

**EI-690**

**EMELY JOHANSEN ANDERSEN**

**BIRTH DATE: OCTOBER 6, 1905**

**INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 25, 1995**

**RUNNING TIME: 57:10**

**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: NORWEGIAN CHRISTIAN HOME  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST,  
JR., 12/1998**

**NORWAY, 1925**

**AGE 20**

**SHIP: "THE STAVANGERFJORD"**

**PORT: OSLO**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **TONBERG**
- **US RESIDENCE: BROOKLYN, SUNSET PARK**

**ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE:** There is confusion during this interview concerning Mrs. Andersen's year of arrival in the United States and her age when she arrived. Based on information given by Mrs. Andersen as well as information provided by the nursing home, 1925 is probably her correct year of arrival and age 20 is her correct age at arrival. Kari Janusz, the social services director at the Norwegian Christian Home, is also present during the interview.

**Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 12/4/1998**

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is October 25th, 1995. I'm at the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Care Center with Emely Andersen. Mrs. Andersen came from Norway in 1920 [sic, probably 1925]. She was twenty years old when she came. Peter Hom is running the recording equipment. And Kari, and I'm, and her last name is Janusz, spelled J-A-N-U-S-Z, first name in K-A-R-I, who is the social services person here is also present. Mrs. Andersen, can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

ANDERSEN: October 6th, 1905.

SIGRIST: And where in Norway were you born?

ANDERSEN: In Norway's oldest town, Tonsberg.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ANDERSEN: T, and they have an initial that you don't have here, "O" (she pronounces "urh"), "O." That's an "O" with a dot, (correcting herself) a cross...(she gestures)

SIGRIST: A little mark over it?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah, no, mark across. (she gestures)

SIGRIST: Across the "O."

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So T-O with a cross...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...uh huh, and that's the whole name of the town?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: T-O, To...

ANDERSEN: Tonsberg

SIGRIST: Spell the rest of the...

ANDERSEN: T-O-N-B-E-R-G. [sic, Tonsberg]

SIGRIST: Thank you. Where in Norway is that town?

ANDERSEN: It's about five hours with the train from Oslo, from the capital.

SIGRIST: Five hours from Oslo.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: As a little girl (he clears his throat), what do you remember about that town?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Well, they had like a little tower there that they call "the Castle" and we used to go up there and admire that. That was a round thing. I don't know what, it was old, old building like a tower.

SIGRIST: And as children you went and played there.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the house that you grew up in?

ANDERSEN: Well, it was on the outskirts[s] of the town, a very nice neighborhood. My mother was a widow with five children, and she lost one so she brought up four children by herself. And she had a store. And we struggled. We had to work when we were, I had to chip in. She had the store and I had to chip in with the store.

SIGRIST: What do you mean by that?

ANDERSEN: Worked there when I, when I wasn't in school.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you lived in, just describe what it looked like?

ANDERSEN: Well, I thought it was a beautiful house. It as like a villa. Do you know what a villa is? And we had a lot of fun there.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the house was made out of?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Wood.

SIGRIST: And how many rooms did it have?

ANDERSEN: Uh, three, six, nine, well, there was about twelve rooms.

SIGRIST: So, it's a big house.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. But they rented out some of it.

SIGRIST: And, and who rented the rooms?

ANDERSEN: One lady that had a husband going to sea. She had three rooms, I remember. And the other one was, uh, working for, they had a shoe factory in Norway, and this couple were deaf and dumb and they had a little girl that was about five years old. And we were scared to play with her because the father would run after us (she laughs) if anything happened to the girl. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did anything ever happen?

ANDERSEN: No, (she laughs) because we were so scared of him. (they laugh)  
He was so (microphone disturbance) legs. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: So as children, you were allowed to, to speak to the other people?

ANDERSEN: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Do you remember what color the house was painted?

ANDERSEN: White.

SIGRIST: And does a piece of furniture stick out in your mind from that house?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) They had some plush furniture in the living room that was very fancy. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to go into the living room?

ANDERSEN: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the kitchen in the house for me?

ANDERSEN: There was a big kitchen and we ate there all the time.

SIGRIST: What, what was in the kitchen?

ANDERSEN: Table and chairs. I think that's about all. And cupboards all around that you have dishes and stuff.

SIGRIST: How, (he clears his throat), excuse me, how was the food prepared?

ANDERSEN: Kitchen stove.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: So there was a stove in the kitchen, too.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. And we had gas to turn on when you cooked.

SIGRIST: So you had a gas stove.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That would have been quite modern for that time.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I guess so.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How was the house lit? How did you light...

ANDERSEN: Electricity.

SIGRIST: You had electricity in the house.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have running water in the house?

ANDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you have a bathroom in the house?

ANDERSEN: No. We had...

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Where was the bathroom?

ANDERSEN: We only had a toilet. We had to go out and we were so scared as children. One had to stand on the stoop (she laughs) when we went to the bathroom. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How did you heat the house?

ANDERSEN: Coal stove.

SIGRIST: And where was that?

ANDERSEN: In the kitchen.

SIGRIST: So you had a gas stove in the kitchen...

ANDERSEN: No, no, I don't think we had that. We had, must have had a, the coal stove.

SIGRIST: It was probably coal.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh huh, yeah.

ANDERSEN: That's the only heating we had.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Was it cold where you lived?

ANDERSEN: Oh, yeah, sometimes it was cold.

SIGRIST: Is there, is there a story that you like to tell about a particularly cold winter or a snowstorm that sticks out in your mind from your childhood?

ANDERSEN: Oh, I love the snow. I used to have, go skiing and skating and sleigh riding. Oh, I used to, I was a tomboy. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Describe yourself to me as a little girl. You said you were a tomboy. What were some of the things you enjoyed doing?

ANDERSEN: O, I used to play with the boys. They play rough. I didn't have no girlfriends. I used to play with the boys all the time because I loved the snow and I loved to rough in it.

SIGRIST: How did the boys accept you as a, as a girl who wanted to play with them?

ANDERSEN: Oh, I had good boyfriends, (she laughs) especially one that lived on the corner. His name was Rolf. Him and I were good company together. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: You started telling me a little bit about your mother. What was her name?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: My mother's name was Magdaliana [ph].

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

ANDERSEN: M-A-G-D-A-L-E [sic], Magdaliana [ph].

SIGRIST: Magda...

ANDERSEN: 'liana.

SIGRIST: So it would be M-A-G-D, Magda, D-A...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Magda...

ANDERSEN: Yeah, 'liana.

SIGRIST: 'Liana. And what was her married name, your maiden name before you were married?

ANDERSEN: What's her name?

SIGRIST: Well, what was her married name, which would be your maiden name?

ANDERSEN: Johansen.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

- SIGRIST: And can you spell that, please?
- ANDERSEN: J-O-H-A-N-S-E-N.
- SIGRIST: Okay. That would have been your father's last name.
- ANDERSEN: Yeah.
- SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?
- ANDERSEN: Olsen, O-L-S-E-N.
- SIGRIST: Thank you. Tell me a little bit about your mother's personality. What was she like as a person?
- ANDERSEN: Very happy person, laughed a lot. She was, I thought she was beautiful.
- SIGRIST: Can you describe for me in words what she looked like? (Mrs. Andersen gestures to a nearby photograph of her mother) Yes, that's a photo but we're just recording your voice. Can you describe for me in words what she looked like?
- ANDERSEN: Well, I, I always thought my mother was pretty because she was always happy.
- SIGRIST: Tell me about her, her body. How tall was she?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Oh, I would say about five [feet] four [inches] or something like that.

SIGRIST: And tell me about her hair.

ANDERSEN: She had brown hair, all of it, uh, (voices can be heard in the background) not blonde exactly but there was (?) blonde.

SIGRIST: Like a light brown.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And how did she wear it when you were a little girl?

ANDERSEN: She had it, she had long hair fixed like this (she gestures) up on the side and then up on the top. (she gestures)

SIGRIST: So her hair was, was combed up and then knotted in...

ANDERSEN: Knot on the top.

SIGRIST: Knotted on the...

ANDERSEN: Not, not on the back but on the top.

SIGRIST: But on the top.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: And what were some of the things that your mother did around the house? What were her responsibilities around the house?

ANDERSEN: Well, she, I don't think she did much around the house because she had the store underneath the house. And she had girls about fourteen that did all the housework.

SIGRIST: Of course, this is a big house to take care of.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. You mentioned that your mother was a widow.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father?

ANDERSEN: He died when I was seven years old.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you do remember him, then.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, yeah. What was his name?

ANDERSEN: Karl Johann.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about your dad?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: I remember he used to tease me a lot. I used to stand between his knees and he used to tease me and he used to, because I was the only girl between two boys. But after that they got two more girls, but I was the only one, and he used to tease me a lot. And I, I love him. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What was he teasing you about?

ANDERSEN: Oh, I don't know. I can't remember that. (she pauses) I really can't remember but he used to tease me and I loved it.

SIGRIST: He was just having fun with you.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like?

ANDERSEN: He was more serious.

SIGRIST: Do, do you have a story about him being more serious, that you like to tell? What is it that you remember about his seriousness?

ANDERSEN: That's about the only thing I remember. I was standing between his legs and he used to tease me. That's about the only thing I can remember.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: They worked in the same, a big, uh, meat store in town. That's how they met. That was the biggest meat store where they sold nothing but meat.

SIGRIST: And, uh, so they were both from this town? Were they born and brought up in this town?

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ANDERSEN: He was, I think, but she was, come from the country from an island.

SIGRIST: From an island?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, that they call Aaosund.

SIGRIST: Oh, dear. Can you spell that?

ANDERSEN: Double A-O, that one...

SIGRIST: The "O" with the line through it.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, S-U-N-D.

SIGRIST: Thank you. How did your father die?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Heart's failure. I remember the night he died. My mother was hollering up to the people that lived upstairs, hollering for them. She says, "Father is," she mentioned him by name, he had died. She found him dead in the morning and she hollered for help from the people that lived upstairs. And they came down and that's all I remember. And I was scared. He was laying on the floor.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of what happened afterwards, like the, the funeral or the wake or anything like that?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I remember the funeral.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

ANDERSEN: We were all marching behind the funeral car. There wasn't too far to the graveyard so we were all walking behind it. And I was so proud because I had the, I could be in the funeral because it the two small children that couldn't go. They were home.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you had to wear when you marched...

ANDERSEN: A black dress, all black.

SIGRIST: So even as a small child they put you into black.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. Can you tell me a little bit about what life was

EI-690/ANDERSEN

like at home immediately after your father died? How, how did your mother adjust to the situation?

ANDERSEN: (Kari Janusz coughs off mike) Well, it was about the same. She was in the store and we had a young girl upstairs to mind us. I remember that.

SIGRIST: I didn't ask you before, what did they sell in the store? What, what kind of a store was this?

ANDERSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: What kind of a store?

ANDERSEN: A grocery store.

SIGRIST: A grocery store.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. They sold a little bit of everything. Like a regular, but it isn't like it is now.

SIGRIST: But it was mostly that food they were selling?

ANDERSEN: Yeah. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did your mother remarry at a certain point?

ANDERSEN: No.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: No. You mentioned that you had brothers and sisters. Can you name them all for me?

ANDERSEN: Uh, my oldest brother was Erling, E-R-L-I-N-G. Then it was me. My name was Emely. And my younger brother was Haakon, like the king of Norway (she laughs), H-A-A-K-O-N. And my youngest sister was Ebba. But we had one sister that died of diphtheria. She was before the youngest one.

SIGRIST: Before Ebba?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is Ebba spelled E-B-B-A.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Two "B"s. What was the name of the sister who died?

ANDERSEN: Mimi.

SIGRIST: M-I-M-I, Mimi? What do you remember about that?

ANDERSEN: She was a very happy little thing and I thought that was, went to the hospital. That was, when we were all so sick they had the flu. We thought we had the flu. We were very sick, all of us. And then Mimi couldn't breath and they called the doctor and he had to take her to

EI-690/ANDERSEN

the hospital. They found out she had croup, diphtheria. And we were, she was, what do you call it, isolated. We were standing outside the window, looked at her. And I remember she was sitting on the potty. My mother and I were standing in the window looking at her. And she was sitting on the potty. And Mom says, "Does it hurt, Mimi?" "Oh, jah, Mama, it hurts so much." And that was the last I saw her.

SIGRIST: How old was she when she died?

ANDERSEN: Seven.

SIGRIST: So she was quite young.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. You mentioned that the other children were sick also.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You were sick?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did they, how did they take care of you?

ANDERSEN: That girl did, the young...

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: But I mean in terms of, of medicine or doctors. How did they...

ANDERSEN: Well, the doctor came to the house once and he diagnosed it, that it was a flu we had or influenza they call it at that time. And that's all he was there. But, of course, it was very serious with Mimi. We didn't know it.

SIGRIST: Was that a common happening at that time? Did, did children die young at this time?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah. I remember one lady that lived in the next block, you know, and they had one girl and her name was Runhill [ph]. And she died and the mother went crazy. Boy, I felt so sorry for her because she only had the one. There wasn't too much doctoring or being taken care of at that time.

SIGRIST: Had your father died when Mimi died?

ANDERSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: He, he had been dead already.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. So this is a double blow for your mother.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. Mother used to say that it was like nothing when the father died but comparing to a mother loses child. She felt that terrible. I

EI-690/ANDERSEN

know my mother was terrible sad.

SIGRIST: After your mother lost Mimi, did she treat any of you any differently?

ANDERSEN: No, we were all treated equal. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: I thought maybe she might become more over-protective of the children in some ways.

ANDERSEN: No, not exactly, no. Maybe she was but I, I didn't realize it.

SIGRIST: You were out playing with the boys in the snow.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Tell me about, were there ways that your mother made medicine at home? Were there home remedies that your mother made that you remember as a child?

ANDERSEN: Aspirin. (she laughs) Aspirin. If anything was wrong with us, we got aspirins. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What about, did she make anything to, to take care of different illnesses that you can remember?

ANDERSEN: We had some kind of cough medicine that she made, mixed with honey that I know. When we coughed, we took a sip of that. (she laughs)

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about school in Norway. Did you attend school?

ANDERSEN: I went to, started school when I was six. I was a year younger than usual. They usually start at seven but I started at six. I don't know why, if I was bright or something like that. So I was out of school when I was thirteen and I couldn't be confirmed before I was fourteen. So I had to wait a whole year before I could be confirmed but I wanted to go another class which they go eight years school. That was higher, a little higher education but Mother couldn't afford it so I had to go to work.

SIGRIST: And what, what sticks out in your mind about the years when you were in school? What...

ANDERSEN: They were happy years.

SIGRIST: Yes. What did you enjoy about school?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) The first five years we went to smaller school and then we went up to a higher, what they called (Norwegian), like I told you about. There was a school built up there and that was higher education, from then up, the fifth year and up to seventh grade. I went up there. And you can go out from the fifth grade into what they call a (midi?) school but my mother couldn't afford that school.

SIGRIST: And that's when you went to work, waiting to be confirmed.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Yeah. And I wanted so badly to go there because all my cousins went there but I couldn't so that was it.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject in school when you went?

ANDERSEN: I think arithmetic.

SIGRIST: You were good at arithmetic.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did that talent come in handy working in the store?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How, how, when you worked in the store, did you have a, something that, that added figures for you or did you have to do it yourself?

ANDERSEN: You had to do it, where they had... (she laughs)

SIGRIST: No cash registers then.

ANDERSEN: Not at all. (they laugh) You had a drawer you pulled out and put the money in it.

SIGRIST: What religion were you in Norway?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Lutheran.

SIGRIST: Lutheran.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how did you practice your religion in Norway?

ANDERSEN: We went to Sunday school. I think we went to Sunday school on Saturday and Sunday.

SIGRIST: And were there ways that you practiced your religion at home?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, we said an evening prayer.

SIGRIST: Do you remember that evening prayer in Norwegian?

ANDERSEN: We say, we used to say a prayer before we went, went to eat. (she pauses, then begins to pray in Norwegian) I can't remember the evening prayer but I remember what we said before we ate. (she prays in Norwegian).

SIGRIST: Thank you. What does that mean?

ANDERSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: Translate that for me.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) (Norwegian) We go to the table. We eat and drink (Norwegian) with your word. God, we praise (Norwegian), name. Now I'm blank. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Okay, that was great. (they laugh) Was your mother a religious person?

ANDERSEN: I think she was. She was always a happy person.

SIGRIST: And, and did that happiness also, I mean, was she happy about her religion, too? Was that an important part of her life?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how you celebrated an important religious holiday, Christmas or Easter or whatever was an important holiday for your family?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, it was but I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Well, let's try Christmas. What, what do you remember about celebrating Christmas in Norway?

ANDERSEN: The tree. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Where did the tree come from?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: From the woods. You used to go out and pick it. (she laughs) We didn't buy it so we went out in the woods and picked it and cut it down. Us kids had to do that.

SIGRIST: Yes. And you cut it down and then what did you do with it?

ANDERSEN: We bring it, drag it home.

SIGRIST: And, and was there a, was there a certain in the house that you put the tree up?

ANDERSEN: We had it in the living, parlor, living room.

SIGRIST: This was with the green plush furniture.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Yeah. And how did you decorate it?

ANDERSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: How did you decorate the tree?

ANDERSEN: With handmade stuff. We had handmade, things that we made, baskets that they put nuts and raisins in that we hang on the Christmas tree. Ah, all that was a big doings. The only thing that we had that we kept from year to year was shiny stuff that we wrapped all around it. That was the only thing we kept. The other

EI-690/ANDERSEN

stuff was handmade.

SIGRIST: So every year you would make new things for the tree.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And were presents exchanged?

ANDERSEN: Yes. We got clothes. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Is there something that you remember specifically getting for Christmas?

ANDERSEN: Well, I remember one year I got a doll. Oh, I didn't play with it but I, I got it. And my two sisters always got dolls and I didn't but that year I got a doll, a beautiful doll. And I put it in the buffet there instead. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Why didn't you play with it?

ANDERSEN: Because I thought it was too fancy. It had to be saved. (she laughs)

END OF SIDE ONE

EI-690/ANDERSEN

BEGIN SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Were there special songs that were sung at Christmas time?

ANDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of them?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) My memory is lacking.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Okay. What, Christmas was important. Were there any other holidays that were important to the family?

ANDERSEN: I remember New Year. The used to blow horns and make a lot of noise. And we used to, used to be, and I remember Halloween because we used to make all kinds of trick, tricks on people. We used to tie a string from their window and used to, used to put some stuff on that, made loud (she gently shrieks) like this. (she laughs) I don't know, don't know what they call that. They made wildly noise. And they opened the window and looked and they couldn't see anything. And then you hide and then as soon as they close the window. (again she gently shrieks and then laughs)

SIGRIST: You were a devilish little girl, weren't you.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: I think so. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: When you were growing up, what did you know about America?

ANDERSEN: I remember a couple came and lived on the same block as us. They had two kids. They came from New York but she couldn't take the climate here. He was a tugboat skipper. I remember that.

SIGRIST: A tugboat skipper?

ANDERSEN: Yeah. And she couldn't take the climate so she brought the kids home and they had such a fancy name. One was Roy and the other one was Diane. And that's what I was going to call my kids when I got them.  
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Roy and Diane.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. But I never got any, so...(she laughs) But that I remember very well.

SIGRIST: And so these people represented something to you? They...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That's what you thought America was like.

ANDERSEN: Was like, yeah.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Had any of your family gone to America?

ANDERSEN: I think some of my uncles were but they, I think they went out west.  
On my mother's side, they, that was on my mother's side.

SIGRIST: Well, what was it that made you want to come to America?

ANDERSEN: My two brothers was there.

SIGRIST: Oh, so your brothers had come.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, they were here, yeah.

SIGRIST: When did they come to America?

ANDERSEN: It must have been about four years before we came, I think. And then Mother sold her store. I remember she got ten thousand crowns for it. And that money she used to bring my sister and I over.

SIGRIST: So your mother, she sold the store and she took the money and sent you and your sister to America.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, and her also.

SIGRIST: Oh, and she went too..

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Yeah, she went, yeah.

SIGRIST: So, so it was Mom and...

ANDERSEN: Ebba.

SIGRIST: Ebba, Ebba...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and Emely.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You. Why did, why did your mother want to go to America?

ANDERSEN: It was bad times on, in Norway at that time.

SIGRIST: What was bad about it?

ANDERSEN: You couldn't get a job. There was depression, 1930. It was depression. Norway, in America and all over.

SIGRIST: Where did your brothers go when they came to the United States?

ANDERSEN: They were in New York.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: They came to New York.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what were they doing for work?

ANDERSEN: I think my husband (correcting herself), my oldest brother was working in a hospital. My younger brother, he was more of a rascal. But he was driving the ambulance.

SIGRIST: Were they writing to your mother when they got here?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, we, we came to them.

SIGRIST: But, but before you came, what were they saying about, when, if they were writing back to your mother or to you, what were they saying about...

ANDERSEN: That I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember if they were sending money to your mother?

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: You don't think so.

ANDERSEN: No.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave Norway? What did you have to do before you could actually leave?

ANDERSEN: I know she sold the store for ten thousand crowns. That I remember. But I don't remember what she did with the furniture or anything.

SIGRIST: What about you? What had to be done, like getting your papers and things? What did you have to do to get papers?

ANDERSEN: I can't even remember that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you and your sister and your mother packed to take to America? What did you, what did you take with you when you were leaving Norway?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) I remember we were terrible seasick, my sister and I. We were in bed all the way over.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember carrying a suitcase?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what was in the suitcase?

ANDERSEN: Clothes, that's all. We didn't have so much clothes then. We had one dress, two dresses and two, got two sets of underwear, warm

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ones and short ones.

SIGRIST: Did any of you learn any English prior to coming to America?

ANDERSEN: No. (she laughs) That was tough. (they laugh) Oh, boy, that was tough.

SIGRIST: Well, we'll, we'll talk about that when we get you to America. (Mrs. Andersen laughs) What was the name of the ship that you came on? Do you remember?

ANDERSEN: Stavangerfjord.

SIGRIST: The Stavangerfjord. And where did you have to go to get the Stavangerfjord?

ANDERSEN: Oslo.

SIGRIST: How did you get from your town to Oslo?

ANDERSEN: We took a boat.

SIGRIST: You took a boat?

ANDERSEN: Yeah. And we carried the suitcases on board.

SIGRIST: And then, in Oslo, did you have to, did you undergo any kind of examinations or anything before getting on the Stavangerfjord?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: No, I don't think so. We just went.

SIGRIST: Now, you said...

ANDERSEN: I think Mother had gotten the passport before.

SIGRIST: She had taken care of all that?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Now how old are you at that time?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) I think I was twenty.

SIGRIST: You think you were twenty.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Because you were born in 1905...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and if you're twenty years old, then this must be like 1925?

ANDERSEN: I think so.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the year that you came? (Mrs. Andersen shakes

EI-690/ANDERSEN

her head "no") You're not sure.

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: So it's around 1925, probably, if you were twenty years old.

ANDERSEN: Say 1930.

SIGRIST: 1930?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, you would be a little bit older in 1930.

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: You were born in 1905?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, so you would be, in October, October sixth...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...is your birthday, October sixth of 1925 you would be twenty years old.

ANDERSEN: The sixth, yeah.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Well, we can check on this later. But, uh, tell me what you thought when you saw the Stavangerfjord. When you were going up the gangplank, what was running through your mind?

ANDERSEN: Oh, boy. I thought I'm going to be seasick all the way over. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: And is that what happened?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What, what sticks out in your mind about being on the ship, other than being seasick I mean?

ANDERSEN: Oh, I hated it. Oh, I thought that's a terrible way to live, laying in those narrow bunks and sick as a dog, oh.

SIGRIST: Did they give you any kind of medicine to take care of your sickness?

ANDERSEN: It wouldn't even stay down.

SIGRIST: So you didn't eat very much.

ANDERSEN: No. I, that's the time I lost weight. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: How long of a trip was it?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: I think ten days.

SIGRIST: Ten days.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your mother and Ebba on the ship.  
Were they sick also or...?

ANDERSEN: Ebba was sick. Mother was the only one at the table. They were  
all, everyone was sick.

SIGRIST: What time of the year is this?

ANDERSEN: I think it must have been the winter time.

SIGRIST: Winter time.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I think so.

SIGRIST: Well, was the ocean rough?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, so it could well have been the winter time.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I think so.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty...

ANDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...from the ship? Did you know what that was?

ANDERSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ANDERSEN: That I knew.

SIGRIST: And, uh, the boat came into New York Harbor...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and then did you have to go to Ellis Island?

ANDERSEN: We went there for just a few hours.

SIGRIST: And what did they do when you went there?

ANDERSEN: We, I remember we were stuck. Two pieces of bread smacked together with cheese on it, no butter or anything, because we hadn't eaten for so long. And coffee with sugar in it and we weren't used to that. And we, I hated it. (she laughs) And we were hungry, too, so we were trying, and we had white bread. That we, that, that was

EI-690/ANDERSEN

nice. And I had American cheese, I remember, we had between two slices of bread. And white coffee with sugar on it.

SIGRIST: So they fed you at Ellis Island, then...

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: That's where you ate this. Did they do anything else with...

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: ...you at Ellis Island?

ANDERSEN: Uh huh. You were sitting on, there was a lot of benches and we were all sitting on the benches. A lot of people. Some people were just as miserable as we were. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did they, did they examine you at all, medically, physically?

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: Did someone come to meet you at Ellis Island?

ANDERSEN: My two brothers did.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: They both came...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and got you. Where did they take you when they took you off of Ellis Island? Where did your brothers take Ebba and you and your mother?

ANDERSEN: They took us to an apartment, that I remember, that was around Sixth Avenue [Brooklyn]. It was around Sunset Park.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you thought when you saw New York City and, and...

ANDERSEN: I thought, "What a mess." (she laughs heartily)

SIGRIST: Did you see anything that you had never seen before? You mentioned, you know, the, the cheese sandwich and the coffee with sugar. Were there other things that you saw that you had never seen before?

ANDERSEN: A lot of people. (she pauses)

SIGRIST: That was something different for you?

ANDERSEN: Yeah. More peaceful living in Norway, you know. We had the wide, open spaces. (she laughs)

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Did you get a job when you came?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did it take before you got the job?

ANDERSEN: I think I had been, not been here a week. My mother took me to employment agency and they gave me working in the house with Jewish people. That was like two families. There was a mother and daughter. The daughter lived downstairs and the, or was it the mother that lived downstairs and the daughter lived upstairs. And she had a little baby. And I used to be working between the two of them.

SIGRIST: Tell me about some of the things that you did for the family.

ANDERSEN: I remember the mother was, was very fat and she used to peel the potatoes and they fell down on the floor and all around and I had to clean that up. And I thought that was terrible. Why couldn't she have a basin and do it in. We were used to that. We never, never used to make such a mess on the floor. That made very much of an impression on me. I thought they were very sloppy.

SIGRIST: Were there other examples of their sloppiness that you remember?

ANDERSEN: Well, they didn't seem to care as long as they had somebody to do it for them.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: It didn't matter. They threw it on the floor.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They knew someone would...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...clean it up behind them. Did they teach you anything in the house? Did they teach you how to do anything?

ANDERSEN: No, I know how to do all of it.

SIGRIST: What were your duties?

ANDERSEN: Cleaning.

SIGRIST: Cleaning.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. And then I got sharper, speak a little English, and I quit. Do you remember Schrafft's, uh, Restaurants, very high class? I went in there as a bus, bus girl, and I graduated and was turning in to be a waitress there. And I was there for thirteen years.

SIGRIST: Oh, for a long time.

ANDERSEN: And they were strict. You had to have very clean nails, very clean uniform, white apron and white cuffs and a collar that you have to

EI-690/ANDERSEN

keep clean yourself.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid at Schrafft's?

ANDERSEN: It wasn't much. I think it was \$3.50 a week. The rest supposed to be from tips.

SIGRIST: But these are hard times in America.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you get good tips?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you get enough tip money to support yourself?

ANDERSEN: Well, I didn't get tipped because I was a bus girl.

SIGRIST: At first.

ANDERSEN: After, when I became a waitress, then I got tips. And then I used to count them at home. (she laughs) Oh I, I was very pleased with myself when I made a lot of tips.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid when you worked at the Jewish family?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: I think I got paid forty five dollars a month.

SIGRIST: Did you live with them?

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ANDERSEN: I went home.

SIGRIST: You went home. Tell me how you learned English.

ANDERSEN: Well, just picked it up. I didn't go to school or anything, I just picked it up.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the first word that you learned?

ANDERSEN: "Yes" and "no." (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did the Jewish family try to teach you any English?

ANDERSEN: No, they were just explaining, trying to make me do words.

SIGRIST: How did they treat you?

ANDERSEN: I would say fairly good, but they made me work.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Did your mother and Ebba get a job when they came to the United States?

ANDERSEN: Mother thought she was going to make money at home so she took foster kids.

SIGRIST: Foster kids?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How, explain, talk a little bit about that. I mean, was that successful for her? How did it turn out?

ANDERSEN: She took, she had a boy. His mother was working. And she had a little girl that (she pauses), I don't like to talk about that because we kept that girl and she is still my sister. And she's still alive, so I don't like to...

SIGRIST: That's okay.

ANDERSEN: ...talk too much about it.

SIGRIST: I, rather, I'm just curious that rather than going out and getting a job, and this is an interesting alternative for your mother to make money doing.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, at home, yeah.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Home, yeah. I'm wondering, who, who suggested that to her? Do you know?

ANDERSEN: Uh, no, she, I think she, no, there was a Pastor Henren [ph] in the 46th Street church that said to Mom, "It's a little girl that, uh, they have no more room for her in the hospital. She has to get out of the hospital. Would you take her?" That's how it started.

SIGRIST: I see.

ANDERSEN: And the mother was supposed to pay for her. I don't, I can't remember how, there wasn't much a month. And she just left the child there and disappeared. And we didn't even know the child's name. But we have kept, Mother kept her. So she is my sister to this day.

SIGRIST: Did Ebba get a job?

ANDERSEN: Yeah. She, there was a Danish fellow that had a dancing studio and my sister was full of life. She loved to dance. And she had to teach dancing in the studio there. So she was dancing in the studio. That's the kind of a kind she had.

SIGRIST: Well, that's an, an interesting job alternative, too, to doing domestic work, you know, like you were doing. (they laugh)

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about Ebba. What was her personality like?

ANDERSEN: Well, she was happy-go-lucky like my mother.

SIGRIST: Did she like to dance in Norway?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you, do you remember or have a story about Ebba's dancing for, that you remember growing up?

ANDERSEN: Oh, she used to dance in her nightgown, you know, for us. When we had to go to bed, she used to make all kinds of fancy gestures and my mother used to laugh like anything. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: That's funny. (he laughs)

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So you worked at Schrafft's for thirteen years...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...for thirteen years finally. Did you get married?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) I was still working and my brother was working on the private yachts for Senator Newbury [ph] of Rhode Island. And he brought a mate that was on board because Mother had an extra

EI-690/ANDERSEN

bedroom and it was weekend and he didn't have no place to sleep,  
so my brother...

SIGRIST: You're saying "mate?" M-A-T-E ?

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Not "maid."

ANDERSEN: And he brought him home and said he would sleep in the extra  
bedroom. And that's how I met my husband.

SIGRIST: And what was it about your husband that you liked?

ANDERSEN: Nothing particular. (she laughs) The uniform.

SIGRIST: A man in uniform.

ANDERSEN: Yeah. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What was his name?

ANDERSEN: His name was Ingebregt but they called him "Eddie."

SIGRIST: Can you spell Ingebregt, please?

ANDERSEN: You want me to spell Ingebregt?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: Yes, please.

ANDERSEN: I-N-G-E-B-R-E-G-T.

SIGRIST: And was he Norwegian?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Born in the U.S. or born in Norway?

ANDERSEN: Norway. He was born on the, on the other side of Norway, like on the west coast. Where I was born is on the east coast and they have a different dialect than we have.

SIGRIST: How long, how long from the time that you met him until the time you got married?

ANDERSEN: Uh, let me see. About four years, I think.

SIGRIST: Oh, a long time then.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And where did you get married?

ANDERSEN: In the Norwegian Seamen Church, downtown Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: In Brooklyn. Do you remember what year it was?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: (she pauses, then whispers as she thinks out loud) I was twenty-seven years old. (she speaks in full voice) I was twenty-seven years old when I got married, so figure it out.

SIGRIST: All right, so that's, well, in 1925 you were twenty and so seven more years beyond that, 1932.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Does that sound about right?

ANDERSEN: That's it.

SIGRIST: '32, sometime in the early '30s. What did he do for a living? You said he was a mate on this yacht.

ANDERSEN: On the private yacht.

SIGRIST: But, I mean, is that what he did all the time? He was a seaman?

ANDERSEN: (she pauses) He was going doing construction work, I think, because, you know, most of the yachts, they gave them up. They didn't, they didn't have yachts because it was Depression so they were laid off. They weren't allowed to have yachts, private yachts, so they were laid off and the yacht was, during the Depression they couldn't have it.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

SIGRIST: So he went into doing...

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...manual labor.

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Construction. Did you and your husband ever return to Norway to visit?

ANDERSEN: I did once.

SIGRIST: Yes. Can you tell me a little bit about how it felt to go back to Norway?

ANDERSEN: Well, then I went to the west coast where my husband was, uh, born. And I thought I had never been here because it was wild country, big mountains and, you know, wasn't used to that. I was used to city life. (she laughs) So I thought, but it was an experience.

SIGRIST: So you didn't actually get back to the town where you had grown up?

ANDERSEN: Yes, for a little, just about a week.

SIGRIST: How did it feel to go back to that town?

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Sentimental, yeah. I thought my hometown was beautiful. The house I lived in, very sentimental.

SIGRIST: It all looked as you'd remembered it?

ANDERSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did your mother ever go back?

ANDERSEN: Yes, she did once. (she pauses) But I can't remember so much of that.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Norway and never come to the United States?

ANDERSEN: Oh, quite a bit different. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How? How do you think it might have been different?

ANDERSEN: You learn a lot when you travel. I think I would have been an old maid. (she laughs heartily) I mean, you think so?

SIGRIST: Still playing with the boys in the snow banks.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, yeah. An old maid. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: When you look back on your life, if you were going to give advice to

EI-690/ANDERSEN

a young person now, what advice would you give them on how to lead a, a happy and successful life? If someone said, "What's your secret?" you know, "How, how have you, how have you kept going all these years?" What would you tell them?

ANDERSEN: Well, you learn a lot by traveling. If they could afford it, travel, see things. I rode a camel in Egypt. I forgot to tell you that. They had two bumps and I sat in the middle. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How did you end up in Egypt? (Mrs. Andersen laughs)

ANDERSEN: I travel, after I retired, I travel. And I travel with a group from the Lutheran Church on 4th Avenue Our Savior Church [Brooklyn].

SIGRIST: Our Savior Church.

ANDERSEN: The pastor there arranged a trip and I signed up for it. And, boy, that was an experience. (she laughs) And I was standing, they were going to take pictures of you standing beside the camel, you know, they have, they edge you over. And before you know it, I was sitting on the camel. (they laugh) And that was some experience.

SIGRIST: Well, it's not everyone who can say that...

ANDERSEN: No.

SIGRIST: ...they've done that.

EI-690/ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: No. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, I think this is probably a good place for us to end. Mrs. Andersen, thank you very much. You've been delightful. This has been a, a wonderful interview and I'm very happy that we had the chance to, to ask you these questions.

ANDERSEN: You enjoyed my interview?

SIGRIST: I did, indeed. I, I hope you enjoyed it, too.

ANDERSEN: Yeah, I did. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Good.

ANDERSEN: Memories coming back.

SIGRIST: Yes. Tonight is when they'll all start coming back to you.

ANDERSEN: Okay, yeah.

SIGRIST: As you're lying in bed, this will all come back. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Emely Andersen on October 25, 1995 here in Brooklyn at the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Care Center. Thank you very much.

ANDERSEN: You're welcome.