

KECK-95
SIGNE BERGMAN
BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 7, 1898
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 25, 1985
RUNNING TIME: 1:00:00
INTERVIEWER: DEBBY DANE
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAM NEGRI
INTERVIEW LOCATION: MARSHFIELD, MA
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 12/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

SWEDEN, 1916
AGE 16 (AS RECORDED IN THE INTERVIEW)
PASSAGE ON "THE STOCKHOLM"

DANE: This is Debby Dane and I'm speaking with Signe Bergman on
Monday, November 25, 1985. We're beginning the
interview at 10:45 AM. We're are about to interview
Signe Bergman about her immigration experience from
Sweden in 1916. She was sixteen years old. Mrs.
Bergman, if you would tell me when you were born and what
town you were born in?

BERGMAN: The town was Dalsland.

DANE: Can you spell it for me?

BERGMAN: D-A-L-S, D-A-L-S-L-A-N-D. It's kind of a hard name to say, but, D-A-L-S.

DANE: And what year were you born?

BERGMAN: Uh, seventh of January, 1898.

DANE: What kind of town was Dalsland? Can you describe what people did there?

BERGMAN: Well, mostly farming. It's a very small town. Mostly farming. My father had a small farm, like a pig and a horse and a cow. We sort of made a living out of that, planted things and so forth.

DANE: What kind of work did he, did he work solely on the farm, or--

BERGMAN: He worked on the farm. It was really all farms all around, and he uses to, my father used to work for somebody else to earn a little extra money, on some other people's farms.

DANE: Did you have a big family or what--

BERGMAN: I had two brothers and myself.

DANE: Younger brothers?

BERGMAN: Yeah.

DANE: Uh-huh. And your mom, was she--

BERGMAN: Oh, my mother died when I was only ten years old. And, and my father, he lived until he was ninety-two.

DANE: He stayed in Sweden?

BERGMAN: Yeah, he lived.

DANE: Huh. And how was it that you came to hear about America?

BERGMAN: Well, uh, I had a friend, a girl that came over here. She left, she lived in the same town as I did. And her, uh, she had a sister who was here and she sent her some money to come over here. So she decided she would go because, home, you know, there was nothing, nothing there but

work all the time, you know. I was only a kid anyway, at the time, so I figured well-- So she wrote me and said, "Well, you'd better come over here. Everything is much better than it is at home." (She laughs.) Of course, we all thought, you know, that, come to america you pick up money on the street. Money is all over the place. But it was a different story when I came here. (She laughs.)

DANE: No gold in the streets.

BERGMAN: No, no. I worked, I got three dollars a week. My aunt sent me fifty dollars for the ticket to come over here on the boat.

DANE: Was she, was your aunt in Sweden, or over here?

BERGMAN: No, over in Brattleboro. Didn't you tell me you were over in Brattleboro. she lived up there. And that's where I landed when I came over here.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did she, did you write her and say--

BERGMAN: I wrote to her, you know, and asked her if she would spare some money to give me, so she sent me fifty dollars. That's what it cost. And, uh, I got up there and I didn't stay with her very long before

she got me a job and I had to go to work. And I worked for, um, in a hospital up there. Maybe you, uh, I don't even know if they have it now, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. That probably isn't there any more now, but that's the place I, I got a job cleaning and washing dishes and stuff like that. And I got three dollars a week. And out of those three dollars I had to pay my aunt one dollar a week towards the fifty dollars. (She laughs.) So that took me a long time. And then I had to get some clothes, And, uh, there was a store up in Vermont there. It was Houghton's. Houghton's. And they were kind of easy with me so they let me charge my clothes. I bought a coat and dresses and shoes and so forth, so they let me charge the, uh, then I had to pay so much a week for that. So between the three dollars there wasn't an awful lot. And then I got, so I left there and I got job at a dentist up there, and I got seven dollars a week, so that was really something. (She laughs.)

DANE: When you say you bought clothes, did you come over in clothes, did you, in Swedish clothes. Did--

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah. Oh, the only clothes I had was what I had on me. (She laughs.) And, uh, so my cousin, she took me out, you know, and she worked in a store. Anyways, it was easy for her to get me clothes.

DANE: Did she say, "Signe, you've got to get rid of these

clothes, you--"

BERGMAN: Oh, you better believe it. You better believe it. I had to get rid of them as soon as I got up there. And, uh--

DANE: But before you came to Vermont and you were still in Sweden and you had decided that life was too hard in Sweden?

BERGMAN: I thought I would like to better myself and get something, uh, different. Especially clothes. I always liked clothes. (She laughs.) So, uh--

DANE: Did you think about going to some Swedish city and trying to make it in Sweden? How come America?

BERGMAN: I don't know why. Just this girl friend of mine, she liked it very much over here, so she said, "If there's any way that you can get the money to come over to America, do it." So I tried awfully hard to do it. (She laughs.)

DANE: And your father, did he think it was a good idea?

BERGMAN: Oh, he said, "If you want to go, go ahead." So he was

very good that way.

DANE: And your brothers, did they want to come too?

BERGMAN: Oh, they were too small. Don't-- When I was home they didn't want no part of this country. They had, they had it very good over there anyway so they, there was no problem there. They could go on a month's vacation every year. That's more than I ever could do.

DANE: Yeah, yeah. That was during the war that you decided to come over, right?

BERGMAN: Yeah. In 1916. And there was a war that had started at the time. So we landed outside England there. I don't know what the name of the place was. Some kind of, uh, a place there that boats had to land. And we stayed there for two days. And there was a lot of people coming. I didn't know who they were or anything like that, but I know that they were dressed different than anybody else. And they used to come and look around the boat, you know, and so on and so forth. Of, course, I was so green I didn't know nothing about what was happening. But we finally took off and we landed here in New York. And, uh, Ellis island, of course. And--

DANE: before you go there, I'm going to keep you on Sweden a

little bit longer. Where did you leave from? You traveled from your village, did you say you left from Gutenberg?

BERGMAN: I left, I left from Dalsland, and we had, I had to take a train to Gutenberg where I got the boat.

DANE: Had you ever been on a train before?

BERGMAN: No. That was the first time.

DANE: Was that exciting or scary, or--

BERGMAN: It was exciting because I was so young to even realize anything, what was going on, that, uh, the most exciting part was when I got on the boat. That was really the biggest part. (She laughs.)

DANE: Had you ever seen a boat that big before?

BERGMAN: Never, never, never. I used to have a small rowboat, you know, my father had. But, uh, that was the big thing.

DANE: The name of the boat. You remember the name of the boat?

BERGMAN: Stockholm.

DANE: Stockholm.

BERGMAN: Because Stockholm, that's so old, I don't think that's in commission any more. And when I went home on the trip I came on Druckenholm. That was another--

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And did you go down, did you have first or second class, or were you down in--

BERGMAN: Oh, first class. Well, I mean third class. You had, one, two, three. Three, third class. And, um, that's the only thing that I could afford for fifty dollars.

DANE: Do you remember what it looked like, where they put you and where you slept?

BERGMAN: We had, just, it's just like today, you know, bunks on each side. Two on, one on, uh two on each side of the room and the, uh, I had, uh, other girls with me on top and bottom. (She laughs.) And, uh, it was just like any, of course, it may not be the fanciest of all the boats of the day but, uh, it was all right, I guess, at the time.

DANE: Did you make friends with people? What did you do during the trip the day of the crossing?

BERGMAN: Uh, we used to walk around a lot and then we used to play cards and do things like that. And then we used to have parties on the boat, too, you know, dancing and things. (She laughs.) It was the best time.

DANE: Did people bring instruments and--

BERGMAN: Well, they had, a lot of, uh, people that was coming over here, they had all kinds of guitars and accordions and violins and everything you could think of. So some, they used to have a big place, you know, that you could dance and things like that. So, uh--

DANE: Did your father, did you have packed some food to bring with you, or did you just have food on the boat, or--

BERGMAN: Oh, we had food on the boat. No, no, no food. I didn't take no food with me. No.

DANE: Uh-huh. When you left Sweden that night when you, was it day or night when you got on the boat and you were leaving to come to America, what, were you excited or were you afraid, or--

BERGMAN: No, I was excited. I wasn't a bit afraid. (She laughs.)
I don't know. Maybe I didn't have no sense to be scared. But, uh, that didn't bother me. I was, oh, this was exciting to see all these things after living on the farm all my life, practically. So, uh--

DANE: And you came into New York, how long were you on the boat, do you remember? Was it a long trip?

BERGMAN: Oh, a long trip because we had to stop over in, outside England there for two days and, well, it took, well almost two weeks before I landed in New York. and, uh, so I can't remember. It wasn't a bad trip after all.

DANE: Did you get seasick?

BERGMAN: No, not that time. Last time I went home on the trip we had a hurricane here and we got part of that, you know. And, going home

from Sweden when I went back home, oh, was I sick. I'll never forget that as long as I live. (She laughs.)

DANE: It's funny, because most people, when they go back, the trip is a lot easier than when they first came.

BERGMAN: Oh, much easier. Everything is so much nicer, of course.

DANE: When you came into New York, I can't remember if you told me that you did see the Statue of Liberty--

BERGMAN: Well, we, when I came to New York and we, they took us of the boat on a ferry, like a small ferry, to get from, uh, from the boat over to Ellis Island. And, of course, they pointed out, you know, we passed the Liberty, the Statue of Liberty, and you said, "Oh, look at that big thing." (She laughs.) So they all, uh, it was, of course, at that time I didn't know too much about the Statue of Liberty or anything like that, but you saw it anyway when you went on that ferry.

DANE: Did you know what she was doing? I mean, she's a funny looking statue. She's not like a man, a general on a horse. I mean, she's

a woman, it was big. Did it make an impression on you at all?

BERGMAN: Well, I, I was too young, I guess, and I was too excited to think about things like this. (She laughs.) So, uh, that didn't, uh, until I came, up to my aunt, you know, and she, she told me about the Statue of Liberty and all that. And, uh, and, of course, when we came to Ellis Island all the people were talking about it there. So then I, you know, would understand a little bit more about the Statue of Liberty, what it was about.

DANE: Uh-huh. You took the ferry over and, were you with a lot of other people when you--

BERGMAN: Oh, a lot of us over on the ferry, all of us. And we all had to go to Ellis Island. When you get off the boat that's where you had to go. And that was the only way you can get there, I guess, by this boat. They call it the ferry, anyway, but it was a small boat. and, uh, it was all right. And that's the first time I ever saw a colored man. (She laughs.) Was on the boat. And, uh, he was sitting there, oh, a big man. He was sleeping and snoring and all that, you know, and everybody got kind of scared of him, you know, looking at him. You know, I

said, "Oh my goodness. I hope we're not going to look like him, black like that." (She laughs.) Here, in this country, in America.

DANE: What a surprise. Had you ever even thought that there were people that had different color skin that--

BERGMAN: No, I never did. No, I never, never did. When I saw him, well, it kind of startled me there for a while. (She laughs.)

DANE: A lot of people say that. A lot of people say they had never--

BERGMAN: Wondering if we were going to look like that after a while. (They laugh.)

DANE: That's a woman says, she says to me, "You come to America you turn black?" That's what she said. And then, did they make you get in line? Do you remember that part, about the medical exams?

BERGMAN: Oh. in that, in that she got inside, uh, Ellis Island there. We had to sit down on the benches there and wait our turn to get

into a long aisle. It was just like an aisle and everybody, different people had to go into this aisle for whatever they came from or whatever it was. But I had a lot of, uh people that I knew on the boat, went in the same line as me. And we had all the doctors there. You know, you had to take so much clothes off, you know, and have a chest, you know, examination. And your eyes, and your teeth. And, uh, we had quite a bit of examination. And, of course, I never knew that if you want, if anything was wrong that you have to turn back and go back home again. And there was a woman ahead of me, and I had to wait until she got through with her examination. And I guess she was in a bad shape. She didn't look very healthy. So she fainted, the woman fainted, and that scared me. That scared me, you know, because they had to take her out of there, you know. A doctor had to bring her in another special room they had, I guess. So that kind of, um. startled me after a while. But after I got through there everything was all right so it didn't bother me.

DANE: Did you know that, when she was taken away, she might be sent back?

BERGMAN: Oh, that would be, she would have to be. I didn't know that until afterwards. My aunt told me that. Oh, she had to, they had to send her back again, home.

DANE: So the people around you weren't talking about, "I hope we get through the medical exam."

BERGMAN: No, no, I don't think anybody realized how bad it was, really, the examination, whether you're going to pass or not. And, uh, I was lucky I did pass.

DANE: And when they checked your eyes, do you remember what they did?

BERGMAN: Well, he looked in my eyes, you know, just like any eye doctor would do when you first get in the office, you know, like the eye doctor puts these long lights in your eyes. And, uh, so that came out all right. And, uh, then we had some coffee and the first time I had a donut. (She laughs.) Coffee and donut and some cookies. And that tasted good because I was kind of hungry. And, uh, from there on I don't remember exactly, uh, how we, we were on a bus, or whatever. We had to, from Ellis Island, to get to the station, to get the train from, to, uh, Brattleboro. So I don't remember exactly whether there was a bus that took us to the, uh, station. I don't even remember what the name of the station was then in New York that, uh, where you had to get the train. And, uh, they put this on, of course, we all had a sign, you know, on our coat, you know, telling where we was going or the name and all that stuff. So they put me on the train to

Brattleboro. And, uh, I don't remember how long I was on the train, but I finally landed there and my, uh, aunt and my two cousins was there at the station waiting for me. I had never seen them. They had never seen me. I didn't even know who, whether they were the right people or not, but I guess they were, after they saw me with the sign on me. So--

DANE: Before you left Ellis Island, it was the first time you'd ever had donuts before?

BERGMAN: Right.

DANE: And it was sweet and good?

BERGMAN: Oh, it was good. Yeah. To me it tasted good. (She laughs.) At home you didn't have anything like that.

DANE: Did you spend, you spent the night on Ellis Island?

BERGMAN: Yeah. On, uh, on the ferry. The ferry. I don't remember exactly now. It must have been very late when they landed at Ellis Island. And, uh, the, let me see now, I guess that was at night, nighttime, when we took the ferry because, um, let me think now, because we spent the night on that ferry too. And I remember that we didn't dare to lie down on

the bed because it was kind of crummy looking. So evidently we didn't land in New York until very late. And then we had, oh yeah, I think that's what it was. And then we took this ferry and took us over to Ellis Island. And, uh, we spent the night there on Ellis Island. Because I happened to see that colored man, and he was sound asleep. and we had to sit there. We could have gone to bed if we wanted to, but I didn't feel like laying down in those terrible looking beds and stuff they had there.

DANE: Was it dirty?

BERGMAN: Dirty and things like that. You were afraid to lay down there. So we sat up and talked.

DANE: All night?

BERGMAN: All night. And, uh, I'm trying to gather that together how that was. But I remember that night se spent on that boat. But it had to be late when we landed in New York and, from there we spent the night on the ferry. And, of course, then they took us over to Ellis Island, and that's how it happened. We had to get off there, off the boat. And, uh, uh, let me think now. That's what, I think that's what had happened. We got off the big boat and this ferry picked us up, or this small boat. And it was nighttime. And we stayed all night because, evidently, they don't

keep Ellis Island open all night either, so we had to wait until they opened up, I guess, on the morning, early in the morning. And now I remember what it was. So we all got off that boat. and we got inside Ellis Island. And then that's when I, we all served us coffee. That's right. Now I remember. Served us the coffee as soon as we, first thing when we came in there. And then, of course, we had to sit and wait for a while until our turn came for the examination. And, uh, that took quite a while. And, of course, I, everybody had to have twenty-five dollars cash. So, my poor father, he had to scrape up twenty-five dollars. That was a lot of money them days.

DANE: And did you have it with you?

BERGMAN: I had it with me. Oh, yes. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't had that twenty-five dollars. Maybe they would send me back home. I don't know. But I had a, uh, twenty-five dollars. And, uh, so then we got on the train and I don't remember how long it took me before I got up to Vermont. And there they were waiting for me.

DANE: Before you left and you stayed up all night, were you talking with other Swedish people?

BERGMAN: Yeah. We were all, everybody was sitting up there. Everybody had to go, to get to Ellis Island, we had to get on this ferry--

DANE: And what did you talk about all night long? Were they going to different places--

BERGMAN: Well, they were going to different places. They were going to Chicago. They were going to, uh, somebody was going to stay in New York. And they were going to all different places. And they were sitting there talking, you know, and there was nothing else you could do, do there, but sit and talk.

DANE: And were you all optimistic and did you think life was going to be better in, in America?

BERGMAN: Well, after I saw the beds and the clothes and things I had brought, (she laughs), you know, I already, I was wondering. But, of course, of course my aunt and a beautiful home up in Vermont. Everything was nice.

DANE: On Ellis Island did you see lots of people from different countries? Did you hear different languages?

BERGMAN: Uh-huh. Yeah. They were from all, I think they were from all over the world, really. All different kinds of people. And, of course, uh, the people that came on, on the boat from Sweden were mostly Swedish people anyway. There was quite a few of them. And, of course, there was other boats. There was lots of boats landing in New York, too, at the time, with all different people coming from all over the world, I guess. Because that place was packed in the morning. And, uh, it took us quite a while before we got away from Ellis Island until everybody got through.

DANE: Did they treat you, how did they treat you? Were you treated--

BERGMAN: Oh, they was treating you all right, as far as I can remember. We were just sitting there waiting, and then there was a lot of nurses, there. I guess they were thinking about them (?) girls and they were all dressed up there, and come and told us to get in that line and stay there and, until the doctor examined you, and so forth. And, uh, that part came through all right.

DANE: Hold on just a second. How are we doing on tape? Okay, I remember when I talked to you on the phone you mentioned that you'd seen a television show about Ellis Island.

BERGMAN: Yes. And a movie.

DANE: Tell me about that.

BERGMAN: Oh, I loved that. The first part of the movie, there were three parts of it. And the first part of it was exactly like it was when I landed there. They, Ellis Island, on the inside, they showed the inside and the benches and I said to myself, when I saw it, "I sat on one of those benches one time." And, uh, it was so, and it was two, I forget now what the two guys' names were that, um, they were supposed to be immigrants, you know. And they also had the idea, one was, came from Russia and the other one was Jewish. There was two of them, two men. And they, uh, came to New York and they came to this country and, and they thought, you know, like everybody else thought, you know, that things was going to be very easy, but it wasn't that easy. It showed what they had to go through, you know, before they find work and find something to do and they was wandering around there with the suitcase in their hands, you know. Trying to find a place, you know, find some work and things. It was just exactly like it.

DANE: Did it bring those memories back?

BERGMAN: Oh, it did. Oh, I, I enjoyed that because it was really, it, I could picture myself doing this. Of course, I didn't have to go around looking for any place to live or anything like that. But they did that. And, um, so I enjoyed that a lot, the first part of it.

DANE: The building, when you first saw the building on Ellis Island, it's pretty impressive, it's a big--

BERGMAN: It's a big, uh, great big, big building. We saw it when we went to New York, didn't we? And, um, it's a big, uh, of course, I didn't look at the building as much as I did on the inside. I, uh, was anxious to see what it looked like on the inside. And, uh, of course, but the movie, oh, I got, oh, I got a big kick out of that because I could remember just exactly how it was with me when I first came over here. And they showed the Statue of Liberty and all that, you know. I, it was really very nice.

DANE: Huh. And then when you got up and you saw your aunt and she took you in, was her, she had a nice house?

BERGMAN: Oh, she had a nice house, a nice house. Yeah, she did. She had a very nice house. And, uh, of course, my two cousins, they were working, you know, and, and, uh, I was there with her, I guess I stayed there for about a month and then she got me this job in the hospital there in Brattleboro. And, uh, I stayed there in Vermont until 1918. Then I came to Boston. And, uh, in 1920 I got married.

DANE: To a Swedish man?

BERGMAN: Yeah.

DANE: When you first got to Brattleboro you didn't speak English, obviously.

BERGMAN: Not a word, not a word.

DANE: How did you, oh, wait a second. We've got to switch the sides. I just have to slate it. This is the end of side one, Signe Bergman Interview Number 95. It's 11:15.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is the beginning of side two, Signe Bergman, Interview Number 95. It's 11:20. You are now in Vermont, you've arrived, you're sixteen years old, you don't speak any English. How did you learn how to speak?

BERGMAN: Well, I'll tell you. I, uh, landed in the hospital in Brattleboro. There was a Swedish nurse there and she helped me an awful lot. Oh, she was an awfully nice person. And I suppose she felt sorry for me, so she, I, she really was a big, big help to me. And from there on my cousins, you know, they tried to learn me and do this and do that, you know. So I finally managed a little bit. And, uh, but that nurse, oh, she was terrific.

DANE: Would she teach you phrases in English, or--

BERGMAN: Yeah. And I used to, I did a lot of work in the kitchen there at the hospital. And every time she came in the kitchen, you know, she pointed at different things and she told me what this was in Swedish and English and said that was the Swedish name and as she pointed out to me, that was English name, and she learned me an awful lot. Oh, she was, she was really terrific.

DANE: Did you feel, when you came over here, did anyone treat you like an outsider, like a foreigner? Did you ever feel like you were--

BERGMAN: No, up in Vermont there when I landed people was very, very nice up there and, and, uh, of course, at that time, you know, it was a small town but, of course, today it's a big place. And, uh, no, I had never that feeling. And my two cousins, they helped me a lot, too. They were very, very good.

DANE: What was your maiden name when you came?

BERGMAN: Tornbloom [PH]. (She laughs.) Did you ever hear a name like that before? My father, he was a , pick out some crazy names. (She laughs.)

DANE: Did they ever want you to change your name, or were you always Signe Tornbloom [PH]. Nobody ever--

BERGMAN: No, no. I had an awful time spelling it, you know, in different places and different things I was doing, but I managed after a while.

DANE: And your clothes, you said when you first got here, did your aunt say to you, "We've got to get you out of those clothes?"

BERGMAN: "Oh, we've got to get some new clothes." And, of course, my cousins, they were clothes crazy anyhow, you know. They always looked nice and they figured that, well, I couldn't walk around up in Vermont looking like the way I did, the clothes I had on. So I had to get some new clothes. So--

DANE: How come you came down to Boston? Why did you leave Vermont?

BERGMAN: Well, this girl that got me down to, made me come over here, she also was up in Vermont. And she went for a month down to Boston and when she landed in Boston she wrote me, said, "Well, you'd better come down to Boston. It's much, much better down here." (She laughs.) So she got me job typing in Boston.

DANE: Is she still, is she still around? Do you still keep in--

BERGMAN: No, no, she's not around anymore. No.

DANE: Did your aunt, did your aunt want you to leave? Had you paid her off and--

BERGMAN: Oh, I paid her fifty dollars. I wouldn't leave until I had done that because she was, she was, uh, that type, you know, where you had to do things and do it right and that was it. (She sighs.) So I got some new clothes, and after I earned some more money and that last part when I was working I got ten dollars a week, so I was really rich. So then I was able to, of course, them days, you know, you could get clothes kind of cheap but, uh, for ten dollars a week. Then I could really splurge on clothes. (They laugh,)

DANE: That's good. And when you came down to Boston, was Boston, you still had never really lived in a big city--

BERGMAN: No, never did, no.

DANE: Was that exciting?

BERGMAN: It was very exciting. A lot of things going on. And of course this girlfriend of mine she used to go to dances every Saturday night, you know, and that was really exciting. Berkley Hall in Boston,

every Saturday night. That was really something.

DANE: And were these, um, Swedish dances with Swedish people,
or just--

BERGMAN: They had a lot of Swedish music at this dance hall we
went to and, ordinary dance place. And, uh, it was a lot of fun. I didn't
care what it was. (She laughs.)

DANE: What kind of job did you have when you came?

BERGMAN: Oh, then, when I came to Boston, this girlfriend of mine,
she worked out in Brookline, and there was a couple
out there. Their name was Burtleson, and he was Danish,
parents were Danish. And, uh, his father owned part of
Boston shipyard. And, uh, and they were very nice. They
were newly married, too, when I came to them. And I
stayed there for quite a while, because it was really a
nice place to work.

DANE: Did you work in the office, or--

BERGMAN: No, no, no, housework. Oh, yeah, yeah. Doing the

housework. And, uh, tried to do a little cooking, as much as I could, because she couldn't do any more cooking. (She laughs.) Cooking had never been my, uh, what should I call it, uh, (?). She knows me in cooking. Of course, when I had all of them home I had to cook but, oh, I never, never liked cooking. I never did.

DANE: How did you meet your husband, then? He came into the picture around here.

BERGMAN: At the dance. (She laughs.)

DANE: And had he, was his story similar? How long had he been in this country?

BERGMAN: Oh, he came here. He, he came from Finland. That's where he, he was born. And he, uh, over there, you know, when they were able to walk, I guess, the first thing they were on the boat and work on the boat and something like that. So that's what he did. And that's how he landed over here, you know, working on a boat and, and, uh, that was the only thing he knew how to do. And, of course, when he, uh, got the citizen's paper and he got established here then he started to do carpenter work and different kind of work like that. So, uh, he was a carpenter when

I married him, carpenter and painter and all kind of stuff.

DANE: Hmm. Did he speak Swedish?

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. They speak Swedish
 over there in Finland. Part, a lot of, uh, many
 parts in Finland they speak Swedish. Today, I guess,
 that's most of it, what they do over there.

DANE: And he became a citizen. How old were you when you
became a citizen?

BERGMAN: (She sighs.) I was married at the time. But, uh, if I
remember correctly, you could, if your husband, if the man you married, he
was a citizen, then you married at the time, well, you become a citizen,
too. But I took my citizen paper out long before I got married. As soon as
I came to Boston. I don't remember, really how old I was.

DANE: Did you have to take a test, or did you--

BERGMAN: Well, sort of a , nothing hard or anything like that.
But I was just looking at my citizen paper here the other day. (She
laughs.) I found it.

DANE: So you went into Boston and, how come you decided that you wanted to become a citizen?

BERGMAN: Well, uh, I think, um, everybody was saying that, well, if you become a citizen, well, it's so much better. You have better opportunities here in, in, uh, America. But I always had in my mind that I wanted to be a citizen, for some reason, I don't know why. But I did become one.

DANE: When you got your papers did you feel, was it a good day, an exciting, happy day?

BERGMAN: Well, yeah, yeah, right. Right. At least I, uh, I wasn't an outlaw anywhere. So that was, that was easy.

DANE: Did people call you, had you ever heard this expression of a greenhorn?

BERGMAN: Oh, I heard that many times. (She laughs.) Many times.
I think even today, you know, with other people, they call them greenhorns. Well, that wouldn't, that didn't bother me any.

DANE: Did they say to you in Boston or also in Vermont, or would your aunt say it, or was it people that were already here and they didn't know how to speak the language, and they'd say, "Oh, she's a greenhorn."

BERGMAN: Well. uh, she was the one that used to tell me that that's what they usually call them here. They used to call, uh, she said everybody they called them like that when you don't know how to speak English, so that didn't bother me any. Not that I remember them really calling me that. Up, people up there in Vermont, they were very, very nice. I guess they felt sorry for people like me.

DANE: Did it remind you of Sweden in Vermont, I mean, cold and snow?

BERGMAN: Yeah, some, some.

DANE: Did you miss home when you first got here? Did you wish you could go back?

BERGMAN: No, no, I never did. I thought of my brothers and my father. I thought about them. But everything was so different here, so

exciting here, that I never thought about the old farm over in Sweden. But, of course, I couldn't help thinking about my family over there.

DANE: But it was a good decision to come over?

BERGMAN: I never regretted that I came over here. I never did.

DANE: And how did you learn to read and write English, then, because you never went to school again once you got here.

BERGMAN: No, well I learned, I tried to do the best I could, you know, in, uh, learning things. But that nurse, her name was Anna, I'll never forget her, never, never. She, and she, when she had her time off, you know, she used to come over and teach me different things in English, learn me. She learned me a lot. She was wonderful.

DANE: Hmm. And then you settled in Boston or came out to Marshfield. Once you got married did you stay in town or did you come out to Marshfield? Where were you? In Brookline?

BERGMAN: No, I got my own apartment, uh after I got married and I lived, uh, in Dorchester. And, uh, then, after my husband died, well, she got me to come to Marshfield and she got this place for me, so I've been

here twelve years. And, uh, if it hadn't been for her I'd probably still be-- And I worked in the Bargain Center in Quincy. Did you ever hear of Bargain Center? Yeah, well, I worked there, (she laughs), for a few years. And that, that's, I got through there, well, I moved out to Marshfield and I've been here ever since.

DANE: Uh-huh. Looking back over it all and you had thought, at one point, that America had gold in the streets, well, not gold, but money in the streets, money on trees. You found out that it wasn't really like that. Would you have done anything differently?

BERGMAN: No, no, no. Really, I wouldn't. Because I really, uh, enjoyed it. I enjoyed it ever since I came here, ever since I came. The only thing that frightened me was that boat there with all the dirty clothes and things on it, there. That was the only thing. I says, "Oh, my goodness, is it like that here?" (She laughs.) But no, I never regretted that I came over here, never did.

DANE: And when you became an american, when did you first feel that you were an American, as opposed to feeling like you were Swedish?

BERGMAN: Well, I think, after I, uh, got my citizen paper. Then I

felt kind of big. (She laughs.) And then I felt like I was somebody. And, of course, my husband, he was a citizen many, he was only young man when he became a citizen. Of course, he was in the service, too, my husband was. And, uh--

DANE: Was your life what you had expected it to be when you came over as a young girl and thought that you'd be able to get work and--

BERGMAN: Well, I really never thought of that. I depended on my aunt for everything. She helped me. But she was the type. I couldn't stay around the house there too long. I had to go out and work. So she got me the job in the hospital. And, uh, I, I liked it. I didn't mind it at all. So I had no regrets. And, of course, it's too late for that now anyway.

DANE: I guess you're right. But it's nice that you don't, let me see if I have any other, I think that that's about, you told me about the first black man.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: She never complains.

BERGMAN: Well, to me it doesn't do any good anyway to complain.

DANE: I think that's about it. Do you know of any stories that she used to tell, or anything else that she hasn't mentioned?

BERGMAN: Oh, she probably has a lot of stories that she could tell.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: She used to tell me when she lived in Boston at a rooming house and they weren't supposed to cook and she would make coffee on the gas burner and the landlady would smell it or something like that. And one of first week, when she was first paid, and she came to Boston, she loved bananas.

BERGMAN: Oh, that's when I first came to the country.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: She bought three dollars worth of bananas. She probably got a whole--

BERGMAN: And I ate so many bananas I was sick. (They laugh.)

DANE: Had you ever had bananas before?

BERGMAN: Well, now I eat them but I never really was crazy about

them. But I'll eat them now.

DANE: But when you first came had you seen them before?

BERGMAN: I never had bananas before in my life. And so I thought,
"Oh, this is great." I could have that anyway.
And, uh, oh, yeah. Did I make a pig out of my self.

DANE: What other things did you see for the first time, or
taste--

BERGMAN: Well, there were so many things I couldn't even, oranges
and, apples we had at home, of course. We were growing apples. And, uh,
oh, of course cake and pie and stuff like that. That was really something.
Of course, we never had, of course, home, all we used to have was these
what we used to call coffee bread, you know, kind of a sweet bread. She
makes it at Christmas.

DANE: Uh-huh.

BERGMAN: And, uh, well, there's, I'm trying to think. Everything
was so different, everything was so new. But it was exciting. I liked
every part of it.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: As long as she could dance.

BERGMAN: Yeah, I could dance, yeah. There was many, many nights, when I worked in Brookline, of course, you had to stay in certain nights, you know. And if it was a Saturday night and I had to stay, you know, in case they wanted something, you know, the people there, they would ring the bell and I had to bring them something, you know. And I was up until ten o'clock at night when I was on duty. (She laughs.) And when ten O'clock came and it was a Saturday night where would I end up? At Berkley Hall in Boston. (She laughs.)

DANE: That sounds so fun. And did you dance in Sweden? Did you know Swedish dances?

BERGMAN: A little bit but, uh, we didn't have the opportunity there to, uh, do things like it was here, go to a dance every Saturday night. That was really something different.

DANE: Oh, it sounds like fun.

BERGMAN: It was. And you meet so many different people.

DANE: And what about the buildings and the city life and the cars and the trains?

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah. That was really something. That was something. Out in Brookline, and I worked there doing housework for Burtleson. They lived in these huge buildings. Of course, he had a big apartment. And, uh, that was really something to see.

DANE: And electricity, did you have electricity on the farm?

BERGMAN: Oh, no, no. Kerosene lamps.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: But they did have electricity over there in places that they didn't have here.

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah, but, uh, then my father wrote and told me that they got electricity after I left, they got electricity there. So that was the big help for them. And, uh--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: But you didn't have it here, Mama.

BERGMAN: No, no. Up in Vermont we didn't have electricity. Right, and we had gas, gas light. And do you know, when I, first apartment

I had in Dorchester on Cateman Street, we had gas lights there for a while until--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: I was born there.

BERGMAN: Yeah, right. And, um, until we got electricity we had gas light, you know. And these were so, every so often, you know, you had to get these new, I forget now what you call them, to put on the gas, you know, in the lampstick or burn--

DANE: The wick?

BERGMAN: Something. Wick, yeah. That's what it is. I couldn't remember that. Yeah, that's right, too. Now you remind me of that.

DANE: Was there anything, this was a hard one because it's hard to be specific. Did any Swedish customs or holidays or food or things that you brought with you that you still-

BERGMAN: Here you mean?

DANE: Yeah.

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah, my aunt always used to have, here, home in the old country, Christmas Eve was the big, big time home. Then we have any presents or all the food and that was a big, big time. And, of course, my aunt up in Vermont, she always had Christmas and Christmas Eve. That was the biggest time of Christmas. And, of course, she has, my daughter has, always, has a big time for Christmas. And she always has all the Swedish things, you know, and, uh--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: All the things people will eat.

BERGMAN: Yeah, that people will eat, yeah. There are a lot of things that--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: Like pickled herring.

BERGMAN: But you like that. Yeah, and, of course, that's an old standby, you know, for the Swedish people to make the pickled herring. Then they also had, um "lutvisk", [PH], that's another, did you ever hear that name?

DANE: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: What is lutvisk [PH]?

BERGMAN: Well, it's just cod--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: And it's salted.

BERGMAN: And they dry it and salt and dry it and it's hard as a rock. And then, after you buy it I don't know what the idea is, but that's what they did. Then after you buy it you have to soak it with the salt that, it would kill you if you ate it the way it was. You have to soak it in water, change the water every day for about a week, and all you do is boil it and have some gravy or sauce with it and that's all, that is the biggest thing in, for the Swedish people. And then we have another thing, my mother always, when she was alive, I remember that. We had what we call, um, (?), that is a sort of, um, she used to have, uh, yeah, my aunt used to make it and I used to make it myself. Buy a fresh shoulder, boil it, in salt and, um, salty water and spices and then, when that was cooked, slice it up and put it in layers, you know, and put all kind of spices in there. It was kind of, it was kind of good, wasn't it?

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: From what I remember.

BERGMAN: Oh, that was another big thing for Christmas. If you didn't have that there was no Christmas. The lutvisk [PH] and pickled herring. And, of course, another thing that they always have, it was rice pudding. It was like cereal. And I remember you put the rice in and you stir it for hours and hours and hours, stir it in milk. I don't what the idea, but it, you couldn't, you couldn't leave it there in a --

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: Because of the milk.

BERGMAN: Huh? I don't know what the idea was, but that was another standby, and that, it was really good when it was cooked, you better believe it. It was very tasty. But it took a lot of, all these things was a lot, so much work attached to it. But it was -- (Daughter speaks off microphone. Inaudible.) I don't know why, I was never crazy about cooking. And today, oh, forget it, forget it.

DANE: How about things like, um, dances or songs? Were there any songs that you guys would always sing, or--

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah. I had, I think I got quite a few of them here

that we bought. We used to have it on, um, record. Yes, I have a few records here that obviously--

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: There used to be a Swedish program on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

BERGMAN: yeah. Right. Oh, they do. They do have all kinds of things. And, uh, you can buy, I have a couple of Swedish records, records here that I used to play. And remember that record that Lawrence bought me? That was really funny. It was some Swedish, uh, he was, uh, he knew how to speak English, but he tried to sing the way the Swedish do it, and we got the biggest kick out of that. That's her son, my grandson, you know. So he bought me that for Christmas one time. And he can imitate the two pretty good, too, the way this guy talks, like I do. (They laugh.)

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: He always says Tuesday, Mom, it's Tuesday today.

BERGMAN: Yeah, and that's another thing, too, he tells me. Instead of saying "yust," there's how do you say--

DANE: Oh, Tuesday?

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: No, just.

BERGMAN; Yes. Oh, and he says, "Used to be."

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: You know something, my oldest daughter is thirty-four. And when she was sixteen, fifteen, sixteen, my mother took here and her girlfriend to Boston to see the Beach Boys' concert. Not me. Her.

BERGMAN: The girls used to take me along. There was no problem there.

DANE: You've always wanted a good time.

BERGMAN: Oh, I always did in my younger days. Of course, now it's different. (She laughs.)

MRS. BERGMAN'S DAUGHTER: Well, we went to Hawaii and she went .

BERGMAN: Oh, yeah, and we went to Bermuda, and we went to New York to see the Statue of Liberty.

DANE: Was that fun to see that?

BERGMAN: Oh, I liked that. And she, did we climb all the stairs?
I gorget now how many hundred. But her
husband and Lawrence, they climbed all the way to the
top.

DANE: When you saw her again did you remember the first time
you'd seen her, the statue?

BERGMAN: The first time I saw it was only about the head. We went
by so fast, you know, they didn't have time really
to see much of anything. But when we did go down to New
York and we went to, oh, to see the Statue for, really
see it, that was a different story. Oh, that was, now ,
they're going to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary
of liberty. (Discussion off record.)

DANE: Let me sign off here. We're just coming to the end of
the tape. Hold on just a second.

BERGMAN: Okay.

DANE: This is the end of side two, Signe Bergman, Interview

Number 95. It's 11:50.