

**EI-632**

**LINNEA (BERTHA) HALLGREN (ORIGINALLY HELLGREN)**

**BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 24, 1915**

**INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 4, 1995**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1995**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: NICOLE STOTZ**

**SWEDEN (BORN U.S.), 1924**

**AGE: 8**

**SHIP: M.S. STOCKHOLM**

**PORT: GÖTEBORG, SWEDEN**

**RESIDENCES: SÖLVESBORG, SWEDEN; DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS;  
QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine, and I'm with the National Park Service, and I'm here today in South Yarmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts. And I'm here with, well, Ms. Hallgren's first name is Bertha, but she does use her middle name, and that is Linnea Hallgren is her last name. And she came, well, she was born in the United States in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and stayed here until she was six years old, and at that time she went to Sweden with her family and came back at about eight years, just before she was nine years old, in 1924. Today is July 4th, 1995, and Ms. Hallgren is seventy-nine years of age at the time of this interview. I want to say I'm delighted to be here, and I'm looking forward to this most interesting and complex story that you have.

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HALLGREN: Thank you.

LEVINE: Let's start at the beginning, on the tape, if you would say your birth date.

HALLGREN: I was born on August 24, 1915 in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

LEVINE: And you remained in Dorchester until you and your family left for Sweden?

HALLGREN: Well, no. Um, my parents rented a home in Quincy, Massachusetts. And so we stayed in Quincy most of those years that we were here before we went back to Sweden.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember anything about Quincy, of those early years?

HALLGREN: Yes. I remember where we lived, and I remember I went to Sunday school in the Lutheran Church on Granite Street in Quincy, and my family were members there, and we had a lot of friends in Quincy. And, of course, I had a big brother and a sister, and we lived together there in Quincy.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

HALLGREN: My father was, my father's name was John Hallgren. It, he had, he changed his name to Hallgren from Hellgren, H-E-L-L-G-R-E-N. But when he first came to this country he was told, well, he can't be called Hell in this country. He'll have to change his name. So he changed it to Hallgren. (Laughs) And so that's the story from there.

LEVINE: Why don't you say when he came first?

HALLGREN: Well, my father was at sea for a number of years, and he met, uh, his wife, in fact, the girl that he fell in love with was from the same town where he came from in the southern part of Sweden.

LEVINE: What was the name of that town?

HALLGREN: Sölvesborg.

LEVINE: Is it possible to spell that?

HALLGREN: S-O-L-V-E-S-B-O-R-G. And he, my mother, Hilda Nordling, came over here to marry my father, who was here at the time. But then after a year she went back to Sweden where my father had a home. And two of the children were born over there. My father was at sea, like I said, during that time. And then whenever he came to Copenhagen or to the southern part of Sweden, he went to visit the family over there, and the children were born over there. Then in 1914 the war, the First World War broke out, and Father was still at sea, but he happened to be in Boston at the time. So he wrote to my mother, and he said, "Why don't you, they say that the war is going to come to Sweden, too. Why don't you take the children and come over here? Rent the house out, and come over here and stay here." And so she did, came over, and they rented a house in Quincy, and lived happily there as a family until 1920, '21. Then they decided, after the war ended, they decided to go back to the home that they had rented out in Sweden. And there they stayed for a couple of years, and the times weren't

too good. There was a lot of unemployment in Sweden just at that time, between 1921 and '24, so in the meantime my brother decided he wanted to come back to the States because he had gone to school here, and so had my sister gone to school here for four years during the time that we were here.

LEVINE: What was your brother's name?

HALLGREN: Conrad. Conrad Hallgren.

LEVINE: And your sister's?

HALLGREN: Hilda, Hildegard. Her first name was Euphelia Hildegard. And, but she was called Hildegard. And so then, so when my brother, he decided to come over, and my father couldn't get a job in Sölvesborg. So my brother suggested why don't they sell the house and come back to the States where they had been before, and go back to Quincy where they were established before. And so they sold the house in Sölvesborg, packed the belongings, and set sail for America. And went through all the paperwork, the doctor's exams and all the visa and passports and everything. They were all cleared in Sweden to go to America. They went with the Swedish-American line. I believe it was the MS Stockholm from Göteborg, and they came to New York and then from there they had to go to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's talk first, before we talk about Ellis Island, let's talk about your remembrances. So you were here for the first six years, and you, you were a church-going family. And you went to school --

HALLGREN: Not in Quincy, no.

LEVINE: Not in Quincy.

HALLGREN: No. I hadn't reached the age, no.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, maybe you can make some comparisons of what your life was like up until six years old compared with what your life was like for those two years or three--

HALLGREN: In Sweden.

LEVINE: --when you moved back in Sweden.

HALLGREN: Well, we were a very affectionate family. We stuck together. We went to church. We had friends. And, uh, being a Swedish family, we did all the traditional things that a Swedish family would do at Christmas time with the smorgasbord and all the traditional things.

LEVINE: Why don't you be explicit about that. What was a traditional Swedish dish?

HALLGREN: Well, mother, she loved to bake. And, well, the Swedes, they have to bake about six or seven different kinds of cookies. And they have their pickled herring, of course, and also a fish called lutefisk, which my mother prepared. All the Swedes, they had to have that as a traditional Christmas Eve festivities. And we opened, we always opened up all our Christmas presents on Christmas

Eve. And then early Christmas morning we got up early, say, about five o'clock, to go to church, early morning service in the Swedish Lutheran Church where they had, the minister preached. The whole service was in Swedish, and this was a custom from the old country, Sweden, early Christmas morning service. The church was filled with people. And, well --

LEVINE: There was a large Swedish community then.

HALLGREN: Yes. It seemed as though the, well, it seemed as though every nationality, they always had some relatives in some area of, say, in the city, Quincy. The Swedes gathered, they lived, some lived in a section called Swede Hill. A lot of Swedish people there, and in West Quincy. Those Finnish people, they lived in one section. The Germans, the Italians in one section. That's what it seemed to be back then. And so the Swedes, and I went to Sunday school there, and I was, had religious instructions, confirmation when you were about thirteen or fourteen years old. That's later, of course. Now we're talking about from the first beginning. But, well, for a six-year-old, went out and played with the kids. And I remember when we were, when the family had decided to go to Sweden. My father was a cabinetmaker, and he did all the packing, furniture and everything, to ship over to Sweden. And . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember when you got back to Sweden, things that were different there from anything you had experienced in this country?

HALLGREN: Well, at that age I remember meeting the relatives, my aunts and uncles and my

cousins.

LEVINE: You had a large family in Sweden?

HALLGREN: Yes. We had, I had some aunts and uncles and cousins around my age, a little younger, at that time. And then, of course, we had the house there that had been rented out that my father and brother repaired, because there was some damage done on the house and they made repairs on the house after it had been rented out. And . . .

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents that you ever had contact with?

HALLGREN: Yes. I had a grandmother, who was still living, but she had had a stroke. I remember that. But otherwise, and then, of course, right after that, I had to start school. Because then I, you started school and you were seven years old there, and so I started in the first grade. It was a little country school down the street. Mother went with me, and I was all dressed up like an American little girl with a hat with a bow on it and a bow in my hair. And so that was interesting. And I, I learned my ABC's in Swedish, learned my arithmetic in first and second class in Sweden, learned my multiplication tables in Swedish.

LEVINE: Were you speaking Swedish at home ?

HALLGREN: Yes.

LEVINE: Even when you were in the United States?

HALLGREN: Yes. That's it. All our, all my life my parents spoke Swedish in the home, so I was able to speak, I thought I could. And, so, then as far as my multiplication tables are concerned, to this day I cannot multiply in English. I have to multiply in Swedish and translate it into English. I've done that all my life. (laughs)

LEVINE: So, when you came back to this country and you were in school here, was there any difference between the schools that --

HALLGREN: Well, I was ahead of the children in the, when I came to the first class here, the first grade here, I knew my multiplication tables better than the other kids in the first and second grade. I knew them. But, of course, I couldn't read English, but I learned.

LEVINE: Now, so how about life in Sweden? Were there any other observances or festivities that you recall from that?

HALLGREN: Well, actually we lived a little further out of the city, more up in the country.

LEVINE: Was, this was . . .

HALLGREN: This was a small town outside of Sölvesborg. We're talking about now when I was six to nine years old.

LEVINE: Yes.

HALLGREN: Well, and every day, every time there was a holiday, they would hoist the Swedish flag. So you'd see the Swedish, the Swedish flag flying in a lot of the

houses, which was a very nice tradition.

LEVINE: Were there any other traditions that you recall? I mean, maybe things surrounding weddings or funerals or --

HALLGREN: No.

LEVINE: Religious occasions?

HALLGREN: I don't remember, I don't remember any of that. We were a home-loving family. We stayed at home, and we did not have an automobile, and we couldn't get any place except to walk. It was out in the country there. But we managed, and we had a nice home life with a family, mother and father and sister and brother. My brother was twelve years older than they, and my sister was seven years older.

LEVINE: Now, what would you do for enjoyment? What would, either you with your friends or you with your family?

HALLGREN: I had playmates down the street that we went and played together and went to each others' homes. And the neighbors got together with the families at Christmas time, too, for a meal or just a get-together.

LEVINE: Do you remember games that you played as a child with the other children in Sweden?

HALLGREN: Hmm, in Sweden? Hmm, no, I can't remember. Ball, I played ball. My father was a carpenter, a cabinet-maker. He made a little ball and bat for me. You

know, play with the ball, and back and forth. And he also made a sled for me. So those are the things that I remember as a child.

LEVINE: And how about, anything concerned with singing or dancing? Was that something that was part of your life?

HALLGREN: Yeah. We, we liked music. Even though my parents did not play an instrument, we always had a little reed organ, the little organ that you pump with your feet and pull the stops out. And we played hymns on there and got together sometimes and sang and played hymns, even though we had not taken any lesson, we played the chords.

LEVINE: And how about the house, the house that you went back to? Can you describe it?

HALLGREN: It was a single home. I remember, there were a couple of bedrooms and a nice living room and a kitchen. I don't believe at that time that there was water in the house. We had to go out and pump the water. Because this was more out in the country still. I really can't remember, but I remember my mother going out pumping water for some reason or other and doing a washing outside. But after that I don't know whether, I can't remember if my brother and my father modernized it and got the water in. So that, I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Do you remember the community?

HALLGREN: Oh, yes. Well, the schoolhouse down the street where I went and walked back

and forth. Like I say, we didn't own a car. And walked up to a little store with, to buy some milk in a milk can.

LEVINE: Was there one store, or were there others?

HALLGREN: There was just one store in this little community. Then, of course, right in the city of Sölvesborg, there they had a shopping center.

LEVINE: Was there a market day, or anything like that?

HALLGREN: Oh, yes. In the middle of the day, in the week, they had a market day on Wednesdays, and that was quite an event.

LEVINE: What would happen? Could you describe market day?

HALLGREN: Well, they had stalls. Different people had certain, they sold vegetables or other items right in the marketplace, in the center of the town. There was a big courtyard in the center of the town, and then old, it was a very, very old town and old-fashioned cobblestones, old houses, a bank and a church. A big, old, old Lutheran church that had once, I think, been Catholic. Most of those old Lutheran churches had been Catholic before the reformation. And so I remember that, and people were, then the sold different items. I remember once when I, my father made a sled for me, I went into a store and they had these tiny little bells to ring, and I wanted one of those little bells, a little copper bell. So I got that, but I don't know what I've done with it. So, it had just . . .

LEVINE: You mean, for your sled?

HALLGREN: Right, right. And so those are the things I remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences either with your father, with your mother, with either your sister or brother in Sweden, things that maybe, places you went together, or some happening that sticks in your mind from that period?

HALLGREN: I can't really remember too much.

LEVINE: What was your sister like?

HALLGREN: She was a quiet type of girl. I can't, she was seven years older, and I can't remember too much of us playing together or doing anything together. So that I can't tell you.

LEVINE: And your mother?

HALLGREN: But then . . .

LEVINE: Your mother, was she, do you remember either helping her do things, or . . .

HALLGREN: This was way back in Sweden when I was, you know. I don't remember much of that. She was a good homemaker. She, her place was in the home and she took care of the family. A very neat, clean woman. Quiet, a little on the stern side. We had to behave.

LEVINE: She was the disciplinarian?

HALLGREN: Yeah, I would say so. Yes, I would say so, right. And my father was a very kind man, too. I never heard any arguing between my parents. They loved each other in the family. And it was a closely-knit family, and we got along very nicely.

LEVINE: Now, you mentioned that your father wanted to come back, or your brother initiated it, and then your father thought perhaps he could make a better living here.

HALLGREN: Right.

LEVINE: Do you remember how you prepared to leave?

HALLGREN: I remember when he decided he wanted to come back to this country. I think that was 1922, if I remember correctly. He was nineteen, and he decided he wanted to come back because he had been to school here and he had learned, he had learned the cabinet-making trade in Quincy, and he couldn't find a job in Sölvesborg , so he decided, well, he'd like to come back. And I remember, uh, the day that he was going to leave. I told you we had a little organ. And he sat down at the organ, and he started to play the chords of this hymn "Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me." Well, as he played, he couldn't continue. He just put his head down and almost sobbed. Then we had to take him, we drove him down to the railroad station. I don't remember how we got there. Somebody had a horse and wagon or something. And, so we all went down to say goodbye to him at the

railroad station in Sölvesborg, and that was kind of a sad parting, my big brother. And, he got on the train, and took out his handkerchief. And the train had to go around the curve, and I saw my brother waving with his handkerchief, and then he dropped his handkerchief. And I said, "Oh, he dropped his handkerchief." And we were crying, and I guess he was crying. So then the train went around the curve, we didn't see him any more. Then he got here to Quincy, and then every now and then he'd send packages to us back in Sweden, and then we were there until 1924, and then we decided, my family decided they were going to come back.

LEVINE: Do you remember your preparation for leaving, your mother?

HALLGREN: All I remember there, too, was my father packing boxes and trunks. I still had about six or seven trunks up in the attic and down in my cellar, those American trucks, Swedish trunks that you'd pack, went on the steamer, big trunks. And I still have them. (laughs) And they've gone across the ocean many times.

LEVINE: Do you still have treasures that your mother and father brought from home?

HALLGREN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What kinds of things do you, do you have, or do you remember . . .

HALLGREN: Well, when my father, I think I told you my father was at sea for many years, and he brought souvenirs with him back home to my mother. He, like I have in my living room a samovar from, bought in Russia. I have an urn from Greece,

which happened to break during my, when I was baptized. Uh, mother had it on a table and my brother and a cousin were playing around and knocked it over and it was in pieces, but somebody put it together. I still have that urn on the mantelpiece. I have other things that my father picked up. Then, of course, Swedish things that they brought with them. I have an old spinning wheel that my father's grandmother had that I still had here. And that's been back and forth across the ocean several times. And...

LEVINE: Okay. So do you remember leaving your home? Did you then sell, did the family then sell the home that you had?

HALLGREN: Yes. They finally decided, so my brother said, he was in Quincy, established here with a job and wrote to my parents, "Why don't you come over here so we can be together?" I'd been in and out two Christmases and I don't want to spend another Christmas alone. By this time he was twenty-one. And, so he said, "But, Pa, you can get a job here as a cabinetmaker." So they decided, well, my father couldn't get any work in Sölvesborg, so he decided, "Okay, let's go." And then we packed. My parents, they packed. By this time I guess I was about almost nine. And, I went back to school, and . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember saying goodbye to your friends?

HALLGREN: No, that I don't remember. I have a picture sitting with the rest of the school class in front of the little schoolhouse with all the, the second graders and the schoolteacher. And then that's all, I can remember leaving. We did sell the

home. And then we went up to Göteborg and got on the boat. I don't remember any of the details, how we got there. I imagine we took the train from Sölvesborg up to Göteborg to get on the boat, but that I don't remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember any examinations before you left Sweden?

HALLGREN: I don't actually remember about myself, but my parents, from what I understood, they had to go through the consulate office, the American Consulate in Malmö, and they were all cleared to go, and they had to, they had to be examined by the doctor, and everything was supposed to be all right. They had passed, so that they could go, with their passports and all the documents and the papers and their health examinations and all.

LEVINE: Was there a family picture, a family photograph for the passport, do you recall?

HALLGREN: I don't have, I don't know what happened to those passports. I don't have those.

LEVINE: Then once you were aboard ship, do you remember any particulars about the voyage?

HALLGREN: (sighs) Well, I . . .

LEVINE: This was, the ships name?

HALLGREN: I think it was M.S. Stockholm. I'm not sure.

LEVINE: Okay.

HALLGREN: I remember that, I guess I remember I didn't feel too well. Somebody suggested you should eat lemons, so we ate lemons so that we wouldn't get seasick.  
(laughs) That's all I remember. And then I think it was on that trip, my sister and I got the mumps. And so we were in the sick bay there, the two of us, throwing pillows at each other.

LEVINE: This is your sister, your older sister.

HALLGREN: Yes. I just had one sister. She was seven years older. And I believe that was a trip that, yeah. Then we got to, to New York. I don't remember landing in New York.

LEVINE: So the mumps . . .

HALLGREN: Wait, excuse me, but we went third class. Most of the immigrants in that town, if they didn't have too much money. Whereas to save money, they'd go third class. Before then, they would go to Boston. Some of my relatives went through Boston. They didn't have to go to New York. But I don't know why they went to New York, but that's what they did. I don't know the reason why.

LEVINE: And had your mumps subsided by the time the ship landed?

HALLGREN: Yes, evidently. Hmm.

LEVINE: So do you remember coming into the New York Harbor?

HALLGREN: No, I don't remember that, no.

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LEVINE: But you do remember Ellis Island?

HALLGREN: Yes. That was the tragedy of the family then. We got to Ellis Island. I don't remember getting off the big ship, the M.S. Stockholm, to get over to Ellis Island, but I remember we were there. And we got in there, and I remember getting into the Great Hall, I guess they called it.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: What did it look like?

HALLGREN: It was huge to my eyes. Uh, I can remember we were ushered into a smaller room first, and we were called, I remember they called my sister's name, and she went. But in the beginning there we were separated. Mother and I were separated, got into one room. My father, we didn't know what happened to him. He got sent off to another section. And then my sister, they took her into another section. We didn't know what happened to her. And it was about this third day after that, that Mother and I sat out in the balcony looking out at the Statue of Liberty with iron bars around the balcony. And then we looked further down and here was some more balconies, and here my sister was standing in back of one balcony with iron bars, and my father up above her in the other balcony. And we, we couldn't do, we just yelled to each other and waved. My sister thought that we had gone through to Boston and left her there, and she had

been crying for three days. She didn't know what happened to us. We were just separated. And then we were taken to the hospital, and first of all my mother and I were told to get into a bathtub. The bathtub was filthy dirty, and my mother, she balked at going in. So the attendant, she said, "You've got to go." So my mother and I got into this dirty bathtub to take a bath, and then, well, they were such a mess. There was such a mix-up of fear. A lot of people all over the place, and right now I'm kind of confused just as to what happened. But I remember certain things at Ellis Island. I remember sitting in the Big Hall one day, and my father was, first of all, after they had been to the hospital, they took all kinds of tests on them. And, my father said to one of the doctors, "I'm not sick." The doctor said, "Well, you'll be sick before you get out of here," he said to him. And they took all kinds of tests, blood tests, and on my mother, too. So, but my father and my mother, they were declared healthy so that they could go through, but they found fault with my sister, first with her eyes. And so they took her to the hospital for an examination. And then finally they declared her feeble-minded.

LEVINE: Do you know the basis for that declaration on that part, why they declared her feeble-minded?

HALLGREN: Well, I, she had gone to school in Quincy four years. She, from what I could understand, she was a little slow in learning. Now, whether it, my mother was pregnant way back in 1908 with my sister, over in Sweden, lightning struck the house and the bolt went through, and my father, my mother was sitting in one

room, and the bolt struck the house, and passed right in front of where my mother was sitting and out the door of the other end of the room. And so my mother got such a shock she couldn't talk for two or three hours after that. So I don't know to this day just what happened. My sister could not talk till she was about two, three years old, but she got along all right, and she went to school four years in Quincy, she learned to write, learned to read. And even then, when she came back to Sweden, she did not go to school in Sweden, but she learned by herself to write in Swedish and read in Swedish, so I don't know what the degree of feeble-mindedness was.

LEVINE: Did the family think that she was, that there was some problem with her abilities before this experience at Ellis Island?

HALLGREN: I don't understand, I really don't know. But they, they thought that the shock of Ellis Island made her worse.

LEVINE: Oh. All the confusion and . . .

HALLGREN: The confusion and the shock of being there and being treated roughly. She was fifteen then, and had never been away from her parents, and she cried, thinking that we were in Boston, in Quincy, and she was left there by herself. She cried night and day after she found where we were, but then we met, we could get together at mealtime, sit and eat our meals together in the big hall there, in the dining room. And then a couple of times a week we were, I think we were allowed out in the yard where we could play, the women, they sat and

embroidered, and they also took my sister to test her in different things. Tested her in games, and arithmetic. But they just declared her feeble-minded, and there was nothing they could do about it. And my parents, I stayed there for two weeks. My brother was in Quincy. I, after two weeks my brother came, they couldn't keep me because I was born in America. So my brother came and took me out of there.

LEVINE: Where was your mother and father for those two weeks?

HALLGREN: They were there at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Ellis Island.

HALLGREN: We were all there. And then they kept my parents and my sister five more weeks. Seven weeks altogether they were kept at Ellis Island. In the meantime, they were told to write to Washington to see what they could do. And my brother here in Quincy and the relatives here in Quincy, they did all they could. They even wrote to President Coolidge, who was president at the time, and to the congressmen, they could help them get them out of there. And the Swedish pastor in New York went to visit them at Ellis Island. Then, so then they knew that they couldn't keep me there, where I was born here, and so then after two weeks the pastor told my parents, "Why don't you let Linnea go to Quincy." They didn't know what to do. So they said, "Okay." But they said to me, my mother said to me, "Well, it's going to perhaps be a long time." I wanted to come to Quincy. I wanted, I loved my brother, I wanted to come to Quincy.

And, so my mother said to me, "It'll be a long time before you might see us, see me again, see us again." So I had said, I said, well, "When Conrad, when I grow up, Conrad and I will come visit you, back in Sweden." I took, I had a little ring that my parents bought for me in Boston with a little red stone. I took it off my finger and gave it to my mother, and I said, "Here, take this and remember me by it." And then, so one of the guards said, well, my mother, my parents said, well, "Can we talk a while to our children before they leave, just say goodbye, that's all?" So we had to rush out, I held my brother's hand and I rushed out where it said Exit for New York, and rode the train with him up to Boston.

LEVINE: Did your sister tell you anything about the treatment she was receiving? Was she being tested this entire time for, in different ways?

HALLGREN: In different ways. I really don't know all the details, but, of course, she didn't talk much about it anyway. She, then it was, it was a sad thing. But, so, nothing could be done. So finally, the day came, the officials there, they just made up their mind, "Okay, they're going to be deported." So, they did, they told them to get ready one day, go and get their baggage, and they brought them down to the pier. They were going to take the M.S. Stockholm back to Sweden. And then by the time, so then one of the guards told them, "Well, don't leave now." Somebody else, they found out that they hadn't left. So they rushed them off down to the pier in an awful hurry. By that time, the ship was out in the harbor, in the Hudson River. They stopped the ship. They transported my parents and the luggage out to the ship. They threw a ladder rope, a rope ladder down the

side of the ship, and all three of them had to crawl up the side of the ship with a policeman with a revolver in back of them to make sure they got on the ship. They practically collapsed, all three of them, when they got on the ship. And, of course, then, then they got back to Stock--, uh, to Copenhagen, Göteborg, they didn't have a place to go. They had sold their home when they got back to Sweden. There was, my mother had to go to the doctor immediately on board ship. She had to lay on, she was sick all the way across and back, crossing over with heartache and physical problems and everything else. And then when they finally, there was one crewmember who knew of an apartment for rent in Göteborg, and so when they got there they were able to rent this apartment, and they got, they stayed there two years. My father got a job in Göteborg, and then during the time they were there, we corresponded, of course. And then we, then in, so they, the officials in Ellis Island, they said to my parents, in fact, there was a talk that my mother should come, be, come through, and my father go back with my sister. But, well, so, but then they decided, but that never was materialized. So then they had said to them, "Try again in two years." Well, so they stayed in Göteborg two years, and then they said, well, okay, they had the two kids over here, and they were over there. And, so they decided, "Well, okay, let's try again. Let's go to Boston this time." So my father said, "Well, I'll go first. In case something else should happen, I'll be alone and you," my mother, and Hildegard, "you come a month after." So my father, he came sailing through to Boston, fine, so we were three here, my father and my brother. And in another month my sister and my mother were ready to sail. Well, three days before my, they were ready to sail, my sister said, "I'm not going. You go.

Linnea needs you. I'm staying here." Well, by this time she had a real collapse, a real nervous breakdown three days before they were going to leave. My mother didn't know what to do, so she had to call the doctor, and they had to put her into a hospital. And my mother had to leave her there, her other daughter, in Sweden, to come over here to the rest of the family, my father and my brother and me. And then, so then my sister stayed there, and she was institutionalized. And, she died in 1976. And then after the Second World War, we decided, again, we were going to go back to Sweden, on account of my sister. Because we were corres--, she could correspond with us, we corresponded, but it was an awful tragedy, especially for my poor mother who had a daughter over there, and my father, who had a daughter over there they couldn't do anything about. And then the Second World War, and, we were working here. I was working, and my brother was working, my father was working, and so then we went back again as a family, but we only stayed a year. And then from then on it was just back and forth. And then finally I went back and I stayed eighteen years from 1950, from '51 to 1970 or approximately that year, during that time.

LEVINE: What, how did the family think or talk about the whole experience of . . .

HALLGREN: They didn't. We didn't talk too much about it. The, I remember when they did come back in 1926 they did, I listened to some of the things that they said, and what they thought. But then when they had, when they were sent back in 1924 to Göteborg, my mother sat and wrote a big, long letter to my brother about all the details, everything that went on from the day one that they got there until the

end.

LEVINE: And that, and that manuscript will be on file.

HALLGREN: Yes.

LEVINE: At Ellis Island.

HALLGREN: That's right. It was written in Swedish, and it was published in the Swedish-American newspaper here. I think the publishing house was in Worcester at that time, now they're in New York. It's called Sviva [PH]. And they published the whole letter. And I had translated that into English. And it gives a good story about everything that went on, everything they went through at Ellis Island, what they did, what the doctors did to them and what they said to them, and everything that happened.

LEVINE: Excuse me. Did, can you think about how, what your family said about it, or how it settled with them as time went on?

HALLGREN: They never forgot. It was, it's been upsetting. All my life I've felt that it was a tragedy and, of course, back in those days, feeble-mindedness, that was something to be ashamed of. You didn't talk about it. You didn't want to mention it. Now it's a little more open. It was kind of a shame in the family if anything like that happened. So that's been kind of the hard thing for me to accept. I have accepted it now. Now I'm talking about it. Now I just looked up the word feeble-mindedness in the dictionary, and I found that it doesn't, they

don't, psychologically they don't use that word any more. It's called, what was it now, sub-normal intelligence, I think is what it said in the dictionary. So it's been hard, and then being separated and back and forth, and all these, and then we've gone back and forth so many times, too. And the separations and the tears of saying goodbye to family members.

LEVINE: Does this color your family's idea about America, about the United States, the treatment?

HALLGREN: No. They became, they later became American citizens, and they liked America. This was home to them, and we established ourselves in Quincy. And, no, that's fine. And we had a lot of friends.

LEVINE: How about you? Did you, how was life for you with your brother Conrad during this period when your mother, father and sister were gone back to Sweden?

HALLGREN: Well, he, this was during the time that he took me out of Ellis Island during those couple of years that I was here. First I lived with an aunt and uncle, but then they moved away from Quincy. Then I lived with another, a lady who was a widow, and she had grown children. I stayed with them the rest of the time. I went to school, and I started school in two or three different schools during that period of time. And so . . .

LEVINE: What was life like for you?

HALLGREN: Well, I felt, I think I, of course, I was busy going to school. But I did, and then, of course, I corresponded with my parents. My mother, my parents, my father wrote to me, and I wrote back to them. And during those two years I was here by myself. And my brother came to visit me quite often. So, and those people, too, were churchgoers, so they always made sure that I went to church on Sunday mornings and to Sunday school, and that's where I had most of my friends.

LEVINE: And do you remember when your father returned before your mother returned?

HALLGREN: Oh, yes, yes. And I was living with this widow, and I remember meeting him. And then, in the meantime, my brother had rented an apartment in Quincy for us to live in.

LEVINE: So it was your brother, your father and you?

HALLGREN: Yes. And then a month later my mother came. So then, after that, we were together as a family, but my sister was left in Sweden. And then my mother went over there to visit her every now and then, just on a trip back and forth, and we sent packages to her every Christmas, every birthday. And we kept up corresponding with her. And . . .

LEVINE: Was it the family's idea that this institutionalization had been brought about by the trauma?

HALLGREN: Yes.

LEVINE: Of going . . .

HALLGREN: They had, they believed that, at the age of fifteen. And then, of course, at the same time, leaving to go back to Sweden again, and she had gone to school here and learned the English language, and got back to Sweden, and then she didn't go back to school over there. So there was a lot of confusion there for a fifteen-year-old girl, too.

LEVINE: Did you see your sister when you were in Sweden after, when she was in the institution?

HALLGREN: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Then after, after the Second World War, that's when we went back. We took the first ship back after the war. And we stayed there for a year. Then I saw her then, and then after, then after that we were going to, then I decided, "Okay." Then my brother, Conrad, he met a Swedish girl during that year. This was in 1946 to '47, and she came over here, and they got married. So, but then the year after that, then my father and mother, they said, "Okay, let's go again." So I went with them. Then I got up to, then they bought another little house down in Sölvesborg, in the Sölvesborg area, and they retired there. And then I went up to Stockholm and found myself a job and stayed there for about seventeen-and-a-half years, worked for GM in Stockholm. And, so life has been, it's been a very interesting life. But it's, there's been a lot of sadness, a lot of hellos and goodbyes, back and forth. And during those seventeen-and-a-half years, like I say, I had, I had a month's vacation, and then I came over

several times on charter flights, inexpensive charter flights, and stayed with my brother and his wife for part of that time. I flew back and forth. So that's . . .

LEVINE: Your sister's condition, was it, when she remained in the institution, was it because she was diagnosed as being underdeveloped intellectually, or was it then an emotional . . .

HALLGREN: No, intellectually. One doctor who had examined her said that she had the mind of an eight-year-old. But now when I think of, look at Ted Kennedy's, at the Kennedy family. They have a sister, or, in the same situation. So now I don't mind talking about it. I did before. It was a shame on the family to have somebody who was sub-normal intelligently. But life has gone on. She died in 1976, and my mother and father and my sister, they're all three buried there in their home parish. And . . .

LEVINE: What made you decide to stay in this country as compared to going to Sweden?

HALLGREN: Well, all the time that I lived over there, I felt like a foreigner. It's strange. And my Swedish wasn't all that perfect, after I had been, I was educated. Well, I just went through high school in this country, but I just felt as though I belong in the States. I was born here, so I belong here. So then in 1970, after my mother died, I gave up my job at GM and I just packed in all my stuff, and I came back and bought this little house, and here I am, and that's twenty-five years ago.

LEVINE: Could you say what, how you think of yourself as far as your Swedish aspect?

HALLGREN: When I'm over here, I long back to Sweden. When I'm over there, I long back to America. That's, I worked together with one lady who was in the same situation. Not through Ellis Island, but her family back and forth across the Atlantic. She says, "You know, the Swedes, they can't make up their mind where they want to be. The Italians, when they go to America they stay there, but not the Swedes. They ought to have an island in the middle of the ocean for the Swedes. They can't decide where they want to be." And that's the way it is. And over here I just long back to Sweden. When I'm over there, I just want to get back home here. It's strange. But now I'm alone. My brother died thirty years ago. Parents, my sister are buried over there, so here I am.

LEVINE: Do you think you have certain qualities that you would consider Swedish?

HALLGREN: Oh, very much so.

LEVINE: What are they?

HALLGREN: Well, it's the language, too, that I know. And my upbringing. Everything, all my little knickknacks. I have so many Swedish things. I have my relatives over there. I call them up every now and then, relatives and friends. And friends over there in Stockholm, they've been coming every five years to stay with me, here a family. And every time I go to Sweden, I stay at their house. And they have cars, and they chauffeur me around. And, so, I have a nice, a nice, um, what do I want to say now? I get along, relationship with these people over there.

LEVINE: How about the upbringing part? Is there something about Swedish upbringing that's specific?

HALLGREN: Well, it was a, it was a, my parents were quite, very religious. They went by the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not do this, and thou shalt not do that, and that was my upbringing. And, don't do this and don't do that, and go to church, which I appreciated. And I admire my parents, and I, I really am thankful for the parents that I had, to give me an upbringing like that. And my, and they were decent people, hardworking. They didn't, in those days my father was unemployed for four years during the Depression. Didn't have any unemployment or any welfare. We got along, and they pulled their own way. My father made ship models. I have some here in my home. And he, that was his hobby. And he was, somebody said that, "You're quite an artist." And, so, I had, I had a strict upbringing, but still not overly strict. I've always been kind of shy anyway, and sort of kept in the background, but I got along all right in my jobs. And. . .

LEVINE: Do you think that even though your home base is here and you were born here, that there are ways that you maintain that are of Swedish origin? Are there things that you do or ways that you perceive . . .

HALLGREN: Well, now, here, on the Cape I've met quite a few Swedish people. Well, then we get together and we talk Swedish. And that's, that's been kind of nice to have these Swedish connections. In that way, I still have a connection with Sweden. But as far as Ellis Island is concerned, that's been kind of blank all these years,

until now when I've heard all, you know, all the talk about Ellis Island being in and getting to be a museum. And now I've started lately to think about it, and so I've gotten together all these paper clippings that I've had since 1924 that I thought, "Well, I've got to do something about this." So that's why I contacted Mr. Rutberg at Ellis Island when I read the article in the New (?) about him. So I sent him a couple of the copies of the clippings that I had, so here you are interviewing me. (laughs )

LEVINE: How does it feel now that you, that you're sort of re-looking at a chapter that wasn't a very pleasant one in your background?

HALLGREN: Well, it's one of those things that, well, it happened, and there's nothing you can do about it. It's one of the things that you had to go through in life, and I've gone through it, and my family went through it, with God's help. I'm very religious, and I still am. I go to church every Sunday. I try. And that has given us strength. And I've noticed it from, on the death of my parents, up to the very end, they held onto their belief, and I still have that belief that the Lord is with me.

LEVINE: I think that's a wonderful place to end this interview. I want to thank you so much.

HALLGREN: Oh, you're welcome.

LEVINE: It was a very interesting, well-told story.

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HALLGREN: Well, thank you.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine, and I'm signing off now. It's July 4, 1995. Linnea Hallgren has been the person whose story has just . . . ( tape ends abruptly )