

**EI-110**

**ALBERT FREDRICKSON**

**BIRTH DATE: 1893**

**INTERVIEW DATE: 10/31/1991**

**RUNNING TIME: 29:42**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D**

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**INTERVIEW LOCATION: TENNENTS HARBOR, MAINE**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 4/1993**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 6/1993**

**SWEDEN, 1911**

**AGE: 18**

**SHIP: CYMRIC**

**PORT: LIVERPOOL**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **SWEDEN: STORKO**
- **US: LOWELL, MA**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine, and I'm with Albert Fredrickson in Tenant's Harbor, at his home. Mr. Fredrickson was born in 1893 and he came through Ellis Island from Sweden in 1911 when he was eighteen. So I'm very happy to be here, and I'll ask you some questions, and whatever you can remember that'll be just great. First of all, what town were you born in?

FREDRICKSON: What was that?

LEVINE: What town were you born in? What was the name of the town?

FREDRICKSON: The time?

LEVINE: The town. The village or the town.

FREDRICKSON: Where I landed?

LEVINE: No, where you were born.

FREDRICKSON: Oh, Storko. S-T-O-R-K-O. Storko.

LEVINE: I'm sorry, S-Y-R?

FREDRICKSON: S-T-O-R-K-O.

LEVINE: And can you describe that town? What was it like there?

FREDRICKSON: What is it like? It's a big island.

LEVINE: Oh, it's a big island.

FREDRICKSON: Population about 2,000. It's a beautiful island. Nice big farms on it.

LEVINE: And were most of the people farmers?

FREDRICKSON: Well, it was pavement cutting, you know. And most of the people did a little fishing and farming and the younger people turned to cutting paving, cutting stone.

LEVINE: I see. So there was a quarry.

FREDRICKSON: There was a lot of granite.

LEVINE: I see. Now, what did your father do for work?

FREDRICKSON: My father was a paving cutter, but he had a farm, too.

LEVINE: And do you remember the house where you lived?

FREDRICKSON: Yes, of course I did. But it's been torn down and a new one being built in its place because my mother come out to this country with my brother and she sold the place when she left Sweden and the house has been there many, many years, and he tore it down and built a new one in its place.

LEVINE: What was the old one like? What do you remember from when you were a young boy?

FREDRICKSON: What's that?

LEVINE: What do you remember about the house when you lived in it?

FREDRICKSON: It was painted red with white trimmings. It was pretty. It was built out

of oak plank, white oak.

LEVINE: And how many rooms were there?

FREDRICKSON: Huh?

LEVINE: How many rooms?

FREDRICKSON: I think it was six.

LEVINE: And did you have brothers and sisters?

FREDRICKSON: Six, besides an attic, you know. Yes, I only had seven sisters.

LEVINE: Oh. And what were their names, the names of your sisters? What were their names?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, Emily was the oldest one. Sigrid was the second one. Anna was the third, and Hilda was the fourth. And Ruth the fifth, and Tina the last one. Tina was the last one, because she was the tenth in the family. There is another one, I, oh, Estrid, Estrid. That gives all the names to them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And were you, where did you fall in line? You were the oldest or the youngest or in the middle or . . . Were you in the middle? When were you born? Were you born before most of your sisters, or in the middle?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, I was the fourth in the family.

LEVINE: I see. And what was your mother's maiden name?

FREDRICKSON: My mother's maiden name Anderson, and her birth name was Augusta.

LEVINE: And what was your father's name?

FREDRICKSON: Algot. Algot Fredrickson.

LEVINE: Albert?

FREDRICKSON: Algot. A-L-G-L-O-T.

LEVINE: Okay. And then did you go to school in Sweden?

FREDRICKSON: Yes, I went to school. I went to school until there were no more schools to go to. I was thirteen when I graduated.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about school there? What was school like?

FREDRICKSON: What I remember about what?

LEVINE: About school, the school that you went to. The school that you went to.

FREDRICKSON: The school? Let us see, there were three schools in Sweden, in three different towns, you know. I remember that so well because we always used to fight one another, different schools. ( he laughs )

LEVINE: You mean fist fight? You mean fight each other with your fists?

FREDRICKSON: Sisters? No, with other children from other schools.

LEVINE: What would start a fight? What kind of thing would start a fight with somebody from another . . .

FREDRICKSON: Oh, wresting, and tear one another down, and poke one another in the face, and . . . ( he laughs )

LEVINE: Do you remember any games that you played when you were young? Any games that you played, any sports?

FREDRICKSON: I don't get you. My hearing isn't too good, you know.

LEVINE: That's okay. What did you do when you were a child? What kinds of things did you do that you liked doing?

FREDRICKSON: What did I like to do? The work I was doing, cutting paving.

LEVINE: When did you start doing that? When did you start cutting paving?

FREDRICKSON: When did I stop?

LEVINE: When did you start?

FREDRICKSON: When did I start? About ten years old.

LEVINE: Really. You went with your father?

FREDRICKSON: No, with my brothers.

LEVINE: Oh, you had brothers, too?

FREDRICKSON: I had two brothers older than I, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what were their names?

FREDRICKSON: One was Adolph and one was Harold.

LEVINE: So you would cut paving and what was your life like there? Was it a hard life? Did you have a hard life?

FREDRICKSON: No. ( he laughs )

LEVINE: No?

FREDRICKSON: I enjoyed it very much.

LEVINE: You enjoyed your childhood growing up there?

FREDRICKSON: Work in those days it didn't mean anything, you know. It was all

used to working. I used to work after I come home from school, cut paving after I come home from school in the afternoon.

LEVINE: Tell me what your mother was like. What was your mother like?

FREDRICKSON: The smartest woman in the world.

LEVINE: Why do you say that?

FREDRICKSON: Because she was. She was a tailor. She made the first suit I ever wore with long pants. I'll never forget that. And she made my daddy a suit, a beautiful suit. She bought the stuff off of a Jew.

LEVINE: And did she ever tell you things? Did she ever tell you things, or try to instill certain ideas in you, or things that she wanted you to remember in living your life? Did she, can you think of lessons she tried to teach you?

FREDRICKSON: I don't get you on that.

LEVINE: When you think of your mother, are there any ideas that she had that you remember?

FREDRICKSON: Ideas? Oh, she was a great Christian, you know.

LEVINE: A great what?

FREDRICKSON: Christian, religious.

LEVINE: Oh, Christian. Uh-huh. What church did she go to? What church?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, Lutheran.

LEVINE: And were you religious, too? Was the whole family religious? Was the whole family a religious family?

FREDRICKSON: I suppose so. I didn't know any better in those days.

LEVINE: So you went to church every week?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, Sundays, the usual. Take my Bible and carry it there.

LEVINE: And then what else do you remember about Sweden when you think about it. What do you think?

FREDRICKSON: Well, I'll tell you, I didn't move around much because my father was sick and when I got to be fourteen or fifteen years old so that I could really work, I took his place and worked to support the family, because with all those girls, you know. Of course, my mother was a beautiful dressmaker and she sewed for a lot of people, too, you know. She had the Singer sewing machine. And she was busy all the time sewing, and I was busy working. And that's how we brought up the family together.

LEVINE: Were your other brothers working, too?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, yes. But my brothers left home early. One was sixteen and one was eighteen when he left home.

LEVINE: I see. So you were really the man of the house.

FREDRICKSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did your father die when you were young?

FREDRICKSON: No. My father died after I came over here. He was sixty-five when he passed away.

LEVINE: But he was too sick to work. He was too sick to work before that. He couldn't work before that.

FREDRICKSON: He couldn't work? Well, he took care of the farm. After I left he got a little better. He had lung trouble. It wasn't T.B., but he had weak lungs.

LEVINE: Well, what kind of a man was he?

FREDRICKSON: Well, I'll tell you what kind of man. He came from a place in Sweden they called Smolen. His mother, his mother died when he was eight days old. And his father had to bring him up from there. And his father took him and went to an island next to the island where I was born, because there was a company boarding house there. And he took a little boy when he was about two year old and took him over there, and when he left in mornings he locked him in the room and he

had to stay there till his father come back at twelve o'clock for his dinner, then they took him down and fed him, you know. And that's how he growed up.

LEVINE: He grew up locked in a room every day? You mean he was locked in a room every day?

FREDRICKSON: Yes. He had to be locked there because his father wouldn't dare to let him out, you know. There was nobody to look out for him. His mother was dead.

LEVINE: What was your father like when he was older, when, after you were born.

FREDRICKSON: What was he like?

LEVINE: Yeah.

FREDRICKSON: Oh, he was a nice little man. He weren't any larger than I am. And a hell of a good-looking man, if I could say so.

LEVINE: And were you close to any particular member of your family? Were you closest to any particular member of your family?

FREDRICKSON: Was I close to them? Oh, yes. Brothers and sisters, of course he was. I had my little sister Tina. I loved her. She was the last one. In fact, I named her. I know so well the night she was born. My father says to me, "What will we call her?" I said, "She's the tenth in the

family." So I said, "I'll name her and call her Tina." And that's what she was called, Tina. She died when she was eleven, twelve years old.

LEVINE: And what did she die of?

FREDRICKSON: She inherited her father's lung trouble. She wasn't sick a bit. She just died, that's all. The two youngest girls, Ruth and Tina, both of them died with the same troubles. I remember sitting on the bed holding that little girl's hand when she passed away. Her hand collapsed in mine, and I know then that she was gone.

LEVINE: Was there a doctor in your town?

FREDRICKSON: No, there wasn't. You had to go to the city to Colescurna. And I went there one winter, but my father, I went on the ice. It froze over, you know, and I went with horse and sleigh and what his name, the big man, his name was Augustus, and he lived in Colescurna, and that was about four miles from where we lived. I went on ice with the horse and sleigh.

LEVINE: Well, what made you decide to come here to the United States?

FREDRICKSON: Well, I had two brothers here.

LEVINE: Oh, they had already come. They were already here.

FREDRICKSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then did they send you money to come, or how did you . . .

FREDRICKSON: No, I had money myself.

LEVINE: You mean from working? From cutting the stone?

FREDRICKSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: So what did you, do you remember what you thought about the United States before you came here? What you expected, what you knew about the United States before you came here.

FREDRICKSON: I didn't know anything about it. I landed in Concord, New Hampshire. I worked in West Concord for about two weeks, three weeks. It was horrible hot. It was never under a hundred day after day, a hundred and two degrees, and that will cook you alive. And I went from there to Lowell, Massachusetts, to Graniteville. It wasn't quite so hot there.

LEVINE: Do you remember what ship you took? Do you remember the name of the ship that you had took from Sweden to the United States?

FREDRICKSON: Remember what?

LEVINE: The name of the ship, the boat?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, the Cymric. The Cymric was the boat I come over in.

LEVINE: Do you know how to spell that? Can you spell it? Can you spell the name of that ship? Can you spell it? Can you spell the word that's the name of the boat, the Cymric?

FREDRICKSON: Can I spell it? Cymric, no. You might spell it better than I can. I can't remember.

LEVINE: Cymric. Okay. And where did it leave from? Where did it leave from?

FREDRICKSON: From England. Liverpool, England.

LEVINE: So you had to get from Sweden, from your town, to Liverpool, in order to get on the ship.

FREDRICKSON: Come from where I was born to a place, they call the town in Sweden, the Goteborg. The Americans can't say Goteborg, they say, "Goteborg." And from there I went to England to Liverpool, and we got the boat in Liverpool to come over here.

LEVINE: Were you traveling by yourself? Were you by yourself? Were you traveling alone?

FREDRICKSON: Traveled alone? Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember if you were looking forward to coming to this country?

FREDRICKSON: Somebody looking for me?

LEVINE: Were you looking forward to being here? Were you excited?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, I never knowed. I always thought I'd go back, but I never happened to. I got married after I got twenty-five years old, and I sailed out here and I never got a chance to go back.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you were leaving? Did your mother feel bad?

FREDRICKSON: I suppose she did. ( he laughs ) My father felt so bad he couldn't stay. He walked away.

LEVINE: You mean, they went with you to Liverpool. Did they go to Liverpool? Where did you leave them? Were you, he walked away from where?

FREDRICKSON: That was on the island where I was born.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Do you remember when the ship came into the harbor, the New York Harbor?

FREDRICKSON: The New York Harbor?

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember when you first saw it?

FREDRICKSON: Yes.

LEVINE: When you first saw land in New York? Do you remember what you thought?

FREDRICKSON: Well, we all immigrants, we all come out just as fast as we could to get onto the dock, you know.

LEVINE: And do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty? Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Did you know what that meant?

FREDRICKSON: Know what it meant? Oh, I'd read about it over in Sweden. There wasn't any more liberty there than there was over in Sweden. When it comes to liberty, there was more liberty in Sweden than there was over here at that time.

LEVINE: What makes you say that? What do you mean?

FREDRICKSON: Well, you feel freer. You was born there and you feel freer, you know.

LEVINE: When you were in the United States, were there any experiences you had where you didn't feel free? When you were in the United States, did you feel free, or you didn't feel that?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, yes. I wasn't bothered. I got along all right. I never had no

trouble with anybody. There was, of course, there was law and order here the same as everywhere else, you know. You had to behave yourself.

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island at all?

FREDRICKSON: No, I don't.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you got back to New York, where did you go?

FREDRICKSON: Well, I come off of the boat and I passed the inspection and I could see my brother standing there at the gate waiting for me. So I just left the inspection and went to my brother and we went off together.

LEVINE: What was it like to see your brothers again?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, it was nice to meet your own brother, of course. He was an awful gentle man, anyway.

LEVINE: Which brother is that?

FREDRICKSON: Harold.

LEVINE: Tell me about Harold. What kind of a person was he? What kind of a person was Harold?

FREDRICKSON: He was a very moderate man, considerate. He was a considerate

person.

LEVINE: And then where did you go? Where did you go after they met you?

FREDRICKSON: We went to Concord, New Hampshire. My brother was working there and I got a job there. But I didn't stay long, only two or three weeks.

LEVINE: And then you moved on to where? Where did you go next?

FREDRICKSON: To Lowell, Massachusetts.

LEVINE: And how long did you stay there?

FREDRICKSON: Oh, I stayed there till the end of fall. About September, I think. And I come down here to Maine, I come down to Walderboro, down here.

LEVINE: And were you cutting pavement while you were there?

FREDRICKSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And when was it you decided to stay? When did you decide to stay and not go back to Sweden?

FREDRICKSON: When did I decide to stay? Well, it went on little by little, you know. You keep working, and by and by I got a girlfriend, and we went around for about a year and a half together. And, of course, I didn't like to leave her anyway, so that's how it happened.

LEVINE: So then did you marry her? Did you marry her?

FREDRICKSON: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was her name?

FREDRICKSON: Bernice.

LEVINE: What was her maiden name?

FREDRICKSON: Wood. She was English.

LEVINE: Had she come from England?

FREDRICKSON: No, she was born here, but her father and mother was born in England, both of them. Her father and mother came from England out west, went out west to raise grain, you know. And they planted the grain in the fall, and it come up, and it looked good, and they got a tremendous rainstorm that washed everything out. Destroyed it completely. So they couldn't stay. They faced starvation if they had stayed another year. So they bought an old horse, and they bought an old prarie schooner, and a little colt, a little horse, and that's what they started out with. They come, they come the Indian trail right down through Montreal, Canada.

LEVINE: Well, then, did you and Bernice have children?

FREDRICKSON: No, we didn't have no children.

LEVINE: Was there, is there anything about the United States that is different from Sweden? Is there anything here in the United States that seemed different to you than you were used to in Sweden?

FREDRICKSON: No, she was born up in Long Cove. She never went to Sweden.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything, when you think back on your life in Sweden, what are the things that you remember most?

FREDRICKSON: In Sweden? Oh, the schools and different things like that, of course, like any youngster that grow up, you know.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you can think of, about, that you want to say about coming to the United States?

FREDRICKSON: No.

LEVINE: Are you glad you came?

FREDRICKSON: I don't know what my life would have been if I had stayed over there. I can't tell. I got along all right. I'm a hundred years old, so you must know I couldn't have been too bad off.

LEVINE: I hear you have the gold cane from the town. You have the town's gold cane.

FREDRICKSON: The town here?

LEVINE: Yeah, this town has given you the golden cane.

FREDRICKSON: The golden cane? Well, there was a man down to Port Clyde that had it before me. He passed away. He was the name of Ernest Maloney. He had it, so when he passed away he brought it up here to me, and give it to me. It's on the table in there.

LEVINE: Wow. I would say you're in good shape for a hundred years old.

FREDRICKSON: Yeah. I got two more years to go.

LEVINE: Oh, you're going to stay around till you're a hundred and two.

FREDRICKSON: No. I'll be a hundred two years from now.

LEVINE: Oh, you're ninety-eight now.

FREDRICKSON: I'm on ninety-nine now.

LEVINE: And you're satisfied with your life?

FREDRICKSON: Satisfied? Well, I walked till I got blind. When I got blind I wasn't satisfied with it any more. I want to die, but I can't die. It don't seem so I can die. I don't know why. I must be forgotten or something.

LEVINE: When did you go blind?

FREDRICKSON: It was about ten years from now. I've been blind about ten years.

LEVINE: Well, you manage to get along all right here. You manage to do all right here, in your house. You manage to get along.

FREDRICKSON: Oh, yes. I got along all right. I intend to get along. My wife was a great worker.

LEVINE: What did your wife do? What did she do for work?

FREDRICKSON: Well, she took care of the house. We got some chickens, and I had four, five hundred hens. And in the spring of the year I had a thousand chickens, little ones. And all the males was culled out, you know, and sold, and the females were kept for egg producers. And I had three cows. We sold milk, the last of it. I used to go out nights and deliver milk. So I'm being a jack of all trades. I used to do mason work and carpenter work. I fixed up three old houses in this town, that's nice property now.

LEVINE: So when you're lying here during the day, do you think about your life, or what do you do while you're lying around?

FREDRICKSON: Well, I wasn't doing much thinking, just planning to get along the best I know how. That's all I was thinking, I suppose.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you'd like to add before we stop?

FREDRICKSON: No, I guess I gave you my pedigree. ( he laughs )

LEVINE: I thank you very much. It's really wonderful to talk with you. I thank you so much for sharing your reminiscences.

FREDRICKSON: I'm glad you came.

LEVINE: Well, thank you. I am, too.

FREDRICKSON: Come again, if you have a chance.

LEVINE: Thank you.

FREDRICKSON: See how much younger I grow every year.  
( he laughs )

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here with Albert Fredrickson in Tenant's Harbor, Maine on October 31, 1991.

END OF INTERVIEW