

DP-14

ELLA FOSSE

BIRTHDATE: JUNE 23, 1912

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 10, 1989

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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

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NORWAY, 1922

AGE 9

PASSAGE ON "THE STAVANGERFJORD"

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Fosse daughter, Joanne Bernhardt was also present during this interview and occasionally interjects with information.

PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., DIRECTOR OF ORAL HISTORY, 3/18/1995

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and we're about to begin interview number [DP-14] for the National Park Service Ellis Island Oral History Project. Today is Monday, April 10, 1989, and I'm in Everett, Washington at the home of Mrs. Ella Fosse. And Mrs. Fosse came through Ellis Island in 1922 from Norway. This is the beginning, again, of number [DP-14], and we're starting at 10:15 in the morning. Okay, after our false start there, can we start back at the beginning of yours story and can you tell me where and when you were born.

FOSSE: I was born in Kjeller, Norway, June the 23rd, 1912. And, um, my mother left me with my grandmother when I was two and a half months old and, uh, then I was raised by my grandmother the whole time. And, uh, when I was nine years old or just about that, my mother and dad had friends in Everett that was going to go to Sweden and, uh, they decided between themselves, without consulting me, that they would pick me up and bring me back to Everett. And, like I said, I didn't have anything to do with it, but here I am. (they laugh)

DALLETT: Tell me again where you were born, the name of the town?

FOSSE: Kjeller. K-J-E-L-L-E-R.

DALLETT: Do you remember your childhood?

FOSSE: Yes.

DALLETT: Can you tell me about that, about life with your grandmother?

FOSSE: Well, my grandmother and grandfather were like my mom

and dad. My sisters, I mean, my uncles and aunts were like brothers and sisters. I was raised with them and, uh, when I was in Norway, because I was raised by my grandmother, I had, um, Kleven [PH] as my name, you know, with them. And when I was going to go to the United States then they told me I would have to learn how to say Trider [PH] when they called me. (she laughs)

DALLETT: Sorry, what was the name that you had?

FOSSE: In Norway?

DALLETT: In Norway.

FOSSE: It was Kleven [PH], and, uh, then, of course, as long as I was coming over here then, uh, I had to remember that my name was Trider [PH]. That's my dad's name.

DALLETT: Oh, I see, because it would be difficult for people to pronounce it, was that why?

FOSSE: No, it's just that because I was raised by my grandmother, that's the name I used, see.

DALLETT: Tell me a bit about the town where you were raised.

FOSSE: Well, actually, about thirty, forty miles from Oslo, would it be?

DALLETT: Do you remember, um, you lived with your grandmother up to the time you were nine years old, is that right?

FOSSE: Yeah. Then I left Oslo and then went to Bergen and then was seasick the whole time until I got to Ellis Island. Well, the day before New York, really.

DALLETT: So you weren't really consulted about this trip to America.

FOSSE: Not a bit. Not a bit.

DALLETT: How did you feel about that decision?

FOSSE: I did not like it whatsoever, and I tried my darndest to get back to Norway, but nobody, well, I guess they thought it was my place to be here, but that was a difficult time, I tell you. But these people that brought me over here were American citizens, so they did not have to go through Ellis Island. So I went

through Ellis Island by myself. And then I tried to find, you know, at those days, most foreigners, maybe Americans too, I don't know, they wore scarves, you know. And I looked for some motherly lady so I could ask where to go to the bathroom and talk in Norwegian.

But, uh, no matter who I tried, I usually found somebody with kids, you know. But I couldn't, they didn't understand Norwegian. But when they called by name the next day, of course I stayed overnight, but the next day then we all sat around waiting for our name to be called. And the lady that interviewed me was really nice. She asked if I could speak English and I said I could, the only word I know was "seagulls." But anyway, it didn't take me long after I got here to learn how to speak English.

DALLETT: And how was it that you know the word "seagulls?"
From on the boat?

FOSSE: The boats, you know, seagulls follow boats, you know, so, but anyway it was, uh, she was real nice. And, of course, they wanted to know how come I was coming over here and I really didn't know anything about it except what I'd been told, you know. But anyway I evidently passed because I'm here.

DALLETT: Take me back again to that point just before you were leaving, okay? Up until the time you were nine, was it planned that you would come to this country and join your parents?

FOSSE: No.

DALLETT: It wasn't.

FOSSE: When this couple came from Everett over to Sweden to live, um, he thought he was going to like it, but then he decided he didn't want to move. So then I suppose letters came back and forth. But, uh, anyway...

DALLETT: So you were happy with the life you had with your grandmother?

FOSSE: Well, that was my, that was just like my mother and dad, you know. Of course, I didn't, uh, I didn't know my mother and dad. Well, they left, my mother left me there when I was two and a half months old so, uh, then my mother came over here to America and then, uh, shortly after that, well, I don't know just how long, then my dad came. So I met them the first time in

Everett April the 3rd, 1922.

DALLETT: Tell me about your grandmother and your grandfather.

FOSSE: Oh, they were real nice. There was no difference, well, maybe I was spoiled, but I mean, I think there was only five years difference between me and one of my uncles. And, uh, of course, they told me afterwards that I was spoiled and I probably was, you know, being the youngest. But they treated wonderful. And, uh, like I said, they were more like sisters and brothers than aunts and uncles, you know.

DALLETT: And how big a family was this? How many sisters and brothers?

FOSSE: Seven, well, it must be seven. I, my memory isn't so good on that. Of course...

DALLETT: And did you live in the countryside.

FOSSE: Yeah.

DALLETT: Was it on a farm?

FOSSE: No, they did have, uh, a garden, but no, not a farm.

My grandfather was in the military and then he, uh, after he retired then he worked at a military base there in Norway. And my grandmother, of course, just stayed home.

DALLETT: And took care of the rather large family.

FOSSE: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Do you remember helping her with the work?

FOSSE: Well, I don't remember doing much of anything but a couple of my aunts had a bicycle, so I learned how to ride a bicycle and, of course, Norway in that part of the country has a lot of snow, and they got me a pair of skis. So that's how we went to school. I started in school when I was seven and, uh, to go to school in the wintertime you skied.

DALLETT: Anything else you can remember about that, about growing up?

FOSSE: Well, yeah, I think, I had a real good, um, childhood there. The difficulties didn't start until they decided to ship me over here, really. And then, of

course, I made a darn fool of myself in Oslo at the dock because I didn't want to go and I screamed and yelled. And Mr. Carlson, no matter where I met him, he used to tease me about that. But, of course, I can understand that I would do that. But anyway, I got here.

DALLETT: So you tried to convince them that you should stay in Norway.

FOSSE: Oh, yeah.

DALLETT: You didn't want to come here.

FOSSE: When, when the Carlsons would come and visit my grandmother and grandfather, and it was in the wintertime, then, uh, I would just leave. I'd put on the skis and go. And, so I stayed as far away from them as I could.

DALLETT: Because you feared that they would...

FOSSE: They were going to take me over here, you know. So, uh...but, anyway...

DALLETT: What was the crux of the reason why you really didn't want to go. You didn't want to leave.

FOSSE: Well, they were family, you know. I mean, I didn't know my mother and dad. then, when I got here, then I had a brother and a sister, you see. And, uh, in those days you didn't have cameras much, of anything, and, uh, to have your picture taken you had to go to a photographer. I mean, there wasn't any such a thing as cameras. So, uh, I mean, I don't imagine I even had a picture of my mother and dad until I got here.

DALLETT: So you'd have letters back and forth. But was there anything that they told you about what life was like in Everett that made you think maybe it wouldn't be such a bad idea to go, or...

FOSSE: Oh, well, they promised me white shoes and they promised me a bicycle and skis. My folks didn't have the money for that but, you know, it was an incentive to get me to go, I guess.

DALLETT: So you remember actually leaving, then. You must have said goodbye to your grandparents.

FOSSE: Uh-huh. Yeah. And then, of course, there was a bunch of them at the dock, you know, at, in Oslo and, uh, you know, that was hard leaving them, you know. But grandmother wasn't up to walking. Because in those days you walked everywhere. She wasn't able to walk to Oslo on the dock. So I had to say goodbye to here there.

DALLETT: That must have been really sad.

FOSSE: Yeah. (break in tape)

DALLETT: All right. We've all had, a little cry, uh, (they laugh)

BERNHARDT: I really was, I'm sure, a very difficult time. You know, now that I have grandchildren and, being nine, I can only imagine the horror that it must be to leave what you thought as you were little until the time that they came when they told here they probably weren't their mom and dad. Mother, can I ask one question because I don't know I ever have. At what age did they tell you, or did you grow up knowing they were your

grandparents? When you were one and two you probably thought they were...

FOSSE: I don't believe that I even thought that there was such a thing that I would be leaving them, you know. It must have been when Carlsons came, and he started teasing that they were going to take me to America. And, of course, like I said, there was not pictures or anything in those days, you know. But anyway, uh, as far as I know I never knew except they were my mother and dad, you know.

BERNHARDT: Did you call them Grandpa and Grandma?

FOSSE: No. I imagine (Norwegian). Mother and Dad. But it, I don't even believe that it was even thought of, because my folks didn't have the money to come and get me. And, uh, but anyway, like I said, it, uh, was just one of those things that happened. But I don't think that I knew anything about it until they started talking about me going over here, coming over here.

DALLETT: Did you mother pack up some special things to take with you when you left?

FOSSE: I didn't have a heck of a lot but, yeah. I did. Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Anything you can remember? A special toy, or...

FOSSE: No, I never had a doll but, uh, somebody gave me a collar to put on over my coat or something and, uh, that was different. I mean, I never had that before.

DALLETT: I'm sorry, this is when you left Norway someone gave you the collar?

FOSSE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: So your grandfather then, walked you to the dock.

FOSSE: Two of my uncles and, uh, must have been two of my aunts, you know, that went with us there. And it was hard for them too, you know. But anyway, uh, I screamed and hollered and so on. (she laughs) I let off some steam that way, I guess.

DALLETT: But, nonetheless, you were on the boat.

FOSSE: Yeah. I was on.

DALLETT: Do you remember the boat at all? The name?

FOSSE: Yeah. I was, Mrs. Carlson and I shared a cabin. And Mr. Carlson and their two boys shared another one. And, uh, then whenever I could, you know, get away a little bit, they'd take me up on deck. But the thing was I was so seasick, you know, that I didn't really enjoy it. But I was seasick until we went, about the day before we got to New York. Then I was better. And I wasn't sick at all at Ellis Island but, uh, I did have to stay overnight, and I don't remember what we ate, you know, but I remember that we did eat. I just didn't know anybody that was Norwegian.

DALLETT: But the Carlsons were from where?

FOSSE: Well, it's called Pinehurst, but it would be like Everett.

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

FOSSE: Yeah, they sold their home and decided to go to Sweden and live. But, uh, after he got there he decided he didn't want to live there. Now, Mrs. Carlson came

from the neighborhood where my mother was born, and Mr. Carlson came from Sweden. So, uh, they both, you know, knew, but for some reason he didn't like it, so they came back.

DALLETT: Anything else you remember about the trip. Did I ask you if you remembered the name of the boat?

FOSSE: Stavangerfjord.

DALLETT: Can you spell that for me?

FOSSE: (Pause to write down spelling)...from Norway in '31, and he came on that boat, too. But he didn't have to go to Ellis Island. They examined them on the boat.

DALLETT: And the Carlsons didn't come through Ellis Island. Did they dock?

FOSSE: They were American citizens. They didn't have to.

DALLETT: So they docked and got off?

FOSSE: They stayed at some friend's house in New York when I was on Ellis Island overnight. And the after they

picked me up sometime in the next afternoon, then, um, we stayed overnight in New York one night and then we took the train to Everett from there.

DALLETT: And at Ellis Island, um, that must have been very frightening to be on your own and not speak the language.

FOSSE: Yes, it was. Uh-huh. Yeah, and like I said, I tried to find somebody that would speak Norwegian, but I didn't. But then, I got along okay. I don't mean to, you know, it's just that, uh, there I was, all by myself, you know. Probably I'd never been alone a day in my life before.

DALLETT: Right, right. Did they separate the men from the women and, do you remember at all about where your sleeping quarters were.

FOSSE: I don't remember anything except that we did have a place to eat and a place to sleep. But as far as separating, I don't know that.

DALLETT: And the next day you were questioned.

FOSSE: Yeah. Interviewed with some lady and, uh...

DALLETT: Was there a translator?

FOSSE: She knew how to speak Norwegian. And the, uh, what was puzzling to them, uh, how come I was coming over here now and I wasn't with my mother and dad. And, I mean, they went into that. But, see, I didn't know much about it. I don't even, to this day, but that's okay. I mean, uh, but that what that lady was interested in, how come I was coming and I was all by myself and so I don't know.

DALLETT: So it's interesting that Mrs. Carlson didn't go through that process with you to help to explain the situation.

FOSSE: Yeah. No, no, she...

DALLETT: Wasn't there at all.

FOSSE: No. Uh-huh. They dropped me off. I don't know how they do it, but anyway, I got off of the boat and onto Ellis Island and that's all I remember. Is there a dock that, uh, that the boat docked and then I got,

they let some of us off...

DALLETT: Right. It's possible, maybe, they let the Carlsons off at one stop further up the river, and then let you dock further down towards Ellis.

FOSSE: Uh-huh. And both Mr. and Mrs. Carlson, of course, are gone now, you know. Yeah.

DALLETT: But they met you when you came through Ellis. Is that right?

FOSSE: When I got through sometime the next afternoon they picked me up and, uh, then we stayed at their friend's house in New York.

DALLETT: Do you remember what you thought of that whole experience? It must have been, uh, something quite different to see New York.

FOSSE: Well, yeah. (she laughs) Of course, I know more about New York now that I did then. But that's quite a town.

DALLETT: So you stayed overnight, then, in New York and...

FOSSE: Then the next day we went on a train and got to Everett August the 3rd, 1922. And then I met my mother and dad and, uh, my sister and brother and moved to Everett.

DALLETT: Was that all at one time? Did they come together to the station to meet you?

FOSSE: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. I think it's on MacDougall. Anyway, it's down there somewhere and, yeah.

DALLETT: So what was that like to all of a sudden meet this group of people that was...

FOSSE: Difficult. Yeah. But they had taught my brother and sister to speak Norwegian. And, uh, so that went pretty good until they didn't like something, and then they'd speak English. But by the Fourth of July I didn't want anybody to speak Norwegian on the street. You were supposed to just speak English. so, you see, it didn't take me long to learn.

DALLETT: By the Fourth of July the next year.

FOSSE: Same year.

BERNHARDT: Well, I think she, again, what was the date that you came to Everett? April, or August.

FOSSE: April the 3rd.

DALLETT: Oh, sorry. Okay. I wrote August. Oh, so just a few months later you mean, then.

FOSSE: Yeah. So then I learned how to speak English. And then I started to school in second grade. I had gone to school in Norway almost two years so then, until I got to fractions. Then they would skip me ahead as soon as I learned, you know, from one class. But anyway, I did just fine in school. I went to night, uh, summer school a couple of times. And I graduated a little ahead of my class, I mean, that I would have been in. So I did just fine English so that was no problem.

DALLETT: What were the ages of the other children that your mother, then, had when you came here.

FOSSE: Uh, my brother was born, you figure it out, Joanne was born in 1915 and I came here in...

DALLETT: '22?

FOSSE: How old would he be then? I don't know.

DALLETT: Seven?

FOSSE: And then my sister was born in 1918.

DALLETT: Okay. Sister, four.

FOSSE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Do you want to talk about that period? You keep referring to it as difficult when, uh, when you first had to get used to mother and father...

FOSSE: Could you turn that off a minute so I can say something?

DALLETT: Sure. (break in tape)

FOSSE: Well, I knew how to write so I started writing to Norway and, of course, the thing I wanted most was to come back to Norway again. And I would write these

letters but you realize I did not know how to send a letter or anything. I would just write it and figured my mother would take care of it from there. And when I finally got to Norway again in 1956, uh, they said they just couldn't understand me not writing, because they never got a lot of that, you know. If I asked, probably, to come back. But one day I had written to my uncle who's only five years older than me and, uh, my mother gave me a balling out. So then I knew that she had been reading them and not sending them, see. So, of course, when I got to Norway then, you know, my aunts and uncles told me all kinds of stuff that I didn't know before because my mother wouldn't talk about it. So anyhow, that is kind of against my mother because it isn't that I didn't write, it was just a difficult time, you know.

DALLETT: Did you then receive letters from them?

FOSSE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I did. My grandfather died about three months after I got here, and that was a difficult time too. but, uh, he'd been sick, so I'm, they told me he died from broken heart but, you know, he actually probably had something wrong, you know. But he probably missed me, all right.

DALLETT: We're going to just flip the tape over here. That's the end of side one of interview number [DP-14] with Mrs Ella Fosse.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of interview [DP-14] with Mrs. Ella Fosse. I want to talk a little bit about when you first came. Your new family was living in Everett then, is that right, which is here we are now. What was Everett like? Was there a large Norwegian community here at that time?

FOSSE: I think there was but, uh, my folks had lots of friends, but I wouldn't say that it was exclusively Norwegian. No, no.

DALLETT: What did you father do?

FOSSE: He was, he worked in the sawmills and he was a grader, I don't know, mark lumber, grade lumber, I suppose it would be. And my mother used to work in a laundry

doing shirts and things like that. Then later on she worked in a fish cannery.

DALLETT: So you were put right into school when you came. Is that right?

FOSSE: Well, I came in April and then I didn't start until September, you know, in the fall.

DALLETT: And what was it like when you went to school? I mean, by then you said you had started to really speak English.

FOSSE: Oh, yeah. I didn't have any problem there, but they put me in the second grade to start with. And then, uh, when they felt that I had accomplished everything I needed to do then they put me in the third grade. I think it was the fifth grade before we got to fractions, and then I had to stay there until I learned that.

DALLETT: So, well, I came up, Evergreen, is it called Evergreen Way, this road here which is K-Mart, 7-11, you know, all kinds of shopping convenience places. What was Everett like then when you first came.

FOSSE: This was nothing but woods out in through here. And we moved out here in 1938 and, uh, it was a little house, and then we eventually added on to it. But it was nothing but woods. I think the hall was there and one house, and there was nothing, uh, well, there was an empty house where Hankies moved into. But it, if we'd had the money or the brains we could have made a fortune buying property in those days, you know. Evergreen Way, that was the way you went to Seattle, old Botnel Highway. And, of course, Everett don't amount to anything anymore. I mean as far as the downtown area. It's the mall now, you know. But in Everett, that's where you did your shopping and everything in those days. So it was a lot different. But there was no school buses. I mean, we walked to school and we walked to high school and then I went to, uh, junior college for a while but I graduated in January in 1931, and that's the Depression. So I didn't get a job. Well, of course I worked at this place, you know, the whole time. But, uh, anyway...

DALLETT: At which place was that?

FOSSE: This, I worked after school at Swenson's I started in

when I was in junior high. And I worked there even past graduation because there wasn't any jobs available. But I did go to junior, I mean, junior college for probably a year or so. And the idea was that they would place you, but where would they place you, you know. 1931 was a bad, a bad year.

DALLETT: So you held on to your job working with the Swenson family.

FOSSE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Was there, was there, were there a lot of young girls from Norway that you knew?

FOSSE: No.

DALLETT: No. So you didn't, uh, did you keep up your Norwegian?

FOSSE: Andy didn't speak English much when I met him and, uh, so we, I spoke Norwegian to him and I got him to learn English and, uh, we got along fine. And then when the Norwegians started coming to visit us I was able to talk to them, you know, and everything. But now it's even a, it's a problem writing Norwegian now. But

everybody, not the older people, but all the young people speak English, so I don't have to write in Norwegian. I can just write in English.

DALLETT: And how did you meet, Andy is your husband, is that right?

FOSSE: Uh-huh. My cousin and her, my cousin had gotten married and her husband gave a party, and I met Andy at a party that, let's see, we got married in 1934 so probably thirty, oh, it doesn't matter. I mean, but I met him at a party for my cousin and her husband.

DALLETT: So you got married sort of in the Depression. Is that right?

FOSSE: Yeah. Well, but, uh, we managed. Didn't have to go on, on, uh, relief or anything, but we had a grocery store. Where the Stadium Market is now there was a grocery store, and they let Andy and me, because they knew me, charge groceries. And there wasn't too many places that would do that, you know. And, uh, if it had not been for that, of course, you'd buy and then you'd pay a little and then you'd buy some more. So it took for a long time to get that straightened out,

but that's how we got along without going on relief or anything.

DALLETT: So you held onto your job with the Swenson family for a couple of years through that period?

FOSSE: Not after I got married, of course. I got a job at Montgomery Ward's for a very short time, and then business just wasn't good enough so I didn't get to keep that very long.

DALLETT: And your husband, what did he do during this period?

FOSSE: Well, during, after he came over here in 1931, him and his brother went to cut pulp wood. And they lived out in a camp, you know. And, uh, of course, they had borrowed money in order to come over here so it was kind of tough for a while, you know. But eventually, he worked thirty-eight years for A. Weyerhauser at the, and, uh, he retired when he was sixty-two.

DALLETT: So it was like that seasonal work when he would go and cut wood and live in a cabin and then come back to you, or...

FOSSE: Well, he lived, he lived at the camp and then, um, then he was in Everett, you know, like on a weekend or something, he would stay with my cousin and her husband. And, uh, then eventually they rented a house, so there was about three or four guys living together there in Everett. But it was the pulp wood camp that kept them going, you know. Of course, that was a lot of pulp wood in this part of the country at that time.

DALLETT: So the women didn't work in this, in the pulp business.

FOSSE: No, uh-huh.

DALLETT: Not in any end of it. Just the men.

FOSSE: It was, my cousin's husband was a truck driver. So he would go up there and load, you know, the pulp wood and take it to the mills and whatnot. But no, there wasn't any women, no. They stayed home and cooked, I guess, and cleaned. (she laughs)

DALLETT: And then you started having children?

FOSSE: Uh, Joanne was born in 1934 in September, I guess. And then Ellen was born in '36. And then came, Joanne had two girls and Ellen had two girls, and then everybody teased, "Well, where are the boys?" And I said, "They'll come along." (they laugh)

DALLETT: Did you speak Norwegian to your first or second daughter at all, as children?

FOSSE: You know, that's what we should have done, but we didn't. Andy needed to learn how to speak English and, uh, of course, we regretted it afterwards that we didn't keep on talking so that when they did meet the Norwegians, you know, they could, but I think Joanne remembered it quite a bit but she probably took more interest in it,

BERNHARDT: They spoke Norwegian when they didn't want us to know something.

DALLETT: Secret language. So how many years did it take from the time that you were nine and came here that you began to feel more comfortable and not want to correspond with people in Norway and try to get back to Norway?

FOSSE: Oh, I tried the whole time. I had an uncle who was to married and he had, he was a blacksmith. And he was homesteading, is that what you call it, in Idaho, had hundreds and hundreds of acres of timber there. And I guess he decided he was going to go to Norway. So I tried to talk him into taking me, but as soon as I got a job and all I would pay him back, but he changed his mind so that ended. But, I mean, I did try to work on him to, (she laughs) if he was going, then I wanted to go, too. but he changed his mind and, uh, so, but of course, when I met Andy and he had people in Norway and I did, as soon as we could save the money, you know, then we went. That was the year Joanne got married, so...

DALLETT: But by that time, when you met Andy and you married, the two of you didn't think of moving back.

FOSSE: No. We didn't want to move back. The first time when we went there, they were not as well off, but when we came back another time, then things were different, you know. They had better furniture and they had bathrooms. Of course, at first it was taboo to have a bathroom in the house, you know. It had to be out, or

a path, or something. But anyway, we didn't want to live there, but we enjoyed going.

DALLETT: So, I'm just trying to figure, get a sense of how long it took until you really felt, you had stopped trying to get back to Norway.

FOSSE: I don't think I ever really gave up on it, but after I got to Norway and saw things the way they were and my mother, my grandmother and grandfather were gone, that made a lot of difference, you know, too. So...
(voices off-mike)

DALLETT: So like thirty years, thirty years later.

FOSSE: (she laughs) Yeah. It was Andy and I both decided we were not going to, uh, you know, go over there. Andy had a chance, he was the youngest in the family, and he had a chance to stay there and do the faring, you know, and he would get his share. But, uh, no, he didn't even want to go back for that.

DALLETT: So did that make a big difference to you, I mean, when you came back from Norway after your first trip?

FOSSE: Yeah. Then I knew I wasn't going to live there but, uh, we went, Andy and I went to Norway twice, the second time with Joanne, I guess. And then, uh, Ellen was the third one, yeah.

DALLETT: What about citizenship?

FOSSE: Uh, yes. That was a very difficult time for me because my mother insisted that I did not need citizenship. I had derivative citizenship through my dad. But I was going to be a witness for a friend of mine when she was getting her citizenship papers. And the lawyer told me that I could not be a witness for her unless I applied for citizenship myself. And, uh, even if I had derivative citizenship and I could use my dad's citizen papers, but if anything happened to him, then I would be without anything. I couldn't use it as a derivative then. So I went through the process. Census, school records, everything. I had to have two people that had known me from the time I came over here and could vouch for the fact that I came. And, but it took quite a while, but I was able to be a witness for my friend and got my citizenship papers, too.

DALLETT: At what age was that, do you remember, that you were...

FOSSE: I haven't thought about it for so long I don't remember. But I got the passport to go to Norway in '56 so, uh, it would be just probably '54 or five. Somewhere, you know, I got the citizenship papers and my passport so I could go to Norway. So, uh, it must have been somewhere around in there. I think that my citizenship papers are in the box at the bank, yeah.

DALLETT: So you brought up your kids but you didn't teach them to speak Norwegian, but...

FOSSE: We regretted it that we didn't, but...

DALLETT: Did you carry on some of the Norwegian customs or were you...

FOSSE: When I was younger we sure did, but I'm at a place now where somebody else does that.

DALLETT: But did you grow up feeling Norwegian or American or that they (addressing Mrs. Fosse's daughter)...

BERNHARDT: I'm very proud of my Norwegian heritage.

FOSSE: And she's a quarter Norwegian, isn't it? (voices garbled) Yeah, you're a half, okay. You see, being that Andy and I both were Norwegians, you know.
(break in tape)

(The following discussion takes place around the kitchen table over cake and coffee)

DALLETT: Okay, so what was the name of it again?

FOSSE: I used to get up about five o'clock in the morning and start cooking the potatoes. And then, after they were ready, then Andy would get and he would help me put the potatoes through a food mill. And then for so much potatoes you had so much flour and so much sugar. And, uh, then you made it into a, you know a dough, you see. And then it had to go in the refrigerator for quite a while. I had to be cold. And then Joanne and Ellen and the kids would all come and taste, you know. And, uh, oh, we made hundreds, I tell you. It really took a long time. Probably late in the afternoon I might be cleaning up, you know, but anyway it was a good time.

DALLETT: So they're flat, like a pancake?

BERNHARDT: She had to roll them out in a circle about this big, and put them in a grill the size of a plate. (voices garbled)

BERNHARDT: When you're eating Mexican food those round things, only lefse is much better.

FOSSE: And it was nice and warm, with butter.

BERNHARDT: Somebody used to like them almost black. Was that...

FOSSE: My dad. My dad liked them really, you know, like you forgot them. Then we'd always say, well, that's my dad's.

BERNHARDT: My uncle Antone would have mashed potatoes lutfisk, which is codfish, you know, that (?) and then cooked. And that was the way my uncle had it. You know, he'd put it on his plate had pile stuff on and lutfisk. And when I was a little girl I thought

everybody had lutfisk, little pigs and spare ribs for Christmas Eve dinner. And, you know, you grow up thinking that's what you are. Not until you're old enough to realize that not everybody did. But that used to be our Christmas Eve fare.

DALLETT: Can we go over that once again? What was the fish? What kind of fish was it?

FOSSE: Cod.

BERNHARDT: And it's dried. Explain, Mother, because you used to do it yourself.

FOSSE: When we first started in we would buy the codfish, you know, at the market. And then you would bring it home and saw it up, and then you would soak it in water about twice a day for about seven or eight days, and then after that you made a brine, and then you soaked it in that, and then you had to re-undo that, you know. But it took quite a while, but it was much better homemade that you could buy in the store. So we did that for years.

DALLETT: So this was, was this a special thing you did just at

Christmastime? Once a year?

FOSSE: Well, it's in the fall mostly. You have it ready, you know, so that you get it, have it ready in December and then, of course, we used to have a, not a barrel, or crock, and keep it in and change water every so often, you know, and then it would last for quite a while. Or then, of course, we had the freezer and so, after a while we got to the point where we would freeze some of it. But's really better just right of the crock, really.

BERNHARDT: And then my mom used to make pickled herring. Pickled herring and head cheese, as I can remember. And lopsouse, and some of the dishes would be kind of like a stew. And then my grandmother, she would make like rosettes and fatima. And then...

DALLETT: What's that?

BERNHARDT: Krumkake. Kind of like a Norwegian cookie, I guess, to generalize, you know.

DALLETT: A lot of butter?

BERNHARDT: Fatima? My mother never made fatima as much as my grandmother did. And then on the fish, the lutfisk, the Norwegians basically, we use a lot of butter, where the Swedes use like a cream gravy. (voices off-mike) We still belong to the Sons of Norway. We still belong to the Sons of Norway and go the lutfisk dinners in the fall. They have a money-raising project and have the lutfisk dinner and serve from about, what, eleven to four, and they have like seven or eight hundred people that come through in a day and have the dinner with them. You see, I'd just have them lefse with butter, or maybe sprinkled with sugar. And that's the one reason I didn't. They wanted to put peanut butter and tunafish and everything in it. And I just can't see that. Yeah, because they use it like a bread, and to us it's special. You don't use it like a bread. My friends not too far away, they had it for lunch and put bologna on it. Well, you know, we just don't do that. (they laugh) (voices off-mike) Grandma's arm would get

pretty tired, but nobody could make them round like Grandma.

FOSSE: Andy kept saying he was going to send me back to Norway to learn how to make them round, because once in a while you had to trim a little, you know, but...

BERNHARDT: On my grandmother's farm, they used to have ladies that would go up and stay for the summer and make cheese and butter. And then didn't the neighbors would get together and make all that lefse and flatbread and they would sit there for hours and roll it at these tables.

DALLETT: Would you roll it out with a pin?

FOSSE: A rolling pin.

DALLETT: A rolling pin. And how big was it, again?

FOSSE: Oh, probably try to get it about like so. (she gestures)

DALLETT: About the size of, like a cake plate.

BERNHARDT: Well, because, you know, my grandmother's, she just used the top of a wood stove, and hers were bigger.

BERNHARDT: You did them as big, according to where you had the room to do them. Because my grandmother's were bigger but she used you know the bread sacks that had the back on it? That's the way my grandmother used to, she'd wipe off the top of her stove. And my mother, here I can remember you wiping off the top of the wood stove with the bread wrapper.

BERNHARDT: She had her big table and card tables out and it was always full of lefse. And I remember different people stopping in.

FOSSE: For years we had open house on Christmas Day, and, uh, oh, I tell you, I would cook for days. But we enjoyed it, and then it had to come to a stop one time when we got a new bedroom set. And we used to take the old bedroom set out, you know, so we had that extra room. And then we just, that was the end of it, really.

Because I, I used to have a lot of dinners and, uh, parties and stuff like that. But that's the end of that, too.

BERNHARDT: Are you interviewing anyone in Ballard?

DALLETT: No. Uh-uh.

BERNHARDT: That's a real Norwegian community in Seattle. My parents had friends who lived in Ballard and there were a lot of fisherman there, and good, older Norwegian folks, really.

FOSSE: A little more cake?

DALLETT: I don't think so, thank you. That was a nice big slice. (voices off-mike)

BERNHARDT: (showing a photograph) That's the other granddaughter, she's not here. That Robin's daughter. That's the great-grandchildren. And Daniel was adopted and he looks more Norwegian than...

FOSSE: Than my daughter. (they laugh)

BERNHARDT: And he's not. He's Italian and French
and...(voices off-mike)

DALLETT: That's a great photo.

BERNHARDT: So, Mother I'm certainly glad that you wrote
that time.

FOSSE: Well, it must have been when I found it, you know,
that thing that Andy had saved with his stuff.
(voices off-mike) (discussion about how Mrs. Fosse
got involved in the Ellis Island Project)

DALLETT: And that's the end of interview number [DP-14] with
Mrs. Ella Fosse.