

KM-0059

ELSIE PANDALIS

BIRTHDATE:

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INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: MELISSA PERLZWEIG

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UNITED STATES: BESSEMER, MI; IRONWOOD, MI; KEMMERER, WY; ROCK SPRINGS, WY; ARIZONA

FINLAND: HELSINKI

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Pandalis was born in the United States but went to Finland in 1914, and then returned to the United States in 1915.

Mrs. Pandalis's brother, Edwin John Soderlund, is also present. He is referred to in the transcription as "SODERLUND".

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is July 5, 1994 and I'm in Rock Springs, Wyoming at the home of Elsie Pandalis who – who was born to a native Finnish mother in Michigan in 1912, um and r—and was brought back to Finland in 1914 for medical treatment with her mother. And came back to the United States in 1915 with her mother when she was three years old. Why

don't you begin by giving us our – your full name and date of birth please?

PANDALIS: Elsie Pandalis.

MOORE: And your birthday?

PANDALIS: August 12, 1912.

MOORE: And what – what was your maiden name?

PANDALIS: Elsie Soderlund.

MOORE: Could you spell Soderlund please?

PANDALIS: S-O-D-E-R-L-U-N-D.

MOORE: And where were you born?

PANDALIS: Bessemer, Michigan.

MOORE: B-E-S—

PANDALIS: S-E-M-E-R.

MOORE: B-E-S-M-E-R?

PANDALIS: B-E-S-S-E-M-E-R.

MOORE: Ok, good. Now what size town was that?

PANDALIS: It was a very small mining town.

MOORE: Mhmm. And what was – it was a mining town. What – what was your parents' home town in Finland?

PANDALIS: My mother's was Herma and my dad's was Hamme.

MOORE: Alright, and Herma is spelled--?

PANDALIS: H-E-R-M-A.

MOORE: Right, and Hamme is spelled--?

PANDALIS: H-A-M-M-E.

MOORE: Right. What was your father's name?

PANDALIS: John Elias Soderlund.

MOORE: What was his occupation?

PANDALIS: He was a miner.

MOORE: Mhmm. Describe what your father looked like.

PANDALIS: He – he was a big, husky man. They used to call him Big John.

MOORE: And what color eyes did he have?

PANDALIS: Green.

MOORE: Green eyes? What—how 'bout what color hair?

PANDALIS: Uh, sort of light brown.

MOORE: Light brown. What about his personality and temperament? How would you describe your dad?

PANDALIS: He was a comedian when he was young (laughs).

MOORE: In Finland?

PANDALIS: Even in Finland. Everybody always laughed when he was around (laughs) – at his stories.

MOORE: [superposed] Is there – is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood?

PANDALIS: Yes. He used to write songs and then at the [not understood] he would sing them to the audience and he got a great big applause.

MOORE: And did he play any instruments?

PANDALIS: He played the [not understood] accordion.

MOORE: The accordion. What was your mother's name?

PANDALIS: Tyyne Maria Yliluoma.

MOORE: Uh huh and could you spell that please?

PANDALIS: The last name?

MOORE: Yes.

PANDALIS: Y-L-I-L-U-O-M-A.

MOORE: Yeah and h—how 'bout her first name again? Judy?

PANDALIS: Tyyne – Tu—T-W – I mean – T-Y-Y-N-E.

MOORE: Right and what was her occupation?

PANDALIS: Housewife.

MOORE: Mhmm. What did she look like – your mother?

PANDALIS: She was lot smaller than my dad. I mean in – in height. And my dad used to call her my little one.

MOORE: How tall was your father, by the way? About?

PANDALIS: Ah, five six?

SODERLUND: No, six foot.

PANDALIS: Oh, six foot.

MOORE: And how 'bout your mom? What would – you think she was – how tall you think she was?

SODERLUND: Five feet, five two.

MOORE: Five feet, five two?

PANDALIS: Something like that, yes.

MOORE: And what about your mom's personality and temperament?

PANDALIS: She was always happy. She was always joking with my dad. They were always teasing each other (laughs).

MOORE: And – and what about um – what were her chores around the house?

PANDALIS: Housework.

MOORE: Cooking?

PANDALIS: Cooking.

MOORE: Mhmm. And is there a story about your mother that you associate with your childhood?

PANDALIS: Well I would say the story that – when I was a baby and the doctors in – in [not understood] so she wanted to take me to Finland to – to a good doctor.

MOORE: And we'll get back to that. It's one of the reasons why you came to Finland and came back to the United States.

PANDALIS: Oh, but that's a wrong story?

MOORE: [superposed] No that's a good – that's a good one, that's a good one. That's not the wrong story, that's a very good one. What about your

brothers and sisters? Wh—wh—how many brothers and sisters did you have?

PANDALIS: I only had one brother.

MOORE: And was he younger or older?

PANDALIS: Younger.

MOORE: [interposed] And what was his—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Ten years younger.

MOORE: Ten years younger and what was – what was his name?

PANDALIS: Edwin.

MOORE: Edwin. Is that his full name?

PANDALIS: Edwin John Soderlund.

MOORE: Ok and um, what about your house – um, you have two houses now. You have a house in Finland and a house in the United States. Do you remember anything about the house in Finland?

PANDALIS: I don't remember – I don't—

MOORE: [superposed] Yeah you were too small.

PANDALIS: I don't remember that house.

MOORE: Ok and uh, what about your house back in Ironwood or what was your first house--?

PANDALIS: Uh, it was a beautiful home. It had seven rooms. There were four rooms downstairs and three rooms upstairs and a great big basement.

MOORE: And what was it made of, the house?

PANDALIS: Um, the foundation was cement and it was made out of lumber.

MOORE: Lumber. And how did you heat the house there in Michigan?

PANDALIS: With a furnace. We – we burnt coal.

MOORE: Coal. And was there a garden?

PANDALIS: Yes, a vegetable garden.

MOORE: And what did you grow?

PANDALIS: Um, potatoes and peas.

MOORE: Did you have – what kind of plumbing did you have in that house?

PANDALIS: [recording skips] in the country, so the plumbing wasn't like in a city.

MOORE: Did you have a outhouse or indoor—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Yes, we had an outhouse.

MOORE: What about water? Where did you get the water?

PANDALIS: We had a well.

MOORE: A well. And how far was the well from the house?

PANDALIS: It was right in the yard.

MOORE: Uh huh. And um, what kind of furniture did you have in that house?

PANDALIS: We had nice furniture. I thought it was nice furniture.

MOORE: Was it store-bought or was it homemade?

PANDALIS: No, it was store-bought.

MOORE: Store-bought furniture. And uh, do you still have any of that furniture?

PANDALIS: No, I don't.

MOORE: Did you keep – you said that the house was a little out of town. How far out of town was that?

PANDALIS: It was five miles out of town – out of the middle of town 'cause we – we could take a streetcar from – from where we lived to go to town.

MOORE: And that's in Ironwood?

PANDALIS: Ironwood.

MOORE: There were streetcars in Ironwood?

PANDALIS: [superposed] Michigan. Oh yes (laughs). E—even in those days.

MOORE: Ok what – did you keep any animals at all?

PANDALIS: We had a cow and a pig and chickens.

MOORE: Mhmm. And did anyone else live with you besides your – your brother and mother and father?

PANDALIS: Uh, my grandmother came to visit us from Finland. Both grandmothers came to visit us.

MOORE: And did you have – what kind of lighting did you have in the house?

PANDALIS: We had electric—electricity.

MOORE: You had electricity so there?

PANDALIS: Well I was – I was little girl when lec—when electricity came in.

MOORE: What did you have before that? Do you remember?

PANDALIS: Uh, lamps. Those uh – oil lamps.

MOORE: Mhmm. And um, how did you get around? Like to town and things?

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

MOORE: Bisco?

PANDALIS: Briscoe – B-R-I-S-C-O-E.

MOORE: Mhmm. And um, what year was that when he had that car? What years did he have that car? Do you remember?

PANDALIS: Let's see, I was about ten years old when he got that car.

MOORE: What'd you do before that – before you were ten, for transportation?

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

MOORE: Alright and where was the school?

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

MOORE: Was it a – how m—how big was the school?

PANDALIS: Well we had a like – four grades in one room and I think we had two rooms. So there was about eight grades we in there. So there weren't very many peop—kids in that school.

MOORE: How many kids in each class, about?

PANDALIS: Oh I'd say about [not understood]. I'd say about ten in each room.

MOORE: Alright um, who did the cooking in the family? You mentioned your mother.

PANDALIS: Yes, my mother did m—most of the cooking.

MOORE: Did you help her at all?

PANDALIS: I used to wash dishes (laughs).

MOORE: And what was your favorite food as a child?

PANDALIS: [not understood] (laughs).

MOORE: And what was your brother's favorite food?

SODERLUND [not understood]

PANDALIS: [not understood]

MOORE: Oh, Finnish [not understood].

PANDALIS: My mother made good [not understood] (laughs).

MOORE: And um, what about the kitchen? Describe the kitchen in the house.

PANDALIS: The kitchen was big and we a—we had a dining room but the family always ate in the kitchen and I remember my mother used to scrub that floor on her hands and knees because she wanted that [not understood].

MOORE: And did you eat meals together or apart? I mean how did you eat these meals?

PANDALIS: No we had regular meal time always with the family.

MOORE: Um, were – who were you closest to in the family?

PANDALIS: When I was a kid?

MOORE: Yeah.

PANDALIS: Mm, I had a girlfriend that lived right next door. She was very close to me.

MOORE: But how 'bout the f—was there a family member as close?

PANDALIS: Well m—my brother – I loved my brother but he was quite small (laughs) when I was a kid.

MOORE: Yeah [not understood].

PANDALIS: [superposed] 'Cause there was ten years different (laughs).

MOORE: And um, did you have any stories about your brother or other family members – your grandmother or somebody – when they were young – [not understood] when you were young?

PANDALIS: Oh, this is the – the story that he d—he hasn't heard this yet either. (coughs) He was about – oh, he was very small – my brother – just a small – well, he was gen—learning to walk but he wasn't really walking yet. One day he was [not understood] on the porch. My mother had a screen on – you know on the – where the steps were so he won't fall out the s—porch. And – and when I – I was supposed to be looking after him. But when I went out on the porch to look for him here he had his diaper all folded up (laughs) because he had wet his pants (laughs).

MOORE: My how times change (laughs).

PANDALIS: (laughs) See you knew that [not understood]. And I couldn't imagine w—how he got those p—they were [not understood] safety pins. I wonder how he got 'em open? He was just – I still don't know how he got them open. But they were on the floor (laughs).

MOORE: What about religious life? Um, were – was your family religious?

PANDALIS: Uh, well not – not too religious. My – when my grandmother lived with us she would read from the bible to us [not understood] and me.

MOORE: Prayers –

PANDALIS: [interposed] [not understood]

MOORE: Did you say prayers before you went to bed?

PANDALIS: W—when my grandmother was there.

MOORE: And did you say grace before dinner?

PANDALIS: No.

MOORE: No. What about um – did you go to church on Sundays at all?

PANDALIS: Yes, when my grandmother was there.

MOORE: Mhmm. Um, where was the church that you went to?

PANDALIS: It was in town.

MOORE: In town.

PANDALIS: Mhmm. We used to take the streetcar to go.

MOORE: Were your parents politically inclined at all?

PANDALIS: Yes, they were Democrats, definitely (laughs).

MOORE: Here in this country Democrats, right?

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: Were they at all aligned in Finland, politically with the – remember they used to have the – the old halls? Like a red hall and then um – another hall?

PANDALIS: In – in Finland when – when they w—in those days – I mean, my mother was real young then when she was in Finland.

MOORE: Did your mother – parents have any ideas about drinking? Any – any strict laws about that?

PANDALIS: Ah, I can't remember – did we have beer in the house at all?

SODERLUND: Yes.

PANDALIS: Did we have beer?

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: They made their own beer?

SODERLUND: Yeah.

PANDALIS: It wasn't root beer was it?

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: It w—it was [not understood]. It wasn't this beer that – that we drink, you know.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: Is it – was it [not understood]?

SODERLUND: Yeah, I guess that's –

MOORE: Home brew, yeah – [not understood].

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: Um, what was your favorite holiday?

PANDALIS: I can't – you mean –

SODERLUND: [interposed] Christmas.

PANDALIS: Oh yeah, Christmas (laughs).

MOORE: And why Christmas?

PANDALIS: Well, when I was [not understood] I kept hearing about Santa Claus and Santa Claus you know and I – I thought well gee I'd like to see Santa

Claus. [not understood] when is Santa Claus gonna come in our house? You know (laughs). My uncle happened to be in town so my mother had my uncle get dressed up in a Santa Claus costume and he came and knocked on the door so we could see the Santa Claus.

MOORE: And did Santa bring you gifts?

PANDALIS: Oh yes, he did.

MOORE: And did you – did you have any special Christmas – like a tree or anything like that?

PANDALIS: Oh yes, we had a tree.

MOORE: And how did you decorate the tree at home?

PANDALIS: Uh it was – it was candles but my mother was real worried about lighting it. Very seldom – if we did light it – it – we had to watch it real close.

MOORE: And what did –

PANDALIS: [interposed] This was before the electricity came in.

MOORE: Yeah. And then what did you put on the tree then as ornaments?

PANDALIS: W—we had a great – you know we used to do this in school and they made chains out of this sort of like crepe paper or – it was. Make a chain, you know, and we'd use that.

MOORE: Um, so you mentioned school. What was the first language that you spoke at home? What was the language that you spoke to your parents?

PANDALIS: Fin.

MOORE: Fin. So you spoke Fin at home.

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: When you went to school did you know any English?

PANDALIS: N—not a word.

MOORE: So how was school – w—were other children in the same boat as you?

PANDALIS: Yes. The whole – the whole street where I lived w—they were all Fin people.

MOORE: What street was that?

PANDALIS: McKinley.

MOORE: McKinley. And so when you were—

PANDALIS: [interposed] This was in Ironwood, Michigan.

MOORE: Yeah in Ironwood. So um, how did you learn English?

PANDALIS: I learned it in school just by listening to the others. It was very difficult because – for all of us – because we didn't know what the teacher was telling us.

MOORE: And were they [not understood]?

PANDALIS: [superposed] But she was – but she was very patient with all of us, yes.

MOORE: And did you speak Finnish at school at all to the other children?

PANDALIS: Outside (laughs). At recess.

MOORE: And do you remember any anecdotes about learning English?

PANDALIS: No, I can't think of any.

MOORE: Did anyone ever call you any names for being a Fin? Were you ever called bad names or – for being Finnish?

PANDALIS: N—no.

MOORE: By anyone? Did you ever suffer any prejudice for being Finnish?

PANDALIS: No, no. No prejudice.

MOORE: Ok, um what did you do for entertainment as a child?

PANDALIS: What did I do?

MOORE: What kind of games did you play and things?

PANDALIS: Oh we used to play hide and go seek and we played ball. You know in the summer we were always playing outside.

MOORE: Did you play – did you play Finnish games as a kid?

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

MOORE: What did – how did your mother and father – how'd they adapt to life here? Did they speak English?

PANDALIS: My dad – I don't know how he learned English but he – he got along with the English people very well (laughs). So he either was real smart and just picked it up himself because he didn't go to school.

MOORE: And your mom – did she learn English?

PANDALIS: No, she was – she was kinda – of – bashful about e—speaking up. She was afraid that she won't say the words right.

MOORE: Did she have any Finnish friends or—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Oh she had lot of Finnish friends.

MOORE: And um, do you have any stories about your parents learning English? Any anecdotes at all?

PANDALIS: You remember anything like that? I – I can't remember.

SODERLUND: [inaudible]

MOORE: How did your parents adjust to life here? Do you think that they were – their decision – how did they feel about their decision to come to this country?

PANDALIS: Oh they – they were Americans. That's the way they felt. They loved their country – America.

MOORE: Alright. Was your father – did your father belong to union?

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: D—w—d—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Of the work – uh – at the work place.

MOORE: Yeah, at the mining.

PANDALIS: Uh huh.

MOORE: Was he ever in any accidents at all?

PANDALIS: Yes he was in an accident at the mine but he wasn't injured too seriously, you know. He—

MOORE: How involved were you in the Finnish community here? Um, in – in – how – how long were you in Michigan?

PANDALIS: I was a s—I was entering the high school, being a freshman.

SODERLUND: 1927.

MOORE: 1927 you came out to Wyoming.

PANDALIS: [superposed] Yeah, uh huh, yeah.

MOORE: Alright now let's go – let's go back to – why did your family come to the United States?

PANDALIS: You mean my mother and my dad?

MOORE: Yeah why did – for who came first and why?

PANDALIS: My mother – uh – as far as I know my mother came first 'cause I – I never did really find out when Dad came. Did ya ever – did you ever talk about that?

MOORE: You don't know which one came – necessarily came first? W—why did your father come here?

PANDALIS: Eh to – to get a better life than in Finland.

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

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

MOORE: And how was your mother's – what was your mother's situation in Finland?

PANDALIS: She had a good home and although they – it was a big family but they seemed to (muffled sound) – they seemed to just get along real well. They – they didn't seem to suffer any.

MOORE: Did either your parents suffer from hunger at all in Finland before they came?

PANDALIS: I don't think so.

MOORE: And—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Because they never said anything like that.

MOORE: When they spoke of Finland -- from where they came – how – w—what was their attitude about it? W—d—were they homesick? W—did they—

PANDALIS: [interposed] They missed their relatives, yes. They did miss uh – like my brother – my dad had lot of brothers in Finland at that time. In fact, he was the one that guaranteed that two brothers to come over here – two eh—you know you had to guarantee somebody to come over? And e—the two uncles of mine came that way t—to America.

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

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

MOORE: Well let's go back originally. How – who sponsored your father then? To come over here?

PANDALIS: Do you know?

SODERLUND: [inaudible]

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

PANDALIS: Oh, a—there was – my father had a cousin in Helsinki. He – because then – h—he sent him some money.

MOORE: What cousin? Do you remember the cousin's name?

PANDALIS: But I can't remember his name.

MOORE: But he had a cousin in Helsinki who – who sent him money?

PANDALIS: [superposed] Uh huh, yeah.

MOORE: Do you remember your father leaving?

PANDALIS: Leaving where?

MOORE: For the United States? Do you remember him leaving?

PANDALIS: I wasn't born yet.

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

PANDALIS: Ah –

SODERLUND: We don't know.

PANDALIS: I can't remember – was there any – yeah well he – he was in this country before äiti was.

SODERLUND: Yeah.

MOORE: Ok so – so –

PANDALIS: [interposed] So it had to be before my mother came.

MOORE: Ok so he came the year before you were born. And you think it might have been financed by the cousin's money in Helsinki.

PANDALIS: Yes, I think so.

MOORE: So um, do you – did you know your father before you came to this country? Had you ever seen him?

PANDALIS: Oh now, uh – my m—my mother and dad were married here in this country.

SODERLUND: She was born here, ya know.

MOORE: Y—you were born here, that's right – that's right.

PANDALIS: The only reason – the only reason I went to Finland was to see that doctor.

MOORE: That's right, ok. That's right, I had (laughs) [not understood] is looking at me here – that's right. Ok so, you – your father came here first and

then your mother came here. Now you told me a story about why d—
how your mother got here and what story she gave the authorities.

PANDALIS: Yes, that was the story (laughs).

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

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

MOORE: And where was this now? This was in –

PANDALIS: Ishpeming, Michigan.

MOORE: In Ishpeming, Michigan there was a man in jail.

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: And your cousin said if she promised to marry him she could come to
the United States?

PANDALIS: Yes, he would finance her.

MOORE: And what happened?

PANDALIS: Well when she saw him she didn't like him.

MOORE: But she was already here?

PANDALIS: [laughs] But he did get out of jail. He did get out of jail though after – after she came to this country.

MOORE: [superposed] And what year was this, do you know?

PANDALIS: Ah (sighs), it had to be about (pause) – hm. Before I was born she – she'd been here almost a – five years – before I was born.

MOORE: Ok, alright. So move on to your um – to your – your mom and dad married then in Michigan, ok, and they had you. Now how did you get back to Finland and why?

PANDALIS: Oh my dad uh – paid the fare. I my m—my dad got the ticket.

MOORE: Your dad got the ticket?

PANDALIS: [superposed] To go to Finland.

MOORE: [superposed] So tell me why your mom wanted to take you back to Finland. W—what was the thing about going back to Finland?

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

MOORE: You were ill with what? Do you know?

PANDALIS: Uh—

MOORE: Anemic?

PANDALIS: Anemic, yes.

MOORE: You mentioned earlier anemic.

PANDALIS: Mhmm.

MOORE: Ok so you're anemic. And why couldn't doctors here take care of it?

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

MOORE: You mean here?

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

MOORE: And what was his name? Do you know at all?

PANDALIS: I don't remember that.

MOORE: Ok so you went all the way from Michigan to Finland again with your mother.

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: Did she ever tell you about that trip? You were only two years old so--

PANDALIS: Yes she told me that when the [not understood] I said hurry let's go, 'cause the boat is gonna sail (laughs). I was just a small [not understood].

MOORE: And you don't remember anything of this do you?

PANDALIS: N—no, I don't remember the trip.

MOORE: What is your first memory?

PANDALIS: About the trip?

MOORE: About anything as a child.

PANDALIS: My first memory – (laughs) [not understood]. But I was ten years old then, so that couldn't have been my first memory.

MOORE: Yeah. Can you remember anything?

PANDALIS: Hmm. Oh I do remember! I think I was about six years old – uh – m—I – we went uptown – we usually went uptown on Saturday. My mother, my dad, and me – and my mother took me to – she had to buy something at a clothing store. They had a [not understood] cape about my size, you know, 'cause that was in style then I guess. And I saw that cape and I wanted that cape so bad (laughs). My mother went and priced it and my mother says no it cost too much (laughs). So I started crying. I – then my dad uh – came over and she – he could see me crying so he went over and bought it (laughs).

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: (laughs) That's – I remember that so distinctly that it would 've happened yesterday (laughs).

MOORE: W—alright so your mom brought you all the way back to H—to Helsinki for treatment. What happened with the – with the treatment there? Would she talk about that at all?

PANDALIS: Oh yes, I got well.

MOORE: And so do you know what they treat—how they treated you? Did she ever say that?

PANDALIS: No, no she just kept saying that he was a good doctor, that's all.

MOORE: And you stayed how long in Helsinki then?

PANDALIS: I think it was almost a month.

MOORE: Mhmm. And so your mother had – did she have a round trip ticket? What – what type of ticket did your mother have?

PANDALIS: That I don't – I don't know. I really don't know. But I know that my dad bought the ticket.

MOORE: Where did you stay in Helsinki?

PANDALIS: Uh with um – let's see she's – you know where we went to visit? Raina[ph].

SODERLUND: [interposed] Oh Raina.

PANDALIS: Um, Raina Hooftala[ph]. He – he was a cousin to my mother. And we went t– but they were very close friends.

MOORE: Vyna?

PANDALIS: Raina Hooftala.

MOORE: Hooftala, ok.

PANDALIS: And so that's where we stayed. They came and picked us up, you know – at a—

MOORE: [interposed] Do you remember that?

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

MOORE: Mhmm. And um, so you were there for at least a month.

PANDALIS: Yes. [not understood] the house.

MOORE: And – and you had to come back. Did your mother talk about this ocean trip at all?

PANDALIS: Well see – it was – the – the – the people over there they start telling my mother that -- well you should – you should be going home pretty soon because there's gonna be a war. You know, and that -- that travel would be hard. It would be harder to travel later on. So then my mother got worried about that and we s—we left soon after that.

MOORE: So we're talking about 1914 then.

PANDALIS: Yes, it could be.

MOORE: And uh, yeah [not understood], yeah.

PANDALIS: 1914 I think.

MOORE: Yeah, 1914. And so the -- she stayed shorter time you think because of the war or threat of the war?

PANDALIS: Yes. But she felt confident that I would be alright. Because I was improving.

MOORE: So you came by ship back again?

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: And did she tell you about the accommodations on that ship? She ever tell you about the voyage? Was it a rough voyage, a smooth voyage or – or the conditions?

PANDALIS: [superposed] No she – she never did talk about that. Oh she did! She said everybody got sick except me (laughs) – except Elsie.

MOORE: You didn't get sick?

PANDALIS: No (laughs). And they were throwing up and (laughs)—

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

PANDALIS: No, she didn't mention the conditions.

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

PANDALIS: I can't – I can't really remember but I'm sure that sh—she might've said something like that but I just can't recall.

MOORE: That's alright, that's alright. Now tell me a little bit about your life then from then on a—from which [not understood] you stayed in Ironwood, Michigan.

PANDALIS: See from Bessemer, that's where I was born – we moved to Ironwood. And then – then my dad bought this house that's – you know with five acres of land.

MOORE: Is that the one you described?

PANDALIS: Yes, uh huh. And then th-- that's where I grew up – and my brother.

MOORE: And uh were – was your family involved in Finnish activities?

PANDALIS: Yes they used to have a hall in Bessemer -- what they called a Fin hall. And they used to have plays and programs and then e—like – then they'd ha—they'd have intermission, they would serve coffee, and rolls down in the basement. And they had these women that belonged to the – it was like a women's club or something. The – they were the ones that furnished the rolls and – and cooked the coffee and served the people. They had [not understood]--

MOORE: [superposed] And did your parents participate in the plays?

PANDALIS: Oh yes. My mother was star quite a few times (laughs).

MOORE: Do you remember the names of the plays?

PANDALIS: Oh they were very um – well know play—oh. And then she played against some of the best actress to of – of the Fin actors. You know they – th—I don't know where the actors came from. Maybe they came from Finland (laughs). They have to, huh? (laughs)

MOORE: We're gonna change the [not understood] – we're gonna change the—. Now you mentioned that you thought your parents considered themselves American, but yet they were very much involved in the Finnish society and I had w—

PANDALIS: Yes, well that was more for amusement because they would have dances after the programs. Even when they had a play, after the play was over they'd clear out the – the seats – on the sidelines and have a dance. And they – both of them loved to dance (laughs).

MOORE: What type of dances did they dance?

PANDALIS: They had polkas! And polka music.

MOORE: Any others?

PANDALIS: A foxtrot – what they called foxtrot. In fact my dad was the one that taught me to dance at – when I was ten years old – at the Fin hall.

MOORE: What did he teach you to – what did he teach you?

PANDALIS: [superposed] [not understood] first.

MOORE: Oh yeah.

PANDALIS: (laughs)

MOORE: [not understood]

PANDALIS: [not understood] (singing)

MOORE: Do you remember you mentioned – before we start – began – your mother comes from a very famous town in Finland. [not understood]

PANDALIS: [superposed] [not understood]

MOORE: Yeah.

PANDALIS: Oh yes. [not understood] (laughs)

MOORE: Is that a song?

PANDALIS: Well they did write a song. Yes, there is a song.

MOORE: And what is it? Do you know it?

PANDALIS: (laughs) Did you want me to sing that song?

MOORE: Yeah, go for it.

PANDALIS: (sings in Finnish) (laughs)

MOORE: [not understood]

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: I almost forgot it [not understood] (laughs).

MOORE: Ok and – and did your mother w—go back to her town ever?

PANDALIS: After that trip?

MOORE: Yeah.

PANDALIS: No. But see my gran—two of my grandmothers came to live with us.

MOORE: In Michigan?

PANDALIS: In Michigan. Both my dad's mother and my mother's mother.

MOORE: Now around about the time that your brother was born or a little after – you said he was five years old or so before when you moved from Ironwood – why did you move out west?

PANDALIS: Uh, let's see no – I was already a – a freshman in high school before we came to Wyoming. I was entering to be a freshman in high school because they were building—

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: Huh?

SODERLUND: [not understood] I was five so you must've been fifteen.

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: You were fifteen years old. Now why did your family come out here?

PANDALIS: Because uh – these friends – friends of my dad’s—

SODERLUND: [superposed] [not understood]

PANDALIS: Yeah and they said that’s even better wages than what they were making over there.

MOORE: In the coal mines here in Rock Springs?

PANDALIS: [superposed] Were making better wages than the – the coal m—than the miners – these are iron miners.

MOORE: How did you get here to Wyoming?

PANDALIS: In a car – the Briscoe.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: It was the Briscoe – it was the Briscoe.

SODERLUND: [not understood] by that time. [not understood] new car every couple of years.

PANDALIS: Was it? Oh I thought it was still the Briscoe (laughs).

MOORE: Ok. So y—so you came by car. Now what did you pack in that car? What’d you do with your house and everything at home? What happened?

PANDALIS: Well we left it – uh—they left it with a uh – real estate agency that was going to sell the house and then they had an auction and sold all the

furniture at an auction and that gave them more money for the trip. You know, because they – they – they knew they'd have to have some money to start with you know, after they get here.

MOORE: And what did they keep? What'd you take with you?

PANDALIS: Just our clothes.

MOORE: Anything special in terms of fam—anything special articles of the family?

PANDALIS: They didn't take –

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: My dad's oh – my dad's skis. Did we take his skis?

SODERLUND: Huh?

PANDALIS: Did we take his skis?

MOORE: Your dad's – your dad's skis?

SODERLUND: No, what skis?

PANDALIS: The ones that he made.

SODERLUND: Oh no, I don't think so.

PANDALIS: He was quite a craftsman.

MOORE: D—did you bring any furniture with you?

PANDALIS: No we – we sold all the furniture out on the auction to get the money -- you know -- for what we need.

MOORE: Did you – did you bring anything special yourself? Do you have anything left from your life in Ironwood?

PANDALIS: No, no nothing.

MOORE: Ok so you came out here. What was your impression of life out here when you first got here?

PANDALIS: When I first came to Rock Springs I thought do people have to live in a place like this? The sand was blowing, it was in your eyes, in your ears, in – (laughs) in your nose. And it was a desolate looking town, you know? Because at that time Rock Springs was just a – you know an – a one stop – I don't know what you'd call it but it wasn't like it is now.

MOORE: W—what are the houses and things? What did it look like?

PANDALIS: The houses weren't too bad but it was that wind and sand that would [not understood]—

SODERLUND: [interposed] No trees, no grass.

PANDALIS: No grass and no trees.

MOORE: And where did your father go to work then?

PANDALIS: An—let's see. The first place we went to was Kemmerer, Wyoming.
When we first came—

SODERLUND: [interposed] Because the people here were—

PANDALIS: [interposed] Because there was – the people that recommended and told him about the wages lived in Kemmerer. And they were the ones that helped my dad get a job, you know. We came with two other families.

SODERLUND: Yeah.

PANDALIS: Like a caravan.

MOORE: Oh but different cars.

PANDALIS: Yeah, three cars.

MOORE: And were they Fins?

PANDALIS: They were Fins. And they – they had families in their cars just like we – like gypsies (laughs).

MOORE: And what about the trip? Did – how did you spend the – where did you spend overnight on the trip?

PANDALIS: We had – we carried tents. We had – we pitched tents.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: And w—what – was that trip fun?

PANDALIS: I thought it was fun (laughs).

SODERLUND: I don't remember it too much but it must've been fun. There weren't too many motels and things in those days.

PANDALIS: (laughs)

MOORE: And what year was that then?

SODERLUND: 1927.

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: 1927.

PANDALIS: Mhmm.

MOORE: So you came here and what happened in your life – h—d—did your parents get involved in the Finnish community here then?

PANDALIS: Oh yes, uh huh.

SODERLUND: Same way.

MOORE: So th—there was a Fin hall here?

PANDALIS: There was a Fin hall here, yes.

MOORE: And I heard that in this town there are two church—two churches. One was a church that was sort of against drinking and one that was for

drinking – or not for drinking, didn't have a policy against it. There were two different churches here in town, I said. Is that true?

PANDALIS: At that time you mean, when we were here? I mean when we got here? Uh – do you remember? Yeah the Catholic church there was – it was a Catholic church.

SODERLUND: [superposed] She's talking about Lutheran churches.

MOORE: Yeah Lutheran churches.

PANDALIS: Oh.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: Y—your family when you came – when they came here to Wyoming – were they religious at all?

PANDALIS: Well my mother was religious but my dad really wasn't and the reason that he wasn't religious because when he was a boy he had to be an altar boy and he had to wear these dark garments. You know, when he was an altar boy and then he'd have to stand there and there was no air coming and he just about choked to death every – every Sunday.

MOORE: This is – this is in Finland?

PANDALIS: And that's when he decided he wasn't gonna go to church anymore after he got older (laughs). He told us that story. And s—it's supposed to be the truth.

MOORE: And so they were involved with Finnish community here.

PANDALIS: Yes.

MOORE: And were you?

SODERLUND: Yes.

PANDALIS: Oh yes. I – I've been on to the young people's league. I joined.

MOORE: And then -- you were in high school then right?

PANDALIS: Yes, I started high school here. I was a freshman.

MOORE: And did you finish high school?

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

MOORE: Mhmm.

PANDALIS: So then the doctors recommended to go to Arizona and that's when we lived here and went to Arizona. We -- we buried Dad in Arizona. My mother wanted to come back to Rock Springs 'cause all her friends were here. And so I knew how to drive -- we had a car and I knew how to drive -- so I drove the family back to Rock Springs, Wyoming (laughs).

MOORE: How long were you in Arizona?

PANDALIS: Until I graduated from high school.

MOORE: So a few years?

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: Three years.

SODERLUND: Three years?

MOORE: Three years you were in Arizona.

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: Now what did your mom do then after your dad died?

PANDALIS: My mother got a job in a restaurant washing dishes. And she – I don't know how she did it but she raised us kids (laughs). And then when I was – I was in high school – [not understood] the summer I got a –

SODERLUND: [interposed] [not understood]

PANDALIS: Oh, I got a job in the laundry – worked in the laundry for a while. But I didn't like that job so then I got a job in a cafe being a waitress (laughs). And I liked that better.

MOORE: And how did you meet your husband?

PANDALIS: Uh – in this building (laughs) my mother went and got a job uh – as a cook a—at—at a timber company – you know, lumber company where

they were cutting trees – forest. So I had to be in charge of my brother so uh – we gave up the apartment – you know, that we lived in – and my mother rented this – this room over here.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: I—it was just a bedroom.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: On K Street then?

PANDALIS: No, right here.

SODERLUND: [superposed] [not understood]

MOORE: What's – what's the address here again now?

PANDALIS: 149 K Street.

MOORE: 149 K Street then.

PANDALIS: So I took care of my brother and I c—w--worked at the Western Café and he ate his meals at the Western Café (laughs). But my mother sent us the money, you know. W—I didn't have – I-- I wouldn't have been able to do it on my waitress. I only –

MOORE: [interposed] Where was your mother at that time?

PANDALIS: At the lumber camp, cooking.

MOORE: Oh I see and how far was that lumber camp from town?

SODERLUND: It was about a hundred fifty miles [not understood]

PANDALIS: Yeah 'cause north—

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: It was out of Kemmerer about—

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: So you took -- actually you helped raise your brother?

SODERLUND: Yeah.

PANDALIS: No I just took care of him – he was already old enough to take care of himself. He went to school and – and I went to work at the café.

MOORE: And how'd you meet your husband?

PANDALIS: Well his mother owned this place (laughs). And I happened – happened to see him and we got acquainted and that's how it started.

MOORE: And he was – what nationality was he?

PANDALIS: Greek.

MOORE: Did he speak Greek?

SODERLUND: Yes.

PANDALIS: He could speak Greek. Oh yes, they spoke Greek at home just like we spoke Fin at home.

MOORE: And did you hear – his mother approve of you? Since you weren't Greek?

PANDALIS: Well she – she – no she wanted him to marry a Greek. She wanted him to marry a Greek girl, you know. 'Cause all the Greeks are like that.

MOORE: [superposed] And did your mother want you to marry a Fin?

PANDALIS: Yeah, my dad wanted me to marry a Fin (laughs).

MOORE: [not understood]

PANDALIS: Isn't that true though? The Fins do believe that way too and the Greeks believe – believe that you should marry within your nationality and the— oh there's a picture of my grandmother and my grandfather on my mother's side. See that little picture? That's a real old picture.

MOORE: So, um – so, um – you met your husband in the café and how long before you're married then?

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

SODERLUND: Yeah about.

MOORE: So his mother got used to the idea or --?

SODERLUND: [not understood]

MOORE: About you being Fin?

PANDALIS: No we just got married. We didn't get no permission (laughs).

MOORE: And where did you get married?

PANDALIS: Uh in – my aunt and uncle were – were standing for us. I mean they were our witnesses. We went to this – what's that – that place in Utah that everybody always went and got married?

SODERLUND: Manila.

PANDALIS: Mani—Manil—Manila.

MOORE: So you went to Manila?

PANDALIS: Yeah, because everybody always went down there to get married. You know that (laughs) – that didn't get married in church (laughs).

MOORE: Oh so you got married in Manila?

PANDALIS: (laughs) Manila, Utah.

MOORE: And was your husband on speaking terms with his mother about this?

SODERLUND: Oh yeah.

PANDALIS: Yeah, oh yeah. Oh she g—she forgave us afterwards. There was nothing she could do (laughs).

MOORE: How 'bout your mother? How'd she feel?

PANDALIS: Oh my mother e—she w—she didn't care. You know, it was – she wanted me to be happy, that's all.

MOORE: And so what happened after that? What did your husband do for a living then?

PANDALIS: Let's see where was he working at that time? Do you remember? (laughs) I can't remember where--

SODERLUND: [superposed] [not understood]

PANDALIS: Huh?

SODERLUND: Down at the bakery?

PANDALIS: Oh yes, he was driving at the Parisian Bakery and it was run by a Greek – yeah. That was – that was where he was working. [not understood]

MOORE: And then what happened? Did you have children?

PANDALIS: Oh yes. M—me – this one. She was our first born.

MOORE: So you were – how many children did you have?

PANDALIS: Three.

MOORE: Three. And what were their names in – in order?

PANDALIS: Mary-May, Andrew, and John.

MOORE: And what do they do for a living now?

PANDALIS: John has a store right down here. M—remember I told you to stop at the little store?

MOORE: Yeah, yeah.

PANDALIS: Ok and um, Andy is working at the Ford garage as – what did – fi— credit manager, yeah.

SODERLUND: [superposed] [not understood]

PANDALIS: And Mary-May is in Las Vegas and she's working at the Sands Casino.

SODERLUND: [interposed] [not understood]

PANDALIS: With the tour—on the tourist – you know she gives out these coffee mugs for the tourists and--

MOORE: I was just there.

PANDALIS: Were you at the Sands casino? Did you get a coffee mug?

MOORE: No I didn't, but I was at the counter. Pardon?

SODERLUND: She retired [not understood]. She worked for a social security firm.

PANDALIS: For twenty years – twenty years (laughs). But the – the job was – was we were shorthanded and she – she got stress, you know.

MOORE: Ok so – so – did you speak Finnish or Greek to your children at all? Do they speak—

PANDALIS: [interposed] No that – that's where I made a mistake. Greek but not Fin.

MOORE: And did you learn Greek?

PANDALIS: No I learned it enough so that I knew that if – if – if they cussed me out I knew that I was being cussed out (laughs).

MOORE: And what was your language at home then between your – your husband and you?

PANDALIS: At home – English.

MOORE: English, right?

PANDALIS: Yeah.

MOORE: And did your children speak to your mother at all? Was your mother alive long enough to know your children?

SODERLUND: Oh yeah.

PANDALIS: Oh yes.

MOORE: And did they speak in English or Finnish to her?

PANDALIS: No Mary-May is the one that spoke the most Fin. Mary-May and Johnny. And Johnny was my youngest son and Andy was the oldest but Johnny and Mary-May were the ones that picked up Fin from my mother real easy. They could – they understood her when – she'd always talk Fin to them, you know. She didn't – she never spoke English to them.

SODERLUND: [not understood]

PANDALIS: Oh yeah they – they all learned to talk Greek. Because they were with – with Grandma Pandalis a lot because I used to work at the club. They had a night club later on – the folks did. The Log Inn. It's still standing there but it's not – I mean it doesn't belong to the Pandalis's anymore. But that's where we worked – I worked and – and – and – and Gus worked there as a bartender and I worked as a waitress.

MOORE: And when you look back on your life now I mean – you have had – your family has come from Finland and – and you lived a long life of – in different places – what do you think about your parents – and you said you've been back to Finland, too – what is your idea about your parents' original decision? Was it a better life here than it would've been in Finland?

PANDALIS: A better life here than in Finland? According to my mother she would agree – she would say that we had a better life here.

MOORE: Mhmm. And were there – was there ever any – any doubt about – or any question of you going back to live there yourself – to Finland?

PANDALIS: No I – I never thought of going back there to live. I wanted to go there and visit, which I did, you know. With my aunt and uncle.

MOORE: In her old age did your mother ever want to go back to live in Finland?

PANDALIS: She didn't want to go back to live but she – she did want to go and visit but she never did have her chance to go and visit. I wish that she could've gone like – like I was able to go with my aunt and uncle. You know, 'cause I enjoyed that trip and I enjoyed visiting with my cousins.

MOORE: And what were your impressions of Finland and having – having gone back and seeing your home?

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

SODERLUND: Oh absolutely. They live pretty good.

MOORE: When you think of yourself now in terms of nationality, wh—how do you identify yourself?

PANDALIS: I'm a Finlander (laughs).

MOORE: Do you consider yourself an American too?

PANDALIS: Oh yes. I'm – I'm an American Finlander (laughs).

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

KM-0059

END OF INTERVIEW