

PERSONAL BACKGROUND Name is Peter Geirhart Danielsen. Born in Rjukan, Norway on March 31, 1915. Rjukan is located in the center part of Southern Norway near Porsgrunn. This is where the Germans made heavy water during WWII. There was a hydroelectric plant.

PARENTS Father was Daniel Bernard Danielsen and his mother was Julie Hansen Espevik. His father was an inspector for the hydroelectric plant in Norway and in the U.S. he was the interior decorator for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. His mother was a housewife.

GRANDPARENTS Maternal grandfather owned a large farm in Porsgrunn, Norway that the Germans cleared all the buildings off of and made into an airstrip. He had a motorboat that he would take Peter out in.

DANIELSEN NAME At one time he heard that their family's name was Holm. When Peter came to the U.S. his name was Per but the teacher in Brooklyn changed it to Peter.

GROWING UP IN NORWAY Remembers playing, swimming, skiing, and berry picking. They lived in Kragerø on an island called Tatøy. They were always down at the water or in the winter times they would be on their snow sleds. Sometimes they had to pay the bigger boys to play in certain areas. They would play ball.

SCHOOL Started at age seven and went for three years. They went at least ten months.

REASONS FOR COMING TO AMERICA His father came in 1921, four years before the rest of the family. There wasn't too much America talk in their home. His father would send money home. His father settled down with an aunt in Brooklyn, New York. They couldn't go with their father because of the limitation on immigration at that time. The rest of the family came in 1925.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Gunnar, Solveig, and Finn.

FEELINGS LEAVING NORWAY They were renting their house. Peter cried because they couldn't take the cat. Peter was almost 10.

TRIP TO U.S. Went from Tatøy to Kragerø and took the boat to Oslo. They stayed in Oslo with an aunt one night and caught the Bergensfjord the next day.

LUGGAGE They took furniture, bedding, and almost everything they had. Packed in the old-house round-topped trunks.

BERGENSFJORD Old, safe, efficient ship. Very comfortable. All five of them were in one cabin.

SHIP TRAVEL Crossing the North Sea was rough. Left March 21 and got to the U.S. March 31. The Atlantic Ocean was calm the entire trip. He thinks they stopped in Bergen, Norway and picked up some Danish people. For the five of them the crossing cost about \$250. Made a stop in Halifax, Canada.

ELLIS ISLAND Led to the see the medics. Got coffee with sugar, which they never had before, and some sandwiches. They waited a few hours.

MEETING FATHER He was like a stranger to Peter. From customs they went to Bertha and Uncle Hans' place in Bay Ridge, New York. Father had a place.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS He remembers learning his first English from the kids asking 'What's your name?' He was numb, had no impressions.

FATHER'S WORK He worked for the Metropolitan Museum of Art doing painting whenever new pieces were bought.

LANGUAGE They didn't go to school that year. They all went into classes just to learn.

COMMUNITY Bay Ridge, Brooklyn was a Scandinavian area, but they lived in an area called Little Italy with the Italians. The immigrant groups were very well defined. Strong national identities. There were a few fights that broke out. There was lots of support within the community. Some of the women worked in 'sweat shops' sewing for \$1 a day in their homes.

HOME IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK A very nice upstairs apartment with 6-7- rooms a with a big porch and backyard. They lived there from 1925-1927 and then they moved to their own home in Bay Ridge. They paid about \$12,500 for it.

CHILDHOOD IN U.S. They had a bicycle. He took a job as soon as he could. He delivered chickens, groceries, and meat, worked in a soda store, and sold soda from his wagon. He also sold newspapers. Soon he had three bicycles.

PREJUDICES They felt prejudice against them. They weren't invited to certain affairs and hearing people talk about them. Lots of jealousy. The Norwegian community took root in the Italian community.

SCHOOL IN NEW YORK They went to the regular classes. Everything was in English. He knew his math. The

teachers were nice. After one year he felt comfortable with English. They were pretty quiet until then.

LANGUAGE USE They spoke Norwegian in the home. He mother and his aunt went to immigrant English classes at Bay Ridge High School, but it didn't last for long. The kids spoke English between themselves or used whichever word seemed to fit best.

CITIZENSHIP Father had to wait for five years to get his first papers. Father became a citizen in 1931 and all his children under the age of 15 became citizens under his papers. The two older children had to take out their own papers. Later Peter asked for his own papers. He had to take a loyalty test.

DEPRESSION The kids all worked hard and still they couldn't afford meat for 3-4 days. Only heard of one Danish man, Mr. Madsen (?) that returned because of the Depression. He had trouble getting out because there was no record of him coming in.

SCANDINAVIAN TRADITIONS Celebrated the same holidays. The churches in Brooklyn, New York kept up the traditions too.

CHURCH LIFE IN NEW YORK He practically lived in church. He was there Sunday morning for Sunday school, Sunday services, Sunday evening for services, Wednesday evening for services, and Friday night for Luther League. In Norway, they hadn't had a full-time minister, they had a bedehus where the minister only came once and a while. They went to Bethany Lutheran Church in Brooklyn. The church was a source of hope and encouragement for the immigrants. He liked to go. It was a social place too. They had a Norwegian service once a month.

CHRISTMAS IN NEW YORK That was the big holiday. They would make up food baskets and go out and give it to the poor people. People donated their time to the church. The church was his second home. At home they had a big tree and walked around it singing songs on Christmas Eve. They had lutefisk and cooked rice with sugar and cinnamon for Christmas Eve. There was lefse and lots cookies. There were lit candles on the tree and they made paper decorations. They had presents under the tree.

HOLIDAYS They would go on picnics to the nearby parks. There was Prospect Park, Sunset Park, and out to Coney Island.

BAY RIDGE He talks about the location of the various ethnic groups in New York. Bay Ridge is one of the last places remaining the same.

SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS Every country had their organizations. His parents didn't belong to this but his mother was involved in hospital groups - Martha Maria Foreningen. He would go some Saturday nights for their programs at the Sons of Norway. His mother's group would help in the hospital.

WWII He enlisted in the Army. After getting to see some places outside of Brooklyn he realized Brooklyn wasn't for him. He had thought that the Dodgers and baseball were everything. He enlisted in 1942 right after Pearl Harbor when he was 26.

WORK IN NEW YORK He had worked on Wall Street in an accounting department and as a runner. He was a clerk at Bethlehem Steel Shipyards. They were very busy during the war. He didn't have time to spend the money he was making.

In 1945 he got out of the Army and went to Long Island University and finished

WEST COAST Came in 1948 to visit his aunt in Los Angeles, California. This aunt was a housekeeper for the wealthy. She was working for Mrs. Slavik (?). What he really wanted to do was go to Alaska. On his way to Alaska he stopped in Seattle and met his future wife.

ALASKA Stayed there for one year and worked for Birch Johnson Telecorporation (?).

SOUTH PACIFIC Took a job with the military government there for almost two years.

Now he felt that he had seen the world. Brooklyn still doesn't appeal to him.

MARRIAGE Married in Moorehead, Minnesota where Helen was from. Helen is half Norwegian and half Danish. She grew up in North Dakota and Minnesota. Her mother came from Denmark and her father from Norway. They didn't have any children.

MOVING AROUND Taught school in Alaska in 196(?). In 1952, they were out west. He was working for the Food King chain and then for the post exchange system out of Fort Lewis and Portland, Oregon. They moved out here because of the nice climate. There is no better place. In 1969, they went up to Alaska to teach school where they stayed for eight years. He taught the fourth grade, some business class, and then to the University of Alaska Accounting Department. He also taught on-the-job training programs. Helen had elementary and home economics.

VISITS TO NORWAY It took 53 years to return. Very little had changed. They left on a Sons of Norway trip from Vancouver, B.C. to Gardermoen in Oslo. It was fun and they want to return. He got along fine with the language. There were a few problems understanding the younger children.

NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE USE He would speak Norwegian to his mother. He and his wife would also speak Norwegian sometimes. His mother would write letters to him in Norwegian. Also he would speak it with some of

his neighbors.

SONS OF NORWAY They became active in Tacoma.

CHURCH IN TACOMA They go to Bethlehem Lutheran. They have been on the board and Helen belongs to the Circle.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS He belongs to the Elks and the Masons. They retired five years ago.

CONTACT WITH NORWAY They have distant relatives that they write to. They are invited back.

IMPRESSIONS OF SCANDINAVIA They are very friendly and very clean.

He has cousins in Brooklyn still. He is the last one in his family. He has some nieces and nephews.

SCANDINAVIAN TRADITIONS They keep up the traditions food wise.

SPOKEN NORWEGIAN He says that they have it good here in America in Norwegian. He recites I Jesu Navn.

IMPORTANCE OF NORWEGIAN HERITAGE It is very important. At one time he wanted to be buried where his parents were. Has never had a bad moment in Norway, but has had some because of the U.S. His loyalty is to America.