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# Mr. Peter Kolliman

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Peter Kolliman of Wilmington, Delaware is going to speak about his childhood in Greece, his living and working conditions after immigrating to America and why he came to Delaware.

Could you give us your name?

Mr. Kolliman: My name is Peter Kolliman. And I wasn't born without a name, but that's what my father adopted when I first came to the United States. My name was by my Europe is, Badaskeva Kumandas *[phonetic]* [0:00:35].

Interviewer: And where were you born?

Mr. Kolliman: I was born on an island in the Aegean just as the coast of Asia Minor. In the Aegean times, they call it Lesbos, today we call it Mytilene or Mytilene. I was born in a village on an island of about 5,000 people by the name of Ahia Baraskivi *[phonetic]* [0:01:04].

Interviewer: When were you born?

Mr. Kolliman: I was born in 1897 on June 3rd and I stayed there – it was May 1911. During that time I attended the local school. I left just before graduation of the 8th grade, the highest grade of schooling they had in the village.

Interviewer: But was it unusual for someone in your village to go to school that long or was that the usual?

Mr. Kolliman: Yeah, we had – when I started say in the first grade, there may have been 50 or maybe 75 children, no, not children but boys because schools were separate. The sexes were separate in our schools. By the time we were to graduate from the eighth grade, there are, as I remember, only six of us. The rest of them had dropped out and going to work either with their parent. That's the only thing that either that or migrated. There was a very low industry or whatever in the village, at least in the village. All the work was agricultural work and not too much of that.

Interviewer: What jobs – what occupations did your father have?

Mr. Kolliman: My father was a shoemaker, but after he got married and I was born, he couldn't make a living in the village. And so he migrated first to one place

and then another. He went to Smyrna for awhile and then he went to Constantinople for awhile. He went to Egypt for awhile. He went to Athens. Before he went anywhere else, he went to Athens because he had his leg built in by a kick on a mule and he have to go to Athens to take care of the leg. While he was in Athens the room – another boy from our village that was attending the University of Athens and eventually became the principal of our schools in the village, while he was rooming with him, my father learned to read and write, other instruction of this University of Athens school.

After he returned to the village and learned the trade of making shoes, he then married. He realized he that couldn't make a living there and he traveled to the places I have mentioned. And eventually he made two trips to the United States. He left home and he stayed in the United States for about a year, maybe a little longer. It must have been about 1906 or '07, maybe it was little later than that. Perhaps it was 1908 and '10. And then there was a depression in the United States at that time. And since he had no work, rather than spent the savings he had by himself he came back home to enjoy it with his family.

**[0:05:04]**

Then the depression eased. Before that, he went to Egypt to make a living and from Egypt, he came back to the United States and settled in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Interviewer: When you were in Greece, can you describe some of the conditions that you remember?

Mr. Kolliman: Well I remember he keeps coming back to real life with my family. I should have said that my father went to all of the places outside of the village, outside of island even to make a living. He would return after a little while and then the time he came home, the next year my mother was having another baby, but then finally there were five girls and two boys that survived. There were others of course that died of childhood or even at child birth or even abortions. We had only one piece of property olive grove that my father had inherited from his father.

Interviewer: Did you father – rather did your grandfather grow olives for a living?

Mr. Kolliman: My grandfather that is my father's father was a tailor. And he became quite a fluent in that business. He had quite a bit of property. All their property of course, all wealth was his properties. So when he died, his late years he became an alcoholic and squandered all that he had. This

piece of property was the only thing goes, that came to my father. And at least we've got our olive oil, a lot of that piece of property, olives and olive oil. Outside of that, it was a pretty difficult time. The people, most of the people are poor and a good many of them migrated and most of them for financial reasons for economic reasons and others because of racial, political reasons. We were minority Greeks living in Turkey. And although most of the population of the island were Greeks still we're born in nomination of the Turks and we have to – we didn't have the privileges that free man at that time can have.

The schooling was very poor. We had eighth grades and only four teachers for the eighth grades or let's see four teachers were eighth grades. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were taken care of by the principal of the school system and another, an added teacher. Compared to the schooling in the United States today it's incomparable. In the winter we had to take – we could go to school, but they wouldn't let us in unless we brought something to keep the school warm. We have to bring either a log or some kindling or even matches to start the fire. There was a big stove in the middle that tried to heat the building. The living – event the food condition was questionable. I remember my mother being by herself, her husband or my father miles, hundreds or sometimes thousands of miles away, she had to then make ends meet the best you have.

[0:09:52]

I remember mornings where we would get up. We had a table. We didn't have chairs in the kitchen beyond the home. In fact the girls, no girl could get married unless she had a home and well furnished. But the furnishes were rather crewed. We had seats build in along the kitchen. And we had the table that would stand up from the floor about – or I would say a foot, not more than 12 inches. And the whole family sat around that table and they ate out of the same dish. In the morning you start to *[inaudible]* [0:10:35]. She had a bowl and she filled it with water, pour some olive oil on top of it which of course floated, added some salt and then dipped our bread in that and ate it, that was our breakfast and then went to school.

As far as the sleeping was concerned, there was a fire place, the only place for warmth in the house was a fire place. And while the fire place was burning during the day and kept the kitchen fairly warm, we slept on the floor over the kitchen. We had no beds. Mother had mattresses rolled up and stored away in a large cabinet in the kitchen. And then at night she would roll it on the floor and we slept. When dad was home

nine of us. When he was away, eight of us. And we slept like sardines. One head would be on one side, the other head would be on the other side and so on. But we kept warm in that way. The fire still ran out and cold set in but we survived. All seven of us survived and go to school and get at least some good education.

Interviewer: Did the Greek Orthodox Church played a very good role?

Mr. Kolliman: Yeah. The schools were – the Turks have nothing to do with our schooling, with our education or with any of our domestic affairs. That was all in the hands of the Greek Orthodox Catholic Church. And while they have control over the schools, our school was very different. There were some things that the Turks would not allow us to study. They wouldn't allow us to study the history, Byzantine history, the history of the Byzantine Empire which empire they defeated and took over sometimes in 1400. While we had very little interference, yet taxation we would sent to there – Turks come to the village to collect the taxes. We had policeman the Turk. And we had – they made us feel that we were a subject people in many ways. At first for us is we would go to gather, to harvest his olives or his grapes or whatever he had planted without having a permit and the permit was issued by the statement of such an amount after we get how much each would meet.

So that's the way. There were times when the citizenry would be almost pushed to rebellion by the abuses, but nothing like that happened. 1908, Turkey adopted the constitution. Up to that time we were not in the – we were restricted in the Turkish army. We paid a tax to keep out of it. But in 1908 when they adopted the constitution and the government, the Turkish government instead of being an autocracy became a constitutional government and all the minority people of the empire were expected to serve in their armed forces. Then most of our youths scattered all over the world to escape that. But the Catholic Church urged us not to flee away but to stay, to stay and join their army, allow the prescription to take into effect, to learn to use our guns because we are going to use them against them later on in rebellion. That was the tenant in which we live and the hopes of our gender did for the future.

**[0:15:09]**

After we left in – I left in 19 – in May 1911, we crossed over. We have to catch the boat at Piraeus, the port city of Athens. And because the boat was late, I spent about 8 or 10 other boys after coming to the United States from the village, we stayed in hotels in Athens for those days. And it was the first time that we had the beautiful things that were once

Greece, the Acropolis and some of the museums, the palace grounds. The first time I saw an automobile, first time I saw an electric light, the first time I ever saw a car. It's the first time I ever saw a telephone. Well we have telegraph wires on the island and I never saw an instrument of any kind. I had seen one automobile in our village and one bicycle up to the time that I left. That was 1911.

Interviewer: Can you describe some conditions on the ship when you traveled?

Mr. Kolliman: The ship was – we're on a boat, that was a small boat but longer than it sweeps allowed today. And it was a very tossing creep. It went from one to the other at times in the mess wherever we were eating, you have to hold them, your plate because if you didn't, it would slide over the other side and probably spill.

Interviewer: What class did you go?

Mr. Kolliman: Third class.

Interviewer: Third class.

Mr. Kolliman: In the steerage. And the steerage was composed of – because I remember three layers of cuts. And in the morning, they would light softer candles in the steerage to force us on deck to clean the steerage and for us to get some fresh air. But the tossing of the ship was such that the – to be on deck as it's messy and if you didn't have a good stomach, you'd lose everything you had in your own stomach because so many others were losing there's because of the tossing, because of sea sickness. I don't know that I was desperate. The trip, it took us, as I remember it, 23 days to cross. As I was driving little to see, my mother had given me a piece of candle that was taken off the procession to celebrate the church of good Thursday evening. Intensively we were taking the body of Jesus who was crucified and we were taking it. That was Thursday evening where he was crucified. It was Friday evening that we were taking him – taking the body for burial and that was done by a procession through the village. And in that procession, the candles that were burning on was intensively was the *[inaudible] [0:19:05]*. I can't say that we travel the coffin of the Lord was that the flowers and candles. The tradition was that anybody that had a piece of that candle has got into a storm, all he had to do was light the candle, throw it in the sea, in the ocean and there would be a great calm. But in me it didn't work. Then of course those were things have to make me question the ethicality and the baselessness of tradition. We got to New York.

[0:19:50]

If I remember right, it must have been the 10th, around the 10th of Jun in 1911. And we landed on Ellis Island. We were placed on Ellis Island and entering the finally through and identifying ourselves and the officials checking on us. We were sold our lunch. I persisted. I can't remember what presented. I remember an orange and I remember some kind of a sandwich which is a hot, my *[inaudible]* [0:20:38] of just a hamburger, I don't remember but they charged us with prices, but it never was in that orange bag. Some of them were offered a sale, offered to buy the Brooklyn Bridge. And unless you were foolish enough to turn over your money by of course – those that had a real education and having people here who would warn what to look for, what to avoid, but we got by. We stayed in the Ellis Island for two days, maybe three days until my father came from Reading and picked me up.

Interviewer: Reading, Pennsylvania?

Mr. Kolliman: Reading Pennsylvania.

Interviewer: And then?

Mr. Kolliman: And then we went back to Reading.

Interviewer: Could you describe the conditions in Reading?

Interviewer: Well the conditions in Reading, the first – my first impression with Reading was beautiful. When I was in Ellis Island, I got on the Pennsylvania Railroad train to Alan Town. And we stayed in Alan Town overnight. I think we slept in the baggage room of the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Alan Town. The next day, we got on another train. And we traveled down from Alan Town to Reading. We got off in Reading I would suppose by early in the morning, about eight, maybe nine o'clock. And we walked up Penn Street, the Pennsylvania station which is on Penn Street. We walked up Penn Street and passed through the second and third streets that I remembered. After fourth street, everything was beautiful and just like the first car that they use to get at home from the United States, beautiful stores, a wide square until we got to Sixth Street. At Sixth Street, we turned left and we walked up Sixth Street to Walnut. And at Walnut we turned right. When we came to Seventh Street, my disillusion began to set in. Seventh Street was the band of the Reading Railroad. It was kind of sulken plaque. We have to walk over a bridge across Seventh Street.

Looking to the right was the railroad going about crossing Penn Street but then coming to the Franklin Street passenger station. On the left hand was a railroad yard and beyond the railroad yard was the station proper, the passenger station. And in the railroad yard, shifters, railroads, locomotives with the pushing cars back and forth and arranging trains destined to go either to New York or Harrisburg or Foxwell or Philadelphia either way. One the corner of Seventh and Walnut was a cigar factory. We walked across and passed the cigar factory. There was a little alleyway there and there were few houses between that alleyway and the next half street it was Poplar Street. We turned left on Poplar. There were a few houses on the right-hand side or the east side of Poplar Street.

**[0:24:54]**

On the left side, after we passed the houses and the backyards of the whole of Walnut Street was a lumbar year. Begun the lumbar yard was a scrap yard and of course both of them were adjacent to the railroad yard. On the right side of the street was a few houses and then a rural house, but before we got to *[inaudible]* **[0:25:28]** there was an opening, a railroad track, a siding that connected the railroad yard to *[inaudible]* **[0:25:38]** candy factory where they make *[inaudible]* **[0:25:41]** drops and other candies. The best set and my father turned into an alleyway between the two homes, the first and the second.

Interviewer: Were they row houses?

Mr. Kolliman: Row houses, the one adjacent to the railroad siding was almost half of the road because the other half was taken down when they tore the house next to it to make room for the railroad siding to lead us. We got in and it opened in two ways, between the alleyway between the two houses, let both yards for the wooden fence between them. There was a top of water just inside this opening and a door that opened into a kitchen. There was a big iron stove that burned wood or coal in the kitchen. That was the only heat in the house.

Interviewer: Do you have any running water in the house?

Mr. Kolliman: No running water in the house. The only running water was outside in the yard. There was no toilet in the house. There was an out building. There was no bathroom in the house. And as I stood in the kitchen and dad said, "I guess we better get something to eat" until you reach in the closet – in the closet or whatever, what do you call them?



Interviewer: Covers.

Mr. Kolliman: Covers yeah and pulled out a plate of beans and some bread. In the meantime I was looking around and the place was like a shape. And I asked my father and I said, "Dad, is this where you live?" And he said, "Yes, why?" And then I started to cry. And I said, "Dad I want to go home, because this is where you live." But that wasn't the worst of it. By evening, the man that lived in it in the house...

Interviewer: How many men live in the house?

Mr. Kolliman: Altogether there were 18.

Interviewer: Eighteen.

Mr. Kolliman: In a six-room house.

Interviewer: And how much did it cost to stay?

Mr. Kolliman: The cost left away, they have to live to accomplish our dream, vision in coming to the United States. At that time most people that came to the United States came at least one that I know, came here with the intention of staying here for about four years and saving as much as it could and then return at home and enjoying it with their families. Well that was their intention. And that was my father's intention. That was his intention for me. But it didn't work out exactly that way.

We, my father and I and three brothers and my mother and my uncles and the husband of my mother's sister and father and I occupied the main room, bedroom in the house.

Interviewer: Were these rooms very large? Were these rooms very large?

Mr. Kolliman: Not very large. The whole building was very large. How the others slept in the other rooms were available, I can't tell you. But we had two beds and I slept between my father and one of my uncles and...

Interviewer: Did you have a bed in Greece?

Mr. Kolliman: No we have no bed. I told you that we had to sleep in the floor in the kitchen.

Interviewer: Yeah.

**[0:30:00]**

Mr. Kolliman:

Then by the time we all got back, the rent for the house was as I remember it 11,000 and that of course at the end of the month, we divide it among the 18 men that live there and that meant to keep about seven to five cents a piece of rent for the month. And then for our food, they took turns of cooking. My father who was a good cook, his Sundays was reserved for him. And the Sunday dinner was usually my father's cooking and probably the most edible meal of the week. But then they purchased anything say 10 pounds a meat, we would – of course we had a book, put it on the book, Peter, 10 pounds of meat, \$5 or whatever it was. The other followed or do the same thing. At the end of the week we would separate it. Didn't call it so much, so much and sum it up and then add everything up and then divide it again by 18 and each man would pay his share into the pool.

On Saturdays, we would take turns and take baths in the kitchen and we would wash up. That was the conditions that I came to in the United States. For their entertainment, the only way to entertain themselves was to get drunk. On Saturday night they would get a barrel of beer and a couple of quarts of whiskey, cheap whiskey and best as the evening and singing and so on and so forth. There were times that we would go to the movies or they would go in the summer, they would go to Persona Amusement Park. And that's the entertainment they had. As far as *[inaudible]* **[0:32:29]** was concerned, they would buy the – excuse me – newspapers that were published in New York and in Greek. And spend a two to read it. As winter came along, we're still living in the same place and my father and my uncles took pity on me. And they bought a small coal stove and put it up in the bedroom to have some heat in the house because as I said, there's a wall being torn down, I guess the house was torn down left some holes near the roof, near the ceiling and snow would go in. Of course birds come into the summer but snow in the winter. They lived the kind of course, the kind of coal that we use was at the site. And the next – and while the room was kept fairly warm, the next morning when my uncle began to get up to go to work, as they get up out of bed, they toppled over to the floor. And it was evidently fortunate that there were holes in the wall because the carbon monoxide that was generated by the stove *[could escape]*, but of course some of it was inhaled by all of us and we were all deathly sick that day, but none of us suffered any serious results from it.

Interviewer:

Once you told me about someone who had severe burns?

**[0:34:58]**

Mr. Kolliman: In the summer when it was necessary or impossible to use a large coal stove for cooking and for warmth, we had the gasoline stove. And I remember just – I think it was the first year or the second year, but during the summer while one of the man was using the stove in cooking, the thing got exploded. And I took the man to the hospital because I remember it when we passed the hospital on Sixth Street. The man survived but it was – he was burned, whole, his body, everything. The whole body was burned. How he survived, I don't know but he did survived. But then the next day they bought another similar stove and that was the only time they had an explosion of it. It's such a coming.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any problems with discrimination or with police?

Mr. Kolliman: As far as discrimination is concerned, tell me what you mean by discrimination. I live in Reading and I worked with American people up until 1918. 1911 to 1918 not once was I invited or did I have access to an American home.

Interviewer: What was the occasion when you were finally invited to it?

Mr. Kolliman: That brings us to another part of my life. That brings us to my – getting acquainted with what are known today as Bible Students. It was the second or third meeting that the owner of the Bible Students Brother Warner who had a large family asked me and another man from the same village who was also a bible student to his home for dinner. The first time I stepped in an American home and it made such an impression on my mind that I will never forget it and I'll never cease being grateful to Brother Warner for inviting me.

The titles of whap, guinea, another – oh I don't know what you would call them – was common. We weren't welcomed. But we lived, most of the man that lived in that house and hundreds of others they stayed on the expeditions for four or five years and returned only to die from different diseases they've contacted while they were here. My father returned to Greece in at the end of the First World War 1918. After he left, I moved to part of this room that I rented and I've been away from that milieu ever since. One time while I was working in kosher mill this was my second job, like maybe later, I'll describe my first job, but the second job was working in a kosher mill. And between the two jobs, they did a 10 school, one term from November till the end of the term. They started me in the first grade, I was 14 years old at that time. And I jumped the second and attended the third, and I jumped the fourth. And I was

graduated to the fifth grade at the end of the term and I never went back to school since.

[0:40:06]

Again I am very grateful to the two teachers that taught the first grade and the other taught the third grade. They did everything imaginable, everything possible to teach me the language. Of course I was presumptuous and aggressive and I wanted – whenever there was any reading, I wanted to do the reading and the kids hated me because I don't know how to read and I don't blame them for that. During my father and my father's ambition was to fulfill his obligations to his girls, to his daughters which of course meant that he have to build five houses before the girls could get married. And that was the reason he was here in the United States. That was the reason he brought me here to help him accumulate enough money to build the house. And because he had that idea that every penny was really precious to him.

I could tell a lot of stories about my life with my father, but it won't help anybody. Only one perhaps would be interesting. I wanted, in the summer, one summer, I wanted to go to Persona Park. And I told him I said, "Dad I want to go to the park today." And he could sense it, that was very good thing to do. So he got down to his pocket and got a dime and gave me a dime which meant that five cents was to trolley fair, to the park and five cents to come back. I looked at the dime and I looked at him. And I was so mad, I threw the dime to the top of the roof and he could have killed me. And that's the way he was. And because of that I decided to run away. So on a Friday afternoon, when I got my pay, I think the amount went to 6 to \$7, I went to the Pennsylvania station and bought a railroad ticket to New York. I got to New York. I didn't know what to do. I looked in the newspapers, the Greek paper and I saw a job advertisement in a butcher shop. So then I applied for the job and got the job. I slept there. I stayed there just that one night. The next night I was out looking for another job. I can't tell you the reasons why I left there unmentionable.

I got a job then that same day, the next day shining shoes. And the owner of the parlor had a room where all his help were sleeping. I stayed there just for a little while. And I got paid for that week but there were tips I had accumulated. I went to the Grand Central station and asked them – show them my money and asked them where can I get through this money? They told me, "You could get as far as New Haven." So I bought myself a ticket to New Haven and landed at the New Haven, rented to New Haven Station and I knew nothing about New Haven. I had a few

pennies in my pocket. And I sat there on the bench and worried as to what I was going to do next. There was a lady sitting across another bench and suddenly she got up and walked away. And she had – I noticed she left her pocket book there. So I took and jumped and sat on the pocket book and I waited, see if she would come back. And so I opened the pocket book and I found a *[inaudible]* **[0:44:45]** of 90 cents. So I bought another ticket to Connecticut from New Haven.

**[0:44:55]**

Even soldier, I knew people that were living there that's come from the same village. And so I went to Sonya and of course people that I knew took me in, but then I start looking for another job. Most of the work available in Sonya were in grass mills and *[inaudible]* **[0:45:23]** at that time because I wasn't big enough or at least they never believe me that I was 14, 16 years old. So finally a grocer asked me to go and work for him. He would give me my board for pay. So I went to work with him. I worked for him for awhile. And while I was working for him by the way, I stole one of his cigars out of the suitcase and I went out in the back alley and smoked it and forget died of it and I never touched tobacco since.

Interviewer: Why did you come to Delaware and how?

Mr. Kolliman: So years later, after my father left, I was living in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1916 again, in 1916, my father by a favor of some friends of his that were running the candy factory, the Polish brothers, he got me a job in an electrical shop, the Berks Engineering Company as an apprentice electrician. There I worked there for over three years. I learned the *[inaudible]* **[0:47:01]** besides some of the aspect of electrical work, sites. The man that was foreman of the department of the Berks Engineering was John Boo. About the second year that I worked with him and for him, he quit the job and became master mechanic of the – I forget what the name of the Wilmington company was, but the travel system in Wilmington Delaware.

After I finished my apprenticeship, I got a job whit the carpenter steel work and I repaired their motors, one their amateurs were about 8 or 10 months. By that time I had caught up with the work. I went with the master mechanic there and asked him what was it for me to do. He says, "Are you done with that work?" I said, "Yes, I'm done." So he gave me a man and a ladder and a sponge and a bucket and he told us to go in the mill and clean, wash the lights in the ceilings and their reflectors. It was all dust. And I've never spend a hotter day in my life. Underneath was a rolling mill, white hot steel going back and forth and above us the sun.

That night I went to bible student, Lee and I read a letter from headquarters asking for volunteers to go to Brooklyn and work there for a little while, for a short while in preparation of our special addition of our – the Golden Age Magazine. So I raised my hand and so did the other brother, Michael, William and Michael and I went back the next day and asked for a leave of absence. He asked me how long would you be gone? I said perhaps a month, perhaps two months. He said, that you should go for a month with the least for two months. So I said well I'm going anyhow. If I come back if theirs is any work, well it's all right. If there's none, I'll find something else.

**[0:49:56]**

When I went back after a month or two, there was no work. It was then that I felt that John Boo and I wrote him a letter and asked him if he had something for me to do. The reply was yes, go to Wilmington and I'll give you a job. So I came back to him. I came to Wilmington. And of course, I got in touch with the bible students here. I've boarded with one of them for awhile and then boarded with another, the family of Wilber Dickenson who was a mechanical engineer at the Pennsylvania Railroad. And I lived with them for awhile. And then I moved again. I went to a furniture for myself. And then finally I did end with another bible student Sister Grapefield. While living with the Grapefield, they had meetings in the home, some meeting and I forget now what even the week it was. And the daughter of Brother Dickenson was at that meeting without her parents. And it was an odd thing that she would come without a father or a mother. At the end of the meeting, Sister Grapefield insisted on a walk with Martha Dickenson through their home. It was the first time that I ever walked with a girl in my life. And after five or six blocks, I asked her if she would go out with me.

Interviewer: And what happened?

Mr. Kolliman: Well she said, she would think it over. And three years later, she told me yes.

Interviewer: And how long have you been married to Martha?

Mr. Kolliman: Now we are married 51 years. We have to come back a little bit and still in Reading Pennsylvania as I told you, when I got interested in the bible student movement, I wrote my mother a letter and I got a reply. The poor lady she couldn't read or write herself. So obsessively she had somebody to read my letter to her and give to her reply. Her reply came, her words – wording like this, "I don't know who to curse, you or your

father. You because you learn to read and your father who send you to school and learned to read." And the idea was that I read and accepted something that she wouldn't think of accepting, accepting a doctrine or a way of thinking that's strange to the Greek Orthodox Church. And that the church because the reason I left is because I left the church because I got to know through the bible students what the bible really taught. And I realized that what preachers taught and what the bible taught are two very different things.

I approached the priest at that time and told them that *[inaudible]* **[0:54:22]** on the day, the morning, the Eastern morning when he came out of the sanctuary and announced the resurrection of Jesus, the hymn then further than that while he said that Christ is risen from the dead, he also add it that he, by his dead, he had conquered death and he has granted life everlasting to all that are in their graves. I recited that to the priest and I told them that, "Father, I believe that now." And he told me that I was crazy.

**[0:55:01]**

That was enough to live the church. And I have been sorry that I did because what I know about the bible that never taught would never dreamt about in the Greek church.

Interviewer: How long have you been an elder in Bible Students?

Mr. Kolliman: Well after I came to Wilmington, I worked for this street *[inaudible]* **[0:55:32]** for about a year. I think I came to Wilmington in 1920. Yes, I worked more than that. I came here in April 1st, 1920. And the year 1923, three years I guess I asked Mr. *[inaudible]* **[0:55:57]** for a leave of absence which he granted. And I used that spring, summer and fall calling on people from house to house in Siscaly, Maryland introducing the divine plan of the ages another publications with the Bible Students. At the end of that year, I was elected a deacon in the Wilmington congregation. And I think the next year, I was nominated to eldership. But because of some objection especially by Brother Vatrio, failed that is while the Bible Students elect their elders and deacons by a percentage of vote, 75 percent of the votes. I did not receive anyway near that number of vote. But the families went out next year, I was nominated again and I was elected. That must have been about 1925, that I became an elder.

Interviewer: What sort of responsibilities did you have?

Mr. Kolliman: One of the first jobs they gave me was to give a public talk down at Glen Mills, Maryland. That was quite an experience for me. I prepared my talk, went down there on Sunday. There were two families some bible students there and two strangers coming from the mills. I said Glen Mills, I mean F Mills. Now I started to talk. The gal, one man got up and left, one of the strangers and the other went down to sleep. And I couldn't find a place to stop. I talked for two short hours because I find a place to cut. And the bible students were still there, but the other man was still sleeping when I quit. After that, of course, after awhile they gave me a meeting that is a bible study. And my job was then to direct a discussion. That's the standard procedure in our meetings.

Interviewer: And you've been doing that *[inaudible]* [0:59:00].

Mr. Kolliman: And I've been that ever since. There were times when I led meetings like that, five times a week, but that's not ordinary. That was an extraordinary situation because I happen to be the only elder at that time.

Interviewer: Could you tell us, talk a little bit about your work and problems, labor problems at work?

Mr. Kolliman: Well, when I started to learn my trade, I was paid – that was in 1916, I was paid six cents an hour. I worked for 55 hours a week for the sum total of \$3.30 a week.

Interviewer: What could you buy with that just out of curiosity?

Mr. Kolliman: Well pork chops for instance were 11 cents a pack.

Interviewer: Okay.

**[0:59:56]**

Mr. Kolliman: I had to go to a doctor because I had a hernia, developed a hernia. And I asked the doctor what the operation would cost? And he asked me, he said, "Are you working?" I said, "Yes, I am." Well he said, "What do you get." And I told him. And he said, "Do you expect to – do you live on that?" I said, "Yes, I'm expected to." This is another story which would take too much time, but when we asked for a raise, we got that raise.

Interviewer: How did you get the raise? What did you have to do to get the raise?

Mr. Kolliman: Ask the boss. For apprentices, that was an automatic raise for six months. And then I went to work for the cop in the steel works. I think they got



about a dollar an hour at that time. I lived long enough to get \$3.30 an hour, then I retired.

Interviewer: When did you retire?

Mr. Kolliman: 1968, '69. When I started my work for the Berks Engineering Company learning my trade and later with the cop in the steel works, they were no benefits of any kind, no vacations, no holidays, no nothing, nothing special. Today I have lived long enough. When I was working for the United Engineering a founder company, I have to join, did join the United Steel Workers Union. And I lived long enough. I worked long enough to get that three months vacation with pay. I took my three months vacation then to retire. But we had a little pension coming to us. By this time the Social Security was in operation. I worked for them, depended on that.

**[1:02:25] End of Audio**