

EI-697  
MARGARET FLOR SOLLIE  
BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 31, 1904  
INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 27, 1995  
RUNNING TIME: 56:48  
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, 1904  
AGE 8 MONTHS  
PASSAGE ON "THE OSCAR II"  
ACCOMPANIED HER GRANDMOTHER FROM NORWAY TO AMERICA, CIRCA 1916

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National  
Park Service. Today is Friday, October 27th,  
1995. I'm at the Norwegian Christian Home and  
Health Care Center in Brooklyn, New York, where  
I've been, this is my third day here. And I'm here  
today with Margaret Flor Sollie (he pronounces  
"Sollie" as "soolie").

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Flor is spelled F-L-O-R.

SOLLIE: Uh huh.

SIGRIST: Sollie is spelled S-O-L-L-I-E in English. Mrs. Sollie came from Norway. We believe she came in 1904 for the first time. She was eight months old at that time.

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh, yeah.

SIGRIST: She made subsequent trips on summer vacations to Norway.

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: And then came through Ellis Island with her grandmother when she was approximately twelve or thirteen.

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Present also in the room is Mrs. Sollie's daughter Eleanor and, who may interject as needed. And I should also say I'm running the equipment today [recording engineer Peter Hom had run the recording equipment for the preceding two trips

to the Norwegian Christian Home but was  
unable to come on this day]. Mrs. Sollie, can  
we begin by you giving me your birth date?

SOLLIE: August, August 31st.

SIGRIST: And what year?

SOLLIE: 1903, that's it, 1903.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

SOLLIE: I'm sorry. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Where in Norway were you born?

SOLLIE: In Arendal.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

SOLLIE: A-R-E-N-D-A-L, Arendal, Norway, yeah.

SIGRIST: Where in Norway is that?

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Uh, I think it was in, you know, I can't remember  
that (she laughs) because I was a little one.

SIGRIST: What, well, that's okay. We can, uh...

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ..come back to...

SOLLIE: But I know I lived in Veregen. V-E, V-E-R-E-G-E-N,  
Arendal. That's a little town, you know. And  
there's a, and the house all along a, it's a river  
that goes up the whole part to where, uh, where I  
met my husband. I didn't meet him there. I  
met him here but he was from there.

SIGRIST: What, what do you know about the town that you were  
born in? What, what was told to you by your  
parents or what you may know from later trips?

SOLLIE: Yeah. They were very, very nice people all around.  
They had houses all along the river there, see?  
And I know we went down to fish right there. And on  
the boats we had, uh, canoes, I think. But they

were big. They were quite big, you know. Those we used to go out fishing and we sat, sat in that many nights, many evenings singing because, you know, it's never dark. It keeps the, light was there almost all, so we were out late, quite late, even as a little child I remember that.

SIGRIST: How often would you go back to Norway?

SOLLIE: Well, I think, uh, well, three times I think it was, back and forth, yeah. Because she, and my mother was lonesome, you know. She knew everybody there. She didn't know the language, you know, so she had to learn that. She learned everything.  
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Tell me, tell me a little bit about your parents.  
What was your father's name?

SOLLIE: My father's name was Charles Flor and he was in the carpenters (injured?) and he, he lives in Borough Park and I, where all the Jewish people are, very fine, nice people. And he did build and, uh, and he was a carpenter so it was another things in

the house in fact. When it, but it got too much  
so he had a carpenter friend to come and be  
so it was Flor and Company.

SIGRIST: And what was your mother's name?

SOLLIE: Laura. My mom was Laura.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

SOLLIE: Bjorlow, B-J-O-R-L-O-W.

SIGRIST: And is Laura spelled as it is in English?

SOLLIE: I think, yeah, L-A-U-R-A, I think it is.

SIGRIST: Is Charles his Norwegian name or is that  
Americanized?

SOLLIE: Yes, Charles is in Norwegian because he was really a  
"squarehead." (she laughs) That's what they call  
the Norwegians, you know.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you know about how your parents met.

SOLLIE: Well, you know, that, that was in Norway and that was before I was born.

SIGRIST: Did they ever talk about that?

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah, because I think he had been over here and then gone home, over, you know. I think that. I can't remember that really because, you know, my mother died very young, see? And then my mother's, and we had been writing to my mother's sister but she was married to a captain, captain in the boats in Norway and then he couldn't, she couldn't leave, you know. But then when, then her husband died and then she said why (?) bring my grand--, my grandmother came over with. And she was, I think, uh, she was quite over seventy to be the grandmother to, and then she stayed there and then my father married her after my mother died.

SIGRIST: How old were you when your mother died?

SOLLIE: I was, I think about thirteen.

SIGRIST: So your, so your mother was in America when your  
mother, when...

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, oh, yes. She had been back and forth and,  
and we, we made our home there, you know. It was  
just on visits there to us, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you know why your parents initially went to  
America?

SOLLIE: Well, because my father had taken that trip and liked  
it so much, so then they must have gone back to  
her. That's the only way I can think on that, uh  
huh.

SIGRIST: So your father, he had gone to America as a young man  
He liked it.

SOLLIE: He must have, yes. That's what I think what  
happened.

SIGRIST: Did they marry in Norway?

SOLLIE: No. (she pauses and corrects herself) Yes, I think they must have come over. See, I have their wedding picture. (she gestures and laughs) No, it was so, so long, that's so long ago, you know.

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father's family background?

SOLLIE: Yeah. Well, to tell you the truth, he didn't have much of a family, so, uh...

SIGRIST: Did he ever talk about his childhood or...

SOLLIE: No, not much, no. That wasn't much. It was my mother that did what she did but then, you know, when she died so young, my, uh, a girl isn't interested in that, those things until later on, you know.

SIGRIST: Is there anything that you remember that your mother told you about her childhood and her background?

SOLLIE: No, I haven't. I think I have to have it all in my, (she pauses), oh, yes. I know one of them. We

used, we used to share beautiful, long hair. And she used to sit on the dining room table and then, we were five girls, (correcting herself) four girls, I think, at that time. And, and we'd all get a chance to comb her hair, you know. We sat there singing, talking and we really had fun. I had a wonderful time, you know. But Daddy, because Daddy was out. He was out working all the time mostly, you know (she laughs), he was so busy.

SIGRIST: The grandmother that you would later come to America with when you were a teenager, whose mother was that, your mother or your father?

SOLLIE: Oh, that was my mother's mother, yeah, my mother's mother.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about your grandmother. What was her name?

SOLLIE: Oh, she was a very, very, Nicoline.

SIGRIST: Nicoline.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Nicoline.

SIGRIST: Is that with an "E" at the end?

SOLLIE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Nicoline.

SOLLIE: Nicoline. I think so. Bjorlow, I think her last name was Bjorlow, B-J-O-R-L-O-W, Bjorlow.

SIGRIST: And tell me what kind of a person your grandmother was.

SOLLIE: Oh, she was a very lovely, but she had not been many places at all, only to the little city that they had there, Arendal, in the town there, to go shopping or anything. But, you now, there wasn't, I don't think they ever did much pleasure like, like we do today, you know.

SIGRIST: Her world was very small.

SOLLIE: Yes, it was. Yes, it wasn't much at that time.

SIGRIST: Did your grandmother ever teach you to do anything?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, because she was with us, I mean, we mostly got on, I know, because my, see, my father then married, got married, see?

SIGRIST: After your mother died.

SOLLIE: After Mama died, yeah, because he had all the girls, you know, and (she laughs) so he had to, had to get help there. And we used to have so many of the girls, like girls coming over from Norway to be, work here in New York as maids and cooks and different things. And, uh, they came, would come and stayed with Mom as much as they could because they had off ever-, every Wednesday and Sundays, the girls, as a rule. But then, when my mother passed away, so then the girls, everybody was afraid. They were afraid that people would be talking, you know, that they were running after my father but wasn't. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What did your mother die of?

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Pneumonia. It was pneumonia.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about that experience?

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah. She was a wonderful mother as far as she could be because she wasn't so strong. But she was very, very nice. She used to love to sing and (then you?) and we have to, stories when we had, as I told, sitting on the table combing her hair (she laughs) and then we were singing. She would try to...

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the songs that you used to sing?

SOLLIE: (she sighs) No, that I don't, no because that's quite a few years, you know, see? (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about when your mother was, was ill, how she was taken care of and what kind of...

SOLLIE: Yeah, well, I, I had to be help, of course. Dad did

as much as he did and my mother had a wonderful doctor that I think she would have gone to Norway all the time (she clears her throat) to get him, you know, she, uh, she liked that doctor. That was Ameri--, a Jewish doctor here but he was very, very good, very good. She trusted him, you know, so (she laughs) but she was a, she was really a nice lady, Mom.

SIGRIST: Did you...

SOLLIE: Everybody loved her, I know, that was it, you know. But then my father married.

SIGRIST: How long after...

SOLLIE: Oh, it was a little while, you know. Then she come over and we had, I had aunts that she visited, everybody. But she, then she come and stayed with us. And then, one night, my father came in and asked me, "Is it all right if I marry Tante Klara?" That was it. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did Klara, was she living in Norway? I mean, did she

EI-697/SOLLIE

come from Norway?

SOLLIE: Yes, yes, she came because she had, her husband had  
died, the captain, the captain he was. Yes, he  
had died, see?

SIGRIST: (misunderstanding her) Is Chanta, is that the  
Norwegian word for "aunt?"

SOLLIE: For what?

SIGRIST: For "aunt?" You said Chanta Klara or Chanta...

SOLLIE: Tante, tante. T-A-N-T-E, tante.

SIGRIST: T-A-N-T-E. And is that, is that the Norwegian word  
for "aunt?"

SOLLIE: For "aunt," yeah, uh huh. Tante, yeah, uh huh. So I  
said yes, that was all right. He could marry her.  
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, it was nice that he asked you.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: I was, yeah, because then I didn't have to do as much  
work, see? (they laugh) And then I had my  
grandmother with me, you know, that was good.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about when you were born? Did  
anyone ever tell you a story about the day you  
were born or anything that happened around the  
time that you were born? Anything like that?

SOLLIE: No, I can't remember that, no.

SIGRIST: Were you the only child born in Norway?

SOLLIE: Yes. In my family, yes.

SIGRIST: So all the other sisters were born here.

SOLLIE: Yeah, here, yeah. But that was from my mother. My  
father did marry that lady but she, she was too  
old, I guess, because, well, she wasn't old but...  
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Now, where did you live? When you grew up, when you  
were a young girl...

SOLLIE: In Borough Park, Borough Park.

SIGRIST: Borough Park. Is that here in Brooklyn?

SOLLIE: Brooklyn. In Brooklyn, yeah, Borough, uh huh...

SIGRIST: Can you, can you describe for me the house or the apartment that you actually spent your childhood in?

SOLLIE: Yes. It was a two family house and it was on 46th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. And it was a lot more like the country because it was fields all along and there was, had farms on, because, you know, but that was while my mother was, my mother was living, yeah.

SIGRIST: Is that, was your father's shop nearby?

SOLLIE: Yes, he had the shop. We had the house, the shop in our home, you know.

SIGRIST: Oh, it was in the house.

SOLLIE: Yes, yeah. He, he had a business. And then, then he had to ask a partner, partner, so got Josephson [ph], Mr. Joseph--, so then it became Flor and Company, see?

SIGRIST: And this, he was, this was a carpentry shop?

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh, that he had.

SIGRIST: Yes. What did he make?

SOLLIE: Made him, no, he built houses. Finally, they started to build houses out in Long Island or in Brooklyn further out, you know, it's now we've (he laughs) but it was in Brooklyn, yeah, all out like, like East Eighteenth Street and that, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what your father's character and his temperament were like?

SOLLIE: He was a wonderful guy and he could play violins and, he, he was, and guitar and that's what he did. And he made a guitar and he made a violin which Sylvie

[ph], my sister, has, yes. No, it's Thelma, I think, that has it.

SIGRIST: And what would...

SOLLIE: Yes, that's, I have the pictures of the people at home, yeah. (she gestures to her photographs)

SIGRIST: Oh, well, we, we can look at that later.

SOLLIE: Yes, uh huh.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that your father liked to do when he wasn't working? You said he liked to...

SOLLIE: Oh, art, you know, pictures all the time. (she gestures to a painting) That's another picture, that one.

SIGRIST: He, he painted?

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He painted.

SOLLIE: He painted beautiful.

SIGRIST: I see.

SOLLIE: (she gestures) But I, I have the other, that one and that, and another one.

SIGRIST: (referring to others in the room) You all are pointing to, to things but, of course, this is an audio tape so (he laughs) no one can see any of this.

SOLLIE: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: But what we're looking at are, are large, they look, are they oil on canvas? Oil paint on, on canvas?

SOLLIE: I guess it is, must, yes, yes, it is.

SIGRIST: Yeah, of, of paintings that your father did. Behind you is a small child with a dog and a cat...

SOLLIE: Yeah, exactly, yes, yes.

SIGRIST: ...and there's a larger painting of a, of a Norwegian family sitting at a table. (microphone disturbance)  
Did he paint the ship over there?

SOLLIE: Yes. That's one, yeah.

SIGRIST: There's a, there's a clipper ship, a painting. Well, that's, so he was kind of an artsy guy.

SOLLIE: Very, very. And he had another picture that was really beautiful but he painted on the wall down in the basement of the, of the wedding. And it was with the violin, people playing the violin on the boat. They, that's what they had to have. They had the weddings in Norway.

SIGRIST: Did he ever teach the children anything?

SOLLIE: Yes, us children, yes, but not spiritually, no. But my mother, when she was dying, she said, "Margaret, pray for me." She was dying. She died from pneumonia. I think she was, I



hallowed be..."

SIGRIST: Can you do it in Norwegian?

SOLLIE: Yeah. "Our Father, who art," no, I guess, I guess no Norwegian. I think we lost, you know, what, "Our Father" (she pauses), I don't know if I could, "Our Father who art," you know, you know, the same one. "Father, Our Father who art in Heaven," but it was in Norwegian.

SIGRIST: Were there other ways that you practiced your religion at home other than praying?

SOLLIE: Well, oh, yes, when my mother, (she corrects herself) when my father got married we had to all learn the Norwegian very good (she laughs) because, see, they were both, you see, my grandmother came over with my stepmother, yeah. But that was my mother's mother and my mother's sister, see? Yeah.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak in the house as you were growing up, when you were a young child?

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Well, American mostly.

SIGRIST: Your, so your parents could speak English.

SOLLIE: Yes, they started that English, they did. My  
stepmother, well, she couldn't although she could  
a little bit because she was a captain's wife  
and, you know, they have to learn their, a lot of  
the, different languages when they go  
boating and (she laughs) and go out.

SIGRIST: But before your father remarried...

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...you spoke English in the house?

SOLLIE: Yes, we must have because there was so, oh, a lot of  
American people around us, Jewish people.

SIGRIST: Did, did your, did your parents, your, your true  
mother and your father, ever speak Norwegian for  
any reason?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, I think they did, yeah, because that was home, they felt like home with that language, you know, uh huh.

SIGRIST: How old were you the first time you went to Norway?

SOLLIE: Well, Mom went back again, you know, I can't remember. Could I have been eight, nine years old, I think?

SIGRIST: You said that your mother missed Norway.

SOLLIE: Huh? Yeah, that's right, yes.

SIGRIST: How, how did, how did you know that she missed Norway?

SOLLIE: Oh, well, she had, you know, almost all, well, I can't tell, you know. We could tell she liked it, you know. She was, came as just a girl from, and, and didn't know none of the, none of the language over here. And we lived around (she laughs) among all the American people here, you know, she did.

SIGRIST: I'm, I'm wondering if she said to her children, to you, you know, "I miss Norway. I want to go back."

SOLLIE: Yeah, I think we learned, yeah, I think we did, some of the things, you know.

SIGRIST: What, what do remember about that first trip to Norway? What sticks out in your mind?

SOLLIE: (she sighs) I don't know. It's so long ago, you know, that it's, now I'm ninety two, you know. That's many, many years ago. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: And so you said you thought you went back three times.

SOLLIE: Yes, at least that (way?), yeah.

SIGRIST: What, what were some of the things during those trips to Norway that, that you like about Norway, that you looked forward to?

SOLLIE: Yeah, yeah. Well, we'd go first in Oslo. That's the, the, what would you call that? Like the, just like the, the principal of Norway? That's the big city.

SIGRIST: The capital city.

SOLLIE: Yeah, capital. I don't know if it the capital is but it is a big city there. That's a very, that's where we landed and we went in to see the big churches and different things there, yeah. And then they have that, their big, uh, park like, a park where they have all the people, you know, beautiful. Real, like real people. You would thought, think they were those. What would you call them?

SIGRIST: Statues?

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: Statues of people.

SOLLIE: Yes, in Norway.

SIGRIST: Uh huh.

SOLLIE: In, in that, in that, I forget the name of that park  
that is really famous with all that, good.

SIGRIST: Did you know, as, as a girl, did you know how to  
speak any Norwegian...

SOLLIE: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: ...before you went to Norway?

SOLLIE: Oh, not at the beginning but I did afterwards, yes.

SIGRIST: How did you learn to speak...

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: How did you learn to speak the Norwegian language?

SOLLIE: Well, I think a lot of it was because my father  
wanted me to go to a certain church and he knew some  
friends, that friend also is a builder like Daddy

would do. He, he was Norwegian, too, and he went  
to this church in Brooklyn way up in, by Seventh  
Avenue and 59th Street.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

SOLLIE: Yeah, the Norwegian Christian Church, yeah.  
(they laugh)

SIGRIST: So, so it was here in America that...

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, oh, oh, yes!

SIGRIST: ...you really started to learn Norwegian.

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, I did. I did go to an American church  
first, you know, just a little bit. But then as  
soon as my father got married again, then we went,  
we had the, went to the other church. I think  
that was it.

SIGRIST: Can, can you talk a little bit about, about how the  
Norwegian church here in America, how, you know,  
it's importance for the Norwegian people. Was the



when your,...

SOLLIE: Uh huh.

SIGRIST: ...these summer trips, what sticks out in your mind  
now about how things were different in Norway from  
how they had been in Brooklyn? How was life  
different in Norway than it was in Brooklyn?

SOLLIE: Well, I can't remember. How can I remember?

SIGRIST: Well, was the, was the food the same?

SOLLIE: Well, yes, I mean, I think we had, well, because my  
mother did cook, you know, and that, our Norwegian  
foods, you know.

SIGRIST: Here in Brooklyn?

SOLLIE: In Brooklyn, yeah, we had. And there's a lot of  
Norwegian people there, up there by the, on Eighth  
Avenue and that (?). But we had it nice anyway,  
you know. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Where did you lived when you would go for the summer  
in Norway? Or whom would you live with?

SOLLIE: Oh, with the family.

SIGRIST: But who were they? Who, who was the family?

SOLLIE: My family , it is some of my sisters and it is it, my  
sister and I.

SIGRIST: But when you went as a child, these summer visits to  
Norway, whose house did you live in?

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah, well, my mother wasn't strong so we did go  
up to East Chatham [ph], I think they call it,  
Bjorlow in East Chatham [ph].

SIGRIST: But, but were you living, when you went to Norway  
during the summers as a child, whom did you live  
with?

SOLLIE: Oh, with my mother, (correcting herself) uh, it was  
my grandmother and grandfather's home.

SIGRIST: I see.

SOLLIE: And that was really very, where the bathroom was outside, you know (she laughs), and then we had the water there. We could go out on that lake, you know. We, uh, my family, my cousins and that, because I, we had a lot of cousins because my mother was a big family, you know, so we had a lot of family in there. And then, uh...

SIGRIST: Can you describe your grandparents' house for me, what it looked like?

SOLLIE: Well, it's a lot like the old houses we have here.

SIGRIST: Well, describe that. What, what did it look like?

SOLLIE: How can I? I'm not a...(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, what was the house made out of?

SOLLIE: The wood, I think, wood. A lot of the houses that Dad made out in, in Brooklyn and Flatbush, yeah, they were, I think they were all wooden houses,

you know.

SIGRIST: But your grandparents' house in Norway, that was made  
out of wood?

SOLLIE: Yes, that was wood, too, oh, yes, it was nice.

SIGRIST: What color was the house?

SOLLIE: The whole thing red and different colors, I, they  
were very, very pretty, you know. It was, all along  
the river was beautiful.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many rooms their house had?

SOLLIE: I think we were on the second floor because you did  
have the kitchen but, you know, the bathroom was  
outside so we did (she laughs) have to worry  
about that. And then, and then we must have got  
water in some place. I don't know how we got  
that but we did have water inside, too. But we  
also had wells, you know. We had to go and get  
the water sometimes if it got low in water, you  
know.

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

SOLLIE: Especially the rocking chairs, they were beautiful,  
comfortable, you know. They were, they were very  
comfortable. And they used to have big tables,  
you know, see it? (she gestures to one of her  
father's paintings hanging on the wall)

SIGRIST: Like the one in your...

SOLLIE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...painting that your father did over here...

SOLLIE: Yes, uh huh, uh huh.

SIGRIST: ...with a large, large wooden table.

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: How, who did the cooking in your grandparents' house?  
Who cooked?

SOLLIE: Oh, I think Grandma did, yeah. We had a lot of mackerels. They went out fishing, see, in that water that we had there. There was, we had, it had mackerel and different fishes, you know, that we had. And we used to take them out and eat them, you know, hold them in a piece of paper. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How would your grandmother prepare mackerel? How would she cook the mackerel?

SOLLIE: Oh, just, I think they just washed them. It's so long ago. Well, it's just, I think we did it the same as we do here now but I don't do it anymore. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember how, how your grandparents lit the inside of the house? How did they light the inside of the house?

SOLLIE: Oh, that was with candles, yeah, and kerosene. That I, I remember but it was, yeah, those, uh...

EI-697/SOLLIE

SIGRIST: Did you, did you use kerosene in Brooklyn?

SOLLIE: Oh, no, not at that time. (she clears her throat)  
Did we? I think we must have had wires so it was  
electric, I think.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Did your grandparents have animals?

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: Did your grandparents keep animals in Norway?

SOLLIE: Well, they did have cows, you know, yeah, they did.

SIGRIST: Does, does something stick out in your mind about the  
cows?

SOLLIE: No. We used to love to, well, when we got home

again,                    you know, when we went to, well, we used to  
go to East                    Chatham [ph], as I said, and that was all  
the cows and                    everything, so.

SIGRIST:    That's here in the United States?

SOLLIE:    Yeah, yeah, that's here in the United States.

SIGRIST:    Tell me a little bit about the trip that you went  
                  over, when you came back with your grandmother.  
What,                    were you there by yourself?

SOLLIE:    No. (she pauses)    No, I was with Mama for, for that.  
                  And then we, I think, afterwards didn't I go with  
my                    stepmother? I can't remember. So I could, I  
think.

SIGRIST:    How was it that you came back to America with your  
                  grandmother?

SOLLIE:    Oh, it was fun. It was very nice. And then we came  
                  into the, where the, because then I, you see, my  
dad                    became a citizen. You have to become a  
citizen in                    order to vote, don't you? And I

think that's

how...(she pauses)

SIGRIST: Why was your grandmother coming to America?

SOLLIE: Well, she was, lived with her, her daughter that my  
father married, see? Yes.

SIGRIST: I see. So it's your grandmother and your aunt...

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah. That was my aunt that became my  
stepmother, yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: So is it the three of you that are coming back to  
America?

SOLLIE: Oh, no. I had all my sisters with me.

SIGRIST: So it is a large family group...

SOLLIE: Yes, yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...that is coming back?

SOLLIE: Yeah.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SIGRIST: Was, was this at the end of one of the summers?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, yeah, that's when we was coming back again  
then.

SIGRIST: Had your grandmother ever been to America before?

SOLLIE: No, no. She hadn't been outside of her little  
(visit?, village?) there and it was all mountains  
and that, up, all there was beautiful.

SIGRIST: What, what did, what did your grandmother think about  
going to America?

SOLLIE: Well, I guess she didn't like it so much but she  
liked to, to go where her daughter was, I think.  
Other, her other children were all married, see, so  
she...

SIGRIST: Was she going to America with the intention of  
staying in America?

SOLLIE: I don't think so but she liked so, because, so she

EI-697/SOLLIE

stayed. So she died here, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Was, was your grandfather...

SOLLIE: No.

SIGRIST: ...living at that time?

SOLLIE: No, no. He died when...

SIGRIST: He died.

SOLLIE: Right, he died, yeah.

SIGRIST: And you said...

SOLLIE: And he was old, too, eighty, ninety years, yes.

SIGRIST: Well, you said your grandmother was in her seventies  
anyway.

SOLLIE: Yes, yes, she was, at that time, yes, sure, so.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your grandmother packed to take

with her to America? What she felt was important  
to take with her to America?

SOLLIE: Sure, I can't now. Just clothes, I guess because  
they didn't, well, they had a lot of stuff but not  
as much as what we have today. That I know.

SIGRIST: How did your grandmother dress in Norway?

SOLLIE: She had only skirts and blouses and, yeah, you know,  
because a lot of this, I imagine, was homemade. I  
don't know. I can't remember that so much.

SIGRIST: I'm wondering if she dressed differently than how you  
were dressed?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes. This is, I think, they did at that time but  
not now. (she laughs) Now they're all, uh...

SIGRIST: So, so it's you and your grandmother...

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and your aunt and your sisters...

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Yeah, we were five.

SIGRIST: ...and, and is, is your mother also in this trip  
going back to America?

SOLLIE: My mother? My real mother? Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Your real mother, so she's with you?

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah, but not after when we were too, when we  
were grown up, no. They couldn't.

SIGRIST: But the time that you had to go through Ellis Island  
with your grandmother...

SOLLIE: Then I, yes, then I was about (she pauses), so I was  
twelve I guess it was.

SIGRIST: And that was, that was the trip that your grandmother  
is packing all the clothes to take with her to  
America?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, yeah, sure, she had been, she came over here

then, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Do you remember getting on the ship with your grandmother for that trip?

SOLLIE: I can't (?) remember. On the ship that there was mice running (she laughs) but otherwise and otherwise, uh...

SIGRIST: Well, because you made so many trips back and forth, it's probably easy to sort of...

SOLLIE: Yes, we did, yeah, we did, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, do you, do you remember the name of ship that you took with your grandmother to America?

SOLLIE: I think it was "Oscar," uh...

SIGRIST: The Oscar...

SOLLIE: One of them, Oscar something. And then wasn't another on "Frederick the," yeah, I can't remember names.

SIGRIST: Yes. There was an Oscar and a Frederick.

SOLLIE: Yes, something, yeah, see? So I forget because we  
did use, go with the boats, you know, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Did, you had told me before the interview started  
that the name that came to your mind was "the  
Oscar...

SOLLIE: Did I ever go with, I can't remember if I ever got so  
far as I was (she addresses her daughter Eleanor),  
with, when I was, took with you girls, I took  
you girls to Norway. Yeah, I took my girls,  
you know, my daughters.

SIGRIST: Eleanor, who is sitting in the room with us.

SOLLIE: That was a grown up, yes, yeah, yeah. (she addresses  
her daughter Eleanor) Did, how, did we fly over to  
Norway? (Eleanor shakes her head "yes") We did  
fly over.

SIGRIST: (he watches Eleanor's reaction) That was a (he

EI-697/SOLLIE

laughs), a long time ago.

SOLLIE: You see, yeah. (a telephone rings in the background)  
That's how...

SIGRIST: Okay, we're just going to break for a...(break in  
tape) Okay, we're now resuming. You mentioned  
that you remembered on the ship there were mice...

SOLLIE: Yeah, mice, rats.

SIGRIST: ...running around.

SOLLIE: But the food was very, very good, yeah. The food on  
the ship, you know, they have a nice, like the top  
of, it's like where you can stay and see and watch  
all the fishes and different things, you know.

SIGRIST: Up on deck?

SOLLIE: Yeah, on deck, yeah.

SIGRIST: The deck.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: The top of the deck, I could.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

SOLLIE: Oh, in the, the boats, like the beds on the, it's  
almost like you had to, now, on the wall, you  
know, yeah.

SIGRIST: Like a bunk bed.

SOLLIE: Yes, bunk beds. That's how, yeah. I know we were  
afraid, though, that we would fall, you know,  
coming over that. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Now, how many people were in a room?

SOLLIE: Well, we were us girls. We had four, five girls,  
yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: What were the names of your sisters?

SOLLIE: Oh, Eleanor, Norma, no, that's my girls I have.

SIGRIST: Eleanor and Norma are your girls. (he laughs)

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were the names of your sisters?

SOLLIE: (she laughs) Margaret.

SIGRIST: You're Margaret.

SOLLIE: Yeah. Margaret, and Lily, my sister Lily. She died  
when she was only thirty two, I think. Lily.  
Sylvie.

SIGRIST: Sylvie?

SOLLIE: Yes, Sylvie, yes, Sylvie. S-L-Y (sic), isn't it?

SIGRIST: S-Y-L...

SOLLIE: V-I-A, isn't it?

SIGRIST: Sylvia?

SOLLIE: Yeah, Sylvia, Sylvie. And Ruthie, but we had two

EI-697/SOLLIE

Ruthies because one died. She used to sing (she sings) "It's a long way to Tipperary." She was only four years. She started to talk, Ruthie, and she was so cute. But she died and that killed, almost killed my, so, uh...

SIGRIST: What did Ruthie die of?

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: What did she die of?

SOLLIE: I think it was pneumonia, yeah.

SIGRIST: But she was only four when she died?

SOLLIE: Yes, I think it was four. So then my, I know, I can remember my father and my mother was talking while on a, we were in a car and Mama said, "I have to have another baby," yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: So...

SOLLIE: That was another Ruthie. So we got that Ruthie,

second Ruthie.

SIGRIST: So all the girls are in one cabin on the ship.

SOLLIE: Yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: What else do you remember about being on the ship?  
Do you remember your grandmother on the ship at all?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes. She was, liked it, she liked it, you know,  
and could help us. She could help, so.

SIGRIST: Did anyone get seasick?

SOLLIE: Oh, I think they did because it was, had tough  
weather sometimes, you know. And certain places  
were very dark and different. I don't know why  
but those things that you know. But we loved it.  
But we loved it, yeah, when we come to Norway,  
come. But we were, we, see, we lived in Arendal  
but then we took the trip to Oslo where it's a big  
place and that's where...

SIGRIST: To see all the sights.

SOLLIE: ...yeah, and all the figures and everything in that big park. That's a very famous thing, you know, yeah.

SIGRIST: Now, now this trip that you're coming across with your grandmother, why did you have to go to Ellis Island?

SOLLIE: Well, not for me. I took my grandmother because she was not a citizen.

SIGRIST: So she had to go to Ellis Island.

SOLLIE: Yes, it was her.

SIGRIST: Uh huh, and, and you just went with her...

SOLLIE: Yeah, I just went with her.

SIGRIST: ...to accompany her.

SOLLIE: Yes, I was there because I could speak English. She couldn't.

SIGRIST: Where did your mother and your sisters and your aunt  
go?

SOLLIE: I guess they were staying home, at home. Well, they  
must have, they must have taken me there because  
at about eleven I don't think I could travel that  
way. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being at Ellis Island with  
your grandmother?

SOLLIE: I didn't remember so much because they have done  
everything now, everything new now, which I, I  
wish I could get over there and see.

SIGRIST: But, but when you were twelve...

SOLLIE: They tell me...

SIGRIST: ...what, what sticks out in your mind about having to  
be there with your grandmother?

SOLLIE: Yeah, it was something. I can remember it was like,

EI-697/SOLLIE

we had to wait. Everybody was waiting on there.  
Boy, I forget just how the building was, though.  
It's so long ago, you know.

SIGRIST: It's a long time ago.

SOLLIE: Yeah, it's a long time. And it, when you get old, as  
you get older you can't remember as much as you did  
before. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, you're doing a great job. (they laugh) do you  
remember how your grandmother felt about having to  
go to Ellis Island?

SOLLIE: No, because she began to, she liked it and she saw  
how happy my dad was when he got married to my...

SIGRIST: But before that. When you were with your grandmother  
at Ellis Island...

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...do you remember how she was feeling about having  
to be there?

SOLLIE: I guess she was a little afraid, you know. She don't, in Norway, you know, they don't get, didn't get so much as they do here, you know. Times were different, too.

SIGRIST: Did, did anyone ask you any questions there?

SOLLIE: You know, that I can't remember, honestly I can't.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how long you had to be there?

SOLLIE: Well, there was a lot of people, you see. There was a lot of other people there, too, on line too.

SIGRIST: Were you a citizen at that point?

SOLLIE: My, well, a citizen when your born because I was, I was born in Norway, so that's right.

SIGRIST: But I was just wondering if you had become a citizen by that point?

SOLLIE: Yes, I have, yes, with my father, you know. He did

that, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, where did, when you were done with your  
grandmother at Ellis Island...

SOLLIE: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...where did you go?

SOLLIE: I think my, my father must have taken us there  
because I couldn't and she couldn't, you know, so,  
so I think that's how I must have.

SIGRIST: And where were you living at that time? Where was  
your house? Was it the same house?

SOLLIE: Yeah, I think we was, we, on 45th Street there, yeah,  
although we had moved up to the other house. Right  
across the street was an all one family house we,  
Dad was building. See, he built it, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of your grandmother's impressions  
of New York City and, and what she thought about  
all of this?

SOLLIE: Yeah. I think she, she liked it. She was really,  
because she had, had another daughter, my mother's  
sister, that was from Norway, too, was coming  
with here over here, uh huh. That I...

SIGRIST: That was the woman...

SOLLIE: Huh? No, no the one who my....

SIGRIST: This is another sister?

SOLLIE: Yeah, that's another sister of hers, see? Because  
she was, I think they were five or six in each  
family.

SIGRIST: Where did, where did your grandmother lived when she  
came over here?

SOLLIE: She lived with us, you know, yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about living with your  
grandmother here in Brooklyn?

SOLLIE: Yeah, oh, well, we were very glad because then I could, (she laughs) she did all the dishes and everything else. Otherwise it was me that had to do it because I was the oldest one, see?

SIGRIST: Uh huh. So she helped?

SOLLIE: Yeah, so she helped when she came. And we became very good friends, you know, because we didn't know her too good, you know, at first, you know. We had to get to, although we had been over but, you know, you forget a little bit, yeah.

SIGRIST: What were, what were some of the, what were some of the ways that your grandmother was very Norwegian? What were some of the Norwegian things that she did?

SOLLIE: (she pauses) I don't know, funny? You know, when you're over ninety, you know (she laughs), my memory.

SIGRIST: Well, for instance, did she cook for the family?

SOLLIE: Oh, yes, she helped to cook. She liked that.

SIGRIST: And what were some of the, the Norwegian foods that she cooked for you?

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah, that. Had very good pancakes. (she pronounces it as "pan-a-cakes")

SIGRIST: Pancakes.

SOLLIE: Oh, they are delicious pancakes they do.

SIGRIST: How did your grandmother make that?

SOLLIE: On a, they were long, bigger, you know. And we roll then up the same way, I think, they did.

SIGRIST: And you're actually saying "pan-a-cake?" "P," pan-a, you're putting another syllable in than we do in English.

SOLLIE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: We say "pan-cake." And you're saying...

SOLLIE: "Pana," yeah, "panakogel" [ph]. We call them  
"panakogel" [ph], yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, "panakogel" [ph]?

SOLLIE: Yeah, yeah. P-A-N-N-A-K-I..., I think it is, panna,  
panna. It's just so long now that I (she laughs),  
I'm mostly America but I do like the Norwegian, uh  
huh.

SIGRIST: Were there, were there, were there certain Norwegian  
traditions that your family followed, say at  
Christmas time?

SOLLIE: Yeah, we had a Christmas tree like you have, like the  
Americans had here, I think.

SIGRIST: But did you do anything that was not American, any  
traditional Norwegian things that you did at  
Christmas time?

SOLLIE: No, I (she pauses), how we'd go around the Christmas  
tree. I guess they do that over here all over,

don't they? We go around and sing, the Norwegians did. (My dad was with us?) (she pauses). I can't, of, of course baking all the cookies and everything, baking fancy cookies. That we did. That time we were great. We learned a lot of that, you know.

SIGRIST: Who taught you how to do that?

SOLLIE: Well, just, my stepmother and Dad, too, yeah, uh huh. So we got along very good, you know, see?

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the marriage, the actual marriage of your father and your stepmother?

SOLLIE: I can't remember when she, when Dad, I think she just had (?) wedding.

SIGRIST: Did they get married in a church?

SOLLIE: You know, I can't remember it, so. It's so long ago now, you know. And I think your memory (grows?, goes?), (she laughs) leaves you, you know, your memory and things. Although we should write, write

things more, you know, uh huh.

SIGRIST: That's why we tape record people.

SOLLIE: Yeah, see, yeah.

SIGRIST: That's why we're here.

SOLLIE: Yeah, see?

SIGRIST: Tell me about, tell me about your father after he remarried. Tell me about his outlook on life. When he got married again, did he change at all as a person?

SOLLIE: No, no. He was the same nice guy, yeah, although we lost a lot of the friends because they were all, some of them, a lot of the girls that came from Norway used to come and stay with us. And, you know, then, when they were afraid that, that people would think that they were running after my father, so we lost, we lost a lot of friends when Tante, and "tante" we called her, "tante," because of that, you know.

SIGRIST: So even after he remarried, you still called her  
"tante?"

SOLLIE: No, no, Klara, no. We called her "Mom."

SIGRIST: Mom.

SOLLIE: In due respect to my father and my mother, too. She,  
my mother knew my sister (correcting herself), my  
aunt, you know, so we knew she wouldn't mind  
that because.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about your father getting remarried?

SOLLIE: Well, I think I was happy because I was, I was the  
oldest in the family and, you know, then I had to  
(?) right away and when my dad and I had to help a  
lot, you know. But when my stepmother came over,  
that helped but she wasn't my stepmother at  
first, you know, right away. It took, took a  
little bit, only a little bit. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Now, did you go through high school in America?

SOLLIE: No.

SIGRIST: Did you, what, what grade did you go up to?

SOLLIE: Eight. It was eight.

SIGRIST: And then what happened?

SOLLIE: Eight. And then I started to go, but then I had to,  
when my father got married, then I could go and  
look for a job.

SIGRIST: And what was...

SOLLIE: But that took schooling, I think that took a little  
schooling to get the typewriting, see? See, that  
was typewriting.

SIGRIST: So you went to school to, to learn...

SOLLIE: Yes, I did. Why, I think it was the telephone  
company first. I had that one job, you know. And  
then I had those other jobs, cleaning house and

that, you know.

SIGRIST: The, the first job with the telephone company, how long did that last?

SOLLIE: It didn't last too long because I didn't like it.  
(she laughs) And I had to travel, see? I took the subway and, that, that we had.

SIGRIST: And so then you went into doing housework?

SOLLIE: Yes, housework, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid for doing housework?

SOLLIE: It wasn't much. I can't remember, funny? Although it was, we have to begin to tell people they should know what they're telling, (she laughs), but you can't.

SIGRIST: Of course, you were, of course, in your house you had to do housework...

SOLLIE: Yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: ...and now you're doing someone else's housework.

SOLLIE: Yeah, so we used to get, I forget now.

SIGRIST: Did you live in with the family?

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: Did you live with the...

SOLLIE: No, I just went and did the, the hours, you know.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about the  
experience of doing housework in other people's  
houses?

SOLLIE: No, I was generally very fortunate. They were very  
nice people. (she laughs) Wherever I went, they  
really were very nice.

SIGRIST: Well, now, what, when did you get married?

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: (she pauses) Oh, that's many years ago, too. (she laughs) Oh, that (?)

SIGRIST: Well, what was the name of your husband?

SOLLIE: Guttorn.

SIGRIST: Gust...

SOLLIE: Yeah, G-U-T-T-O-R-N.

SIGRIST: Guttorn.

SOLLIE: Guttorn Sollie. (she pronounces "Sollie" as "soolie")  
That was Sollie, see? That was Sollie.

SIGRIST: How did you meet him?

SOLLIE: Huh?

SIGRIST: How did you meet him?

SOLLIE: Well, I saw him the first time. He came to, in the choir out west, a guy, Fergus [ph]. He was at

Bible school there. And he came to Brooklyn and came out. And he was walking along while they, after they got off the, the, uh, what do you call it, the program? What do you call that? (she gestures)

SIGRIST: The stage?

SOLLIE: Yeah, when they can get off the, the hymn, the singers there. And my sister said, "Hey, Margaret, there's a good, there's a (she laughs) good friend for you," you know, of course. And then I said, "Oh, no. He's too short," because I couldn't wear high heels. But I, see, I married him anyway. (she laughs and gestures to her wedding photograph hanging on the wall)

SIGRIST: Is, is that your wedding picture right to the...

SOLLIE: Yes, yes, that's my picture, yeah.

SIGRIST: I'm looking at this really magnificent wedding picture taken in the 1920s sometime.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what year you were married?  
(addressing Mrs. Sollie's daughter) Or Eleanor,  
do you know what year?

SOLLIE: Well, he's...

MRS. SOLLIE'S DAUGHTER: Well, I was born in '29, so probably  
'27.

SIGRIST: 1927.

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: It's, it's a wonderful photograph, maybe, I don't  
know, twelve [inches] by eighteen [inches] or so.  
(he addresses Mrs. Sollie) You're sitting in a  
rather fancy chair in your gown...

SOLLIE: Yeah, in my gown, yes.

SIGRIST: ...your wedding gown, yeah.

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: Yeah, that's it.

SIGRIST: And name your children for me.

SOLLIE: Well, my girls, Eleanor and Norma...

SIGRIST: Eleanor...

SOLLIE: Thelma, Ann and Elsie.

SIGRIST: Oh, my goodness. Eleanor, Norma, Ann...

SOLLIE: Thelma.

SIGRIST: Thelma and Elsie.

SOLLIE: And Elsie, yeah, five, five, just five. Thelma  
called today from Florida.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Sollie, what do you think is truly Norwegian  
about you? What part of you is Norwegian?

SOLLIE: I don't know. I think I liked it altogether. i had  
a, a, what do you mean like?

SIGRIST: Well, is there, is there some part of your  
personality...

SOLLIE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...that is, that is truly Norwegian?

SOLLIE: Yes, that's, yes. Well, I think I liked it  
spiritually. I thought I, I, uh, I learned more  
spiritually in the church that we went to,  
learned. I got to learn to know, to know the Lord.  
I gave my heart to the Lord and then I learned  
to follow him, you know, and be his child. So  
that's what I am  
today.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Sollie, thank you very much. That's,  
that's a good place for us to end.

SOLLIE: I'm not a good, what do you call it? (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, you did a great job. (they laugh)

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: I'm not, no. I'm not, I can't but I know I've had a  
very happy, and I tried, I had, of course, a lot  
of sorrow. I lost a wonderful guy. He didn't, I  
don't know how many years...

MRS. SOLLIE'S DAUGHTER: He died in 1954.

SOLLIE: Huh?

MRS. SOLLIE'S DAUGHTER: 1954 Daddy died.

SOLLIE: Yeah, in 1954.

SIGRIST: 1954.

SOLLIE: Yeah, so, see, you know, so. But I had, had a  
wonderful, he was a wonderful guy, you know. That  
I know. And I learned to know the Lord, that I  
would be saved, walk and talk with him. That's  
easy.

(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Thank you. Thank you for letting me ask you...

EI-697/SOLLIE

SOLLIE: That was good, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...these questions.

SOLLIE: But that, I'm sorry. I'm not a good...(she laughs)

SIGRIST: You did it a fine job. (they laugh) There's nothing  
to be sorry for. This is Paul Sigrist signing off  
with Margaret Sollie on Friday, October 27th,  
1995, with her daughter Eleanor in attendance at  
the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Care  
Center in, uh, Brooklyn, New York. Thank you  
very much, Mrs. Sollie.

SOLLIE: Yes, thank you.