**Janet:** Today is July 20th, 1995 and I'm here at the Swedish home in West Newton, Massachusetts with Edith Borgesen who came to this country from Sweden in 1923 when she was 20 years of age. Today, Mrs. Borgesen is 92?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** 92 years old.

**Ida:** I will be in June.

**Janet:** Well, this is July so you just had a birthday in June.

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Right you're 92 and you look very healthy and good.

**Ida:** Yeah, I've been very good thank you.

**Janet:** Okay, Mrs. Borgesen lets start at the beginning by you giving your birth date.

**Ida:** June 16, 1903.

**Janet:** Where in Sweden were you born?

**Ida:** Gunnarskog [laughter].

**Janet:** Gunnarskog and that is in Varmland.

**Ida:** Varmland.

**Janet:** Tell me about Gunnarskog, when you think back about that place, what are the things you remember?

**Ida:** We had nice neighbors and we were happy.

**Janet:** Was it a little town? Do you remember the house you lived in?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** Could you describe it?

**Ida:** It was a little round house and we lived on the farm, so we have plenty of room to run around.

**Janet:** What kind of farm? What did you---?

**Ida:** Just a few cows and horse and sheep and chickens and pigs [laughter].

**Janet:** So your father was a farmer?

**Ida:**  Yeah.

**Janet:** What was his name?

**Ida:** Johannes.

**Janet:** And your mother?

**Ida:**  Christina.

**Janet:** And your mother's maiden name?

**Ida:** Carlson.

**Janet:** Did you have brothers and sisters when you were in Sweden?

**Ida:** Oh yes, I had two brothers and then my twin sister and my older sister were home that time.

**Janet:** What was your twin’s name?

**Ida:** Martha.

**Janet:** Martha, and were you identical twins?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** No, were you particularly close to any one of your sisters or brothers?

**Ida:** I think to my oldest sister, I was very close to her.

**Janet:** And what was her name?

**Ida:**  Hilda.

**Janet:** And did she ever do things with you when you were a little girl?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** What did she do? Where would she take you?

**Ida:** She teaches how to dance [laughter].

**Janet:** She taught you how to dance? Did she play an instrument or did anyone in the family?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** No, and how about your brothers?

**Ida:** Two other brothers were home at that time before they left here for this country.

**Janet:** Do you remember any experiences with them when you were a little girl?

**Ida:** No, they used to fight a lot [laughter].

**Janet:** With each other?

**Ida:** Yes.

**Janet:** How about your mother and father? Do you remember anything you did with them, maybe places you went with them or?

**Ida:** Well, we used to go and my mother used to go visit [unclear 00:03:55] and we always went with her and then we had some relatives we went to see.

**Janet:** How about grandparents, did you have?

**Ida:** Yeah, they lived next door to our house.

**Janet:** And did you ever do anything with your grandmother? Do you remember any experiences with her?

**Ida:** No, she used to weave a lot.

**Janet:** Would she make cloth or she'd make things out of cloth?

**Ida:** She make bedspread.

**Janet:** And would this be right from the sheep's wool that she'd weave?

**Ida:** No, it was a cotton bedspread.

**Janet:** How about your grandfather? Do you have memories of him?

**Ida:** Yeah, he was very nice and he used to work on different farms.

**Janet:** And then you'd go see relatives, would that be like an aunt, an uncle or cousins?

**Ida:** Cousins and an uncle too.

**Janet:** Did you go to school?

**Ida:** yes.

**Janet:** You started school what about five or six?

**Ida:** No, we were eight when we started.

**Janet:** Oh you were eight and how long did you keep going?

**Ida:** Till 7th.

**Janet:** 7th grade and then was that usual then to stop?

**Ida:** Yeah, when you could go to high school too but then you had to live away from home too.

**Janet:** Was this school a big school?

**Ida:** All the classes except- at least [unclear 00:05:41] in one room and then the other ones were in their room.

**Janet:** I see, was the boys and girls together?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** Would you remember anything about school? Was it strict?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** Did you have like the same teacher for three classes?

**Ida:** Yes, we did.

**Janet:** So when you stopped school, what did you do after that?

**Ida:** I did some housework.

**Janet:** For someone else or in your own?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** In the same town?

**Ida:** I worked at the old people’s home for a long time.

**Janet:** Did you like that?

**Ida:** Yeah, it was alright [laughter]. Its hard work [laughter].

**Janet:** What did you do? What were you duties? What did you have to do when you worked there?

**Ida:** Well, we had to help with the cooking and serve the food and take care of the dishes.

**Janet:** And what about your twin sister? Did she work also after she finished school?

**Ida:** Oh yes, she worked in the city first. He was a professor. He came from our first home. She worked there for a long time.

**Janet:** She worked in his house?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And what would she do, cook and that kind of thing?

**Ida:** Yeah, they lived in Gothenburg.

**Janet:** Did you ever visit here in Gothenburg?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** Were you a religious family or were you religious?

**Ida:** Well you know everybody has the Lutheran church home but then I went to a Baptist church.

**Janet:** In Sweden.

**Ida:** Hmmm

**Janet:** A lot of people were Baptists in Sweden? Even in your little town?

**Ida:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**Janet:** Was there any difference that you could think of between the Baptist church, going to the Baptist church and going to the Lutheran church?

**Ida:** Well, I guess so.

**Janet:** How about food? Do you remember any favorite’s kinds of Swedish food or dishes that your mother made that you remember liking?

**Ida:** Yeah, my mother used to make flaftponkea [laughter].

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

**Ida:** F-L-A-S-K-T-P-O-N-K-A.

**Janet:** And what was it, flasktponka?

**Ida:** Bakes it, deep fried and baked first then they didn't have that door one and then they baked it in the oven. It was very good.

**Janet:** What would that be? Like a main meal, a main dish?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Anything else you remember about as far as food was concerned?

**Ida:** She make good food.

**Janet:** What would be the most typical meal that you would have when you were a little girl?

**Ida:** They used fresh bacons and potatoes and vegetables. That used to be the main course.

**Janet:** Do you remember things that you did that were like recreation like maybe after school? Things you would do with your friends?

**Ida:** Yeah, we used to play at the gardens.

**Janet:** What kind of games? Did you play games or dolls?

**Ida:** Yeah, we could just play hide and seek a lot [laughter].

**Janet:** And how about like in the winter time when it was snow and ice?

**Ida:** Well, we had to use the skis a lot.

**Janet:** Skis, would you use the skis to get from one place to another or just for--?

**Ida:** No, we could walk in the snow. We walked to school too. It wasn't far to where the school was and they had to start 8 O'clock in the morning, the farm.

**Janet:** Did you have chores on the farm at all?

**Ida:** Oh yes, and so it was hard to do [laughter].

**Janet:** Do you remember any particular jobs that you had to do?

**Ida:** Well, we had to feed the animals, milk the cows.

**Janet:** Did you have any idea when you were a little girl what you wanted to do when you got --?

**Ida:** Yes, I wanted to be a nurse but it cost so much money that time.

**Janet:** How was it decided that you would come to this country?

**Ida:** My sister was home and then she had to go back to this country in a hurry, so I say I'll bring him over later on. So that’s what I did.

**Janet:** So do you remember anything that you sister told you about this country?

**Ida:** No, I don't remember.

**Janet:** Do you remember what you thought when you realized you were coming here? What you expected or?

**Ida:** Well, I had two brothers over here too and then my two sisters so.

**Janet:** Oh both of your sisters were here?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** So you were the only child in the family who wasn't here?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** I see, when you decided to come what did you have to do?

**Ida:** I had to get a passport and the examined by the doctor.

**Janet:** You were examined in Sweden? By your own doctor or a doctor connected with the ship?

**Ida:** No, they had a doctor in the city we went to.

**Janet:** In other words you did that on your own or you had to do it, go have an examination?

**Ida:** I guess we had to do it.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving?

**Ida:** Yes.

**Janet:** How did you feel?

**Ida:** My sister had a boy. I took care of the boy. She went with her [unclear 00:12:54], she felt bad [laughter].

**Janet:** Did you have a sister who was in Sweden when you left?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Which sister was that?

**Ida:** Esther.

**Janet:** Was Esther the mother of your nephew?

**Ida:** No, Hilda was the mother of the boy.

**Janet:** Okay and Esther wasn't your twin sister?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** That was another sister.

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** I see, so she was still there.

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And did she ever come to this country?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** Did you expect when you left that you might return to Sweden?

**Ida:** [unclear 00:13:34].

**Janet:** But when you left, you thought this was where you were going be the rest of your life pretty much.

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And do you remember anything she took with you? Anything she packed? Anything you have now that you brought from Sweden?

**Ida:** No really, I don't.

**Janet:** When you were leaving you said goodbye to sister, well you said goodbye to your mother and father too.

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** How did they feel about you going?

**Ida:** Oh they felt bad [laughter].

**Janet:** You left your town, how did you leave the town? What kind of transportation did you have?

**Ida:** They had a bus into [unclear 00:14:29] was close to Norway then they took the train into Oslo.

**Janet:** And then after that?

**Ida**: We went on the boat.

**Janet:** What was the name of the boat?

**Ida:** [unclear 00:14:42].

**Janet:** Did you go right on to the ship or did you stay around the port for a few days before you actually--?

**Ida:** No, we went the same day.

**Janet:** Now, how old was your nephew that you were travelling with?

**Ida:** Maybe four or five. I can't say exactly.

**Janet:** What’s your nephew’s name?

**Ida:** Leonard.

**Janet:** Did anything happen during the voyage? Can you describe anything about what happened during that?

**Ida:** [unclear 00:15:25].

**Janet:** Good weather and were you in the steerage? Did you have a cabin you and your nephew?

**Ida:** We were in the cabin.

**Janet:** And you and your nephew?

**Ida:** Hmm.

**Janet:** And two people you didn't know?

**Ida:** No, I know the ones. I know them from home.

**Janet:** Oh were they from you’re--?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Did you know they were going to be on the same ship?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** So did you plan it?

**Ida:** Yes.

**Janet:** Okay, so who were these people?

**Ida:** Different neighbors from home and she lived in Chicago and she was going back to Chicago and she had two children.

**Janet:** Do you remember when the ship came to New York?

**Ida:** Hmmm.

**Janet:** Was there anything that struck you when the ship came first to the harbor?

**Ida:** Yeah, the statue of liberty [laughter].

**Janet:** Did you know what that was?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And were there a lot of people on the boat from Sweden?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** Was there any reaction on the deck, to see the statue?

**Ida:** No, I wouldn't say.

**Janet:** So then you came to Ellis Island.

**Ida:** Hmm.

**Janet:** Can you describe your impression of Ellis Island?

**Ida:** Well, I stayed there all night. It was nice and clean but there were lots of but nice [laughter], about eight in bed in one room [laughter].

**Janet:** And the door was locked?

**Ida:** Oh yeah and then we went out for breakfast in the morning and they come around with boiled eggs so we could take eggs if you wanted [laughter].

**Janet:** Were you examined in Ellis Island? Do you remember that?

**Ida:** Before you leave Ellis Island they look in your hair if you have fleas then they look at your throat that’s about all.

**Janet:** Why was it that you had to stay overnight?

**Ida:** I don't know, maybe we came in late. I can't say but it was nice and clean.

**Janet:** And so you were able to stay in the same room with your nephew?

**Ida:** Yeah and they had wash sinks in the same room so you can wash up.

**Janet:** And how was the food?

**Ida:** Well, I don't eat. I don't remember if I had supper but they had breakfast there. Eggs and coffee and toast.

**Janet:** And how was your nephew, was he your good travelling companion?

**Ida:** Oh yeah, he was very good.

**Janet:** So you stayed overnight and then did someone meet you?

**Ida:** Yeah, the boy's mother, my sister.

**Janet:** How were your feeling when you were just getting to this country?

**Ida:** I felt pretty good [laughter].

**Janet:** Were you looking forward to being here?

**Ida:** Yeah but we spent the time here at time and then in Sweden you could get work easier too.

**Janet:** When you met your sister, how long had it been between the times your sister had been visiting in Sweden until you came here?

**Ida:** Maybe a couple of years, I can say exactly. I think so.

**Janet:** And what was it like for Leonard to see his mother?

**Ida:** He didn't [laughter] like her first. He wanted to sleep with me but not with her but it didn't take him long.

**Janet:** When you and your sister and your nephew got off of Ellis Island where did you go?

**Ida:** We took a train. We took the train to [unclear 00:19:49].

**Janet:** Was there anything that struck you as new and different about this country those first few days?

**Ida:** I didn't like the darkness in the evening, you know getting dark very early because home is hardly any darkness, so in the summer, only a few hours.

**Janet:** When did you arrive here? What was the month? Do you remember?

**Ida:** I think it was the first part of August.

**Janet:** I see, so you didn't like it was getting dark. Was there anything else that was different that you noticed?

**Ida:** About everything is.

**Janet:** Everything so, anything that struck you in particular that you either liked or didn't like?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** How about foods? Were there foods that were different?

**Ida:** Well, my sister cooked about the same as we did home.

**Janet:** So you went to your sisters, was it an apartment?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** In Boston?

**Ida:** In Walton.

**Janet:** Did you look for work immediately or?

**Ida:** No, not right off but later on I work for a family in Auburn.

**Janet:** Was your brother in law also there?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Was your sister working?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** So how come to get the job in Auburn?

**Ida:** My sister knows somebody that needed a help so that’s why.

**Janet:** Could you just describe yourself, what you were like when you were 20 years old and you just came to this country [laughter]?

**Ida:** It’s hard to describe yourself [laughter].

**Janet:** Were you a shy young woman?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And so you took this job, what were your duties?

**Ida:** House work.

**Janet:** Was the family nice to you?

**Ida:** Very nice.

**Janet:** Did you meet other people? Did you have any kind of a social group?

**Ida:** I used to at my sisters [unclear 00:22:21] relatives over there.

**Janet:** How about any Swedish clubs or Swedish societies? Was there such a thing around where you were?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** There was no place to go and meet other people?

**Ida:** Oh yes, my sister went but I didn't go until later on.

**Janet:** Oh you didn't go right away?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** So how long did you work for that family that you started working?

**Ida:** I guess two years.

**Janet:** And then why did you leave?

**Ida:** My other sister lost her son so I went over there to stay with her.

**Janet:** This wasn't the Leonard?

**Ida:** No.

**Janet:** No, this is another son?

**Ida:** Hmm.

**Janet:** And so you went to stay just because she was so upset?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** How long did you stay with her?

**Ida:** Maybe a month or so.

**Janet:** And then did you look for more work or?

**Ida:** I went to employment office so I worked for a family in Brooklyn that was very nice.

**Janet:** And did you do house work, is that what you mean?

**Ida:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Did you stay with them for long?

**Ida:** I stay until I get married.

**Janet:** How did you meet your husband?

**Ida:** We went to evening high school to learn English [laughter].

**Janet:** Were you learning English all along while you were working?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** How long did it take to take, how long was the course in the evening high school?

**Ida:** Oh I don't know, it lasted a few weeks.

**Janet:** And you were both in the same class.

**Ida:** Yes.

**Janet:** What did you like about him?

**Ida:** He was nice [unclear 00:24:28] [laughter] and then his friend had a car so we went together home and then I happened to meet him later on [laughter].

**Janet:** Now was he also from Sweden?

**Ida:** Norway.

**Janet:** From Norway, right. Had he come over about the same time you had or?

**Ida:** Yeah, he went out west to his sister so I don't know what year he came over but then he had a sister here in Boston so she send over a ticket to come over to Boston.

**Janet:** So did you see each other for quite a while before you got married?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** And you continued to work for this family?

**Ida:** Hmm.

**Janet:** And then after you got married, did you keep working or did you stop?

**Ida:** No, I went there a few days a week to work.

**Janet:** Where did you settle with your husband?

**Ida:** We stayed in [unclear 00:25:57] for a while and then we went to the [unclear 00:26:04].

**Janet:** So you were living around Newton?

**Ida:** Yeah, Newton and before.

**Janet:** Did you have children?

**Ida:** Yes, I have.

**Janet:** And what are their names?

**Ida:** The oldest one is Ralph and the other boy is Steven and my girl is Natalie.

**Janet:** Do they have children?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** So you have grandchildren.

**Ida:** I have seven grandchildren.

**Janet:** Wonderful, and are any of the grandchildren married?

**Ida:** Yeah, I have two great grandchildren [laughter].

**Janet:** What are you great grandson’s names?

**Ida:** Cole and the other one is Melody.

**Janet:** When you look back on your life do you think that you've retained some qualities that are what you would call Swedish?

**Ida:** Yes, I think so.

**Janet:** You have ways about you that--?

**Ida:** [unclear 00:27:28].

**Janet:** That’s a Swedish quality?

**Ida:** No [laughter].

**Janet:** Do you think you have any Swedish characteristics?

**Ida:** I don't know [laughter].

**Janet:** Do you consider yourself Swedish or American or some of each or?

**Ida:** You can never give up the Swedish but I like America.

**Janet:** And you've been back to Sweden?

**Ida:** A few times.

**Janet:** What do you feel very proud of that you’ve done? What makes you feel good and satisfied that you've done in your life?

**Ida:** Well, I took care of my sister when she was sick, so she died in the house. So I took care of her.

**Janet:** This was the sister--?

**Ida:** That was the mother of Leonard.

**Janet:** Oh the mother of Leonard.

**Ida:** And I took care of my husband as long as I could.

**Janet:** Well that takes a lot. Did you ever in your life have like a hero or a heroine? Somebody you looked up to either a person you knew or somebody who maybe was famous or something? Anybody that made you feel or you've thought that was just--?

**Ida:** Well, I don't know [laughter].

**Janet:** How about this time in your life? Your old age? Here in Newton in the Swedish home. How is this time for you?

**Ida:** Pretty good.

**Janet:** Do you feel like you're in a good place?

**Ida:** Oh yes, we are well taken care of.

**Janet:** Is there anything else? Do you think the fact that you started out for 20 years and lived in Sweden and then you came here? Do you think the fact that you changed countries as a young woman, do you think that made a difference on the rest of your life?

**Ida:** No, I don’t' think so.

**Janet:** Is there anything else you can think of that has to do with the fact of coming here from Sweden and living out your life here?

**Ida:** Well, if I wasn't going to bring the boy over, I don't think I would be here [laughter].

**Janet:** Really?

**Ida:** Hmmm.

**Janet:** So that was kind of an accident that happened that way. What do you think would be different if you had stayed in Sweden as compared with coming here? We just stop.

An interruption, we're really just sort of winding up but the fact that you had to start a whole new life at 20 years of age that must make you somehow- it’s kind of different than most people who start out some place and live their whole life that way.

So do you remember when it became clear to you that you liked it here and you wanted to stay here? Was there any time that that happened?

**Ida:** Yeah, I liked it very much here.

**Janet:** Did you like it right at the beginning or did you [crosstalk 00:31:30]?

**Ida:** You know you don't like everything the first but you like the [unclear 00:31:35].

**Janet:** Did you learn English easily? How was that for you, learning English?

**Ida:** Well, it’s hard for everybody to learn English I think.

**Janet:** Did those night classes make a big difference?

**Ida:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** And how about citizenship? Did you try for Citizenship and the papers?

**Ida:** Hmmm.

**Janet:** Did you take an exam?

**Ida:** Oh yeah, they asked you about 15 questions.

**Janet:** You were okay [unclear 00:32:15] [laughter]? Okay, alright well if there's anything else you can remember? Can you remember anything else about Sweden or anything else you want to say before we close?

**Ida:** When we were born, my twin sister and I. My sister went to school and she stopped at the next house and the woman said, "Did your mother have a baby?" "Yeah, she had two." "Then I can have one," She said, "You can have both of them [laughter].

**Janet:** This was your sister?

**Ida:** Yeah [laughter].

**Janet:** Oh that’s funny.

**Ida:** Of course she had to baby sit so she was [laughter].

**Janet:** How did your sister Martha- how was her life different from yours?

**Ida:** Well, I don't know really, see we didn't have the same interests.

**Janet:** But she came to this country too?

**Ida:** No, just for visit. No she was [unclear 00:33:25] most of the time but she got married and her husband and they were here very few times because she had a daughter in California.

**Janet:** Do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Sweden? How would it have been different?

**Ida:** I don't know, now they have it very good but that time it wasn't so good. No, I'm satisfied here.

**Janet:** Well, it’s been a pleasure talking with you.

**Ida:** Same here [laughter].

**Janet:** Thank you very much and I want to say I'm speaking with Ida Borgesen who came from Sweden in 1923 when she was 20 years and today she's 92 and we're here in Newton on July, 15th, 1995 and this is Janet Levine for the national park service signing off.