KM-027
MARY (JOHANNA KATRINA MARIA) HOUBEN RYMER
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INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE
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THE NETHERLANDS, 1914
AGE 3
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Rymer is the sister of Mary Hilla, Interview KM-028.

MOORE: Good morning. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 22nd of January 1994, and I'm in Las Vegas, Nevada at the home of Mary Rymer, who came from The Netherlands in 1914 when she was three-and-a-half years old. Why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth, please?

RYMER: Johanna Katrina Maria.

MOORE: And what was your maiden name?

RYMER: Johanna Katrina Maria Houben.

MOORE: Can you spell that, please?

RYMER: H-O-U-B-E-N.

MOORE: And your current name?

RYMER: Rymer. R-Y-M-E-R.

MOORE: Where were you born?

RYMER: In Ulestraten, Netherlands. U-L-E-S-T-R-A-T-E-N.

MOORE: And what size town was Ulestraten?

RYMER: I have no idea.

MOORE: Do you, were you ever told what the town looked like, or what the major industry of that town was, or anything about the town that you were born in?

RYMER: No, except everybody had, my mother and father had a mill downstairs of the two-story house, and we were on the ground floor. My grandfather was the bergermeister of the province of Limburgh. My uncle had produce, plums, import and export, and that's all I remember.

MOORE: Okay. And what was your father's name?

RYMER: Joseph Peter Houben.

MOORE: And what was his occupation then, you said?

RYMER: He was a miller.

MOORE: And what did he look like?

RYMER: He was a big man. He weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds, but only about five foot-ten.

MOORE: And his hair and eyes?

RYMER: Dark hair, dark eyes. Dark brown, almost black hair.

MOORE: What about his personality and temperament? How would you describe him?

RYMER: Please.

MOORE: Why?

RYMER: Well, am I off the air.

MOORE: No.

RYMER: No, no. No comment.

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

RYMER: We don't have very many pleasant memories of our father. He was a typical old country, bossy, lord and master of the house.

MOORE: What about your mother? What was your mother's name?

RYMER: Mother was Maria Patrina Visschers, V-I-S-S-C-H-E-R-S. She was very docile and very kind, very loving, and very browbeaten by you-know-who.

MOORE: And what did she look like, your mother?

RYMER: We all resembled Mother. She was fairly small-boned, about five foot five, probably weighed about a hundred and thirty pounds. Lived to eighty-nine years of age.

MOORE: And what was her occupation?

RYMER: Housewife, bore six living females and one stillborn and one male son.

MOORE: What were her chores? Is there a story that you associate with your mother from childhood, something that typifies your mother or that you tell?

RYMER: Nothing except she was a hard-working woman, raised all these kids. She had a garden, milked cows until we were old enough to do it. We had chickens and

turkeys and pigs and cows and hay and grain. We had a small farm about a section, I think, perhaps a section, a hundred and sixty acres that we had homesteaded.

MOORE: In Holland?

RYMER: No, no, in America, after we came to the United States. No, in Holland we had a two-story house with the mill on the ground floor which my mother and a hired man operated. In Holland, as probably in lots of foreign countries, everything is milled. All the grain for the cattle and for human consumption goes to a mill where it's ground, and that's what they had.

MOORE: Could you name all your brothers and sisters in order of birth?

RYMER: Okay. My sister Jeanne Marie, J-E-A-N-N-E, died of leukemia in 19, the mid-'70s.

MOORE: She was the oldest.

RYMER: I'm the oldest.

MOORE: You're the oldest.

RYMER: She was eighteen months younger than I am. Then

around came Leoni Melanie, which is Leona in English. She was born December 31, 1914. Then came Cecelia Rose, born in 1919. Then came Martha Beatrice, born in 19, I presume '21. I'm not really sure without my calendar. Then came Josephine Valerie, born in 1920 . . . in the late '20s. And then came Joseph Roman, my only brother, who is twenty years younger than I, so that would make him born in '30, 1930. All living except my next oldest sister Jeanie, she died in the late '70s of leukemia.

MOORE: Now, you described your house. What was your house made of in Holland? What was the structure?

RYMER: The pictures I saw, it looked like it was brick. I think all of them in southern Holland were brick.

MOORE: How many rooms do you think were in there, would you guess?

RYMER: Probably, the mill on the ground floor, and probably two bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen on the top floor. The pictures I've seen look like a square, straight up and down house, probably sixteen hundred square feet.

MOORE: How was it heated? Do you know?

RYMER: I have no idea.

MOORE: You said there was a garden.

RYMER: No, the garden was in Montana.

MOORE: Oh, I see. Do you remember anything about furniture that you had in that building?

RYMER: No idea.

MOORE: All right. Was that mill in or out of town?

RYMER: It was in a village, on the outskirts of a village, the village of Ulestraten.

MOORE: Did you keep animals in Holland?

RYMER: Not to my knowledge.

MOORE: Who else lived with you then?

RYMER: My sister Anne, my father and my mother.

MOORE: What about, who did the cooking in the family?

RYMER: I have no idea.

MOORE: Did you have a favorite food in Holland?

RYMER: I have no idea.

MOORE: Do you know what the kitchen looked like?

RYMER: I have no . . .

MOORE: Okay. How about grandparents? Where did they live?

RYMER: They lived in Ulestraten. (a clock chimes in the background) Grandpa, I think his name was Peter, and Grandma I never knew her by anything but "Grandma." It was probably Petranella, because I think my mother was named after her.

MOORE: Were you, did you see your grandparents very often when you were a child?

RYMER: I have no idea.

MOORE: Okay. Were you especially close to someone in the family? In your family, who were you closest to?

RYMER: We were all about the same. We were a very close family.

MOORE: Do you have any anecdotes about any of your brothers and sisters?

RYMER: Any what?

MOORE: Any stories about any of your brothers or sisters?

RYMER: Oh, you don't want to start me on that.

MOORE: Well, give us a for instance, one.

RYMER: No. No, there were too many funny things that happened tous. (she laughs)

MOORE: All right. What about religious life?

RYMER: We were all devout Catholics?

MOORE: And was there a church nearby that you attended in Holland?

RYMER: I don't know.

MOORE: How did you practice religion in your home? Did you have prayers, grace?

RYMER: In Holland?

MOORE: Yes.

RYMER: I don't remember. In the United States we had the rosary every night, and cathecism.

MOORE: In Holland did they tell you of any religious persecution for being Catholic in Holland?

RYMER: No.

MOORE: Okay. What about holidays? Do you remember any?

RYMER: Honey, I don't remember a thing about Holland, not one thing. They said when we left there that Grandma kissed me goodbye and I said, "I will never see you again." I don't remember that either. I remember nothing.

MOORE: Do you remember about coming to America, anything?

RYMER: Nothing.

MOORE: Do you remember the boat trip at all?

RYMER: Nothing.

MOORE: How about the voyage over? Do you remember . . .

RYMER: I remember nothing until we landed in Valier, Montana. I remember my mother telling us that we were held in Ellis Island for quarantine, and then we were put on the train and we were led directly to Montana.

MOORE: Did they tell you anything about the boat trip

afterwards? Did your family ever . . .

RYMER: Except that my mother was seasick. Looking back, she was probably pregnant with the girl that was born New Year's Eve. And the two of us were, were in everybody's care because she was too sick to look after us. I have no recollection at all.

MOORE: Did they ever tell you about why they came to America?

RYMER: Yes. Monsignor Day of Helena, Montana was a missionary, like the Mormon missionaries or the Lutheran missionaries, and he went to Europe to bring back to, as a mission, to interest people in coming west. And he came and gave many speeches telling them, "The land of opportunity, the land of milk and honey where you can be a millionaire overnight." (a cuckcoo clock can be heard in the background) And so forth, and so on. And my father attended several of those meetings, or whatever you want to call them, and he was enticed with the outlook that America was the land where he could make a million and then return to Holland. So he came with the first boatload, to look it over and see if he liked it, and then he would come back and get Mother and my . . .

MOORE: When was that? When was that first trip over?

RYMER: It was in 1913. While he was over here, he got a job working someplace. I have no idea where, but I remember him, my family saying that he contracted cholera, and he was very, very sick for a couple of months. Then he came back to Europe and he picked up Mother and we two kids, and some more people that were in the mood to come then, and another boat load of us came over, and that boat load went directly to a little, uh, commune, I guess you would call it. There was a great, big house there that about twenty families were put into. We went to the town of Valier, which was probably about fifteen miles west of this so-called commune.

MOORE: How do you spell Valier?

RYMER: Huh?

MOORE: How do you spell the town's name, Valier?

RYMER: Valier. V-A-L-I-E-R.

MOORE: Valier, okay.

RYMER: Valier. And they homesteaded there, they built a

house, a small two-room house, which was later added on, two more rooms were added on. I don't know about the other foreign countries, but when my folks came to this country they had to have a sponsor and they had to have X amount of dollars. I don't know how much it was, but they had to have enough for a team of horses, a plow, a disc, a seeder, and a house. Which, as I remember my mother telling us, ran about six thousand dollars.

MOORE: How did they get that money?

RYMER: Well, they sold the mill.

MOORE: They sold everything? Did they tell you any stories about selling everything, about the trauma of that? What was your mother's attitude about coming to the United States?

RYMER: Well, in those days women did whatever the men wanted them to do. There was no questions asked. Naturally, she was heartbroken to leave her family. She had to be. But, like I say, it was true, I was too little, I don't remember this.

MOORE: And you said that your grandmother kissed you goodbye.

What else did they tell you about parting? Anything? Did you take anything from Holland with you?

RYMER: Oh, yes. My mother brought a clock that was a wedding present that my brother now has. She brought a waffle iron, two waffle irons. One that made the little Dutch waffles for New Year's, and the other made the other. She brought some seeds with her. I don't know where she put all this in this trunk, but she had, I think she even brought a few plants with her, but I wouldn't be sure about that.

MOORE: Did she take any food with her?

RYMER: I, no, I doubt it, because they were fed on the ship.

MOORE: So when you came back on the ship, who came? You, your sister and your mother was your father with you?

RYMER: Oh, yes, he came back and got us.

MOORE: And what did they ever tell you about Ellis Island? Anything?

RYMER: Nothing.

MOORE: Did they tell you why you were quarantined?

RYMER: No, that was the going rule. Everybody was quarantined. They were all kept on Ellis Island. I don't know. I think that they were twenty-one days, but I'm not sure. Now, two of my sisters have gone back. When they were on a trip to New York City they went around Ellis Island. Well, I was back there about five times, but I never did get to Ellis Island.

MOORE: Did your parents ever tell you about any significance of the Statue of Liberty in terms of coming into the harbor? Were there any stories about that?

RYMER: If they did, I don't remember.

MOORE: Okay, that's all right. Now, when you said about, I want to know more about this, uh, oh, did they mention your medical examination at Ellis Island at all? You were quarantined, so supposedly you had a . . .

RYMER: I presume, but I have no recollection.

MOORE: So your family went from Ellis Island, boarded a train and they went out to Montana.

RYMER: Right.

MOORE: And so you said your father was enticed by the land of

milk and honey, as you said.

RYMER: Right.

MOORE: Is that where you . . .

RYMER: What a rude awakening he got.

MOORE: Tell us about that. What do you mean?

RYMER: Well, in the first place, if you know anything about the Wild West, this is all prairie land. Never been cultivated, never been plowed. So you go out and you buy a plow that you walk behind, and a horse that pulls it, and you plow up all this native land. Then it has to be a disc, which is the round things that you cultivate the land with, and then you have to seed it. Well, it takes about five years for the land to get in condition to grow anything. Well, in 1915 they had a lot of rain, well, of course, the ground wasn't ready. 1916 was not bad, but they still didn't make anything. '17, '18, '19 were absolutely drought years. In 1919 they didn't even harvest one spear of grain. Then along, they struggled along. They leased some more land and worked some more.

MOORE: So they, given the amount of land, you said, when you

say . . .

RYMER: Homestead, yes.

MOORE: It was given to you by . . .

RYMER: The government.

MOORE: The government.

RYMER: And, but in that, in those stipulations, as I remember, as I remember it, you have to put a building on in a certain length of time, and you have, there are stipulations that come with this Homestead Act, and you have five years in which to do it, and then you get clear title for this land. There were lots and lots of homesteads around, and they just closed the Homestead Act as late as ten years ago, where you could no more do that. But that's where most of the people in the early days got their start was through this Homestead Act, where they could go out and get a piece of land. I think it was a section that they could have. They had to put a building on it.

MOORE: They had to develop it.

RYMER: That's right.

MOORE: They had to develop it, and then fence it, those kinds of things.

RYMER: That's right. They had stipulations. You had to have a house on it, a fence on it, growable, something growing, you know, in so many years. And that's what they meant by the Homestead Act. Well, then in 1928 they had what they call the bumper crop. It was lots of rain and wheat was good, and the barley and the oats were good, so we had a good year. And then after . . .

MOORE: This was 1920 what?

RYMER: Nine.

MOORE: That's already ten . . .

RYMER: All these years they just scrimped. They just made a living.

MOORE: Off of what, made a living?

RYMER: Off of the land.

MOORE: What about animals? What kind of animals did they have?

RYMER: Well, we had cows for milk, we had horses for pulling the machinery. We always had a couple of pigs. We always had about twenty-five turkeys. We always had chickens.

MOORE: How many cows did you have?

RYMER: Probably about five, enough for milk and butter. And during these rough years we had a cream separator, a big thing that you put your milk in and you crank it. We had to get it to a certain speed, and then the milk and the cream would separate. And we'd take the cream into the town creamery, and for that we would exchange, no money changed hands. We would get sugar, coffee, things that we couldn't grow. There was a coal mine about twenty-five miles north of town, and we'd trade them grain for coal. So we lived without any money at all. We raised our own garden. Mother canned, like oh, six hundred quarts of peaches and pears. She had to buy peaches and pears, because they only grew apples there. But she canned everything, even fish were canned.

MOORE: Did you have a smokehouse?

RYMER: We had, no, we didn't have a smokehouse as such, but

we had a square cage, like, built, that hung in the basement, and they used what they call liquid smoke.

MOORE: What was that?

RYMER: It's a liquid that you put over your hams and you hang them up to dry and it gives you a smoke effect. We candled eggs in the summer when they were profuse, put them in a crock, and we even put them in, poured oats over them or put what they called a liquid glass over them. Eggs will keep indefinitely if the air don't get to them. We made sauerkraut, big batches of sauerkraut. Like I say, we had potatoes and carrots in the root cellar. We did not have to buy anything except coffee, sugar, salt, you know, condiments. Very little was bought, and most of that was gotten at the grocery store in exchange for cream at the creamery, which was, one was in conjunction with the other.

MOORE: Did you ever go hungry at all?

RYMER: Never. We had plenty to eat. We had beefsteak for breakfast. We walked a mile-and-a-half to school in the wintertime. It got as much as sixty below zero.

MOORE: And what about transportation, then? What would you use for transportation?

RYMER: First we had a horse and buggy, then we had a wagon and horses. And then we got a Model T Ford.

MOORE: What year was that?

RYMER: 1928, the year that they had a good crop.

MOORE: So the good crop enabled you to buy a car.

RYMER: Well, you could buy a car for six hundred and ninety dollars in those days. You know, that was just before the Depression.

MOORE: During this time when your family was subsistent level, I mean, you ate well, but you didn't exchange, you didn't have money, cash in hand as much . . .

RYMER: We didn't need money. We lived on a farm about three miles from town. If we got a penny's worth of candy, in those days you could buy six pieces of candy for a penny. We didn't need money. My mother sewed and made all our clothes. We wore long underwear all winter long, which we hated. We hated, I mean, I had wear long underwear. Scarves over our faces, hoods

over our heads to go to school.

MOORE: Did you ever, did they ever talk with parents about their decision to come to America, during those hard years, this rude awakening, as you call it. Did your father and mother ever discuss that, do you know?

RYMER: Mother cried a lot, but Dad said, "No, we're going." You know, he was a stubborn Dutchman, and he would never admit that he had made a mistake.

MOORE: When did your mother cry, over what things, do you think?

RYMER: Oh, over lonesomeness and hard times, you know.

MOORE: Did you speak Dutch at home?

RYMER: Oh, when we came to this country we could not speak one word of English, not one word of English. When we went into the first grade, we spoke not one word of English. There was no kindergarten in those days, and we learned, or else.

MOORE: Did you ever suffer any taunting, or did they make fun of you?

RYMER: Oh, sure, oh, sure. They used to call us "red-headed

Dutchmen," because our hair was kind of red, and we wore it in a braid. But, don't forget, now, our neighbors, one group was Belgian, two groups were Belgian. There were two English families there in school, three English families. So we weren't the only foreigners. There were lots of foreigners in that country at that time.

MOORE: So your neighborhood, you had people from England, from Belgium, from Holland and . . .

RYMER: No, we had them from Belgium, or their ancestors were, they weren't immediately. And some from Ireland. And I don't remember where the others were from, but there were all mixed groups, a mixture.

MOORE: Did you all get along well?

RYMER: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: Well, when you went to school, do you have any stories about learning English, how it was for you at that time?

RYMER: Terrible, terrible, terrible. As a matter of fact, I was in first grade two years because I could not speak English.

MOORE: And . . .

RYMER: But you pick it up when you're a kid. You pick it up real fast.

MOORE: And did they say, so they put you back one year because of your English. Did this happen to any of your other brothers and sisters?

RYMER: No, my, well, the two of us that we were in the first grade, the one that died, the two of us were held back. The one that was born in the United States skipped a grade, she was so smart.

MOORE: So you were held back one year, and then suddenly you understood enough.

RYMER: Yeah. Kids pick it up real fast, you know, when you hear nothing but that and the teacher's up there teaching it, and all the kids are speaking English or American, whatever, you pick it up faster. And we used to go home, and we'd say to Mom and Dad, "Don't talk Dutch. Talk English. You're in America now. Don't talk Dutch." Well, my mother, to her dying day, had an accent, even after all the years she was here.

MOORE: How did she learn English?

RYMER: From us.

MOORE: You taught your parents.

RYMER: Sure.

MOORE: How about your dad?

RYMER: We taught everybody, anybody that learned any English at our house was taught by the kids, because they didn't have teachers come around like they do today and tutor you and give you all these, you know. You learned on your own, or you were out of luck.

MOORE: And so when your parents spoke to you in Dutch, did you answer in English? How did you manage it at home? Did it gradually go . . .

RYMER: Half and half.

MOORE: To the time, all the way through.

RYMER: It graduated from, at first we had to speak Dutch because they couldn't understand what we were talking about. Then we'd say it in Dutch, and then explain it in English, and I can't speak a word of Dutch now, and

at one time I could speak fluently Dutch, fair German, fair Belgian, and a little tiny bit of French, but it was a stigma in those days to be a foreigner. It isn't now. Now it's a feather in your hat to be from a foreign country, but in those days it was really a stigma, and you got rid of it as fast as you could.

MOORE: In school do you remember any teachers or any playmates that particularly stand out in your mind to you, any names?

RYMER: Our first teacher was a sixteen-year-old girl who just graduated from teacher school.

MOORE: What was her name?

RYMER: Queenie Charlton.

MOORE: And how, what was her attitude toward your English, learning English?

RYMER: I don't remember, but I remember the teacher. Then we had another one that contacted us about fifteen years ago, and I haven't seen her in years. I don't know what her name is now. Then we had one that was Nelly DeLonge, DeLonge, and she'd put her hand down like this and rap your knuckles if you didn't come to

attention right now. She was mean. But we were in a country school where we had all the grades, from first grade through eighth grade.

MOORE: And that was in the town? How far away?

RYMER: No, it was in the country. We had to walk a mile-and-a-half to school every morning.

MOORE: Now, what about religious life here in the States? Was it any different than in Holland?

RYMER: I don't know what it was like in Holland. I know we went to church every Sunday, come rain, shine or whatever.

MOORE: Did you, you said you said the rosary every night.

RYMER: My mother made us say the rosary every night, and then after supper she lined us up and we had to learn our catechism, if you know what that is.

MOORE: And did you have your First Communion here in this country?

RYMER: Oh, sure.

MOORE: And what were your big holidays here that you had for

big celebrations?

RYMER: Fourth of July was a big day, Christmas.

MOORE: Can you describe each, both of those? Christmas, what did you do that was special?

RYMER: Well, my mother used to make us a rag doll out of an old pair of Dad's socks, and maybe we got an orange or a little piece of candy, or maybe a new dress or something. For Easter we always got a new outfit. Hats, shoes, stockings and a dress. Come rain or shine, we wore our new outfits to church on Easter Sunday. And I remember lots of times we had a snowstorm on Easter Sunday, but everybody wore their new hats.

MOORE: And at Christmas what did you eat? What Christmas food did you have?

RYMER: The regular. Just, like, we raised turkeys, so we usually had a turkey.

MOORE: And what about the Fourth of July? What did you do for that?

RYMER: The Fourth of July was always new peas and new

potatoes and fried chicken, new chicken was ready by the Fourth of July.

MOORE: And, so what was your favorite holiday? You liked them all.

RYMER: They were really just another day, because we had to milk the cows every day no matter what.

MOORE: What were your chores, each of you children? Describe a day of chores when you were younger.

RYMER: Well, when we got older, big enough to be of some assistance, somebody had to get up in the morning out of a cold bedroom and run in and light the fire. Big kitchen range, and one in that little living room. Then we'd hop into bed until those stoves got red hot, then we'd get out. Then we had to go out and milk the cows, and then we had to have breakfast, and then we had to walk to school. We had to be in school at nine o'clock.

MOORE: What about breakfast time? What was that like?

RYMER: Breakfast was oatmeal that was cooked the night before, that old-fashioned oatmeal that's left on the stove all night. In the wintertime it was beefsteak

and whole wheat bread, and then we had a lunch that we took, carried to school with us. And then when we got home from school, about four o'clock, then we had to bring in wood and coal and water, and milk the cows, and clean the barn, or whatever, whatever you do on a farm. And then eat supper, and then we'd have our prayers and the rosary and go to bed. That was in the winter months. In the summer months we could play till dark. Well, in Montana you were quite far north, so it doesn't get dark till nine thirty, ten o'clock in the summer months. So our own, my sisters would play ball. I mean, we were a mile from any neighbor. So then every Sunday it was church, no matter what.

MOORE: Describe your house now. What kind of furniture did you have in your house?

RYMER: We had old-fashioned iron beds.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

RYMER: But you have seen them in a thousand homes. They're kind of poorly, you know, the metal is kind of, like cast-iron rolled, those are the beds. The table was a homemade table that my dad made with criss-crossed

legs, and the benches, two benches for all us kids to sit on. You know, we were five, at that time there were five, six, five of us, and Dad and Mother, so that's seven right there to feed every day. Then we had a little tiny living room that had a, it was an add-on years later. First of all, we had one, big room that was a living room, kitchen, parlor and one bedroom. That was the original house. And in the original house, in the bedroom was a trap door that went down into a cellar that was not like the basements today. This was a hole dug in the ground that was all dirt with shelves and stuff in it, a root cellar and (?) and stuff like that, that was tex cellar. Then when the kids came along and got too many for one bedroom, eh added on a lean-to that was two rooms, and there was two beds in that, and we all, two in a bed. And then that other room was kind of a, like a pantry. And that's how we lived until I left home. After I left home they bought a neighbor's house, and cut it in half, and moved it onto the place. Then they had a little more room.

MOORE: Now, how was the plumbing?

RYMER: Outdoor plumbing.

MOORE: You had an outhouse.

RYMER: Outhouse.

MOORE: How about water?

RYMER: We had a pump, hand-pump it first, and then later on my dad got an engine, a little engine that he ran a belt to a belt on the pump and we pumped water.

MOORE: Now, tell us a little bit about your life from there. I need to ask you what you grew that year, when you had the bumper crop that year, what did you grow?

RYMER: Wheat, wheat.

MOORE: Anything else?

RYMER: Then we got about seventy-five cents a bushel, which was big money in those days.

MOORE: Now, so the Depression years, just prior to the Depression, you had a bumper crop. And what, how did the Depression hit you people?

RYMER: Well, there was just, like any Depression. No rain came, the winds blew, and we just had no, if you've got enough grain off your fields to pay the interest

on the money you borrowed from the bank, you were very lucky.

MOORE: What about natural disasters? Did you ever have any of those at that time?

RYMER: No.

MOORE: Okay. Now, briefly tell us a little bit about your life and what happened after that. You left home at what age?

RYMER: Sophomore in high school, I went into nurse's training. No, junior high school I went into nurse's training in a Catholic Hospital in Great Falls, Montana that was run by Canadian nuns that were out of Toronto, Canada. And I spent three years in training, took my state boards and passed, and from then on I worked.

MOORE: And so, I was going to ask you some questions here about your background, did your parents push education, or you to be educated, or is that . . .

RYMER: No, it was just an, it was just an accepted thing. You went to school.

MOORE: And why did you choose nursing?

RYMER: Because my English teacher talked me into it. She thought I was a good candidate for nurse's training.

MOORE: And how do you feel about that now, looking back on your life?

RYMER: Fine, fine. (a doorbell rings) That's my grandson, probably. I just don't answer the door.

MOORE: What about marriage and children and your work? Did you get married?

RYMER: Never had a pregnancy. Of the six girls in my family there's one, the youngest sister had four children, and one has adopted two children.

MOORE: Okay, hold on . . .

RYMER: I married at age twenty-four, and he went in the service, and that's how we came to Las Vegas from Montana. He was transferred here, and he died of a heart attack.

MOORE: At what age?

RYMER: Forty-seven years of age.

MOORE: So you were a widow quite young.

RYMER: I was a widow for eleven years, and then I married this man that I'm married to now.

MOORE: And he's alive?

RYMER: Oh, yeah. He's out picking up his car. His car's in for service this morning.

MOORE: So you had no children by your first husband.

RYMER: Nor by my second husband.

MOORE: And so your grandson is . . .

RYMER: That's my step-grandson, my husband's daughter's child. He had three children when we married.

MOORE: And when you look at your sister's lives, your sisters had children, did they?

RYMER: My youngest sister had four children, that's the only one. My other sister adopted two children.

MOORE: Was there any reason why they didn't have children? Was it because they . . .

RYMER: No reason, no reason. We were all tested, and one in

Montana tried for months, every thing that there was to be tried. I had my tubes blown open one time trying to get pregnant. I guess it was just the termination of the race, I don't know.

MOORE: When you look back at your life, did your parents, how did your parents adjust to live in the United States overall, do you think?

RYMER: Well, I think they did as well as anybody else. You just got up in the morning, did your work, and went to bed at night. You didn't think about what you might have had. I really don't know what they thought. If they thought anything, they never expressed their opinion to us.

MOORE: How do you look about the time of your immigration to this country?

RYMER: Oh, I'm tickled to death they came. I'm tickled to death they came. I would hate to think I was living in Europe where there is no land, you know. They can't even marry over there until they get a piece of land.

MOORE: Have you been in contact with any of your relatives

there?

RYMER: Oh, yes. We've had, we've had several come visit us. (a clock chimes in the background) We had four cousins here the year before last, and we had two second cousins were here this last summer. Europeans travel much more than we do. I mean, we see our own United States. But they get out of Europe, they go to Mexico and they come to the United States. We have two cousins that were in their sixties that came here and walked every single town there was from Washington, DC to Los Angeles and San Francisco. They wore out their shoes, the two of them. They knew more about the United States than we did, really.

MOORE: Did anyone in your family ever want to go back to Holland to live, to The Netherlands?

RYMER: No.

MOORE: And did, it never entered the minds of any of the people in your family?

RYMER: No. I've got one, two, my sister that's dead went back. The sister that's living has been back three or four times. Then I have another sister in Oregon that

went back once, and they liked to go for a visit, but they wouldn't live there.

MOORE: And do any of your siblings, any of your brothers or sisters, continue speaking Dutch?

RYMER: No, no.

MOORE: How, in any way, do you feel that you are Dutch still to this day? Do you maintain any cultural things?

RYMER: Uh-uh. I don't think so. I don't think so. I think at the age that we were when we came over, you know, we don't, I remember my mother saying that on New Year's Eve we had these little waffles and a little glass of wine she never drank, but those are traditions that I've heard her speak of, but I don't know that they are authentic or not, it's just her word for it.

MOORE: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the Ellis Island Project for your immigration . . .

RYMER: Well, you're most welcome.

MOORE: And we'll send you a copy of this afterwards. I promise we'll get that to you. And this is Kate Moore

in Las Vegas, Nevada with Mary Rymer, on the 22nd of January 1994, signing off for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.