house for him and I was sixteen years old then. For five years I took care of his little boy.

Matsen: What was his name?

Wilhelmina: Donahue. (?) Doctor Harry Donaga. (?)

Matsen: So you lived, you were, you were his housekeeper, baby-sitter...

Wilhelmina: Yes, a large big house but I was the house-keeper.

Matsen: Did you do the cooking there?

Wilhelmina: Oh yes, I done everything. I took care of the little boy.

Matsen: What can you tell me about school in America?

Wilhelmina: Well we went to Americas ????? school. It was some kind of a college. I can't think of the name of the college now, but it was for people to learn the language and we went there for quite a while. It was, schools in America were a pleasure because they all had swings and slides. We thought that was wonderful but then we didn't get to go there, we went to this school.

Matsen: And did you stay at that school or did you eventually go to an Amer, another American school?

Wilhelmina: No, no, no I went, we, I stayed there until, until I got married and then come to California.

Matsen: Now what can you tell me about the town that you lived in when you came to America. What was that like?

Wilhelmina: What?

Matsen: The town.

Wilhelmina: The town, Sioux Falls?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: Well we thought it was a big town at that time, compared to what we, but now it's enormous. Isn't it honey?

Mr. Rogers: Pretty big, about two hundred thousand.

Wilhelmina: It was a beautiful town. It was a, it was a city, we liked it.

Matsen: Now the house where you lived in, it was a big house?

Wilhelmina: The house?

Matsen: The doctor's house.

Wilhelmina: Where I lived?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: Yes, it was a big hou... it was a two-story house.

Matsen: What was it made of? Can you tell me what it looked like?

Wilhelmina: What it looked like?

Matsen: Hm hum.

Wilhelmina: The house the inside? The only thing I know it had about one, two, three, four, four bedrooms only one bath. It was a, it was a old house at that time but it was a beautiful house. The people I worked for were rich. They all...

Matsen: Now your sister, where was she staying? Your sister...

Wilhelmina: My what?

Matsen: Where was your sister staying?

Wilhelmina: She was staying with Doctor Billian that was, it was relatives and she was staying there.

END TAPE A BEGIN TAPE B

Matsen: And your uncle who picked you up, what was his name?

Wilhelmina: Dr. Billian.

Matsen: That was your uncle who came to get you?

Wilhelmina: He was a, what was he, what did you say?

Matsen: He, was he who came to get you?

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: At Ellis Island.

Wilhelmina: Uh hah, Doctor Billian, but not the Doctor Billian she went to work for, it was his father.

Matsen: Oh, ok.

Wilhelmina: He was a retired at that time.

Matsen: Ok, do you remember any kind of entertainment, do you remember doing anything for fun when you lived there, any entertainment?

Wilhelmina: You mean at Ellis Island?

Matsen: No, no.

Wilhelmina: At Sioux Falls?

Matsen: Yes.

Wilhelmina: Oh, yes. The only, no, the only thing I remember was the school, the school entertainment, that's the only thing. Otherwise no, we didn't do much because my aunts kept track of us and we better not have any entertainment.

Matsen: How did you meet your husband?

Wilhelmina: We haven't been married very long.

Matsen: Oh, ok.

Mr. Rogers: No, not me, your, your...

Wilhelmina: You mean my first husband?

Matsen: Yes, your first husband.

Wilhelmina: Oh, that's ah, I don't know, I guess I knew so many by that time I was so popular. I knew so many boys that he was just one of them and I went with him for four years before I married him. I want to show you something.

Matsen: Oh wait one second.

Wilhelmina: Oh, I can't.

Matsen: When were finished you can show me.

Wilhelmina: Mm, ok. After a while.

Matsen: Um, when did you move to California?

Wilhelmina: No, I went to Chicago first.

Matsen: Oh, ok.

Wilhelmina: I moved from South Dakota, I went to Chicago to marry someone else not the one I was going with, someone else. He was a German and we were

going to Germany on a honeymoon but I changed my mind when we got to Chicago and I didn't want to marry him. My boyfriend was in California at that time and he sent all the letters to my folks and when I got the letters I decided to come to California, but it took me a year before I got to California and that was in 1929, I came to California.

Matsen: Where in California?

Wilhelmina: Yes, uh huh.

Matsen: Where?

Wilhelmina: In Santa Ana.

Matsen: Santa Ana.

Wilhelmina: And we were married for fifty, what, four years.

Matsen: Was there any, once you came to America were there any family tragedies that you can remember?

Wilhelmina: No.

Matsen: Everyone...

Wilhelmina: Um, my father died in 1935, he died, not, no, no, my folks came in 19, three years after we did, in 1928, My father died about seven years later I think.

Matsen: Now did you go to live with your parents once they moved?

Wilhelmina: South Dakota.

Matsen: You went and lived with your parents then or did you stay where you were in the doctor's house?

Wilhelmina: No, no, they had a house, When my folks came to this country after three years, the three of us children had a house for them completely furnished when my folks come off of the train they moved right into this house and the house of their own.

Matsen: So you did not live with your parents then?

Wilhelmina: No, no. I still stayed with the doctor all that time.

Matsen: Ok, are you happy that you came to America?

Wilhelmina: You mean hobbies?

Matsen: NO, are you happy that you came here?

Wilhelmina: Oh yes, uh huh, uh, at first when we get got here I wasn't, we were homesick we wanted to go back and my aunts kept saying "You better behave cause if you get sick we'll send you back." We tried everything to get sick, cause we wanted to go back. We didn't like it because our folks weren't here.

Matsen: And then when they came it was better?

Wilhelmina: Yes, when they came here, my mother was, must have been about forty-two years old at that time. She had dark hair when we left, by the, three

years she had turned snow white, so it must have been a big worry for her.

Matsen: What can you tell me about your brothers and sisters. What did they do? Where did they go?

Wilhelmina: Ah, well, um my, I had four brothers in the service. My youngest brother was killed in Pearl Harbor, let me see. I can't see, which one is it? This one here turned out to be lieutenant commander in the navy.

Matsen: What was his name?

Wilhelmina: That was Jake.

Matsen: Oh ok.

Wilhelmina: The one that lived in Glendora.

Matsen: Hm hmm.

Wilhelmina: Ah huh, and this one, he was a business man in Sioux Falls.

Matsen: Who, who...

Wilhelmina: That was Frank, he di... he died.

Matsen: Hm hmm.

Wilhelmina: And Tony, he's retired now, he was in the navy, too.

Matsen: Now he lives umm, further east from here.

Wilhelmina: This one lives in Jackson, this one lives in mar, say it for me.

Mr. Roger: Marino Valley.

Wilhelmina: Marino hm hmm and Mary lives in Concord, right now. She lives not too far from here and she's real...

Matsen: What was her name? Her name is?

Wilhelmina: That's Madelyn.

Matsen: That's Madelyn. She lives in Norwalk.

Wilhelmina: Yes, hm hmm.

Matsen: Ok, well I want to thank you for doing this interview with us, very much, and talking about your experiences coming to this country and this is Elysa Matsen. I'm signing off and I'm here with Mr. and Mrs. Rogers on, and with Peter Hom is doing the recording on, on September 15, 1994 for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Thank you Mrs. Rogers.