

EI-721

MARTHA LINDGREN GUSTAFSON

BIRTHDATE: JULY 27, 1904

DIED: APRIL 11, 1996

INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 1995

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:40

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: LUTHERN HOME, WORCESTER,
MASSACHUSETTS**

**ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY
MAIER**

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

SWEDEN, 1927

AGE: 22

SHIP: "THE DROTTNINGHOLM"

RESIDENCES:

- **SWEDEN: BORGORD**
- **THE US: WORCESTER, MA**

LEVINE: Today is November 12, 1995. I'm here in the Lutheran Home in Worcester, Massachusetts, and I'm with Martha Gustafson, who came from Sweden when she was 22 in 1927. You came to this country with your husband and your two first children.

GUSTAFSON: First children.

LEVINE: Right. And ah, today, Mrs. Gustafson is 91 years of age and looks absolutely wonderful. (laughs)

GUSTAFSON: Thank you. (laughing)

LEVINE: And I want to say that I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember. So let's start at the beginning. If you would say where in Sweden you were born.

GUSTAFSON: I was born in [land] that's in the center of Sweden and I lived there to, to I really went to the United States. I lived there really long, in different places there.

LEVINE: But within that same...

GUSTAFSON: In that area, all the time.

LEVINE: Okay. Now what's your birthdate?

GUSTAFSON: My birthdate? That's in July 27, nineteen hundred four.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

GUSTAFSON: Augusta.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

GUSTAFSON: [A-U-S-G-A-S-T-A] Augusta.

LEVINE: Augusta. And do you by any chance know her maiden name?

GUSTAFSON: Her maiden name was Anderson.

LEVINE: Okay. And your father, his name?

GUSTAFSON: His name was Oskar.

LEVINE: Oskar. Okay. And did you have sisters and brothers?

GUSTAFSON: Oh yeah. We were nine sisters and brothers. And I was next to the youngest one. I was four and a half years old when my father died, and my brother was only six months old.

LEVINE: Oh.

GUSTAFSON: And my mother took care of the family after that. And she used to weave, and she started to, to, started to do that work to make a living. And she did wonderful. We were nine children. We never starved, we never were without clothes. She was a, just a wonderful person. She used to sit at night. I can remember when we're waking up in the morning sometime, at four o'clock, five o'clock, probably I had to go to toilet. And she sat there and study. Studied. She made curtains. She made vests. Material for dresses. And she made rugs. And she made a lot of tablecloths. Beautiful linen tablecloths, that she sold. And I still have some of them at home. But I gave it away to my children, divided it out to my children, so they could have something to remember her by, because she was really remarkable person. When she was, had gone, had been

dead for forty years, they wrote an article about her in her paper. Her picture was in the paper...

LEVINE: In this country?

GUSTAFSON: No. In Sweden. After she was gone for forty years, and wrote what she had done. There was my mother.

LEVINE: So she supported all of you children.

GUSTAFSON: She supported, of course there, all my elderly brothers, they were working then because they were twenty-one and eighteen and seventeen and things. So they were working and helped too, see, but she supported, supported us.

LEVINE: Do you want me to turn it off for a minute?
(tape resumes)

We're resuming now. We were talking, you were telling about your mother and how she supported the entire family. Now, what kind of a person was she?

GUSTAFSON: Well she, she was a quiet person. She was very religious. Every Saturday we, she took us, her children to her father, to her husband's grave. My father's grave. Every Saturday. And of course, in the wintertime, when it was cold she couldn't go. But when she'd go it was always every Saturday afternoon we would bring flowers to the grave.

LEVINE: And she was a Lutheran?

GUSTAFSON: She was a Lutheran.

LEVINE: And what about church? Did you go to church?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had to go to church, yeah.

LEVINE: And what about religious occasions? Do you remember religious holidays and what you did?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. We had a lot of holidays there. And there was all, they was all more religious than here, you know it? They were all from the Bible. I can't even describe them. We had, when Jesus got, got blessed, when the, right now I can't explain it --in the Bible on the ah, he got blessed from heaven, there was a certain day...

LEVINE: On Easter?

GUSTAFSON: No. Easter was Easter. But then, I can't remember exactly what day it was, but I'm remembering it was (pauses, mutters) What's the name of that day now? (nursing home announcement in the background).

LEVINE: What did you do on that day?

GUSTAFSON: Huh?

LEVINE: What did you do on that day?

GUSTAFSON: Now everybody, nobody worked. Nobody worked. It was a holiday. The first holiday we had after that was ah, in February when there was, *Vårfrudagen*. It was when Maria got blessed. We called that *Vårfrudagen*. There was in the last part of February or somewhere. There was a holiday. We all, nobody worked then.

LEVINE: And what did you do? You went to church?

GUSTAFSON: We went to church. And we went to [] and had coffee and homemade things and coffee bread and cake and cookies and things like that. Went door to door. And visited each other. We did a lot of that in Sweden. We went to visit. We were very caring about each other. What happened to one. Very caring.

LEVINE: Now, the town that you were living in, Borgord?

GUSTAFSON: Borgord, yes.

LEVINE: Borgord. How big a place was that? Were there a lot of people there?

GUSTAFSON: There was a small, just a small, small city or town outside [Norrkopen] a larger city.

LEVINE: What was the larger city?

GUSTAFSON: Norrkopen.

LEVINE: How would you spell that?

GUSTAFSON: N-O-R-R-K-O-P-E-N. Norrkopen.

LEVINE: So would you go to Norrkopen for certain reasons? Would you go to the larger city?

GUSTAFSON: Well, yes. We used to go in to do some shopping and things like that in larger stores that they had. Because it was a small city, what we had.

LEVINE: And what was the kind of work that most people did in Borgord?

GUSTAFSON: They, they made pitchforks. My father made... I can remember going visit him in the shop, though I only was four and a half years old. I used to go at eleven o'clock in the morning with coffee and coffee bread and things like that for him. And four o'clock in the afternoon because they worked a long day. And I used to go down with coffee. I had a little, little ah, coffee pot. And then of course I had that little basket, and this was my job, when I could. When I was this old. And I was my father's pet, see. So I used to go down with the coffee. And he had, it was a big, big oven. Big long, like an oven where they heated all the material that they made those pitchforks from. So those boys were standing there taking care of it. And then my father took those hot, and put it in the big, big machine and then stepped on something and made it split, and it made (laughs) in that material, so after that he made the pitchfork out of it. And some people made screws and bolts and they made an awful lot of everything in different

parts of the factory. And in one part of the factory they made material, wood material. Something out of wood, like um, ah, clothespins. I never saw clothespins like they made them here. Like they were made out of, they had a spring in the middle, you know some of the clothespin we have? That's the only clothespin I know cause that's what they made there, see? And they made tops to play with, you know, that had a, put a string around them and play with those tops. They made them there too. So they were quite busy working people there.

LEVINE: Did you have any particular toys that you remember?

GUSTAFSON: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember any toys you had when you were a little girl?

GUSTAFSON: Any toys?

LEVINE: Toys, uh, huh.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. I had my, the most I had are dolls that are made out of everything. All kinds of material. Probably then porcelain head. You know, the head of made of porcelain, but then you know the other things were made, my mother made the other things. The arms and the body and all that. She used to make.

LEVINE: So you played dolls. Did you play by yourself or did you have friends?

GUSTAFSON: No. We had, there were a lot of friends. I lived, we lived in a, an apartment building so there was quite a few people there. So I had a lot of friends. Oh, I wouldn't say a lot, but we were at least, we were at least eight or nine girls that used to go together and play.

LEVINE: What else did you play with your friends, besides with the dolls?

GUSTAFSON: What?

LEVINE: What other things did you play with your girlfriends?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, we played games. All kinds of games and things like that. And we used to run and hide and we had to find out where this was hiding []. But things like that. We played games.

LEVINE: Can you describe the apartment where you lived?

GUSTAFSON: Hm?

LEVINE: Could you describe the apartment where you lived.

GUSTAFSON: My brothers, they lived upstairs on the third floor in that apartment building because that way, we lived on the first floor, my mother and the girls. There were three rooms. And then there was a big hallway that we walked into. And then my mother had, in one of those three rooms she had the loom where she was doing the weaving on.

LEVINE: And how many girls were there? How many girls?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, there were... One girl was married so there was, we were four girls.

LEVINE: Four girls and how many brothers?

GUSTAFSON: We were nine. There were five brothers. But they, we didn't live, they were married. Three of them were married. Three of my brothers were married, see.

LEVINE: And what did your brothers do for work as they got older?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, they worked in the factories. Made screws and all that kind of material.

LEVINE: Now, did they have to do an apprenticeship or did they just go after school, after they finished school they went.

GUSTAFSON: Well, yes. There was, not at that time, they picked it up at the father's, you know, their uncles, whatever they did see.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents there in Sweden that you knew?

GUSTAFSON: No. My, my grandmother husband, he went to United States. And he went to Maine, and they never heard of him. They never heard, know what happened to him. This one was on my mother's side. But on my father's side, his parents went to United States and they took all the children with them. But my father and my aunt didn't like it over here so they went back to Sweden.

LEVINE: Oh. When, do you know when your father was here in the United States?

GUSTAFSON: I couldn't say. I know my grandmother and my grandfather died in Holden.

LEVINE: Holden, Massachusetts. Oh. So did your father stay here very long before he returned?

GUSTAFSON: No. That I don't know either. I don't think he stayed a year.

LEVINE: This was before he was married?

GUSTAFSON: Before he was married. So then he went home, he met my mother and married her.

LEVINE: Did they ever tell you about how they met?

GUSTAFSON: No. I can't say that they did.

LEVINE: Were they both from the same town?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Can you think of any other holidays or festivals?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. We had, of course there was New Year, but there was nothing too special about New Year. Everybody didn't, nobody worked. And then we had a holiday where

we took out the Christmas tree. There was the thirteenth, in January. (silence) What did we call that? Julendeknut. That's what we called that holiday.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

GUSTAFSON: Twenty, twenty, I had to spell that, twenty. Juledeknut. T-- U-S-U-O-N-D-E K-N-U-T. [It's know as Tyvendedagen]

LEVINE: It's two words.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what does it mean?

GUSTAFSON: That we threw out the Christmas tree.

LEVINE: So what was....

GUSTAFSON: It was twenty days after Christmas.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So what would happen on that day?

GUSTAFSON: That day we danced around the Christmas tree. We all danced around our Christmas tree. And then we had candy, there was, it was wrapped into paper, beautiful paper and inside there were candy.

LEVINE: What kind of candy?

GUSTAFSON: There was (pause) regular candy. Hard candy. And we, my mother, and in all the houses, the mother or father just

stood and dealt out this candy. We all were supposed to have exactly, exactly used as many candy from the Christmas tree.

LEVINE: Oh, before that, the candies were hanging on the tree?

GUSTAFSON: Before they were hanging on the tree. So then we danced around the tree and then after we danced around the tree we took those candy off, and then, in a pile, and then my mother, in my house, took the, took one candy and then 'till we all got just as many.

LEVINE: And what else was on the tree besides the candy?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, we had light and we had all kind of decorations, and bulbs and you know... Oh, yes. Christmas was a big, big holiday in Sweden. It's the biggest holiday, you know.
(train whistle in the background)

LEVINE: What did you do on Christmas do on Christmas day or Christmas Eve?

GUSTAFSON: Well, Christmas, we started Christmas in Sweden on the 13th of December. That's when we celebrated the nun that came over from Russia years and years and hundreds of years ago. And she used to come over, she came, she was a Lutheran. She was an, ah, of course Russia was Catholic, Roman Catholic and you know they were very strict against the, the Lutheran people see? So she escaped over that Baltic Sea and come over to Sweden, but she, she was a nun really. And she was so nice. She

went from house to house and she made up clothes and she took old clothes and washed them and took 'em apart and made clothes for younger kids out of it. That's all she did, went from house to house to do that. She was very nice person. So from then on we celebrate that the 13th of January. We call it Lucia Day, Lucia Day.

LEVINE: L-U-C-I-A.

GUSTAFSON: Ya. How do you spell -cia? Lucia Day.

LEVINE: That was the 13th of December.

GUSTAFSON: That was the 13th of December. That was the first holiday in December. There was a holiday too. Nobody worked then. They celebrate the way that she did it. And then we ah, (coughs)...

LEVINE: When you celebrated that day, what did you do?

GUSTAFSON: Well, we just celebrate. We didn't work. We went to visit each other.

LEVINE: And then what was the next holiday in December?

GUSTAFSON: Then come Christmas.

LEVINE: And what did you do on Christmas Eve? Did you do anything special?

GUSTAFSON: On Christmas Eve, of course, first we went and got the Christmas tree. But we did that before Christmas Eve probably, a couple days. So then it's all decorated Christmas Eve already. And there was a lot of food. You started to cook before Christmas. All kinds of foods. Herring was done and the, the, what do you call [silta] all kinds of meat put together in one that you cut up, what do you call that? You call that [silta] anyway. And all kind of food was cooked before Christmas, because Christmas you were not supposed to work too harshly. So we had (laughs a little), everybody went from house to house. And if you came into one house, you couldn't get out of there. You had to have a cookies or something because otherwise you walked out with the Christmas. So you had to be treated or something. It doesn't matter who you were, if we never saw you before in all our life, if you happened to come into our house, they had to be treated a coffee or coffee bread and cookies and homemade stuff. That was Christmas Eve. And Christmas Day we went to church. It was very quiet, Christmas Day. That was a quiet day. But then we had a second Christmas. Second day of Christmas. And then they started to go out and dance and have fun, people. The second day of Christmas.

LEVINE: Did you dance?

GUSTAFSON: Oh gosh, yes. I danced. (laughing a lot)

LEVINE: (Laughing) You enjoyed it I take it. What kind of music did you have?

GUSTAFSON: Well we had my ah, my brothers was in, had a musical corp. They went from place to place in their spare time and entertained people. And they entertained and they had one of those – what do you call them?

LEVINE: Accordion?

GUSTAFSON: Accordion. Anything.

LEVINE: And did you, was there any such a thing as a Santa Claus idea, or gifts?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There was Christmas Eve, there were Tomte Gubben. Tomte, T-O-M-T-E, Gubben, G-U-B-B-E-N. Tomte Gubben was a man. Tomte Gubben. Ya. Oh, ya. He was dressed in red. And he came at night and gave us all the presents. And people they had farms that put out some bowls with cooked rice and a little milk. In the farm. This is long time ago, you know. For that tomte gubben, so he was going to have something to eat. And naturally that was gone in the morning. They got the cats, or somebody or other ate it. (they laugh) But that was done anyway. Absolutely. People they had farms, you know.

LEVINE: And then twenty days later you had the taking down the tree.

GUSTAFSON: Hm.

LEVINE: After twenty days...

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, then we had julen knut. Then we throw out the Christmas Tree.

LEVINE: Are there any other holidays that you can think of?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yeah. There were lots of holidays. I can't remember them all just now. The 20 February we celebrate three days. There was [Junfebriasse] [--- dorg] when she was told she was gonna have Jesus. There were three holidays then. I thought it was in that last part of February.

LEVINE: And how about, did you ever...

GUSTAFSON: And then of course we had Easter, and then we had what we called Pingst. That was when the Holy Spirit come over their apostles. We had that for holiday.

LEVINE: What did you call that one?

GUSTAFSON: You call that Pingst. P-I-E-N-G-E-S-T. We had three days off then too, that we just celebrated.

LEVINE: And you said it was when,

GUSTAFSON: It was when the Holy Spirit come over the apostles from the Bible. And of course we had Easter. And then we had Midsoman, of course that wasn't a holiday. That was a holiday, but it wasn't after the Bible, see?

LEVINE: Did you celebrate May Day?

GUSTAFSON: Yes! The first of May.

LEVINE: What was that like?

GUSTAFSON: Well, then they open up all the parks. All the parks on the outside. They had dancing in them. And entertaining. They opened them up the first of May. Then everybody had the day off and we were going on parades and things like that. (coughs) And we go and they've opened up those parks and they have all kinds of entertainment in the parks.

LEVINE: Like musical entertainment?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. And sometimes they had a little place, a place where they have a little theater in the parks where they put on a play. Any kind of play.

LEVINE: Do you ever remember a wedding in Sweden?

GUSTAFSON: A wedding? Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was that like?

GUSTAFSON: That was like, well, in the church, in the Lutheran church, the church had a crown, a gold crown, a little gold, beautiful, really gold crown, and if they bride want to she could wear that when she got married in the church.

LEVINE: How about funerals? Were the funerals any different than they are here?

GUSTAFSON: The funerals. Of course there, in Sweden, you know, they don't pay for anything. I mean, everything the government is taking care of, see. So there was the same as here. You know they had a service and the, the funeral parlors was, the cemeteries, were usually around the church, the cemeteries, as a rule. They were around the church. So all my, all my relatives that I have in Sweden that passed away – my mother, father, they're buried in one of the lots that were around that big church, see? It's an immense cemetery there. They usually were around the churches.

LEVINE: And do you have any other memories of your father besides when you were four and a half and you took him his coffee?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, every Sunday morning, every Sunday morning, of course we had to go, we didn't have running water you know, so we had to get our water then, see. But the water, we had a, a well, a little ways away from where we lived, in the, in the woods. And that well was so, it was such a beautiful, was a good water. So clear and so nice water. People went there with their buckets, you know, and collected water used for drinking, see? And every Sunday morning my father and I used to go to that well. (Laughing) And I can remember I want to look just like my father all the time, see?

LEVINE: You wanted to look like him?

GUSTAFSON: Like the way he did, I did. So when he went out he had his hat even on the side of his head. So I had a white hat. A white hat that looked like fur. But I guess it wasn't fur. But it looked like a fur hat anyway. And the minute I come outside the door, I looked to see if my mother saw me, then I put mine,s (laughing) on the side of my head. And then when I, when we come back again, I forgot to straighten it out, see. So I can remember my mother looked at my father, said, Oskar, can you see what that girl doing now? She's trying to look just like you, she said. That wasn't, that wasn't nice you know, for a little girl like me to have my hat on the side like a man, no. Oh, I'll never forget it. And I was only four and a half years old when he died. Can you imagine? And I can remember his face, even. I got a grandson by the name of David. He looks so much like his grandfather. That when we're together I can't help but look at him all the time.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: What did he look like?

GUSTAFSON: He was an ordinary person, just an ordinary... But always happy. He was always happy.

LEVINE: Do you remember any particular foods that your mother made or that you remember enjoying when you were a little girl? Any dishes?

GUSTAFSON: Ya, we had beautiful dishes. I don't know how we got them, but they call it [Ekdah]. They came from England.

LEVINE: Oh. But I mean particular foods.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, you mean food. You mean food. Well, know, of course you know meatball, Swedish meatball (laughs). We had that. And we had the regular, we had the pot roast and regular dinner like we have here.

LEVINE: Did you have a favorite kind of food?

GUSTAFSON: Yea. We had a lot of fish. Because we had, went fishing all the time. We ate a lot of fish.

LEVINE: Now, did you go to school.

GUSTAFSON: Yea, I went to school. And we had to walk quite a while to school then. There was at least two miles to school; more probably. And we walked. And in the winter time when there was, because there was a lot of ah, ah, streams and things like that. So then when they were frozen we used to go, we used to go to school on our, our skates. We used to skate to school sometimes, see. Because there was at the end of that stream, the school.

LEVINE: And how long did you stay in school?

GUSTAFSON: Well, this is years ago, remember. We had to, we start school eight in the morning, had to stay 'til four o'clock in the afternoon. But we had an hour off for dinner. And we had some time off for rest in the morning and afternoon. But not much, I guess, about fifteen minutes probably. When we could go out to play. But then in the middle of the day we had an hour off. But we start at eight o'clock in the morning 'til four o'clock in the afternoon. So in the wintertime it was dark when we, when we walked home.

LEVINE: And what did you do after you finished school?

GUSTAFSON: After I finished school? Well, I worked in the restaurant. I worked, I helped, I was a helper to the cook. Spare cook or whatever you call it. And after that I took that up so I did a lot of cooking. I used to, be head for cooking in the, in some restaurants and I come here, I used to go out and cook here too.

LEVINE: Were these restaurants in Borgord?

GUSTAFSON: Yes. But not a big one in Borgord. But in the next city there, [Finsbogen] was a large one, was a big restaurant we used to go to.

LEVINE: So you met your husband in Sweden.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, ya. He was from Borgord. He was from the same place as I was. But of course, he was older than I was. Then as I grow older we started to go together. I can

remember when he met me when I was a young girl. He used to say, you know, I'm going to marry you. And we used to laugh together, you know it? But that was all. We didn't go out together or anything. But he just told me, I'm gonna marry you.

LEVINE: And did you like him?

GUSTAFSON: Ya, of course I did. We were married fifty years. We never had any, never was anything bother between us. Never. I don't believe in that. And my children is the same way. They're very happy married people, all of them. So I believe that, their home makes it. You know, by the home you come from.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

GUSTAFSON: Harold.

LEVINE: Harold.

GUSTAFSON: Harold, Harold Gustafson. And his father was a contractor in Sweden. And he didn't, we didn't have, on my husband's side there was nobody over here when we left there. And we had no reason to go because he had, he had a good job. But I don't know. There's a Viking in you, you know. You want to see something else, see. And I had a sister and brother that had gone over here, and at that time, around 1927, there were a lot of people that left for the United States. But ah, we were only going to be here two years.

LEVINE: Why was that?

GUSTAFSON: No. That's all we were going, we were just going to see United States and see how it was and go back home again. And we came in 1927 and then they had they Depression here, 1929. That was terrible.

LEVINE: Well, first before we talk about the Depression, tell me about leaving Borgord, and do you remember leaving? Do you remember packing up to leave?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I remember that all right. We sold all our home, our furnishings and everything. And there was spotless, everything we sold you know. We were not married that long, see. And then we walked from there to my mother's place. And that was outside, so on that side of the city, it was a farmland so there was, there was a field on one side of the street, the, the, the road. And then there was some woods on the other side. And this was in the last part of April. And the spring comes early in Sweden than it does here, see. So all those fields were nice and green. I'll never forget it. And the sun was hitting. And I'll never it, how I started to cry. And my husband said, why are you crying. I said, what do we know what we're going into, Harold, I said, look at how beautiful it is. And what we left. Now, what do you think? So ya. I didn't tell you, when we come over to (laughs) New York. We were on the (pauses)... I never forget that. We never, I never saw a black man before in all my life, you know. There was no black people in Sweden, see.

After we gone through Sears Island, you know, and the long row there, just going through there, and I remember this black man, you know, helped us with the luggage when we come to New York. And we had just changed our money for American money. And you know, the dimes, you know, are so small and then the nickels were larger, and we thought, you know, the nickels were worth more than a dime. (laughing) When that man had helped us, we didn't know, we didn't know what else was, so my husband gave him three nickels instead of the dimes, you know. And I'll never forget that he said something, though I don't know what he said. But it wasn't something nice, because I could tell on his face. But we didn't know the difference, see. He thought we would give him more. Three nickels and three dimes. And then we, they took us all to a hotel in New York.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember, do you know what you brought with you?

GUSTAFSON: From Sweden?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GUSTAFSON: Yes, we brought, I had a lot of antiques from Sweden. I always like the antiques. And we brought a lot of that. We had three big wooden boxes full of stuff with us. With rugs and towels and my mother made a, some dishtowels and everything. And I had all of those with me, and a couple dozen of those. And lot of the linen tablecloths she had made and all that. Some, I don't think I had some curtain

with me. But linen tablecloths. An awful lot of linen tablecloths. And, and some dishes that we didn't want to throw away, that probably was given to, you know. And knick-knacks that we didn't want to throw away and things like that. I can remember that the man, he took a look, they were kind of late in the afternoon when we, when it was our turn to go through the custom in New York. And he took a look at those three things that we said, and he said, I wish I could go through 'em he said, but get going. He said, get out of here. (Laughing).

LEVINE: Well, do you remember anything about the voyage. When you were on the ship?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. (laughing) I, there was my husband and my two boys. We had one cabin together. The kids were small, see. But there were some other people that we know that came too, that we know from Sweden. And they, they were so sick. The, the, the place was, it was a mess, they were so terrible sick. And my husband and my kids, we were not sick at all. When we come down to the dining room, they were hardly anybody in the dining room. People were sick. They were seasick. And then after a while, I thought, and they aren't ever going to get over this you , know, to be sea sick. I thought it smelled terrible, [] cabin, see. So then (laughs), I find out they've been drinking a lot too. (chuckling) Of course, my husband and I, we didn't drink, see. So that probably was more in that, that these were both that seasick. Oy, yo, yo. Terrible.

- LEVINE: And what were your son's names. Your children, who came with you?
- GUSTAFSON: Their, one's name was Bertil, and Jan, my oldest son is Jan, and the other son was Bertil. And they're both passed away now, and their wives have passed away too. So I only got my youngest son, and his wife. The sons. But I got plenty of grandchildren. And they're very, very nice to me. They're very nice to me.
- LEVINE: So do you remember when the ship.. The name of the ship was the what?
- GUSTAFSON: Huh?
- LEVINE: The name of your ship?
- GUSTAFSON: Drottningholm. You got that.
- LEVINE: Drottningholm. Right. And do you remember when that ship came into the New York harbor?
- GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. I remember when we saw the Statue of Liberty, we first saw that. And everybody was up on the deck looking at it, you know. And I said, Harry coming into New York now, see.
- LEVINE: And tell me anything you can remember about Ellis Island.
- GUSTAFSON: Well, when you first come in, there, we had to, before we, we went, we went into the, they made us go into some

rooms, see. And the ladies had to go into one room and the men another room, and we had to go doctors examine. The doctors examined us. I remember that. And of course I had the two children. I could take them with me when I went in. And then we met my husband again. Then we had to go, and, and from, show our identification, who we were, you know, our passports and all that. And we had to have so much money to get in, we had to show 'em where we were goin'. The name of the people where we were going. We had to show 'em that. And we had to have, we had to have, two hundred dollars apiece in American money to come in.

LEVINE: So, do you remember anything specific about the examinations?

GUSTAFSON: Well, we went into the doctor and there wasn't much of an examination. But they listened to our heart (there is a nursing home announcement in the background) and they examine us. It wasn't much of an examination, but we had to go through it anyway. (loud voices in the hallway) I can't remember. But, when they exam you, naked. You wasn't naked.

LEVINE: No.

GUSTAFSON: No.

LEVINE: We're going to pause for a minute because there's a lot of noise outside right now. Okay, we're resuming now after some noise in the hall has stopped. So, did someone meet

you? When you were told you could go ahead, where did you go?

GUSTAFSON: In New York? Well, there was a man there that took us to, took us to a hotel. I can't remember the name of the hotel. That took us to the hotel. And ah, signed us in there. And we had to stay to that hotel into the morning.

LEVINE: Did you ever have any contact with the Seamen's Institute?

GUSTAFSON: What?

LEVINE: The Seaman's Institute? It's a Swedish organization in New York? Did you ever have any contact with that?

GUSTAFSON: I don't know. I might be them that took us. I don't know. There was somebody that took us.

LEVINE: And what was it like there, where you stayed?

GUSTAFSON: There was like a hotel. We had a room and stayed overnight. And they would give us food there and everything. And then the next morning they took us and put us on the train to Bos-, to Worcester.

LEVINE: Now, was this mainly Swedish people in the hotel where you were?

GUSTAFSON: Yes. Ya.

LEVINE: Do you have any idea where it was?

GUSTAFSON: No. I don't know where it was really.

LEVINE: Well, you wouldn't....

GUSTAFSON: There was a man and a woman, I remember. But the man seems to have more, the most to say. I was worried more about my children, I guess, so they wouldn't, I had to take care of the two children, see.

LEVINE: Do you remember those first few days and weeks in this country? Any things that struck you as very different?

GUSTAFSON: (silence) Well, the first thing in New York, when I saw the United States, I saw that there were a lot of black people that was workin', you know. And they were, and this is years ago now, you know. They had those, those things that you, what you call it, there's with one wheel that you shove around with, full with things...

LEVINE: Wheelbarrow?

GUSTAFSON: Ya, wheelbarrows. They had wheelbarrows. And they were walkin' around and workin' with those wheelbarrows. I don't know, the, and they were terrible dirty and they was ragged. And I thought, my gosh, is this United States? So my husband looked at me, so he says, Marta, he said, do you think we doing the right thing? (laughs) He looked at me. Of course, we had never seen black people before and we, the Swedes, you know, are very, if you had a rip in

something, they was sewed up so they wouldn't show, you know, see. And you didn't go out ragged. Not at that time. They probably do now, but not at that time. If you had rags, anything that wasn't all, you didn't wear it, that's all there was to it. Until it was all sewed up. Clean. And when we saw all that dirt, they was terrible. The most people... I don't think it's as bad now as it was then. It was terrible.

LEVINE: So then you came to Worcester. You were in Worcester.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what did your husband do for work?

GUSTAFSON: He was a carpenter. He worked with Swedish carpenter. A Swedish contractor. And then he worked with him and then that contractor, he worked with him, so he was four men to that contractor. His name was [Arlene]. And then we went back to Sweden in nineteen hundred thirty seven. And we were going to stay in Sweden, see.

LEVINE: Well, wait. Before you tell about that, you had one more son.

GUSTAFSON: Ya. Rolf, Rolf Gustafson.

LEVINE: Rolf?

GUSTAFSON: Rolf. R-O-L-F Gustafson He's still here.

LEVINE: And so, why did you go back to Sweden.

GUSTAFSON: We were going to go home. We were just going to be here two years when we came here. Now we've been here since 1927, this is 1939. So then we were going to go back home. So we did. We sold everything we had and went back to Sweden.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about the Depression, when you were here.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, they was terrible. You had to be, I went out and I scrubbed floors on my knees for 25 cents an hour. It was terrible. And my husband had to work, he, with that Arlene, he got a job and he'd let my husband, and his brother was here, he'd give them the whole job, the whole building, that's on [Berkon Street], in the [Berkon] section. All of those big houses my husband built. And you know what he used to get? He used to get four hundred crown, dollar, for, from this, for the whole house, for the inside that finished the whole house. Everything. He got four hundred dollars. Two hundred dollars apiece. It was terrible. Terrible. So I had to go out and work. And I went out and did housework, so I scrubbed floors on my knees and then after you scrubbed them on your knees, you had to go and put the wax on, and then after you did that, you had to have an old skirt, a woolen skirt that they gave you and shine up so they were shiny all over. (low and drawn out) Oh, I hated it. You know, I just hated it. I'm sorry to say now, but I did. But we never, we never went hungry. We always had something to eat.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of Swedish people in Worcester?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. There was a lot of Swedes. Where I lived. Up on Belmont Hill. There were almost all Swedes up there, see. There was a lot of Swedes. But ah, they thought we made, they always asked, how you make it? I used to take all the pants apart for my husband and wash them and take pieces and make pants for the kids, sew the kid's pants. And if there was a shirt from my husband, you know, there was hole and things like that, I cut them out and sew them. Made a little shirt for the boys, you know. You had to take care. I was, I was, I wonder what people would do today, if they had to go through it. But we didn't ask for anything. We never asked for anything. Not a dollar.

LEVINE: Did you have certain attitudes that you tried to pass along to your sons?

GUSTAFSON: What?

LEVINE: Were there certain attitudes that you had?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I suppose maybe the same attitude, because they're the same as we are.

LEVINE: Were there things like that you mother tried to instill in you that you also passed along to your children?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yeah. To be honest, and never, to respect other property and respect other people, you know, and respect

other people's opinion, ah, like we did. There. And they have. I got a very nice family. Everybody tells me so. My granddaughter comes and sees me all the time from the Oxford. Now, she was here yesterday, and she'll come tomorrow. And she has married to a nice boy. They have a very nice family. Her oldest boy is going to the, (pauses) to college now. He's taken up, what you call it...

LEVINE: Computer?

GUSTAFSON: No. Not computer. When they, try, you have to scratch your leg. Sometime I forget the words, you know what? They have 'em here.

LEVINE: A medical career.

GUSTAFSON: Yes. God, help me. I forgot. They'll come to me.

LEVINE: Okay. So what was it like for you and your family when you went back to Sweden in 1939.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, well, my husband worked over there. He worked as a carpenter. He got work right along. And we had an apartment over there for almost two years.

LEVINE: And were you glad you had returned?

GUSTAFSON: Huh?

LEVINE: Were you happy that you had returned?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, sure. I got to say after I, everything, and then it started the war. Hitler started the war. So we were sure that Hitler was gonna take Sweden. He took Yugoslavia, you know, first. And he went, Lithuania started. So everybody started to go back because they knew sons, my oldest son, the sons, they had to be in war if you stay here, you know, see. So then we were going to go back again until the war was over. Oh, ya. We had to make, we stayed here since 1969 then.

LEVINE: So you returned when? When did you come back here?

GUSTAFSON: To here? Nineteen hundred seventy. In '69, '71. Well, I didn't stay all the time. We come back, we come back for two years because we were gonna, we were afraid Hitler was gonna take Sweden. And the kids were gonna be in the war.

LEVINE: So you went to Sweden in 1939.

GUSTAFSON: '39.

LEVINE: And you came right, how long did you stay before you came back?

GUSTAFSON: '41.

LEVINE: Til '41 and then you came back. I see.

GUSTAFSON: And then we come back here again. And of course, Hitler didn't take Sweden. He didn't touch Sweden. But my, my

boys were in the war here. My three boys were in the war. My second boy was a paratrooper in the Second World War and my oldest boy was a, was in the army. He was, they were over in Germany and fought. And then they get home, and then the Korean War started, so then my youngest boy had to go to the Korean War, fighting down there.

LEVINE: Well, we're getting short on time. I want to ask you a few questions. What do you feel proud of, that you've done in your life? What makes you feel satisfied that you have done?

GUSTAFSON: That I've drawn up my family.

LEVINE: Do you think... Go ahead.

GUSTAFSON: And whatever I went through before, I never had to ask for anything. I always went out and work. I used to cook.

LEVINE: And how do you feel when you think, you're Swedish and also American. How do you think about yourself?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I will always be a Swede. I'll always be a Swede.

LEVINE: And do you think, do you think the fact that you immigrated and then went back and forth, do you think that made a difference in the way you saw things and the kind of person you were?

GUSTAFSON: Well, the first time we come back, nineteen hundred forty one, that was because of the war. And then we back again, nineteen hundred sixty nine, and my husband was sick. And he was the nicest man you could come across but he got an idea that he want to be, he was going to go home and stay in Sweden and then come and visit the children here. So we went. And then he got sick. He got a tumor on his brain and it was like a, it was like a sponge that couldn't be operated on at that time. This was 23 years ago, see. So, then in Sweden he got an idea that was account, it was because he was in Sweden that he got the, the climate or something. You know when you get something the matter with your brains you don't think the same. You don't get to be the same way. So then you want to go back to America. And everybody, the doctors and everybody told me, not to go. Don't go. He was such a good man, so I couldn't have it on my, my conscious that I didn't go back when he wanted to. So we came back here in September. And he passed away in March the next year.

LEVINE: Well, how is this time in your life?

GUSTAFSON: I always worked. I always worked.

LEVINE: And how is it for you now?

GUSTAFSON: Well now, I can't do anything but sit here (laughs). And to a hard working person, I worked, I enjoy working. I enjoy it. I do, I always enjoy work. But they're very nice here, people. Very nice.

LEVINE: Do you wish that you were in Sweden? Would you prefer it?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: You prefer it?

GUSTAFSON: I sure does.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. I really, I remember homes and the place and the people and well, there's a different, there's a different country. You can't make a country out of United States but look at all the people we have here. They're all different, they have all different religions. There's cultures all different. You know what? That's hard to make a solid country out of it, isn't it? I think so anyway.

LEVINE: Did you ever hear of the idea of a melting pot? They talk about the United States as being a melting pot of people from everywhere?

GUSTAFSON: Ya. Ya. It is. Naturally, because they were made out of, made out of all kinds of people from the whole world, United States is. So there's so many different kind of people. There's a big beautiful country. It's a big beautiful country. They got a lot of beautiful things. To what I mean, to make a living and everything. But ah, does that, some people doesn't appreciate things. I don't know how

to express it, that's not... They... Some people seem to think that what they can get, get out of anything they can get out of it, and not give anything back. Oh, probably it's my own idea, you know it.

LEVINE: Well, that's a valid opinion. Sure. Okay. Well, we're at the end of the tape now. I want to thank you so much for a very interesting interview.

GUSTAFSON: Thank you, it was nice talking to you too. And I suppose I remember hundred things I should have told you afterwards. (laughing)

LEVINE: Okay. I've been speaking with Martha Gustafson. She came here in 1927 with her husband and two of her sons, and stayed here 'til 1939, went back for two years, came back again until 1969 . . .

END INTERVIEW