**Kate:** Good evening. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 26th of June 1994 and I'm in Seattle, Washington at the home of Alli Benson who came from Finland in 1920 when she was 12 years old.

Why don’t you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Alli:** It’s Alli Ottelia Benson.

**Kate:** How do you spell it?

**Alli:**  OTTELIA Benson. Ottelia Benson.

**Kate:** What was you maiden name?

**Alli:** Carlson.

**Kate:**  How do you spell that?

**Alli:** C-A-R-L-S-O-N

**Kate:** And when were you born?

**Alli:**  June 1, 1908.

**Kate:** Okay, where you were born?

**Alli:**  In Pargas, Finland.

**Kate:**  And how do you spell Pargas?

**Alli:** P-A-R-G-A-S

**Kate:** And what size town was Pargas?

**Alli:** That's a very small town. It was a very old old town you know. That church must be three- four hundred years old.

**Kate:** What the town look like? How would you characterize the town? Is it beautiful?

**Alli:** Yes it’s a very beautiful little town.

**Kate:** And what was the major industry in that town, do you know what they did?

**Alli:** Well, just sailing all around and they had a cement factory. There are not too many in Finland but I think that’s maybe one or two they had one up in [inaudible 00:01:25] in some place but they had a lot of ships coming in and out of there

**Kate:** And what was your father's name?

**Alli:** Carl Johan Carlson.

**Kate:**  And how do you spell Carl Johan?

**Alli:** C-A-R-L J-O-H-A-N.

**Kate:** Okay, and what was his occupation?

**Alli:** Well, when he came back from America to Finland, he started his own store. And he was also very active in all the activities in Pargas in the church and he was one of the five people who started the savings bank in Pargas many many years ago of course.

**Kate:** And what type of store did he have?

**Alli:** Oh I think just general, probably mostly groceries and a few general things that he sold.

**Kate:**  What did your father look like?

**Alli:** Well, I couldn’t--

**Kate:** What color of hair and eyes?

**Alli:** Oh I couldn’t tell you that?

**Kate:** What about his personality and temperament?

**Alli:** He was a very pleasant person we had a lot of friends. Always very very nice

**Kate**: Was he sociable?

**Alli:** Oh yes. Oh yes

**Kate:** And is there a story about your father that you remember in your childhood at all?

**Alli:** Well, no we always had a lot of company at home because of his business and because he was so active in all the activities in Pargas there, so consequently we had a lot of company and he always enjoyed that.

**Kate:**  What about his energy level?

**Alli:** He was an energetic person but that I couldn’t tell you either.

**Kate:** What about your mother’s name, was your mother's name?

**Alli:** Akelina Wilhelmina. I wrote it somewhere. Herman's daughter that was her name.

**Kate**: Could you spell that for us please?

**Alli:** Yeah, you have it right here Akelina Wilhelmina. You want to see it?

**Kate**: Here it is Akelina - A-K-E-L-I-N-A. Wilhelmina -W-I-L-H-E-L-M-I-N-A Karlsson- K-A-R-L-S-S-O-N

**Kate:** And what was your mother’s occupation?

**Alli:** I think having children we were eight of us [laughter]. Well just a housekeeper.

**Kate:** A housekeeper.

**Kate:** What did your mother look like? Eye color, do you remember?

**Alli:** No.

**Kate:** And what about a personality and temperament you remember much?

**Alli:** Not so much I was very young when she died. She was a very pleasant person.

**Kate:**  How old were you when your mum died?

**Alli:** How old was I when my mum died? Well she died in 1918 I think so, I was about 10.

**Kate**: And is there a story that your family members told about your mother at all, anything that you remember her by?

**Alli**: No, she had one sister who was younger and she had a brother I think he was a year or two older who moved to Africa and he died there, a few years ago.

**Kate**: And what part of Africa was he in?

**Alli:** In Johannesburg.

**Kate:** I see.

**Alli:** He was a sailor, he sailed across and then he first stopped in Australia and then he moved on to Africa.

**Kate:** How about brothers and sisters you mentioned there are eight of you could name them in order?

**Alli:** Oh, no cause I was the youngest and they almost all died before I--I don’t even remember their names.

**Kate:** Oh I see. What was the difference in age between the oldest and the youngest if you were the youngest?

**Alli:** I don’t know 15 years or something like that.

**Kate:** Do you remember any brother or sister’s names? do you have a sister here?

**Alli:** Oh yes my brother’s he was the oldest his name is Arthur Karlsson next to him was George Karlsson who lived here in Seattle until just a few years ago. And then I had a sister Elsa who died of TB in 1912 and then [inaudible 00:05:53] who lives up at the north and the somewhere in Lagrange then it was me but we were eight in the family I think three of them must have passed away before they were four or five years old.

**Kate:** And describe your house. You have a picture of your house. How could you describe it for us on tape here, the house that you lived in when you were a child?

**Alli:** Well just had a big kitchen, and then we had two bedrooms and then we had a big living room shall I say.

**Kate:**  [inaudible 00:06:31]

**Alli:** All that I wouldn’t, it looked like wood of some kind.

**Kate:** And do you remember how it was heated?

**Alli:** Well we had a like a fire place like they had [inaudible 00:06:45] they had that in I think in two rooms and that’s about all and then we’ve got a kitchen store of course going.

**Kate:** And was there a garden?

**Alli:** Oh yes we had a garden both in front and in the back.

**Kate:**  And what did you grow in the garden do you remember?

**Alli:** oh yes, in the back we had all fruit trees a lot of apple trees and cherry trees. And then in front they grew a lot of I think we even had raspberries up front and then they grew carrots and vegetable, beets, I remember that but we had a lot of fruit trees all through the place.

**Kate:** What kind of furniture did you have in the house, do you remember?

**Alli:** No I don’t remember that.

**Kate:** And what this house far from town? Was it in and out of town?

**Alli:** No it was one Swedish mile to Pargas mile which was the closest town. One Swedish mile that is.

**Kate**: And did you keep animals?

**Alli:** Yes, we had a cow and chicken and I don’t think they-- oh I think they had probably two sheep and that’s about all I remember.

**Kate:** And who else lived in this house with you? You had your brothers and sisters and your mother and father. Did your grandparent live with you?

**Alli:** No they did not, they lived away from home.

**Kate**: Where did they live?

**Alli:** On the same Island but up in the farming country.

**Kate:** And what was mealtime like in your family as a child? Do remember anything?

**Alli:** No, I don’t.

**Kate:** Were you especially close to anyone in your family?

**Alli:** We were all very very close always especially my sister, she was a little older. Well, let’s see she’s was born in in 1902 or something and she had to take care of me because she and I were left all by ourselves. So we lived in our home all by ourselves, but we had wonderful wonderful neighbors. They were related a little bit, I think their mother and my neighbor was cousins.

**Kate:** Why were you left alone in the house?

**Alli:** Why? Because when my mother died in 1918 of cancer.

**Kate:** Were you very close to your grandparents?

**Alli:**  I don’t remember them.

**Kate:** You don’t remember them. Alright, what about religious life, were you religious?

**Alli:** Oh we went to church very often. We had our own service every Sunday morning with our neighbors, either they’d come to our place or we’d go to them and we had to sit still for an hour or 12 o’clock [chuckle].

**Kate:** And what denomination were you?

**Alli:**  I mean Lutheran of course.

**Kate:** And was there a church nearby at all?

**Alli:** No Pargas moment, it’s just one mile.

**Kate:**  So you worshipped at each other’s homes?

**Alli:** Yes of course they used to go to church quite often. We had row boats and in the winter time it was kind of hard to get to church but we made it.

**Kate:** How did you do it in the winter time?

**Alli:** Well, we had our own transportation of some kind. Either we tried to ski or do something to get there either on skies or on feet.

**Kate:** Did you have a special church boat, boat that went to church or was it your own row boat?

**Alli:** Our own.

**Kate**: And would the whole family go in one row boat?

**Alli:** Oh yes, it’s a rule we had big row boats.

**Kate:** How about holiday celebrations. Do you remember any special you liked?

**Alli:** Well especially Christmas because we were four neighbors and we all had to get up Christmas morning. The one who had the coffee, cooked the coffee first came in invited everybody else and then from then on we went from about four in the morning until 10 o’clock at night we had to go and visit all the four neighbors.

**Kate:** And what did you do when you visited?

**Alli:** That I don’t remember just sit and talk, I guess the kids played I guess.

**Kate:** What about food you had special foods?

**Alli:** We had a lot of potatoes, fish and potatoes because we always had fresh fish.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food as a kid, what was the food you liked the best?

**Alli:** Potatoes. [Laughs]

**Kate:**  How about music were you singing?

**Alli:** Not at all.

**Kate:** Not at all [laughter]. What about school life. Did you remember school life in Finland?

**Alli:** Oh yes I started, we had to row across the sound to a place called Vono V-O-N-O and so they had a school there. That is after we got into the high school sort of, otherwise we had a school on our little island that we went to.

**Kate:** How big was that school in that island?

**Alli:** It was not a school they rented a room in the farmer’s house somewhere, so that’s where we went to school.

**Kate:** And who taught you then?

**Alli:** We had teachers that came all the time.

**Kate:** What was your favorite subject?

**Alli:** Staying home [Laughter].The Island we had to cross water and sometimes the water would be frozen but there was one place where the current was so swift that we‘d take the row boat and walk along the row boat hanging on to the boat, walk along on the ice until the ice wouldn’t give in and we’d all jump in to the row boat and start rowing across and no one ever drowned, just think how dangerous very deep there and cold snow.

**Kate:** Did anyone fall in?

**Alli:** No one ever. Never.

**Kate:**  Never and did you make it to school every day that way?

**Alli:** Oh yes, oh yes

**Kate:**  Did you learn? Do you remember any--?

**Alli:** Yes his name is Sandbag and he was there for many many years and he was our high school teacher and the other teacher would come different ones every year [inaudible 00:12:44] generally a lady who was our teacher.

**Kate:** And what was the most important thing in school for behaving. What were you taught to do in school?

**Alli:** Prayer every morning we knew right from wrong and I think we had a lot of respect for everyone. I think we learnt that at home but also in school. We had something from the Bible every morning.

**Kate:**  Did you learn any English before coming to the United States?

**Alli:** No, not a word.

**Kate:** And what language did you speak at home?

**Alli:** Swedish.

**Kate:** Did you learn Finnish at all?

**Alli:** Not a word.

**Kate:** And was Finnish spoken anywhere near--?

**Alli:** We had one family on our Island but they spoke Swedish but their children were sent to Finnish school in Abo so that’s the only family that’s Finnish.

**Kate:** And you were there, do you remember anything about Finland during the Russian-- the time of before the civil war?

**Alli:** When what year would that have been?

**Kate:** Like 17?

**Alli:** Oh yes I remember the Russians very well at that time we were real scared of them, just very frightened when we saw a Russian.

**Kate:** And did your family fly the Russian flag? Because the picture that you have of the house has it.

**Alli:** I don’t know. Well that flag meant we became Russians. White, blue and red we became Russians. I don’t know but that was our flag for many many years.

**K ate:** The white, the red and the blue.

**Alli:** White, blue and red.

**Kate:** White, blue and red [chuckle] sorry. And so what was why you were frightened of the Russians at that time?

**Alli:** Well I think I don’t know probably didn’t understand the Russians and we just did not, could not really like them.

**Kate:** And did you ever come in contact with them very much?

**Alli:** No they were more in Abo than in Pargas but there were a lot of them in Abo of course.

**Kate:**  And what type of games did you play as a child for entertainment?

**Alli:** We used to jump rope a lot [laughter]. We even played cards, little kids games. We made our own cards there were none to be had so we sat down and got a piece of paper and made some cards. And I guess we did a lot of swimming of course swimming in the summer time.

**Kate:** And did you ski?

**Alli:** Well to a certain extent not really professionally no, but we all we had skies and we had skates and we had what are they called those--?

**Kate:** Sledge that you push?

**Alli:** Yes they had. Spark Statting

**Kate:** Spark statting. How do you spell that?

**Alli:** Spark statting. S-P-A-R-K S-T-A-T-T-I-N-G.

**Kate:** Its kick sledge where push the sledge, it’s like a chair on a sledge.

**Alli:** That’s right.

**Kate:** What about life in the Island, how was it when you were a child?

**Alli:** Wonderful.

**Kate:** How was it?

**Alli:** It was pretty nice.

**Kate:** And the people fished. Fishing was common?

**Alli:** Everyone fished for a living practically. It was winter or summer. In the winter time they’d go out quite [inaudible 00:16:22] from where we lived they’d go to Abo almost every day and sell the fish. So they were about like that, I know what they could have been.

**Kate:** Well like Herring?

**Alli:** Probably not very much, not as big as the herring, they were kind of small.

**Kate:** And what about--The house that you lived in did it have plumbing? Where did you get your water?

**Alli:** No, we had our own well that never went dry. They’d come from all over to get their water in our well. Our neighbors had a well. Their well got dry. Ours never got dry. That’s the kind of water we had.

**Kate**: And so you have outdoor [inaudible: 00:17:20]?

**Alli:** Absolutely yes?

**Alli:** And how did you like the house do you remember?

**Alli:** Oh we thought it was nice. We had nice furniture considering.

**Kate:** And how were the lightening how did you--?

**Alli:** No we had of course a lamp quite a few lamps. We didn’t have electricity at that time. Now they have it but we did not at that time. Candles.

**Kate:** You had candles? And what type of lamps did you have Kerosene or?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** Now tell me about how your family, how your father or who was the first to come to America and why did they come?

**Alli:** Well my dad had been here in 1889. He fished in the Columbia River. He was a sailor in all over the world but he just loved the North West here. So he was there and he decided to come home when he married mother and then he stayed there until, he came here in 1912 then I think my dad did. Maybe 13, something liked that.

**Kate:** So he was here in 1889 and he stayed how long?

**Alli:** Well that I don’t remember for sure.

**Kate:** You don’t know when your parents were married.

**Alli:** No, I really don’t know.

**Kate:** So he loved it here and he wanted to go back?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** And what did he tell you about the North West here when he was--?

**Alli:** Well he thought it was the greatest country he had been to, so he came here.

**Kate**: And what did your mother think about his ideas of coming here?

**Alli:** Well, I don’t really know I don’t know if she was too happy with it or not with all her children and all I don’t really know. I was too little to realize how she felt or anything.

**Kate:** So he came here, what year 19--?

**Alli:** I think 1912 or 13 maybe.

**Kate:**  1912 or 13. Then that left your mother with the children at home.

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** Do you remember him leaving at all?

**Alli:** No I don’t I was just 4 years old.

**Kate:** How did he get the money to come to the States when he came do you know that?

**Alli:** Well he was in business as I said. He had his store. I don’t know if that’s how he got his money, I never [inaudible 00:19:29] really

**Kate**: And did he sell that store?

**Alli:**  No, I don’t know I think he just quit.

**Kate**: He just quit, your mother did not run the store?

**Alli:** There was no store after he left.

**Kate:** And so how did you come to the United States?

**Alli:**  Well, we came by boat of course from Abo to Stockholm.

**Kate**: No but I mean how did it happen that you joined your father then who decided?

**Alli:** We were only the two of us left back home my sister and I because my two brothers were here in Seattle too with my dad.

**Kate**: So they came first?

**Alli**: Yes.

**Kate:** And then your mum died.

**Alli:** Yes in 1918.

**Kate**: And so then you two were left?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** And you wanted to come?

Alli: Well I don’t know if we had much choice, no I never wanted to come to America, I wanted to stay with the neighbors. My sister said, “No we’re going to America”. We came thank goodness [laughter].

**Kate:** Do you remember packing getting ready to come to America? do you remember that?

**Alli:** I had an aunt and an uncle who lived in Newport Rhode Island he was in the Navy there for many many years. They happened to come home for a visit, so they helped us more or less with our packing and it was a great help.

The only thing we didn’t like, they took the pictures off the wall and left the glass and their frames on them and we packed those in a big trunk that was full of pictures when we came and not one of them was broken.

**Kate:** So you brought pictures from home? What else did you bring from home?

**Alli**: Things you should not have brought.

**Kate:** Like what? Like name them [laughter]?

**Alli:** Oh gracious I can’t really think. Lots of quilts, homemade quilts of course and I don’t really remember.

**Kate:** Did you bring anything special that you still have? Do you have anything from your original home?

**Alli:** No I don’t think so.

**Kate:** Did your sister?

**Alli:** No. She was the one who was in charge she was 18, she was a grown person [laughter]. Likely she thought so.

**Kate**: So your Aunt and Uncle from Newport Rhode Island they came and helped you pack then they returned?

**Alli:** To America oh yes, he was in the United States Navy for many many years so he retired from the Navy.

**Kate:** Without you people?

**Alli:** That’s right. He was retired then I think already in 1920 when we came.

**Kate:** What did you do with the house when you left?

**Alli:** They sold it, they had an auction. After we left, we stayed there and then when other farmers took charge of the place and we had an auction on it.

**Kate**: Okay, and so you were coming to the United States with your sister?

**Alli:** Right.

**Kate**: How did you get from your house? Walk me through this. How did it happen? You left the house?

**Alli:** Yes and then we had a boat that left-- I don’t know how many Islands it stopped at and then came to our little Island and then we went direct to Abo.

**Kate:** Did anyone see you off any families.

**Alli:** All the kids from school got a holiday that day to see me off to America.

**Kate:** Really?

**Alli:** That’s right.

**Kate:** And did the neighbors come too?

**Alli:**  Oh yes.

**Kate**: And did they have a party for you?

**Alli:** No not really, we didn’t have too many flowers. It was November or December but they brought me whatever they had, all the little flowers and we had a wonderful send off.

**Kate**: And so they all waved goodbye?

**Alli:** Oh yes, and cried. [Laughter]

**Kate:** And you waved and the boat went away?

**Alli:** That’s right.

**Kate:** In the Island.

**Alli:** And we went to Abo.

**Kate:** And then from Abo what happened?

**Alli:** Well, we took a boat there to Stockholm. We got there on and then--

**Kate**: You don’t remember the name of the boat?

**Alli:** No, I don’t but I was the only child on the boat, I was 12 years old and my sister got sea sick which she shouldn’t have being brought up right on the water but she got sick, she went to bed immediately cause she got sick and I ran around there and the sailor got hold of me and talked to me he said, “Come on with me.” So he took me to the captain’s quarters where we had coffee and coffee and Oh I was in my glory [Laughs].

**Kate**: But your sister was in charge of you?

**Alli**: Absolutely.

**Kate**: Poor thing.

**Alli:** [laughs] Yes that’s right I feel sorry for her because I wasn’t about to go to bed at 8’clock at night.

**Kate:** Take advantage of her sickness. So you went on a boat—went by boat to Abo and then from there you went to Stockholm

**Alli:** And then we took the train from Stockholm to Gothenburg

**Kate:** Gothenburg you took a train there?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate**: What do you remember about train? Do you remember anything about these trips that was different, new things you saw?

**Alli:**  Well I think it was the first time I’d ever been one train. I thought it was wonderful [laughter] I had never been on a train on a ship yes but not on a train.

**Kate:** And so, you went through small Islands to Sweden by train right?

**Alli:** To what?

**Kate:** You went through Sweden [inaudible 00:24:34]

**Alli:**  Yes that’s right.

**Kate:** And so, then what happened?

**Alli:** Okay we came here to [unclear 00:24:37]. We were supposed to live the following day. Something had happened so we had to stay a couple days in [inaudible 00:24:47] but then went the following maybe two days after we arrived in [inaudible:00:24:52]

**Kate:** Where did you stay?

**Alli:** In a hotel. They had that provided for us, that was included in our ticket.

**Kate:** How was the hotel, remember it?

**Alli:** Well it was all immigrants of European people like us, like ourselves from Sweden and Finland.

**Kate:** In the boat you came from Abo to Stockholm what were the accommodation? Did you have your own cabin?

**Alli:** Yes we did.

**Kate:** And did you have sheets in the bed?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** What about the dining facility?

**Alli:** Well, no this was at night so I don’t think we got anything to eat. I can’t remember.

**Kate:** Except you had the coffee with the captain.

**Alli:**  Yes, I should say that. It was good enough for me. [Laughs]

**Kate:** Alright, so on the train then, did you take any food with you?

**Alli:** No, we didn’t eat very much I tell you on the train either. Not that I remember at least.

**Kate:** So then you stayed overnight in a hotel for immigrants.

**Alli:** Couple of nights yes.

**Kate:** Couple of nights. Do you remember seeing the boat through the first time that you were leaving?

**Alli:**  Well, yes it was in the harbor we saw it.

**Kate:** And what was it like this boat, was it immense?

**Alli:** We thought it was but I don’t think it was. It belonged to a Swedish American line. No Scandinavian American I guess they called it. It was an old old boat called Stockholm it was supposed to be its last trip and the rats were just as big as the cats.

**Kate**: The rats were as big as cats? You saw rats?

**Alli:** We had third class. Of course we came third class you know. Oh that was a terrible sight.

**Kate:** Where were the rats?

**Alli:** Running around everywhere. That was terrible and the cats, so many cats. I really like cats. But I didn’t like those cats.

**Kate**: And so where did you sleep in the boat did you sleep in your own cabin? You had bunk beds or--?

**Alli:** No we were four in a cabin.

**Kate:** Four in a cabin.

**Alli:** Yes, I think I had the upper one and my sister had the lower cabin.

**Kate:** Who else was with you?

**Alli:** Well two other people, I can’t remember who they were.

**Kate:** Were they many other children?

**Alli:** Not too many.

**Kate**: Were you allowed on deck?

**Alli:** Oh yes and the sailors there were just as nice to me there as they were when we left Finland for Sweden. No, they were very nice to us because my sister was seasick the whole time so I had to take care of myself.

What I did one day, you know what fruit soup is, made out of fruit? Of course we just loved that. So I brought her a bowl of fruit soup. That sweet stuff when you are sea sick, it doesn’t makes sense she didn’t like it a bit. [Laughs]

**Kate:** So what did you eat on that boat?

**Alli:** They had a dining room.

**Kate**: What type of dining room was it?

**Alli:** That I couldn’t tell you.

**Kate:** Was there anything in this voyage that had experience or that you’d never experienced before?

**Alli:** Not really not in the ship no.

**Kate**: And the Stockholm to--When did you leave then? When did you first what day? Do you remember?

**Alli:** I think it was the 13th of December.

**Kate:** 13th of December from the island.

**Alli:** I think it was. Now I’m not too sure about that but I think

**Kate:** So then you took a couple of days about 3 or 4 days in [inaudible 00:28:13] from there up to the States do you remember how long that trip was?

**Alli:** No I don’t remember but when we came to New York you know the Swedish American Line and the Italian Line, shared the same dock and there were two ships ahead of us two Italian ships. So we had to be out of the bay area and the ship there till the Swedish ship had a chance to land. So we were there quite a while two days out in the harbor.

What they did, they took all our bedding away from us when we came to the area, the water because to land that day well they couldn’t and you know we had no way of washing clothes on the ship. So they just handed us somebody else’s sheets and beddings to sleep in and we did not like that. But we had to we stayed there then overnight and I guess the next day probably we landed in New York.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

**Alli:** No I can’t really remember that seeing it. I can’t really remember that it didn’t mean anything to us at the time.

**Kate:** What about the skyline of New York do you remember that?

**Alli:** Well yes, I remember that, it was unusual we had never seen anything like it we couldn’t believe it but that’s the way it was.

**Kate:** And how did you get from your ship to Ellis Island?

**Alli:** Well we got I guess it was just a very small boat that took us to Ellis Island and when were got there, we were the only Scandinavians on that ship. Why did they send us to Ellis Island? We had the money. We had the papers and everything ready. Why weren’t the rest of them sent there?

**Kate:**  The rest of the Scandinavians?

**Alli:**  Yes.

**Kate**: So you were the only two sent there?

**Alli:** We were the only two that were sent to Ellis Island as far as we knew we didn’t see anyone. We stayed in Ellis Island I know two nights maybe just one day I don’t remember. But we stayed there quite a while.

And the night we went to bed, we slept in a room there were, I think 30 or 35 bunk beds. And they were--We had never seen a Catholic yes probably a Russian Catholic we’d never heard of a Catholic.

They were all Catholics and they were all from some Southern Country I don’t know what kind of language they spoke but they all came and they prayed for us and we had never seen a rosary. We thought, “What are they doing to us you know?” Scared, we were so scared.

Some of them came and just put their arms around us. We were still scared of them but we stayed there for two nights I think in Ellis Island.

**Kate**: What do you remember entering Ellis Island? What were your impressions, do you remember?

**Alli:**  No I don’t remember.

**Kate:** Did they give you an examination?

**Alli:** That I can’t remember either. I was just 12 years old. I can’t remember what they did to us. We were scared.

**Kate**: So do you remember a large hall at all.

**Alli:** I don’t know it was a big hall but I don’t remember anything about the walls or anything.

**Kate:** Do you remember eating there?

**Alli:** Not unless we had to. We were so scared and they had a man standing at the door going into the dining room and he had like a French loaf of bread and he broke it off in half and he gave half to my sister and half to me and that’s all we ate. We didn’t dare to eat we were scared they were going to poison us. [Laughs] I think we drunk a little coffee but that’s absolutely all we ate.

**Kate:** Did anybody speak to you in Swedish there?

**Alli:** No, there wasn’t there were no Swedes. There was one lady, the last day when we were there and we were standing in line, this lady came and spoke to us and she was sick. And she had I think three suitcases or something so she asked would I please carry one of her suitcases she was in the line next to us and she comes from one of the little Islands up there in the [inaudible 00:32:32] can you imagine?

So I took suitcase and she had a couple of blankets I was really loaded. We never saw her after that before we got parted. Poor thing.

**Kate:** You had her suitcase?

**Alli:** Sure but she had our address so New Year’s morning her son came over from the Island here and picked them up. But we had all this luggage.

**Kate:** You had some body’s luggage you didn’t know?

**Alli:** We didn’t know her, she was a Swedish Finn.

**Kate**: You remember her name?

**Alli:** No, but she came from a place called Paros out there in the Island.

**Alli:** I’m glad that she happened to have our address so she got her things back.

**Kate**: That’s a great way of getting someone to carry your stuff.

**Alli:** Yes, she was sick, she was real sick [laughter]

**Kate**: So you got out Ellis Island finally? How did it happen that you got out?

**Alli:** Well because every day they’d called names of those who were to be released. We were sitting there shaking, finally they called Bertha Gunhild Karlsson and her sister Alli and we understood that and we jumped up and got away I guess [laughter].

**Kate**: And so where were you going then?

**Alli:** To New York to get on a train to come to Seattle.

**Kate:** And how did you get in the train?

**Alli:** That I don’t remember they must have helped us a great deal. We got on that train, it was in the evening and about 3 O'clock in the morning, we had a head collision with another train. There must have been six eight feet of snow. We understood not much but we understood some had been killed in that train. And in the car that we were sitting, almost everyone had blood running down their face, it didn’t touch us.

We were not hurt at all. But it was so cold at 3 o’clock in the morning and all that snow and we had sit there for several hours before I don’t know how we got on another train but we didn’t come in the same route that we were supposed to they had to go-- another train had to go some other place but how we got on the train I don’t remember but that was just--

**Kate:** You mean people in the immediate car that you were in were injured?

**Alli:** Yes very much so, they all had blood on them just head on collision and we understood that some had been killed in the first car.

**Kate:** And when was that was that after Christmas?

**Alli:** No before Christmas. It was just before Christmas, isn’t that something? That was terrible.

**Kate**: And so you finally got through to Seattle right?

**Alli:** We finally did but we were supposed to dad told-- gave us money, you know you couldn’t buy a sleeper you know Pullman car or when you bought your ticket you had to buy that at the station like in Chicago we were supposed to have bought our tickets. Well we didn’t know what to do so we sat up all the way from New York to Seattle.

**Kate**: Was it like five days?

**Alli:** Well not quite five days we took a long--had three days and three nights I assume or something like that. We were delayed someplace else, of course when we went Ellis Island that’s true. But we didn’t understand we should have notified our folks here in Seattle when we were coming in and at that time there were three trains landing in Seattle from Chicago.

We didn’t go to Chicago. They took us to St. Louis or someplace out of the way because of this train accident. And we had three trains coming in here. So my brothers, two brothers and my dad had to take their turn to go down and meet the train and here we came in at 6 o’clock one morning.

And while we were on Ellis Island we bought these packages of food, they came in about a 12 by 12 box. I don’t know what was in there because we never opened them. My brother met us at the train he said, “What in the world have you gotten here”.

So we told him it was food and he throws it in the garbage can after we had carried it all the way from Ellis Island [laughter] in Seattle. We couldn’t throw a crumb away when were in Finland at that time it was a pretty hard time you should know [laughs]. But anyhow we finally got to my brother’s place and then my dad lived with him.

**Kate**: Where did they live?

**Alli:** Here in Seattle, Quinine Hill.

**Kate**: And what did they have a house?

**Kate:** Did they own this house?

**Alli:** Yes they owned their own home.

**Kate**: How big was the house?

**Alli:** I know it had two but I think three bedrooms. I’m sure of that. But then they had--Those days they had a lot of those couches where they could open them you know could sleep in the bed, make it a bed. I guess we still have them too.

**Kate:** You walk back a bit, another story you gave you talked about contracting lice.

**Alli:** Oh yes. When we got on this second train in New York and it was full of soldiers who had come home from war you see it was right after that World War and they had their, I guess it was their wives and almost all of them had children and had babies and of course kids I like kids too and they brought all those kids to me, and they were full of lice. [Inaudible 00:38:19]. And I got so many lice. Oh, it was terrible.

My sister, the same thing when we lived in Finland she never got one of those. I always brought them home and I can still see my mother standing out the lawn when I came home from school with kerosene I guess she had in her hand and she poured it over my head and it burned my skin [laughter]. I think that’s why I am I am the way I am I think they did something too me. [Laughs]

**Kate:** Oh yes so you found out at the train [inaudible] that you had lice and what did you do?

**Alli:** I had lice when we came home came to Seattle my sister in law the first thing she did was to give me a real hot bath and wash my hair. It took three of those baths and that hot hot water and soap before I got rid of them. And my sister never had one. I don’t think she was ever jealous of me. [Laughter].

**Kate:** Yes, it doesn’t seem something to be jealous of.

**Alli:** It’s starting to itch [laughter].

**Kate:** I have the same problem. We’re all scratching here together. Alright so you got home and the house, what was it made of the house?

**Alli:** Oh just a wooden house.

**Kate:** Wooden house and did it have plumbing?

**Alli:** Oh yes. It was in town right here in Seattle.

**Kate:** Electricity.

**Alli:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing anything for the first time when you came here? Anything that struck you, any foods?

**Alli:** No. I think all the food. I think all because we ate fish and potatoes and one meal and potatoes and fish the next meal and carrots [laughter]. No I can’t really.

**Kate:** Vegetables were different here.

**Alli:** No I didn’t remember that at all and my sister in law was such a wonderful cooked. She worked in one of the lady’s clubs here in Seattle and she was such a beautiful cook. So we had lots of good food.

**Kate:** So when your brother came to get you at the station.

**Alli:** He happened to be the one that came down.

**Kate:** And you remember reuniting with your family then?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** What was that like?

**Alli:** Oh fine great, wonderful, just great.

**Kate:** Did they have a dinner for you when you came?

**Alli:** I don’t remember what they had.

**Kate:** Now what happened then after that? How did you learn English all of you?

**Alli:** Okay, so then I started grade should and it took about 10-15 minutes to walk to the school and of course every child in school came and looked at that idiot sitting in that school, I wouldn’t go out you know she didn’t know a thing she’s just dumb you know so they all came but going home that night one of the young girls came and spoke to me and her parents were Swedish but she didn’t speak much Swedish but she understood Swedish so we got along fine so after that they became my best friends so I still see them most of them are dead now. I got along just fine.

There was a girl from France and we didn’t understand one another but we stuck together pretty close in the school she was quite a bit big bigger than I was but we got along fine with our sign language.

**Kate:** And do you remember- how was it learning English for you?

**Alli:** Well it wasn’t easy I would say that but it didn’t take too long before I understood it. And the way it was I had to go through to college call it Pacific College, Seattle Pacific. It was a religious college and I had to walk through the-- what do you call the ground of the college there to go to school.

**Kate:** Campus?

**Alli:** Yes campus and a girl about my age she was so mean to me she’d throw rocks at me, she’d spit at me. Didn’t understand what she wanted. So I told my brother and my dad I said I’m not going to back school I’m not going back to that school ever. “What’s the matter?” So my brother said, “Okay the first day I have off, I’ll go with you,” is in a couple of days he went with me.

She thought I was a German. See it was right after the German war and after that we became the best friend she was so nice to me but you see she had learned to dislike the Germans very very much.

**Kate:** Did anyone call you any names?

**Alli:** For that I didn’t understand. [Laughs]I wouldn’t know what they called me

**Kate:** Were your teachers. How your teachers react?

**Alli:** Very nice they had a lot of patience with me and it didn’t take long before I understood it. I didn’t speak it and I had to get up in front of the class and pronounce T-H. You know that is about the hardest thing for a Scandinavian. Anything that has a T-H in it. [Chuckles] think you know tink. But I--Good good.

**Kate:** Okay so you adjusted well to the--

**Alli:** Oh yes and then of course being that there was many Scandinavians in Seattle and in the district where we lived that made it easier for me too.

**Kate:** What language did you speak at home then?

**Alli:** Swedish.

**Kate:** How did your older sister adjust?

**Alli:** Well she started to do housework like they all did. She worked for a wealthy family. And then, she went to night classes. So it didn’t take too long she was just 18 so it didn’t take long before she understood the language at least.

**Kate:** And your brothers and your father spoke English.

**Alli:** Yes oh yes.

**Kate:** And the house that you were in? Did you live there for very long the one that--?

**Kate**: Yes I was there with them for I don’t know two or three years I guess.

**Kate**: What about schooling then? Tell me briefly what happened after that? What was the name of the school you went to?

**Alli:** Quinine, North Quinine School I started and I went there. But then before that, we moved and then I went to another school in a very nice district [inaudible 00:44:52] school then I stayed there until I graduated.

Graduated from primary school then I went to two years to high school then I went to Business College. So that was pretty nice and I stayed with this couple. I helped with the housework and so I got my boarding room and I wasn’t going to high school he said, “Yes, you are going to high school that’s all there is to it.”

He was an architect one of the best known architects in Seattle. So I stayed with them and he said I’ll pay for your high school. So I said, “Okay I’ll quit when I’m through high school.” He says, “Oh no you’re going to Business College.”

I didn’t have a penny and no one to pay for me really. And he said,   
“That’s Alright I’ll take care of you,” so he paid for my business college then when I was through he said, “Now you’re going to work for me.” So I worked for him for six years in his office.

**Kate:** And what was his name?

**Alli:** Holmes. John Lister Holmes. He just passed away about almost five six years ago now. But they were so nice to me. They brought me up in a way and I got accustomed to the American way of living.

**Kate:** And how about religious life when you got here was it the same as at home?

**Alli:** No, my folks did not go to church. My sister and I started going to church when we could to the Lutheran Church of course when and I went to confirmation class, so I graduated from there when I think I was15 years old I graduated from the Swedish Finnish Lutheran Church the main Lutheran Church in 1923.

**Kate**: And did you have any Swedish Finnish Halls here?

**Alli:** We got in with the Swedish people we never were at the Swedish- Finns not that I know of, I think they met in some of the Swedish Halls cause they had Swedish club had their own building and then IOGT you know what that is [inaudible 00:47:03] had their own building and we used to go there for dances and things like that.

**Kate**: And so did your family associate with other Swedish speaking people?

**Alli:** Well yes. But I think it was more with I don’t know they were Swedes I think they yes were all Swedish people that they associated with but of course not my oldest brother but the one after that was a sailor, so he went out to sea most of the time. He worked for the Alaska Steamship Company for I don’t know, almost 40 year. I guess captain when he finally died he was a captain [inaudible 47:41] up there in the ocean some place.

**Kate:** Did any of your family members ever want to go back to Finland?

**Alli:** Not really. No.

**Kate:** Did you ever experience homesickness at all for Finland?

**Alli:** I was lonesome for them but not really sick that I felt that I had to go back? No.

**Kate:** How about the rest of your family members?

**Alli:** No.

**Kate**: Did they ever talk about how they felt about life here in the United States?

**Alli:** I think they were all very happy to be here. They were hard workers but they liked it here very much. Better than in Finland. It was hard times in Finland you know 1918 when the war was going on and everything because they were here in this country at that time. Most of them came in 1914 or so about 14-15 but it wasn’t easy.

**Kate:** Did any family tragedy occur during the years following your coming to America?

**Alli:** No, let’s see I think the first one to die was my brother 1928, he died of TB. He was my oldest brother and my dad passed away let’s see he lived with us with my husband and me I think it was just 42 or something like that when he passed away. Old age of course.

**Kate**: And did you notice differences in this country and the Finland country practice for dying and burial?

**Alli:** No we were all Lutherans, so we all had the same ceremony and everything I couldn’t have ever seen any difference. I think they somehow they were stricter in Finland probably in their religion in a way than in this country

**Kate:** What about the burial practices were they different?

**Alli:** Well they were, no about the same cause we had a place where they took the corpse you know dead the bodies so I guess it was about the same.

**Kate:** Tell us about the course of your life afterwards, you went to Business College.

**Alli:** I worked for six years of one man for Mr. Holmes.

**Kate:** And then you married?

**Alli:** Yes.

**Kate:** How did you meet you husband?

**Alli:** Through a dance, a Scandinavian dance. [Laughs]

**Kate:** And how old were you?

**Alli:** I must have been about 15 or something probably I don’t think I was 16.

**Kate**: And so how old were you when you married him?

**Alli:** 21.

**Kate:** So you knew him many years?

**Alli:** Oh yes and his family, he had quite a few brothers. They were eight in his family and only one sister, the rest were boys and they almost all lived here in Seattle and they are all gone. Everyone is gone. Every year we made about four but I think five trips to Sweden and Finland and it’s been very very nice.

**Kate**: And did you have children?

**Alli:** No children.

**Kate:** So now when you look back on your life now, look at all the things you’ve experienced, where you’ve been, how do you feel about the decision to come to the United States?

**Alli:** Well I didn’t have, no I wanted to stay in Finland but I am sure glad I didn’t. There was an old lady there she was determined to have me to stay with her but of course the rest wouldn’t let me stay there by myself and I’m happy there’s no place like America.

**Kate:** And you never thought about going back to live in Finland?

**Alli**: Oh no, like I said we’ve been back there I think five times four times maybe five.

**Kate:** That’s a good place to end this interview, I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island [inaudible 00:51:21] the opportunity.

**Alli:** I really enjoyed it. I hope I gave you all the information you need.

**Kate:** We’ll send you a copy also of this.

**Alli:** Oh for goodness sakes.

**Kate:** So this Kate Moore in Seattle Washington in June 26th 1994 signing off for the Ellis Island History Project.