

**EI-695**

**MARTHA LARSEN**

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

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**RESIDENCES:**

- **NORWAY: EAST AKELAND**
- **THE US: FLATBUSH, BROOKLYN, NY**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1995. I'm at the Norwegian Christian Home in Brooklyn, and I'm here with Martha Anderson Larsen.

LARSEN: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Larsen came from Norway in 1923 and she was 20 years old at that time. She hadn't...

LARSEN: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: ...quite turned 21. Present also is Peter Hom, who is running the tape recorder, and our friend, Kari, who is the social services person here and who has been with us throughout all this interviewing of Norwegians. Mrs. Larson, can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: Your birth date.

LARSEN: February, February 10<sup>th</sup>.

SIGRIST: What year?

LARSEN: 1902, I believe.

SIGRIST: And where in Norway were you born?

LARSEN: Well, that part what you call East Akeland. Ake...Akeland.

SIGRIST: What part is that?

LARSEN: It's Farsund, that's in, close Farsund. That's in the, on the south part of Norway, all the way in the south.

SIGRIST: And, what do you remember about...

LARSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that part of Norway when you were a little girl?

LARSEN: Oh, I remember a lot of things, but I've been home just like two times visiting since I came over.

SIGRIST: But what do you remember as a little girl when you were over there?

LARSEN: Oh, well, I see, I belonged to any...? Oh, I belonged to a (unintelligible) Society and taken of young people. You knows, uh, I don't know what else can't I think of.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you lived in when you were a little girl?

LARSEN: Well, I had my house on my road, down to my road. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: What did your house look like?

LARSEN: Well, a regular house with just two big rooms and a kitchen and the bedrooms were upstairs on the, on the second floor, like, you know.

SIGRIST: And, and what was the house made out of?

LARSEN: Wood, I believe.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What color was your house?

LARSEN: Oh, white, painted inside and outside, and now well, I can't just remember, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the furniture in your house?

LARSEN: What I have is what my, my mother and father had because I didn't already....

SIGRIST: What your, what your mother and father had...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...in that house.

LARSEN: Yeah, they just, like regular, like some chairs and a bed...and like bedrooms' furniture and we had the bedroom up, up, the bedrooms upstairs. And, a dining room and parlor and the kitchen there downstairs, you know, yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you heat the house?

LARSEN: How did I...?

SIGRIST: How did you heat the house? How did you keep the house warm?

LARSEN: Oh, they had a, like an oven that they, that they put wood and, and things in and kept the right heat in the, the oven up and heated the whole room, had the door closed, you know for that one room. They didn't have heat for all the rooms, no. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: What was, what was the weather like in Norway? What was the temperature like?

LARSEN: Well, I mean, there could be very nice weather for some time, but in the winter sometime, you had a lot of snow, like you have here for that matter. (Chuckles) Yeah.

SIGRIST: What would happen when it snowed?

LARSEN: Well, what would happen? I just...

SIGRIST: What would your family do?

LARSEN: We waited for a while until you could happen to, to just get it away so you, so you could walk, like, you know.

SIGRIST: How did you, how did you light your house? How did you make the house light inside?

LARSEN: In Norway? Well, you see, I mean, I was nothing more in Norway, and never left until I was married and I went up and visited my mother and father, but my husband was still over here.

SIGRIST: But, but when you were a little girl...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, how did you light the inside of the house?

LARSEN: I can't say. I must think, even to, to think about it, I mean. You took it the way it was, you know.

SIGRIST: What kind of food did you eat as a little girl?

LARSEN: Oh, all kinds of different... They, they had their own lambs and in the tents that they would, on the floor they would happen to, to kill and, uh, have homemade meats. Some they would take it as salty and some they would have in this what used to be made, you know. And, yeah, they did the best they could, you know. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: Did, did you, did you own the lambs? Did you raise the lambs?

LARSEN: Yeah, they raised the lambs themselves, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes? Did you take care of the animals when you were young?

LARSEN: Oh, yes, sometime we went up with them in the market, like in that we had, like, a tie on them, you know, and in the market we had to move them so they had a place to, to eat, yeah. In the, in the winter, naturally, they couldn't have them out. No, them days they was in, in the house there and they gave them to, to eat inside.

SIGRIST: What other kinds of animals did you have?

LARSEN: Well, we had...they didn't have no horse because it was a small farm, so they didn't have no horse. But they had about two or three cows, like, you know.

SIGRIST: Who took care of the cows?

LARSEN: Oh, my mother, and especially my mother and my father. And I, when I'm old enough, I was helping doing something.

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SIGRIST: What did you have to do? When you got old enough, what, what was your chore?

LARSEN: We'd have, they...you won't believe this, but, you know, this, this is sleeping them. They were used to them. They would open up the door where they were and then they would walk and go up some steps and go into where they were, where they were going to eat for a while. And then we were coming and take that off and nobody would go down in that place again. Sure.

SIGRIST: So that was your job to...?

LARSEN: Well, me when I'm old enough, but otherwise my, my brothers. I had four brothers.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember your brothers' names?

LARSEN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you say them for me?

LARSEN: Alfred and Albert, and, uh...Alfred and Albert and...yeah. And Georg, you know, in...

SIGRIST: Georg.

LARSEN: And after Fritjof. (unintelligible) and Fritjhof. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: And are you the only girl?

LARSEN: Well, there was only one girl. That was, that was me.

SIGRIST: Yes.

LARSEN: Of course, I had four brothers. But one, one brother, Al...Alfred, he was older than me. And then there was me. He was born in 18 hundred and 98 or '99, and then I was born in, like I said, in 19...1902, 1903.

SIGRIST: 1902, right.

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Which brother were you the closest to?

LARSEN: Well, we were pretty close, I mean, to them all. They were, they were pretty nice, yes, to me.

SIGRIST: What, what did you do with your brothers when you were a child?

LARSEN: What did I do with my brothers?

SIGRIST: Yeah, what, how did you, did you play with your brothers?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah, well, but there were also neighbors there. We played with children from, in neighbor houses.

SIGRIST: What kinds of games did you play when you were a little girl?

LARSEN: Oh, Hide (coughs), Hide and Seek, like, uh, you know, you would go and hide someplace and then, and then a certain place was

supposed to...if you got there yourself before they found you, then you, you know...yeah.

SIGRIST: Were there any other games that you can remember?

LARSEN: Yeah, then they were jumping rope, ropes jump.

SIGRIST: Jump rope?

LARSEN: Rope, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you say little...little songs, sing little songs, when you jumped rope?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: Did you sing little songs when you jumped rope?

LARSEN: I can't remember really. No, I can't.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

LARSEN: Emanuel.

SIGRIST: Emanuel.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

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LARSEN: Well, it happened he was away some time, like in, in like a fishing trip, since he make a little extra money. But otherwise he needed to be home to take care of things, yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your father's...

LARSEN: (Coughs)

SIGRIST: What was your father like as a person?

LARSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: What was your father like as a person, his personality?

LARSEN: Oh, he was, he was very nice. Yeah, my father was nice. They were both nice, yeah.

SIGRIST: Is there a story you can tell me about your father when you were a little girl?

LARSEN: (Coughs) My father and mother, they were over here in a place called...do you know some place they called Green Point?

SIGRIST: Green Point?

LARSEN: Green Point.

SIGRIST: Green Point in Brooklyn?

LARSEN: Yeah, well, it's, it's a while away from Brook here. That's where my mother had a...she was for eight years there working for a, a fire...a fire...he was a fire, the man in the house, you know?

SIGRIST: A fireman?

LARSEN: Fire, yeah. And my father was on, on, on the boat going out from there and coming into that place and that's where they meet, in that place there.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year your parents got married?

LARSEN: My mother and father? Eight...yeah, 18...1898 and '97 or '98.

SIGRIST: About a year before your brother was born.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was your mother's name?

LARSEN: My mother's name was Ana, Ana...

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

LARSEN: Aanenson.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

LARSEN: O, that is then like two a's together to be "o" to Aanensen. She came, she came from a place called Kvinnestad. You know, that's

a little, used to little away. You had to go with a boat in, for to get from where we lived and to where she's come from.

SIGRIST: I see. And what was your mother's personality like?

LARSEN: Hum?

SIGRIST: What was your mother, what her personality was like? What was she like as a person?

LARSEN: Oh, she was very, very good mother, very nice mother, yeah. And sewed the clothes and changed for the...for, in that day, even the, the boys and that get big would sew. Sewed the skirts and things. You never...she, she was very busy. She was, I don't know if you know where they, where they would make their own material by a web cloth.

SIGRIST: Like she would weave the material?

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What, what kinds of clothes did you wear when you were growing up in Norway?

LARSEN: Well, we wore...well, dresses most of the time. Most of the times it was things what my mother had made the material, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, how, how long were the dresses?

LARSEN: Well, we, we didn't...we had it maybe down a little bit below the knee, you know, not, not down, no. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And, and how did you wear your hair when you were a young girl?

LARSEN: Oh, we had hair like low. I mean, we didn't cut it like you do here and put any trim or anything in it. We would happen to make ready how did they low and then we would make a little bit wet and, of course, it get a little curly and make it half, half-twisted up, you know.

SIGRIST: Twist the hair up to...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...make it curly.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anyone else live with you in the house?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: Did anyone else live with you in your house?

LARSEN: There were others living about, but not in, not in, in, no.

SIGRIST: What about grandparents? Did you have any grandparents?

LARSEN: Yeah, when my mother and father went home then from here, then they, he took over his, his parents' house and they had to move and get to another place to live. Yeah. (Chuckles)

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SIGRIST: (Chuckles) Where...do you remember your grandparents?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: Yes? Are these your father's parents that you remember?

LARSEN: You were, yeah, they were my father's parents.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandpa and your grandma?

LARSEN: Well, they used to go to visit. They used to take us down and we would stay, stay with them if, if, when we get a little bit older, stay with them when there was no school, you know. Some days stop by and play school Amland, instead of Akeland and then Amland.

SIGRIST: And what religion were you?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

LARSEN: Well, they was just regular religion like we have here. I mean, not, not Catholic or any, no.

SIGRIST: Right. Was there a church near where you were?

LARSEN: Yeah, we, well, we walked to it, but it was about a half an hour walk to get to it. That's where I was confirmed and everything.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being confirmed?

LARSEN: Oh, we were an awful lot of us that year and, you know, it was nice. We went once a week, we went for...see, we had lessons and went for examination, like, you know, until we got...I think we had to be fourteen, you had to get confirmed. And there were quite a few, yes, quite a few.

SIGRIST: Did you get a present for being confirmed?

LARSEN: Yeah, they had a party for us home in my mother's house, you know, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what that present was?

LARSEN: Well, I can't just say that. It mostly was, I think, that they gave us a card with some money in it, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you go to school in Norway?

LARSEN: I should say so.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you started school?

LARSEN: Seven.

SIGRIST: And, uh, what do you remember about going to school?

LARSEN: Well, I mean, we...they called it small school, en storschule. Yeah, they didn't, they didn't have the best small, small school, but if you were very good, and could be moved from that to the other. They did that, and I was one of them and some other, you know, that got

moved from there and over to the...so I got it, you know. Of course, we were pretty, pretty good at school.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject?

LARSEN: I can't remember, no.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

LARSEN: If they read...?

SIGRIST: Could your mother and father read and write?

LARSEN: Oh, yes, sure they did. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: How did they feel about education?

LARSEN: About what?

SIGRIST: How did your mother and father feel about the children getting an education?

LARSEN: Well, my father...with my, with my brothers, my father would see that they would get in to make things in the woodshop, like, I mean, all things like....and that's, and even to go out on the sea, you know. And with me, they would, he, my father saw that I got to, to sewing school and to what they, what they called hilsboschule [ph]. It was to learn and, and cook, cook different things. (Coughs)

SIGRIST: Do you want some water? Here.

LARSEN: Yeah, my throat is not so good. (Drinks water.) Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, but you enjoyed school?

LARSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: You enjoyed school?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about holidays. Tell me how you celebrated Christmas in Norway.

LARSEN: Well, they had more than one day, you know. They, they, they celebrated more than one day. They did two, two days, or maybe even more. Of course, you had your festival in tents in that time.

SIGRIST: And how, how would they celebrate Christmas? What would you do to celebrate Christmas?

LARSEN: School.

SIGRIST: Christmas, Christmas.

LARSEN: Yeah, Christmas. Well, we had some...my mother and dad, when we were small, they would go and buy us some little, some thing that would be wrapped and lay under the Christmas tree. And then,

we would...well, we do them things here, too, I think. And then they would be opened on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day or so. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the Christmas tree?

LARSEN: For Chr...? They went out in the, in the, in the woods and cut themselves. There were trees that were grown there, fresh trees. So then they fixed them at the porch, and they would have to have a little water in some, so it would keep fresh.

SIGRIST: And then how would you decorate the tree?

LARSEN: Oh, we had all things we had bought in a store, you know. Also, some we had made from, from color to paper strings, you know, to go over like one, see? Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were there any other important holidays that you celebrated in Norway?

LARSEN: I don't think we had no...no. Did we have any Thanksgiving, you know, over there? I don't think, I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Did you celebrate the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, May Day?

LARSEN: Well, we had it. We celebrated what we called Easter here, we called "paaske" in Norway.

SIGRIST: And how would you celebrate Easter?

LARSEN: That we would happen to give some, some boiled eggs to eat.  
(Laughs)

SIGRIST: What, what, what, what were the special Easter foods that you got to eat?

LARSEN: Well, we liked to get some, some bread because mostly we would have to be, be, would be eating what we made home there, like potato cakes and that's about, yeah, yeah, waffles. They're very good, you know, but we liked to buy most, I guess, home was fresh from the store, too. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: So it was a treat to get bread that came from the store, the...

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Who usually made the bread at home?

LARSEN: Well, there was a shop where we used to do them things. There were one or two of my brothers, when they got older, now they were even went in a shop like that, and helping bake them.

SIGRIST: Oh, so your brothers were taught how to do that?

LARSEN: Yeah, so even when they were, got over here, they make some in a, in a, in a baker's shop for, I mean, at the Larsen's Baking Shop in...called the Larsen's Baking Shop, downtown someplace.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about World War I, the first World War.

LARSEN: Yeah, that was not an easy time, that it wasn't, I know, because we had, we had, oh, to get some cards, something, that you could buy for so much of, like, oh, in, like, foods. But you, but if you had a little farm, you know, then that's not so bad because then you, one who has, when you didn't have no farm, you see, didn't have a cow or two or something to get your own milk, milk and that. That's not so easy.

SIGRIST: How did your family do during that time?

LARSEN: How did he...?

SIGRIST: How, how did your family survive during that time, 'cause you had a little farm?

LARSEN: Yeah, that's, well, that's when my mother and father, they had a farm. And I, when I, in that time there was the war, then I was already confirmed. There was, uh, so I was working for some other people. And they did, too, had like a farm and they went outside to draw water from the, from a big, deep (unintelligible) tank or some type of water, they would fall down in that water. It is true, it was terrible.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing soldiers?

LARSEN: Seeing what?

SIGRIST: Seeing soldiers during that time.

LARSEN: Yeah, oh, yeah, oh, yes. Of course, my youngest brother was four years in the last World War. Jof [ph], my youngest brother, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have any...he was in which war? Which war did your brother, youngest brother, fight in?

LARSEN: What?

SIGRIST: Which war did your youngest brother fight in?

LARSEN: It was that last, last...

SIGRIST: The Second World War?

LARSEN: Yeah, the Second War.

SIGRIST: Did, did any of your brothers have to fight during the First World War?

LARSEN: That I can't remember really. I can't really remember.

SIGRIST: How did your father feel about the First World War?

LARSEN: Well, what he could he feel, poor thing? He tried to do the best he could for...It wasn't easy, no. No, no.

SIGRIST: You said that after you were confirmed, you had a job at somebody's farm.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about that experience.

LARSEN: Well, I mean, that is what I said, well, that I was the one, I was supposed to be doing all the work what I did do there. What I did and that was me that went out to get water outside and, and had a can on a string and down and then do like this and get water and pull it up here and carry it. (Chuckles) Oh...

SIGRIST: What were some of your other jobs on that farm? What were some of your other responsibilities on the farm?

LARSEN: Well, to keep the house, you know, to, to clean up the house, you know. And to wash the clothes, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you get paid for this?

LARSEN: Yeah, but not very much. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: (Chuckles) Do you remember how much?

LARSEN: Oh, I think it was about 13-14 kroner. Was in kroner, it wasn't the dollar. It was in kroner.

SIGRIST: Did you live on the farm?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

LARSEN: I lived there with them, yeah.

SIGRIST: How often did you visit your parents? When you lived on that farm, how often did you visit your parents?

LARSEN: Oh, well, well, let's see. It was, it was a little while. I, I waited before I (unintelligible), but my father got me a bike; otherwise it was I had to walk it and that was not so easy because it was, it took more than an hour to walk it. But, I mean, uh, I was supposed to be off every, every like either Sunday off, so I could go home to be with them and, but come back the same day.

SIGRIST: So your father bought you a bicycle?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How did that feel to have your own bicycle?

LARSEN: I couldn't even ride a bike, but, uh, my father went to Far...to Farsund, a place called Farsund, and bought it and I met him by [?]. He couldn't ride a bike, so he was, had to walk with it there. And I, when I got it, I had to walk from there and to where I was working.

SIGRIST: Who, who taught you how to ride the bicycle?

LARSEN: Oh, well that I had to, to learn myself by keeping trying.

SIGRIST: Did anything ever happen when you were learning how to ride the bicycle?

LARSEN: No, no, no. No, no.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me why you wanted to come to America.

LARSEN: What?

SIGRIST: Why did you want to come to America?

LARSEN: Yes, yeah, that happened so quickly there. They just about all them people what I was together with in school, the same age, got to find out that they were going, going to go and then I, that's why I want to go. But my father didn't like it, I suppose, because they (unintelligible) him. But then I got my ticket and got to go with them. And then I was only 20, about 20 years old, I guess.

SIGRIST: Why didn't you, why didn't your father want you to go to America?

LARSEN: No, he felt he wanted to be home, to, to be with them or either..., you know. 'Cause my brothers, two of my brothers...oh, wait, no my oldest brother, I think, only him was over here when I came over here, but then the others came later.

SIGRIST: Your older brother, where did he live in America?

LARSEN: He lived in 56<sup>th</sup> Street in Brook.., there in Brooklyn here.

SIGRIST: 56<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn.

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what was he doing for, for a living?

LARSEN: They cut, he would be doing carpenter work, I mean, like jobs like fix...building houses, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what, what year did he come to America?

LARSEN: Well, he had gone a couple times to three times years before and he had been home on a visit before I got to here, and had gone back again before I got to go over.

SIGRIST: I see.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Before you got to America, how did you think about America? What did you expect that you would find when you got here?

LARSEN: I don't think, I can't remember what I think about. I can't remember anything, no.

SIGRIST: Well, do you remember what changed your father's mind to let you go to America? What...

LARSEN: Well, I mean it was not that, you know, but, uh, he, he did, everything that waited for me before that, you know that. After being in that place, we arrived first month, you know, then he got me into a, they have us going to a sewing school and they have us going what you called hilsboschule [ph] that was to learn about a lot of cooking and things, you know. But then so many of my friends went to America, so that's what made me go. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you pack to take to America?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: What did you take with you to America?

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LARSEN: I just, just took clothes, in a, in a trunk. Just some clothes. I didn't...and we went to Ellis Island, see?

SIGRIST: Well, do you remember taking an object? Did you take anything that was not a piece of clothing, like a book or a photograph or something like that?

LARSEN: No, I don't think so.

SIGRIST: No? Just clothes.

LARSEN: Did you...I didn't really hear what you said.

SIGRIST: Did you...you said that you took clothes...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...to America. Did you take anything else?

LARSEN: No.

SIGRIST: No. Just clothes.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: OK.

LARSEN: Just clothes, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do to get ready to leave Norway?

LARSEN: Yeah, that went so quick when I, like I said, when I heard my, my friends were going. So that didn't take me long before I got my, my tickets in. Oh, no.

SIGRIST: Did you have to go to a doctor?

LARSEN: I think so. I don't remember, but I think so.

SIGRIST: And where did you have to go to get your papers to leave Norway?

LARSEN: Yeah, we had to get that in, must be in old Stavanger or...I think so. I think we went out with the boat from a place called Stavanger and I think I get them through there someplace.

SIGRIST: Did your, did your mother and father give you a good-bye party?

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah, they was. It was hard for, especially for my mother there. She had a lot to do. Of course, said, like I said, you had your cows and that. In the summer, I went up in the farm and had to go up there to, to, to milk the cow and bring it home and, and make their own butter and oh, gee. My mother had to... And in the summer, she would pick blueberries and sell as many as she could to make a little bit extra money, and oh...

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about you going to America?

LARSEN: Well, what could she do? She didn't say anything, no. Like I said, she was, I don't know how many years she was here – eight, seven or eight or maybe nine years in there in, in, in Green Point where she was.

SIGRIST: That's right. So she knew about America. She had lived here.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, she lived here.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you have to go to get on the ship to come...

LARSEN: To get on the...

SIGRIST: ...to get on the ship, the boat? Where did you have to go to get on the boat?

LARSEN: I went to Stavanger.

SIGRIST: And how did you get there?

LARSEN: Well, by, by boat.

SIGRIST: Went on a boat to Stavanger?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then...

LARSEN: From out to Farsund to, to Stavanger, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you go by yourself?

LARSEN: Yeah, when I was there and they, my friends, we were there before, but they had a (unintelligible), I got a (unintelligible) with them anyway. I got there just about in time to get tickets so I got on the same boat.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the boat that you took to America?

LARSEN: I can't remember that, no.

SIGRIST: No?

LARSEN: I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Um...

END OF SIDE A

BEGINNING OF SIDE B

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how it felt to say goodbye to your mother and father?

LARSEN: Well, I said that, too, but, like I said, everything went so fast that...but the, the worst was for my youngest brother. He felt bad when I was going. Yeah, that I know.

SIGRIST: Why, why do you know that? How did you know that he felt so bad?

LARSEN: Yes, I knew. It was later on, when he grewed up, he came over, too. Yeah, and, and that, that poor kid, like I said... I said it before, that when he came there it was just about the...the war was still...that he got put into the war and had to be in the war.

SIGRIST: This was the Second World War?

LARSEN: Yeah, in the Second World War, yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the voyage to America across the Atlantic? What do you remember about being on the boat going to America?

LARSEN: Well, we were pretty lucky with good weather, so, I mean, so then that's okay. Yeah, we got our meals there already made and, uh, I think we...were we sitting in a, in a room? Or did we get it into, to a room? I can't remember that.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

LARSEN: Well, we had a...I had a room, you know, with some other lady in the same room, you know. Not alone in the room, you know.

SIGRIST: Did anything happen while you were on the ship?

LARSEN: No, no, no, can't say that. But when I went to home alone once there, with two of my children with me home, I was together with

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another lady that had one child and I had two. We were all in one room, and uh...(chuckles). Oh, ya, ya, ya.

SIGRIST: How long did the ship take to go from Norway to America in 1923?

LARSEN: I believe it took a week or something.

SIGRIST: A week? And did you see the Statue of Liberty when the ship came?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: Did you see the Statue of Liberty when the ship came to New York?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

LARSEN: From where I come from, I tell, we couldn't even see the Statue of Liberty yet.

SIGRIST: But when you were on the ship...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...coming into New York...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...could you see the Statue of Liberty?

LARSEN: Oh, oh, oh, oh, that maybe we could, but I didn't know what it was, I guess. Yeah, I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what happened at Ellis Island.

LARSEN: Well, not too...yeah, it was like I said, so many people, you know, that it takes the whole day in there. So we, I ate my first meal over in, in Staten I...on Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: What did they feed you?

LARSEN: Well, we got some sandwiches and some coffee and things there. And there my brother and, and, uh, a, a cousin of mine was staying together with other people. They couldn't get in, so they didn't get to get anything. They stayed, stayed the whole day there, waiting, without having anything to eat. (Chuckles). No.

SIGRIST: What did it look like on the inside?

LARSEN : Well, you didn't get really to look most of any because I didn't while you were inside there, so I can't say that, but we went from New York. The boat had you come into New York and we went from there with, I guess, with a boat, too, and went over to...We had to go back with that, you know, and that's where all, all, all our suitcases and things were. We had to get it then when we got back.

SIGRIST: So you didn't have your suitcase when you were at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: You didn't have your suitcase with you when you were at Ellis Island.

LARSEN: No, no. No, no.

SIGRIST: Did you have to be examined at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: I can't really remember. I can't really.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you were at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: (Chuckles) Well, I can't. Yeah, regular clothes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Who came to meet you at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: A brother of mine that had been there before.

SIGRIST: That's your oldest brother.

LARSEN: And yeah. And, yes, a cousin.

SIGRIST: And where did they take you when they took you off of Ellis Island?

LARSEN: Well, they had to get first over, right from there and over to, to where the, where my, where the boat had come in, so we can get, could get up close with, so I could get my clothes there in the suitcase. And then one cousin there that was there, I was with her. She lived out in Flatbush.

SIGRIST: Out in Flatbush.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. How did you get from New York to Flatbush?

LARSEN: Get, did we go by...did he rent, did he rent, did he rent a car, like, because I don't think they had the old car. I think they rented a more like, you would say here, like a, like a, a taxi. Yeah.

SIGRIST: But you went in a car. You didn't go by subway or...

LARSEN: Oh, no. No, no. No, no.

SIGRIST: When did you get...did you get a job?

LARSEN: Yeah, it didn't take very long that I got a job for Jewish people.  
(Chuckles)

SIGRIST: And what were you doing for the Jewish people?

LARSEN: And I couldn't even begin to talk or talk English. (Chuckles) And the Jewish people, they have that you have milk day, dishes. And had, had to have two kinds of dishes. Had to be sure to wash the right dishes in the right, so in not to mix them. I got into it pretty quick. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you live with the Jewish family?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember how much you got paid?

LARSEN: Yeah, that was, it was four...either thirty or forty dollars in, in the whole month.

SIGRIST: And how many days a week did you work?

LARSEN: Well, I was, I was, off some hours on the Thursday and, and some on the Sunday. But otherwise I had plenty to do, otherwise.  
(Chuckles)

SIGRIST: And what did you wear when you worked at the Jewish family's house?

LARSEN: Oh, well, well, I wear work...like the working, yeah, clothes and would use things for the, for, for the evening or either, you know, for holidays and Sundays when I went to Brooklyn, I mean, to, to, to my cousins' or I came over and went to her.

SIGRIST: When you worked for the Jewish family, did you see anything that you had never seen before?

LARSEN: Well, the thing was that I had to be really careful about the milk dishes and make, not to mix anything up, but dishes. I had to be very careful.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did any, did any other people work for the Jewish family? Were you the only person working for them?

LARSEN: Not, not when I was there. They, they only had one to work and that was me.

SIGRIST: I see.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did you work for them?

LARSEN: I worked for them, yeah, a couple years at least. But, you know, then I had some others. Well, I shouldn't say but, I mean, it so happened that the Jewish man, he got a little bit, uh, uh, uh, like after me like somehow.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

LARSEN: So I happened to mention something little bit to, to his wife, so because I wanted to, to leave to get some other place, so I had to say, say the reasons. So I, well...but it went alright anyway.

SIGRIST: How did you learn English?

LARSEN: I learned it by hearing other people talk, you know. That's, that's the way you learned it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your first word was that you learned?

LARSEN: No, but it...I tried to look in papers, too, to see if I could make out some words and know what it was, you know. Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember trying to speak English and making a mistake?

LARSEN: Yeah, maybe I did. I can't say. Well, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah? Was your brother still doing carpentry work all during this time?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: Was your brother still being a carpenter at this time? Your brother who was here?

LARSEN: Yeah, he, he was a carp...yeah, he was a carpenter, yeah. And that's what, uh, that's what, uh, my other brother when he came over was, too, you know.

SIGRIST: Did...how did you, did you miss Norway when you got here?

LARSEN: Yes, I did in one way, but you know, I don't know. I can't say I think, thought so much about it, only I missed about it writing home, you know, to, to my mother and father, see.

SIGRIST: Did you send money home to your mother and father?

LARSEN: Yes, off and on, I did, you know, when I could. But you know, what I sent home, they would put in the bank home there. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: Who paid for your ship ticket?

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LARSEN: Let's see, I had worked something home in Norway before I went over here, so, so I had a little money. I think I paid for my, my ticket myself.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much it cost?

LARSEN: No, that I don't.

SIGRIST: (Chuckles)

LARSEN: That I don't.

SIGRIST: Did you...when was the first time you went back to Norway?

LARSEN: I don't think I was back before I, yes, I can't remember what year I was first back after come over.

SIGRIST: Had you been over here for a while before you went back?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah, that I had, yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you married when you went back?

LARSEN: Yeah, that's what I won't know if I...I know I went home when I had two children, but if I went home before, but my husband didn't, you know. He, he came from, from Bergen.

SIGRIST: From, from Bergen in...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...Norway.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was your husband's name?

LARSEN: Jan.

SIGRIST: Jan.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how did you meet your husband?

LARSEN: They happened to go to the same church in going home, he lived on Staten...on Long Island, like east Long Island. Stat...no, over...yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Staten Island?

LARSEN: Farther out than where the boats went. I had to get off one place and he had to go a little farther. And by meeting him like church, that's where we got to meet and start talking to each other and everything.

SIGRIST: But you met him here in America?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And, and what year did you get married?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: What year did you get married?

LARSEN: Well, we went together for a couple years. I think we got, got married in '20, 192 . ( pause)4, or something like that.

SIGRIST: Well, you came in 1923...

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So...

LARSEN: Oh, well, no, no. I...it was farther...question now. I can't remember all them things, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you have children?

LARSEN: Huh?

SIGRIST: Did you have children?

LARSEN: Children, I heard you, I heard you...three girls.

SIGRIST: And what are their names?

LARSEN: Louise, Evelyn, and Mable, and only that girl was only that live, but the two others are dead.

SIGRIST: I see. Did...and you took two of the children to Norway, right? You, you took your children to Norway?

LARSEN: Yeah, but they was small there.

SIGRIST: Yeah, when they were kids.

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you become a citizen?

LARSEN: Here?

SIGRIST: Here.

LARSEN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yes?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do to become a citizen?

LARSEN: Well, we went through quite a bit you know. You were able to, took tests, had, could, had to be able to read, and had to be able to do this or that. Yes, I'm a citizen, an American citizen.

SIGRIST: How did it feel when you became a citizen?

LARSEN: I can't say, no. I think it was, I think I felt, felt alright, I mean...

SIGRIST: Do you, do you think of yourself as American or Norwegian?

LARSEN: Yeah, that's hard to say, too, I don't know. I think of both things, you know. (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you stayed in Norway?

LARSEN: Hm?

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you stayed in Norway?

LARSEN: Well, I don't know. When I was home with, there with the two children with me, I was home for over, for almost a year, with my mother and father. And my husband was...it was in a bad time. There was very little work to do, so he was living with somebody and was working some time you know, over here. Yeah, and then coming back there, somebody saw that they had an apartment ready for me.

SIGRIST: How did it feel when you went back to Norway? How did it make you feel to be back there?

LARSEN: Well, it felt alright, but you know but you're thinking and worrying about him over here, you know, yeah, how he was getting along because with so little work, to have money to live on and pay, and pay his rent. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Larsen, thank you very much for letting me ask you these questions.

LARSEN: (Chuckles)

SIGRIST: I appreciate it.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Martha Larsen.

LARSEN: On Marth...Martha Larsen, yeah.

SIGRIST: On, on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>,...

LARSEN: I'm on the fifth floor there.

SIGRIST: ...1995, here at the Norwegian Christian Home. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW