

DP-27

ROLAND EGON LINDGREN

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SWEDEN, 1926

AGE 24

PASSAGE ON "THE MAJESTIC"

PHILLIPS: This is Andrew Phillips, and I'm speaking with,
perhaps you can pronounce your name better than I
can, Roland Egon?

LINDGREN: Egon, yes. Lindgren.

PHILLIPS: L-I-N-D-G-R-E-N.

LINDGREN: L-I-N-D-G-R-E-N.

PHILLIPS: L-I-N-D-G-R-E-N. Thank you. It is the 23rd, Tuesday
the 23rd of May, 1989. We're beginning this

interview at about ten to two in the afternoon.

Mr. Lindgren comes from Sweden. And what year did you, in fact, immigrate to the United States?

LINDGREN: I came to the United States in 1926, uh, close to the first of August, I believe it was.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me the name of your village, and when we get to the names and things like that which are difficult to spell, if you could spell those for us, please.

LINDGREN: I was born in Stockholm and, uh, subsequently was raised and grew up in Lulea, which is L-U-L-E-A, with a ring over the last A. I lived basically with, my mother had died when I was very young, and my father lived in Stockholm, but could not raise me as a child, so he sent me up to his grandmother in Lulea, which is where I grew up. And, uh, my grandmother and two of my aunts raised me. I went through all of the primary schools in Sweden and, uh, decided that since I wanted to be an engineer it might be a good idea to go to Germany.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me a little bit about the environment,

the atmosphere of your house? It was in the city, what was, what was it like? What sort of house was it?

LINDGREN: Well, it was a two-story house which we occupied the second floor. It contained the three bedrooms, kitchen and what is now known as a living room. We were on the outskirts of the city, a wooded area, all, of course, the weather is quite cold because it's just, just below the Arctic Circle. And, uh, what else would you want to know about it?

PHILLIPS: Well, was it, it sounds like it was sort of a middle class neighborhood.

LINDGREN: A middle class neighborhood. One of my aunts was a schoolteacher, and the other one had a bakery. So that was the background of my family. But prior to that my grandfather and grandmother owned a grocery store in the city. But my grandfather also passed away when he was quite young, and as a result of that the store had to be sold. So they had no, the income that they had was, besides the salary, of course, was from the bakery, and also they had the apartment down below which was, there was, my family owned the

house, and the lower floor was let out, so that was also income.

PHILLIPS: I see. Just, for me to ask you once again, you were living with your aunts and your grandmother.

LINDGREN: Yes.

PHILLIPS: What had happened to your parents?

LINDGREN: They had, my mother died when I was quite young, I think only a year-and-a-half old. And my father, they lived in Stockholm, where I was born. My father could not keep me and take care of me as a young child in Stockholm, therefore he sent me to his mother, my grandmother, in Lulea. That's how come I was raised up there.

PHILLIPS: Did you used to travel sometimes to see your father?

LINDGREN: Occasionally, but rarely. It was a long trip, about a hundred Swedish, about a thousand kilometers and, uh, money wasn't that affluent, so we, not too often did we get down and see him. And he ultimately married some nine or ten years later.

PHILLIPS: So during the time, of course you went to school here

and, uh, what kind of school did you go to?

LINDGREN: Well, it's, lower grade school, of course. I finally went to what in Sweden is known as Laroverk, which is upper class school.

PHILLIPS: Could you spell that for us?

LINDGREN: Laroverk. (he laughs) L-A-R-O-V-E-R-K, Laroverk, which is equivalent to junior college, I guess, here in the United States. And, as I say, after that, oh, yes, also I had to do my military service in Sweden at that time, which was only six months. That wasn't too bad.

PHILLIPS: How old were you when you did that?

LINDGREN: I must have been nineteen.

PHILLIPS: What was the atmosphere for you like in Sweden? Was it a comfortable place? Was it pleasant? Were you happy?

LINDGREN: Oh, yes, oh, yeah. It was a, it's a very, still is, a very pleasant place. Of course now the community's much larger. At that time, there was only about ten thousand people. Now it's more like forty thousand.

The last time I was in Sweden, that was about how many people lived in the town of Lulea.

PHILLIPS: I don't think that in our interview I ever asked you what year you were born in.

LINDGREN: 1902, 1902.

PHILLIPS: Can you give us a sense of what Sweden was like when the second World War was in progress? Sorry, the first World War.

LINDGREN: First World War you're talking about. Well, Sweden being as close as they are to Germany, undoubtedly, favored the Germans at the time. And consequently traded greatly with the Germans at the beginning of the war. They traded so much that they, uh, themselves did not have enough to eat. In other words, potatoes disappeared, and all that kind of stuff. Certainly meats, and it became quite strict. We all were, of course, on cards during the war and, uh, I can remember at the end of, of course, the end of the war, about the only thing we had besides some blood pudding was, were, uh . . .

MRS. LINDGREN: Fish.

LINDGREN: Well, fish, of course, was always there, but, uh, the vegetable was, uh, what in English? (voice off mike) (he laughs) Well, okay. It will come to me. Anyway, it was, it was pretty tough, the last, particularly the last year of the War. 1917, 1918, it was pretty tough. Many people made lots of money. Again, because of the trade, because some, the other part of Sweden traded with men also, the Finns, and the Russians on the other side, and then Germany on this other side. So therefore money was plentiful. The thing was, you couldn't find enough good to buy with that money.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me a little bit about that relationship with Finland and vice versa.

LINDGREN: Well, of course, at that time, because Finland was ruled by Russia, as you perhaps know. And the Finns, naturally did not like it. As a matter of fact they, uh, fought quite a bit against the Russians during the first World War. And Sweden, of course, as a matter of fact, Finland used to belong to Sweden at one time, and Swedish was spoken almost entirely in Finland until after they finally got their own

freedom, then Finnish became the main language. But, uh, they, uh, they, the language was the same in Finland and Sweden for a long, long time. And the people who came from Finland over across the border into where I lived, they spoke Finnish, yes, but they also spoke Swedish. So it's a very good relation.

PHILLIPS: The two languages, in fact, are very different, aren't they?

LINDGREN: Oh, entirely different, yeah. I don't know background. Finnish is more like Hungarian, I believe, than anything else. Also, that far north in Sweden, the coast of the Lapps which, uh, again, you know who the Lapps are, they live with the reindeer and so forth. And they came down to the city quite frequently to buy things and, uh, brought sometimes a reindeer with them. And in the winter they have a means of transportation which is the reindeer pulling something that looks like a boat. And, uh, frequently, when they come down, we kids used to ask could we have a ride, and we frequently did. So that was quite interesting.

PHILLIPS: Were they dressed differently to the . . .

LINDGREN: They were dressed just like Lapps are today. Very colorful costumes, woolen, of course, because it's cold, and the reindeer coats and so forth. Reindeer, after all, ins the main sustenance for them. They eat it, they drink it, they get milk from the reindeer, and they get clothing from the reindeer.

PHILLIPS: What was the relationship like between the Lapps and the Swedish?

LINDGREN: Well, uh . . .

PHILLIPS: How do you differentiate that difference? I mean, I suppose the Lapps are considered Swedish as well. How do you differentiate the difference? They'd be ethnic Swedish, I suppose, are they? Indigenous.

LINDGREN: Of course, it had been a lot of mixture naturally, at home. It was like everywhere else. Lapps were not entirely pure Lapps. Many were, but many were mixed up with Swedes, of course. And the Swedish government did all they could to get them established, and then, built schools for them and so forth so that the relationship was, I would think, very good between the Lapps and the Swedish

government.

LINDGREN: Excuse me, but don't the Lapps go across to the northern part of Norway?

LINDGREN: They, yeah, they can. (voices garbled)

MRS. LINDGREN: They're Swedish.

LINDGREN: I mean, the Lapps, of course they gather by the reindeer. The reindeer, therefore, there's something called reindeer moss.

PHILLIPS: I'm sorry, reindeer what?

LINDGREN: Moss. M-O-S-S. Reindeer moss. And it's a growth that goes right into the ground, and it grows about, oh, two or three inches high. And that's mainly the reindeer's food. In the winter when the snow came down, then they had to get away from the high snow and go down towards the coast where they could find some of this reindeer moss. So we saw them frequently come down during the winter, and then in the summertime they went back up North. And then they travelled across Norway, Sweden and Finland. This was their territory. The northern part, just,

along the Arctic Circle, actually. And sometimes, I'll show you, they went into Russia, too, I don't know.

PHILLIPS: What did you used to do during your summer holidays in Sweden as a young person?

LINDGREN: Uh, well, I suppose, like most kids do. Swimming, playing.

PHILLIPS: Did you used to travel away, though, from the city?

LINDGREN: Yeah. Not very far. I imagine, normally, our travels, probably, were in the limit of, oh, say, twenty miles, twenty, thirty miles. We had no automobile, of course. We had no other limit. Bicycle was the main locomotion.

PHILLIPS: So you went into the service at age nineteen for six months. And, uh, what happened next?

LINDGREN: Well, I was, this time I decided, with the encouragement of my family to, uh, to get down in Germany, get an education. Not necessarily because German schools were any better, because the Swedes had very good schools, and engineering school. But

at that time, this was now in the 1920's, the early '20s, and Germany, at that time, had a tremendous inflation. And therefore the money was worth very little. And the Swedish crown, which was stable, enabled us to buy all kinds of things with the Swedish crown that we . . . And therefore, the tuition and the living was very inexpensive in Germany for a Swede, that is, and an Englishman and anybody else that had steady money.

PHILLIPS: So it was cheap for you to go to Germany, in other words.

LINDGREN: That was the main reason I went to Germany, yes, because of economic reasons, yes.

PHILLIPS: Because the crown would go further.

LINDGREN: Uh-huh. It was fixed, and it . . .

PHILLIPS: Tell us about that, uh, what you did down there. What was Germany like? The war had finished?

LINDGREN: The war had finished and, uh, the German people were extremely poor, most of them were, because, for one thing the, uh, Allies hadn't left them much in the

way of sustenance. They took away most of the industry and, uh, many other things. German people were extremely poor, although they were beginning to pick themselves up. And, uh, but, at the same time, they were very friendly people. Germany is a beautiful country. And the four years I spent in Germany was certainly one of the highlights of my young life, no question about that, besides the fact to get an education. And I graduated in 1924 as an electrical engineer.

PHILLIPS: Where did you study?

LINDGREN: At, somewhere named Mittweida in Saxony.

PHILLIPS: Can you spell that?

LINDGREN: Saxony?

PHILLIPS: No . . .

LINDGREN: Oh, Mittweida. M-I-T-T-W-E-I-D-A, and Saxony, you know where that is.

PHILLIPS: And, uh, were Swedes well accepted by the German people?

LINDGREN: Oh, yes. All foreigners were well accepted, with some exceptions. The English and the French, and that's natural. It was after the War and they did not. There were quite a few Americans there also, quite a few South American. But in the school I attended, there were probably, uh, it was probably . . . Well, probably a total of about two thousand five hundred students of which at least one fourth were foreigners. They were from South America, Scandinavian countries, Italians, some Spanish, I believe. They came from many places.

PHILLIPS: And it was a school, what you studied at that school was electrical engineering.

LINDGREN: They, they had school for a mechanical and an electrical engineer.

PHILLIPS: Why did you select that? Why did you choose to do electrical engineering?

LINDGREN: (he laughs) Because I liked electricity ever since a child, so that's why. And this was now just the very beginning of radio coming in, too. Any, uh, consequence whatsoever. The first radio I ever heard

was in Berlin and it was purely a crystal sets and all. They had the set standing on a chair in the lobby of the hotel. I pick up this thing and manipulate the little whiskers, and you got some sound.

PHILLIPS: You listened through headphones?

LINDGREN: Oh, yes, oh, yeah.

PHILLIPS: What did you hear?

LINDGREN: I don't remember any more. Music, mainly.

PHILLIPS: So what year was that, do you remember?

LINDGREN: It was 1924.

PHILLIPS: It was just in the hotel lobby so people would . . .

LINDGREN: That's right. Yeah, yeah.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember which hotel?

LINDGREN: No.

PHILLIPS: So you finished your degree. Did you then go back to Sweden?

LINDGREN: I went back to Sweden, that's right. And, naturally, having an engineering degree, you figure you might be able to get a job someplace. Well, employment in those days, at that particular time, it was hard to find.

PHILLIPS: You must have been, what, about twenty-four, twenty-three years of age.

LINDGREN: I was twenty-two. Twenty, wait a minute, I was twenty-two. And, uh, I wrote to a number of places. Not only in Sweden, but overseas as well including the Swedish papers, newspapers, occasionally or frequently advertise for engineering help to go, say, to Borneo or Sumatra or some of those things. Shell Oil Company, for example.

PHILLIPS: Because the Shell Oil Company is Dutch.

LINDGREN: Yes.

PHILLIPS: What's that connection? That's an interesting connection.

LINDGREN: Well, none at all, except, you know, I had to get a job someplace.

PHILLIPS: But then the Shell Oil Company was exploring for oil in the Dutch West Indies, right?

LINDGREN: That's right. And they needed people to work for them, engineers. However, I never did get a job with them.

PHILLIPS: And part of the reason would be because you were Nordic and the Dutch, close to that area there, are Scandinavian. You spoke Dutch, or . . .

LINDGREN: No, and I think this was perhaps the reason I did not get a job. I sent in my application and resumes in German. And if I had known English good enough at that time I probably should have done that, it would have been a much better chance. In retrospect, I think it's good I did not get it because Borneo is a pretty nasty place to live in, I think, pretty hot.

PHILLIPS: That's true.

LINDGREN: Yeah, I'm sure. (he laughs)

PHILLIPS: So where did you get a job?

LINDGREN: Well, I worked in Sweden for an electrical firm, installing wiring and so forth for, uh, a couple of

years. In the meantime, I had a number of friends who had gone through the same school in Germany as I had, and we occasionally got together and we thought, "Well, how are we going to do this now?" So we figured we, best thing to get some experience, engineering experience, would be to go to the United States.

LINDGREN: Excuse me, would it be all right to say anything about when you went to, dancing and things like that when you were in Germany and you got all dressed up in tuxedos and . . .

LINDGREN: Oh, yes. Why, sure.

PHILLIPS: Okay. So take us back to your social life in Germany. Think about . . .

MRS. LINDGREN: . . . you don't usually think of young people, any time they go dancing to, that they put on a tuxedo.

LINDGREN: Oh, yeah. Oh, that was almost a must in Germany at that time. You want to pursue this thing?

PHILLIPS: A little bit. Tell us a little bit about that.

LINDGREN: Well, of course, in the city, in Mittweida, was probably about twenty or thirty thousand people.

PHILLIPS: I'm sorry. Let's just establish who we are on the tape.

LINDGREN: We are now at school. This is where I go to school, in Germany, in the city of Mittweida. And the city is about thirty, thirty-five thousand people. And the main interest in the city is the school. And, consequently, all students, they were considered by the people of the town, including the families, to be, you know, they liked to associate with them. And we, thus we got introduced to all kinds of people and then, and they had dancing classes and dancing schools and parties of all kinds which we participated in. And again, due to the fact that we did have solid money, we were able to buy clothing incredibly cheap, incredibly cheap. I kind of remember, for one thing, that I bought a suit, a full suit, made by a tailor, for the equivalent of about two dollars in American money. I think it was about four or five crowns at that time. And, uh . . . (a telephone rings) Consequently, our resources were

far beyond what they should have been. (break in
tape)

LINDGREN: Our living quarters in Germany, we were . . .

PHILLIPS: We're just picking up on the interview again. Yes?

LINDGREN: My living quarters in Germany, a very good friend of mine, as a matter of fact, a very good friend of mine, he and I, we roomed together for all the four years. We came from the same city in Sweden. We lived with a private family. We had basically two rooms. One was a bedroom, one was the room where we studied and so forth. And, uh, I guess for German conditions at that time was pretty good. It had indoor toilets. They were not water toilets, however, they were dry toilets. So every so often the wagon came around and pumped out the stuff. The landlady, her husband, that was her job, to take care of the rooms and so forth, her husband was working in a bank and they had two daughters. With them we did not associate, for obvious reasons. That was not good politics, public relations. (he laughs) So we did not get too well-acquainted with the girls from the family. Uh, however, we, oh, like the

Germans in those days, you know, one of the main, excuse me, attractions of the Germans also, to go wandering off on the, on weekends, particularly, they had, they were traveling and they had been together. Some of them knew how to play the concertina, and guitar, perhaps. And then they wandered off to some, perhaps inn or something, maybe five or six or ten miles away, and that's what was the entertainment. And we used to go with them, and it was very pleasant, very pleasant. Uh, the Saxon, Saxony, is a beautiful state, nice and green and so forth. Then occasionally, of course, we would, Dresden, which was then the capital of Saxony. Still is, I imagine.

PHILLIPS: Dresden.

LINDGREN: Dresden, yeah. Beautiful city. Absolutely beautiful. And Leipzig, which was at the forest. Occasionally we would travel by train for a few days if we had some vacation.

PHILLIPS: I'm sorry, where?

LINDGREN: Leipzig.

PHILLIPS: Spell that for us.

LINDGREN: L-E-I-P-Z-I-G.

PHILLIPS: Oh, Leipzig.

LINDGREN: Okay? Uh . . .

PHILLIPS: So as a young man, you were becoming fairly world-wise. You were traveling, you were on your own, independent from your parents, or your guardians, your grandparents. And, uh . . .

LINDGREN: Pretty well let loose from them by the time I'd come . . .

PHILLIPS: You were even in the military for six months so you were very grown up by the time you got back to Sweden.

MRS. LINDGREN: Did you do your military in the garrison in your town? (voices garbled)

LINDGREN: Well, close. There's a fort, there's a fort in Sweden by the name of Boden, B-O-D-E-N, which is approximately, located approximately fifty English miles from where I lived. And, of course, this is where I did my military duty. Now, that is a

peculiar, uh, peculiar setting in that it is ringed by three sides by mountains. And then the center is open like a bowl, and that's the city. The mountains are fortified, fortified to the extent that they are, the mountains themselves are fortifications and all, so they have all the living quarters for soldiers inside the mountains. So, and this, this was built, of course, years ago, anticipating the Russians coming in some day, trying to take them over. So this is where I partly grew up.

PHILLIPS: Tell me, tell me about that fear of the Russians in Sweden when you were a young man.

LINDGREN: Well, they always thought that the Russian bear perhaps would try to get, Sweden had fought wars proudly with the Russians, for years and years and, uh, it was actually Peter The Great, I guess, that finally defeated Charles XII of Sweden in Pultava, on the southern part of Russia. And as a result of that defeat, lost Finland and the rest of Sweden's, Sweden's, uh, territory, the upper part of Germany, the Pomerania was part of the Swedish state at one time. As were a whole hell of a part of Germany.

That was lost when that defeat came about.

PHILLIPS: Where was that defeat?

LINDGREN: Pultava. I think it's spelled P-U-L-T-A-V-A in, uh, it's found in Ukraine. You can wonder how did the Swedes ever get down there. Well, some of it was that Sweden had, the Swedes had travelled extensively through Russia and established trading posts, Novogorove, or such a, such and such a place. That's along the Volgas, almost in the middle of Russia. And from the . . .

PHILLIPS: Can you spell it?

LINDGREN: Novogrove, I believe, is N-O-V-O-G-R-O-V-E, or D. Anyway, it's quite well known. And as a result of this, of course, we travelled clear down to, uh, to the southern part of Russia. And, actually, established a city with about twenty-five thousand Swedes living there continuously. And it was only in 1924 or '25 that the petition, I'm not talking about the people living on it, it was called (?), an old Swedish town in Russia. The people down there petitioned the Swedish government to please bring

them back to Sweden.

PHILLIPS: Because they were living on the other side of the border.

LINDGREN: Oh, way down in Russia. Yeah, yeah. And, uh, ultimately that was accomplished. They were about twenty-five thousand people, if I remember correctly, came back to Sweden after all those years. Now, when they first established that thing there, the Battle of Pultava was in 1712, so we're talking here about, better than two hundred years difference.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember what year it was that they finally came back?

LINDGREN: 1924, I think. Either '24 or '25.

PHILLIPS: So you were in Sweden when the Russian Revolution, or in Germany and Sweden when the Russian Revolution was taking place.

LINDGREN: Uh, I was in Sweden. That was in '17, '18. I was still in Sweden, then.

PHILLIPS: What did you hear about that when you were in Sweden?

LINDGREN: What about it?

PHILLIPS: What did you hear about that when the Russian Revolution was happening?

LINDGREN: Well, of course, it was all Bolsheviks at that time, and all, so that was quite a bit of upsetting information, naturally. They killed off most of the white Russians for one thing. And a lot of those that did escape, quite a few came into Sweden. They came in through Finland, and over across the Baltic into Sweden. Others travelled south, of course, and went into whatever they did, Turkey, and so forth. But, no, those were extremely upsetting times.

PHILLIPS: Did you see these refugees from Russia?

LINDGREN: Uh, no. I don't think I did.

PHILLIPS: It was common knowledge, though, that they were . . .

LINDGREN: It was common knowledge, yeah. Of course, before that, you see, the Germans and the Russians exchanged prisoners. The Germans sent the Russian prisoners up through Sweden and in through Finland, and the Russians did the same the other way around. So the city where I lived had a lot of wounded soldiers come

through, which we did see.

PHILLIPS: From the first World War One.

LINDGREN: From the first World War, right. There were some, mostly, many of them were basket cases, you know. They were just barely living. And, uh, they stopped, of course, in my town. And the people there did what they could for them, feeding them and so forth.

PHILLIPS: How were they travelling?

LINDGREN: Train. Yeah, the train came from, from the, from Germany, not through Sweden, and in through Finland, and the other way around just exactly the same.

PHILLIPS: Why did they stop at your town?

LINDGREN: Just to, perhaps, change locomotives or something.

PHILLIPS: All right. Um, let me just stop there, because I'll turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PHILLIPS: We're on side number two of tape number 401 [DP-27]

with Mr. Lindgren. Let's get back to the time when you were about to leave for the United States to seek fame and fortune, if that's indeed what you were seeking. Why did you decide to leave, again?

LINDGREN: Because, well, basically, there were three of us, three engineers, or budding engineers, if that was all, just graduated. We thought the best thing, to get back to Sweden, we had to have some experience. So that, we figured, the United States would be the place to go and get that experience. And this, basically, was the reason why we came over here. We, all three of us did not have any idea of staying more than maybe three or four years, and then come back to Sweden. How did we get to the United States was not easy. You applied for a visa to go over, an immigration visa, that is.

PHILLIPS: What year was this, again?

LINDGREN: This was 1925. And you applied for a consulate at Stockholm for this visa. And they informed us that it would take about a year to get this through because, again, there was a certain amount of people allowed to come in, and no more, no less. So, uh,

during this time, waiting for the visa to arrive, or be issued, I worked as an electrician. Ultimately, of course, that visa came through and, uh . . .

PHILLIPS: When you say you worked as an electrician, you mean as a tradesman?

LINDGREN: As a tradesman.

PHILLIPS: Actually putting in switches and wiring.

LINDGREN: That's right. That's exactly correct. Yeah. And, uh, not just switches and wiring, also high tension lines and so forth and so on, and the whole realm. I worked for an electric company in Sweden that was quite a large one, as a matter of fact. Uh . . .

PHILLIPS: So you, the visa comes through.

LINDGREN: Uh-huh. The visa comes through. Then, of course, it required money. So, uh, you get the fare over here and so forth. And, uh, not only that, but I, I and a friend of mine, thought perhaps would everyone like to go back to Germany, on the way to Germany or, rather, the United States. On the way to the United States go down through Germany again to see old

friends and go back to the city where we had our education, and so forth. So we arranged for that. And the money, of course, supplied for me by my family. Now, there was a regulation at that time in the United States that any immigrant coming must have at least twenty-five dollars when they arrived in the United States. Also, he or she must have a sponsor. Well, the only sponsoring person I had lived in Minnesota. An uncle of mine had immigrated many years before and lived in Minnesota. So from him I had received a letter stating that he would see to it that I would not become a burden on the state, or the United States. And this, of course, was then presented to the consulate in Stockholm and so forth. Uh, however, I had no intention of going to Minnesota, and I didn't have enough money, as a matter of fact, to go as far as Minnesota. And this is the reason that they detained me on Ellis Island. I had the twenty-five dollars all right, but I did not have the money enough to go to Minnesota. And my uncle did not have the means or whatever to come to pick me up in New York. So this is the reason that I was detained at Ellis Island.

PHILLIPS: Tell us about arriving at Ellis Island, actually arriving.

PHILLIPS: Well, uh, I travelled on the big ship, Majestic, which was one of the ships, I think, the English people had appropriated that from the Germans after the first World War. It was a large steamer, a lot of people. I made some acquaintances on the ship. Some Jewish people, I remember particularly. What happened to them, I don't know, but they stopped in New York, and I never did see them again. The . . .

PHILLIPS: What did the Jewish people tell you?

LINDGREN: Well, at that, of course, they were escaping Germany. Even now, mind you, at that time they were escaping Germany. They were jewelers, which many Jewish people are. And, uh, they were going to be, downtown they had some relationships in New York, also in the jewelry business, so this is what they were waiting for. Well, to go back to my detention, or rather, if you want to know something about my impression of New York. Well, of course, I basically knew what New York was going to look like from pictures and movies and what have you. So that was not a tremendous

surprise. The Statue of Liberty, uh, was sitting out there, of course. But frankly, I don't think that many people actually looked at it. Rather you look at the skyline of New York when you come in. And then finally, of course, the ship stopped in the middle of the harbor for many good people to come in, customs, and many good people. And this is where the first inspection (?) took place. They looked at you, they looked at your fingernails, particularly, because it seemed that anything wrong with the fingers, that time, as a big question because, I don't know why, but anyway, it may have been that some oriental people had problems with fingernails or something, falling off. Anyway, mine were all right. And, uh, then the ferry picked us up and brought us to Ellis Island. Those of us who were detained for one reason or another, there were many south Europeans, Greeks, Italians, Spanish also, and quite a few from the Balkan countries. And, uh, many families, children, women. And, uh, my first impression of Ellis Island besides the fact because it was more or less a prison, was the fact that it was extremely clean and well-maintained and the big hall on the Ellis Island which was, to me, quite an

enormous place. It had to be for that many people. It was, uh, surprisingly attractive. We were told then that, I mean, that's why we was, we were safe for the rest of the day. Of the Marines someone asked okay, you can come now and have a dinner. It had to be dinner. I don't think it was lunch. And again the dining room, also, only was, there were tablecloths on the tables. It was very attractive. Well, attractive, maybe, is not right, but it looked very good, and it was nice and clean. Then back to the main hall again where we sat, and there wasn't much to do. Then some time, during the afternoon, and also some time during the morning, the guards told us to go out in the yard for exercise. Which we did for I don't know how long, half an hour, forty-five minutes maybe. Mainly walking, running, whatever you wanted to do. And then back to the hall again and, uh, there was a number of people, of course, that spoke different languages so you didn't, it was not easy to get, anybody can acquaint themselves. Then ultimately they let me into the dormitories which were, of course, double-deck beds. And again, nice and clean, white linen on the bed and on the pillowcase. The whole thing was most, besides

the fact that it was a prison, it was actually quite an experience.

PHILLIPS: A positive experience.

LINDGREN: Huh?

PHILLIPS: A positive experience.

LINDGREN: A positive experience. Oh, yes, it was that, yeah.

MRS. LINDGREN: There was a physical examination.

LINDGREN: (he laughs) That was a surprising, perhaps, not only surprising, but a rather peculiar experience. Some time during the day, the second day, I guess . . . Oh, I should say that, let me go back a little bit. Each day some official, perhaps one of the guards or whoever he was, came up on a platform at one end of the Big Hall and announced over the loudspeaker the names of people who were allowed to leave. Either they had, the relations had come down for them, or whatever reason. And, uh, at that time I contacted one of the guards. My English wasn't all the best, but I could make myself understood. And I found out from him the reason that I was detained,

the fact that I was supposed to go to Minnesota. It happened that two or three of my friends, also from the same school in Germany, had already come to the United States and were located in New York. And, uh, I told the guard, and I gave him the name and where he worked and so forth, and that guard evidently told somebody, and the somebody telephone this fellow. And the result of that, two days later, this fellow came out, again by ferry to Ellis Island. And he watched for me. In other words, he co-sponsored me, so I was allowed to leave. So my stay at Ellis Island was very short. Anyway, to go back to the experience I had. The second day I was asked to come down to a room downstairs somewheres. And here was a lady doctor and all kinds of instruments. I say, now what is going to happen here, this to me, then nobody. I did not understand what they were talking about, and they didn't understand Swedish. So communications were pretty tough. Anyway, it turned out that this doctor was a phrenologist. And I was placed in, well, similar to a dentist's chair. And this lady, with the help of two fellows, I believe it was, they measured me up and down, particularly my head, of course. This was the main find out what my

head looked like. And that examination must have been at least an hour-and-a-half, two hours. I don't know what I would think it was. Anyplace it would bother you. She looked in my ears, they looked in my nose, they looked at my hair. It must have been, at that time, kind of a study going on, particularly about phrenology and what immigrant skulls may look like.

MRS. LINDGREN: Hopes of knowledge.

LINDGREN: (he laughs) Anyway, it was painless. I thought it was kind of interesting that she would, I had no idea what she was doing.

PHILLIPS: She didn't tell you.

LINDGREN: Well, she probably did, but I didn't understand what she was talking about. (he laughs)

PHILLIPS: Just once again, what year was that.

LINDGREN: Uh, '26.

PHILLIPS: Your year of immigration, obviously, of course.

LINDGREN: 1926.

PHILLIPS: All right. So what happened when you finally left and, uh . . .

LINDGREN: Well, I finally left these people who, I had more than one friend anyway. And that had been there long enough so they had a job in New York. And the two of them worked for Otis Elevator Company in Yonkers and they lived, uh, they had an apartment on Riverside Drive, which was a long way from Yonkers, actually. And, uh, they had a job and they, I guess we had, didn't take them more than a week or so, and I went with them and applied for a job until I got a job at this Otis Elevator Company. At, the initial pay was fifty cents an hour. And we worked eight-hour shifts, four on Saturdays, so that was a total of fifty-two hours, fifty-two. I figure that's forty-eight, forty, forty-four hours, actually.

MRS. LINDGREN: Well, did you work Saturdays?

LINDGREN: Half a day, yeah. One o'clock.

LINDGREN: No, it was forty plus four.

LINDGREN: Forty-four. But that, at fifty cents an hour was

twenty-four bucks a week. Well, it wasn't much, but it was enough in those days to live in New York. And we did. The three of us lived in this apartment. We paid a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month for the apartment. This consisted of a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms and, of course, a bathroom.

PHILLIPS: You paid how much a month?

LINDGREN: One hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, on Riverside Drive.

MRS. LINDGREN: On Riverside Drive.

LINDGREN: That is unbelievable now that is, I'm sure. You live in New York, so you . . . And it was not very far, we could dance to 125th Street, actually. Not too much later. We stayed there for quite a while. And we decided finally that it was a crazy thing to live in New York. To work in Yonkers and to live in New York, that was ridiculous. So we finally found a Scottish family in Yonkers that rented us a living room and two bedrooms. And we stayed with them for, they found, they had quite a long while, and we finally decided if we're going to go back to Sweden,

we better see something of the United States before we do go back to Sweden. We stil had it in our minds, go back to Sweden. So we thought, uh-oh, we'd better see something. So we bought an old Chevy, an old Chevrolet. And, uh, collected the gear our and in, uh, I guess June or so 1928, the three of us set off to see the United States. We spent seven weeks travelling up and down the states, staring at Niagara Falls and then going west. And, ultimately, one of the fellows had an uncle, no, a cousin, lived in Los Angeles. And they had been in contact, so we were aiming for Los Angeles for this fellow to see his cousin. And, uh, ultimately after seven weeks we arrived. We had a little accident where the car turned over for us on a gravel road in Utah and the wheels were broken. It wasn't very travelable, so we sold it for more money than we paid for it. We paid \$200 for it, we got two-and-a-quarter, in Utah, and took the bus to L.A. And, uh, out of notoriety of this family we had been rented a room to begin with. And, uh, got hold of this fellow's cousin. And they did not want us to stay in the rented room, so they got us a (?). We moved in with them. And, as it turned out, this family has two kids, a girl and a

boy. And this girl ultimately became my first wife, this being my second one. My first one died in 1982.

PHILLIPS: And when did you, in fact, move to Los Angeles?

LINDGREN: 1928. We came in August of '28.

PHILLIPS: You've been here ever since.

LINDGREN: More or less.

PHILLIPS: Just before the Depression?

LINDGREN: Just before the Depression, yes.

PHILLIPS: What was the Depression like for you?

LINDGREN: Well, it was tough, but, and at that time I was not married. Had two kids and, uh, fortunately enough I did work almost all the time during the Depression years except for ten months. And we had already, we had already built the house, bought a lot and built the house, we had a loan. And, uh, we had to meet the obligation of the loan, of course. And that the mortgage payments were a hundred and sixty every six months. One hundred sixty dollars was quite a bit of money in those days. Because I remember my, I got a

job, of course, at this time. I worked for an engineering firm, Oil Field Equipment Company, making drilling tools for oil fields out there. And my pay was a hundred and eighty-five a month, which was pretty good, actually, I consider. And, uh, but I, as I say, I had no job for ten months. And payment was coming due, mortgage payments. And, uh, all we had in the bank, I think, at that time, was a hundred and sixty-eight bucks. That was it. And, uh, a few days before the payment was due, the director of the company that I worked for, Oil Field Equipment, I was out mowing the lawn one day and he came by. And he said, "Look." He says, "I got a job for you for about a week if you want to take thirty-five dollars a week pay." Thirty-five dollars a week was a lot of money when you have nothing particularly. Well, of course, that week stretched out to be thirty-nine years I worked for this company continuously until, well, even after it was sold to some other company. So I was fortunate, I guess.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Um, is there anything else which you'd like to, out of that period? I don't know whether you have any other . . .

LINDGREN: Regarding? What are you talking about?

PHILLIPS: Well, you think, which you would like to share with us, which you particularly would like to record on tape?

LINDGREN: Can you think of something that is memorable or something?

LINDGREN: Are you interested in his sons, or?

PHILLIPS: No, not, I think that's just about it, then.

MRS. LINDGREN: The only thing was the '34 earthquake.

LINDGREN: Well, I lived through that.

PHILLIPS: Why don't you tell us a bit about that, too?

LINDGREN: Well, again, it was 1933 in March, March the 10th, I guess. And we, uh, this was six o'clock in the evening. The two children, the baby, the younger boy, was asleep in his crib in his bedroom. He slept through the whole thing. He never heard anything. The bed rolled around a little, I guess. And we were just having dinner. The older boy was in his high

chair. And we were having dinner. My wife was feeding the boy. And just as it hits, uh, the dining room was facing the street, so you see that. And when it hit, I looked out, and the house across the street, a house similar to ours, just stood up on end like this, and it came right back again. That was the first shock. And, of course, ours did the same thing, no question about that. Only the way was a little different, so we saw that one. And that was a real, real scary experience. And it was a devastating earthquake, particularly in Long Beach. This is where it mainly hit, Long Beach. I lived about twelve miles north of Long Beach. It was scary. No question about that. And, uh, scary to a point that people who you thought were really macho characters, I'm talking about men now, you know, absolutely scared to a point where they quit, left, at least California for the time being. Have you ever lived through an earthquake, have you?

PHILLIPS: So you're now living in this retirement community.

LINDGREN: That's right.

PHILLIPS: What's it like here?

LINDGREN: Very nice. We like it. We've lived here over five years, and we like it real well. It's a planned community, and it's well-planted, plenty of green space. It is not crowded. And within the community itself traffic is not no problem. Once you get into the freeways, of course, that's a different story. So my wife and I, we both ride, but we do hesitate to go into Los Angeles because . . .

MRS. LINDGREN: The point where we don't unless somebody drives us.

PHILLIPS: Okay. I think that finishes our interview.

LINDGREN: Well, thank you.

PHILLIPS: Number 401 [DP-27] with, uh, Roland Egon Lindgren.