**Janet:** 20th 1995. I’m here at the Swedish home in West Newton, Massachusetts with Esther Carlson. Esther came from Sweden in 1923 when she was 19 years old.

**Esther:** Came to where?

**Janet:** Came from Sweden.

**Esther:** From Sweden? I thought you said came to Sweden.

**Janet:** No, came from Sweden, 1923.

**Esther:** I was wondering about that.

**Janet:** You were 19?

**Esther:** Yes.

**Janet:** Now that we’ve gotten re-situated, we’ll see if we can do this again. Why don’t we start at the beginning Esther, if you would say your birth date again for the tape?

**Esther:** 16th of December.

**Janet:** 19?

**Esther:** 04.

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

**Esther:** Degerfors.

**Janet:** That’s D-A-G-E-R-F-O-R-S, right, and the state?

**Esther:** Värmland.

**Janet:** Värmland. You said you moved around a lot when you were a little girl.

**Esther:** Not while I was in Sweden, I didn’t move a lot.

**Janet:** You lived in the same place in Sweden?

**Esther:** Yeah, Degerfors.

**Janet:** Degerfors is where you lived up until you were 19?

**Esther:** Until I went over here.

**Janet:** We were talking a little bit before about Degerfors. You said it wasn’t a very large town but there was a street with shops and …

**Esther:** It wasn’t awfully big that’s for sure.

**Janet:** Tell what the main industry was.

**Esther:** What?

**Janet:** The main industry in your town?

**Esther:** It was iron works.

**Janet:** Did your father work in the iron works?

**Esther:** He done something else, he was a carpenter. There wasn’t everybody that worked in the iron work but that was the main thing. He was a carpenter, so he did carpenter work for them.

**Janet:** Did he work on houses, building houses? Or he did more refined carpentry like cabinets or -Do you remember?

**Esther:** A little bit of everything.

**Janet:** What was your father’s name?

**Esther:** Joseph.

**Janet:** Your mother’s name and maiden name?

**Esther:** Anna.

**Janet:** Anna Swenson?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** You had grandmother and grandfather, were they on your mother’s side or your father’s side or both?

**Esther:** I had both.

**Janet:** Tell me what you can remember, any experiences that you can remember with your grandparents.

**Esther:** I love my grandfather.

**Janet:** You loved your grandfather?

**Esther:** He used to cry if I didn’t say that I was his girl then he cried. My grandmother was wonderful too. She lived a long time after him. She used to bake things and of course she used to come to us children with buns that she had made for each one of us. We used to love to see her.

**Janet:** Did your grandfather work while you were a little girl?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** He was older by then, was he?

**Esther:** As far as I remember he never worked.

**Janet:** Can you describe him, what he looked like?

**Esther:** I can’t really describe him. He was a nice looking man, that’s all I can say for an old fellow.

**Janet:** Is this your mother’s or your father’s?

**Esther:** Mother. On my father’s side I didn’t see them much. My grandfather used to travel a lot. I guess he used to go out and preach.

**Janet:** He was a preacher?

**Esther:** I don’t know if he was a preacher but he used to go out. I know very little about him.

**Janet:** Was your family religious?

**Esther:** So and so.

**Janet:** Did you go to church or sometimes?

**Esther:** Yeah. I was confirmed from church.

**Janet:** What church was it?

**Esther:** The Lutheran church.

**Janet:** Do you remember your confirmation day? Was that a big celebration?

**Esther:** Certainly was, yeah.

**Janet:** Could you say anything about …?

**Esther:** [Inaudible 00:05:23] and all the girls were dressed in white and it was quite a thing. We took the Holy Communion. We had a very nice pastor and he was married. His wife was very nice too, she used to get us girls together to -We used to sing at a …

**Janet:** A choir?

**Esther:** At a choir but he was very strict.

**Janet:** In what way? What would he be strict about?

**Esther:** Everything, [inaudible 00:06:09].

**Janet:** Can you remember any of the songs that you sung with the girls in the choir?

**Esther:** We sung a lot. I had a guitar and I used to play. My father used to love to sing and so did my mother. On Sunday afternoons he used to say, because my guitar was hanging on the wall, and he said, “Take down the guitar and let us sing.” We used to sing in the Sunday afternoon.

**Janet:** You mean just at home?

**Esther:** At home.

**Janet:** You, your mother and father, sisters and brothers?

**Esther:** My mother and father they had good voices, the two of them. The children managed to get the same thing. I have one brother that sings on the air, should I say no?

**Janet:** On the radio?

**Esther:** That I couldn’t tell you if he has been on the radio, but he used to entertain in people’s park and they used to have little prayers and everything, he was very talented.

**Janet:** Can you remember any of those songs that you sung with your mother and father in Swedish? That you could sing part of the song on the tape? It’d be wonderful if you could remember some of it.

**Esther:** What a Friend We Have in Jesus, we used to sing.

**Janet:** Could you sing a little part of it? Could you sing some of it for the tape?

**Esther:** I tell you I have such a cold I can’t sing, [inaudible 00:08:01].

**Janet:** You sure? It’d be wonderful to have it on tape.

**Esther:** I used to have a pretty good voice but I have such a cold now that I noticed yesterday we were supposed to sing. I could hardly, sound like nothing.

**Janet:** I think it’d be nice to have a little part of that, because that was a real part of your childhood singing those songs at home.

**Esther:** That really was my mother’s songs. She used to sing it like anything, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, always used to sing that. My father, it was before my time, I was too young to remember when he an accordion and he used to play.

**Janet:** Your father?

**Esther:** My father, yeah.

**Janet:** You were a musical family?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** What did your brother play? Your brother who performed, what instrument did he play?

**Esther:** Guitar.

**Janet:** What was your brother’s name?

**Esther:** Stembolin.

**Janet:** Spell that.

**Esther:** Stembolin.

**Janet:** S?

**Esther:** S-T-E-M - [Inaudible 00:09:33].

**Janet:** Did you go to school for very many years in Degerfors?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** What age did you begin school?

**Esther:** What age?

**Janet:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Esther:** From the time I had to start school.

**Janet:** Five or six?

**Esther:** Six I guess.

**Janet:** How long did you stay in school?

**Esther:** Six years.

**Janet:** Then you left. You must have been about 12 or 13?

**Esther:** Then we had to start for confirmation.

**Janet:** Did you work after that?

**Esther:** I had a part, I had to do some work, garden. We used to plant woods.

**Janet:** Trees?

**Esther:** Yeah. It’s awfully hard to know what in English.

**Janet:** Could you describe it, what you mean? What else you did?

**Esther:** We dug up rovors. You don’t know what rovors is?

**Janet:** No.

**Esther:** That’s turnip. There used to be fields and fields of it and used to have to go and take them up. Just to get a little money and then go out in the woods and plant trees.

**Janet:** The woods did they belong to your family or they were other woods?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** What did you do for fun?

**Esther:** I don’t know.

**Janet:** Did you play games or anything like that?

**Esther:** Not much.

**Janet:** Skate?

**Esther:** I like skating yeah or [inaudible 00:12:29] some kind of a -Do you know what it is in [inaudible 00:12:37]?

**Janet:** I’m not sure. Say what it is and I …

**Esther:** It’s some kind of a sledge that allows whatever. I had it in the winter time and we …

**Janet:** You would hold on to it? You would hold on to the sledge?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Skate.

**Esther:** Not skate, no.

**Janet:** Maybe you can explain it. It would be nice to have that on tape. It was a sledge so it must have been snowing, then what?

**Esther:** I don’t know if they have it here, sledge.

**Janet:** Do you remember who you would do this with? Would you do that by yourself or you were with other people?

**Esther:** You could do it, be by yourself. You stand and you’re holding onto and then you let it go. There was a seat in front so you could have people sit on the seat. [Inaudible 00:13:56] it was like a chair with some, you know what you call it.

**Janet:** A blade? A runner?

**Esther:** A runner yeah. We used to be a big gang once in a while and go out together and had those things. We used to have a lot of fun.

**Janet:** In other words, some people would be sitting in the seat?

**Esther:** Could be.

**Janet:** Then other people would be hanging on behind?

**Esther:** No, you were standing on runners of the thing. Holding onto that was built up so you could hold on, like a chair.

**Janet:** A whole lot of people would be standing on the runners and holding on?

**Esther:** You couldn’t have very many on the runner.

**Janet:** Where would you go on this?

**Esther:** Wherever that was good to snow. Especially where it was slid, you know what I mean.

**Janet:** You’d slide down the hill? You’d go on hills?

**Esther:** Downhill, yeah.

**Janet:** Did you have a best friend that you remember?

**Esther:** I have a girlfriend. We were together an awful lot.

**Janet:** Remember her name?

**Esther:** Yeah, her name was Agnes.

**Janet:** What would you do, say after school or later than that?

**Esther:** Just to go out and look at boys.

**Janet:** Did you have boyfriends before you came to this country?

**Esther:** Yes.

**Janet:** What would you do, if you had a date? If you had a date with a boy where would you go, what would you do?

**Esther:** We used to walk up and down the streets a lot. There was a small little town and we used to meet up in town and walk up and down the sidewalks. Then I came over to this country.

**Janet:** When you think about your life in Sweden before you came here, what are the things you remember most?

**Esther:** That’s hard, I can’t tell.

**Janet:** Do you think about Sweden much now?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** Did you ever visit it? Did you go back …?

**Esther:** Yes. I’ve been home about four or five times. I went home on my wedding trip to Sweden.

**Janet:** Let’s get to that, but first tell me how was it decided you would come to this country?

**Esther:** My father couldn’t take care of that big family, it was too much.

**Janet:** You had 12 children?

**Esther:** It wasn’t 12 at that time.

**Janet:** It was more like seven before you came to this country?

**Esther:** Yeah. He told me I had to go out and get my own living. I wrote and told my uncle, asked him, because we didn’t had the money, he couldn’t send me to America because he had no money. He said, “You write to your uncle and see if he can send you some money.” Which I did, and I wrote and I cried because I didn’t like to.

**Janet:** You didn’t want to go to America?

**Esther:** I didn’t care to, but I know I had to do something. Like I told you, I had to go out there and do work to earn my money. The way I had to do it, like I told you [inaudible 00:18:45]. I couldn’t keep that up because I was getting too old for doing what I did.

**Janet:** You were getting too old for planting the trees and doing the turnips?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Did you know this uncle?

**Esther:** At least I felt that way, you understand a young girl.

**Janet:** Did you know your uncle in America?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** Who was he? He was your father’s brother or your mother’s?

**Esther:** My mother’s.

**Janet:** When you wrote to him, do you remember what you said and what he responded with?

**Esther:** I asked him if he would please send me some money to come over and if I could come to him, because he was married and had a family. I got a reply right off, that I could. He sent the money.

**Janet:** You were going to travel by yourself? You were going to come to this country alone?

**Esther:** Not the family, if that’s what you mean.

**Janet:** I mean you were just travelling yourself. You weren’t traveling with your family?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** Any brothers and sisters, did any of them come?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** How did you feel about coming?

**Esther:** Awful. When I get on the train in Degerfors, we took the train to go to Orebro. Orebro is where we got the boats. I was sitting there and I’m [inaudible 00:20:38] at the same time. She was on the same train as I was sitting beside me.

I sat there and I looked out and I was numb. I didn’t know what it was all about then got down but we were 10 of us from Degerfors. 10 young people and we all know each other, we had a wonderful time, we really did.

**Janet:** In other words, you didn’t realize that they were going too in the beginning? In the beginning when you knew you were going to come to the United States, did you know that these other young people from your town?

**Esther:** I know them from home.

**Janet:** Did you know that they were also going to be travelling at the same time?

**Esther:** What do you mean by that?

**Janet:** When you first thought you were coming to this country, you didn’t realize that there were 10 young people from your town that were also going to travel at the same time.

**Esther:** I tell you there were people leaving Degerfors all the time and they went to America, they had America fever as they call it. I know that there were quite a few.

There was also one fellow from [inaudible 00:22:05] and I don’t know he fell in love with me I guess. The final part after I got here, I got a place as a kitchen maid. One day I got a letter from him and it was full of love, I said to the cook, I said, “Funny that it didn’t do [inaudible 00:22:34].”

**Janet:** What was it like? Tell me the name of the ship you came on?

**Esther:** The ship?

**Janet:** Yeah.

**Esther:** Gripsholm. I came with that to [inaudible 00:22:48].

**Janet:** Yeah I just wanted it for this tape. What was the voyage like? Describe the voyage?

**Esther:** It was nice.

**Janet:** Were the 10 people from your town?

**Esther:** 10 of us and we had a wonderful time.

**Janet:** What did you do on ship?

**Esther:** One of the fellows was running around and he went into the second class and then he had to come back around the rail to get into the third class. We were scared below that he was going to fall in the ocean. There we had more fun.

We used to go and see each other, one night we went to their room. We were three of us, three girls. Here the fellows were standing reading, they were standing in bed. Of course they had long night shirts on and they were dressed like ministers. Stood there read something in their hands reading and they believed …

**Janet:** They believed they were reading from the scripture?

**Esther:** Yeah, it was funny. We had an awful lot of fun.

**Janet:** Did you keep contact with any of those people that you came over with?

**Esther:** Yeah, I did. We used to write to each other. One from Degerfors, he was in New York and we wrote to each other regularly. The fellow in the [inaudible 00:24:39] answer him.

**Janet:** You never answered that letter?

**Esther:** No. It was too much, I laugh when I read it. I said to the cook, I said, “Read this letter and then throw it right in the fire.” Which he did, that was funny.

**Janet:** Was that person on the same ship, that boy?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Do you remember what you expected? I mean you had heard from people from Degerfors while you were still there, you heard from people in the United States. Do you know what your idea was about what the United States would be like once you got here?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** Do you remember the ship coming into the New York Harbor?

**Esther:** It was the same ship.

**Janet:** Yeah, you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**Esther:** Yeah.

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

**Esther:** Sure, yeah.

**Janet:** What was it like aboard ship when that came into view?

**Esther:** That’s hard to describe, I can’t really, but it was something to see.

**Janet:** How about Ellis Island, what was your impression of Ellis Island?

**Esther:** An awful lot of people and an awful lot of things.

**Janet:** Do you remember your experience there?

**Esther:** There wasn’t much, we just had to go and get the examined. It wasn’t much to it.

**Janet:** Did you stay overnight?

**Esther:** I can’t, I know if we did or not. I don’t think so, we got a Fall River boat and they took us to Fall River from New York. From Fall River into Boston, there my aunt was to meet the train.

**Janet:** Were some of the other young people also going to Fall River and to Boston?

**Esther:** Yeah, my cousin. I had a cousin that was on that boat and her boyfriend and the boyfriend’s brother, we were quite a few.

**Janet:** You didn’t have to travel alone?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** This was 1923. Nobody had to meet you at Ellis Island? No one met you at Ellis Island? You were just put on the ship to Fall River

**Esther:** That’s it.

**Janet:** Then to Boston by train?

**Esther:** That’s right.

**Janet:** Do you remember the meeting with your sister? Was it your sister? Who met you in Boston?

**Esther:** My aunt.

**Janet:** Do you remember meeting her?

**Esther:** I go to the uncle to [inaudible 00:28:08] -That was his wife.

**Janet:** You didn’t know her?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** What was that like?

**Esther:** Kind of funny feeling that’s all. I don’t know how to describe it.

**Janet:** You went and lived in their home?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Was that pleasant or was it difficult?

**Esther:** Some of it and some were not. It had its unpleasant time. I know especially one time I was going to visit my other uncle, I had one more uncle here, he lived in East Boston, he was brother to the one that sent me the money. I liked him and he was married and lived in East Boston. I wanted to go and see them and that’s what I did.

Where I was staying with my uncle and aunt, they had children and I had one cousin, she was about the same age as me. She was going with me and they didn’t trust me with money, so they give it to her, it was going to take care of the .We went and we had a nice time.

My uncle in East Boston he lived in a three family house, parents to my aunt, the one that my uncle was married to over in East Boston. Her parents were living on the third floor. She come down while we were visiting, she said, “Have you got any money Esther?” I said, “No.” She said, “Here is a quarter, you cannot live by stamps for going.”

I was very grateful for that. I came home. I put it in my [inaudible 00:30:43]. This is not nice, but my aunt [inaudible 00:30:56] she wasn’t always [inaudible 00:30:59]. She happened to find that quarter and she didn’t say anything to me.

She told my uncle about it. When he came home at night he said, “Where did you get that money?” She had told him, “You don’t have to go and get money from somebody else.” He said, “I can give it to you.” He got mad over it. It was terrible.

**Janet:** Did you have any money? How long after you came here did you start working?

**Esther:** I was here a week and then I started to work.

**Janet:** This happened before that or after you were working?

**Esther:** Before.

**Janet:** That first week?

**Esther:** The first week. He got very mad over it. That was very unpleasant.

**Janet:** How did you find the job that you got?

**Esther:** My aunt took me to the employment office. I got it like that.

**Janet:** Do you remember how …?

**Esther:** They were Swedish girls the ones that worked there. I got a kitchen maid work, the cook was Swedish, the chambermaid was Swedish and most of them were Swedish in there. I got along very nicely.

**Janet:** Did you have to pay boarding room?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** To your aunt and uncle?

**Esther:** Yeah. If I bought a stamp and ask for them the money I had to pay it back, they put it down on piece of paper.

**Janet:** What did you do, you turned over all your pay to your aunt and uncle?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** Do you remember how much money you made?

**Esther:** $12 a week I think.

**Janet:** Then what? Would you pay them a certain amount or?

**Esther:** Gosh, I don’t remember how the money went.

**Janet:** It seems like your aunt was keeping track of what you spent.

**Esther:** She sure did. Only a week then I got that place.

**Janet:** What place was that?

**Esther:** Kitchen maid.

**Janet:** Then you lived where you worked?

**Esther:** Yes.

**Janet:** That’s what I was confused about. How long did you stay working there?

**Esther:** This was in the fall. I stayed there until after Christmas. Then they moved in to Boston and I tried to get something else. I did go with them to Boston, but -By the way it was Mrs. Bayer Tayor on Beacon Street in Boston.

**Janet:** Really?

**Esther:** Have you ever hear of that?

**Janet:** Say the name again.

**Esther:** Bayer Tayor.

**Janet:** Tell me about her, it doesn’t ring a bell with me.

**Esther:** She lived on 84 Beacon Street. Of course she was a very rich woman and she had a lot in help. She had kitchen people, kitchen maids and I got to be one of them.

**Janet:** What was she like?

**Esther:** She was awfully nice and beautiful, a sturdy woman, she was nice. When I came up to give my notice, she said, “Esther,” She said, “I don’t want you to leave.” She says, “I would like you to stay here and in the fall I can get you kitchen place, you can cook.” Because I used to cook when the cook was out, “You are a very good cook and I would like you to stay.” She said. I said, “No, Mrs. Tayor.”

**Janet:** Why did you want to leave?

**Esther:** I wanted something else for a change.

**Janet:** How was it for you learning English?

**Esther:** It was all right, I didn’t mind that at all. The week I stayed with my uncle and Margaret the girl, she was about my age, or younger. She used to write little simple things on a piece of paper and tell me what it was and she tried to learn me that way.

She was very nice. In fact I got so surprised the other day, I got a letter from her and I haven’t heard from her for years. She still lives down the Cape.

**Janet:** What is her name?

**Esther:** Margaret Landel.

**Janet:** I just interviewed a woman from Sweden on the Cape.

**Esther:** Really?

**Janet:** Her name is [Ms. Harlgrin 00:37:05]. You decided you were going to look elsewhere and what did you do for work then? How did you go about it?

**Esther:** I asked to go to the employment office and got another one like that. What did I do after? I took a cooks class, I did cooking. I got the class down in Melrose. The people there wanted a cook and of course I told the house keeper, she hire me. I told her that I couldn’t speak English and the same with food and I wasn’t too experienced in it.

She said, “We want somebody like that, so we can tell them what to cook and what to have and we do it in our way.” I went down there and I stayed there for a year and a half. By the way you probably hear about Mrs. Bibi in Melrose. Anyway, that’s the one I saw and …

**Janet:** What did they teach you how to cook? What did you learn how to cook in that job? They wanted you to cook certain things?

**Esther:** Certain things, they told me about it. They had a daughter and she was very interested in cooking and wanted to do some herself. She came out in the kitchen a lot and taught me how to.

**Janet:** Were these Swedish people?

**Esther:** No.

**Janet:** What kind of cooking was it? Was it a certain kind of …?

**Esther:** American cooking.

**Janet:** You stayed a year and a half?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Was that pleasant, that job?

**Esther:** It was very nice. I liked it very much there. Then I met a fellow, he used to come down and see me down there. It ended up in marriage.

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

**Esther:** That’s another thing. I worked in this place as a kitchen maid I told you, and there was the Swedish cook, the Swedish chamber maid and the Swedish -I don’t know we were three, four Swedes.

One of them happened to come from the same place as the cook, from Småland in Sweden. They know each other and they also know some people from over there. One time she happened to, I guess see what she was writing to somebody, some man I don’t know. Somebody that she knew when she was home, they were neighbors. He came down to see her once in a while.

One night he came down and he said, he had just got a brother who came over from Sweden. Some night he said, “I’m going to bring him down and I bring another one,” two of them, they got two good friends, “I bring the two of them.”

He did, he brought down the two of them and they happened to be very good friends from home. Do you follow me? [Inaudible 00:41:14] over from. One of them asked me if I would like to go out with him some night and he would like to take me to the dance. I said, “All right, I love to dance.”

**Janet:** What kind of a dance was it?

**Esther:** Swedish dance. We started to go out regularly, I’d go out a couple of times a week and so forth and so on and go to dances. Then he brought that other friend because I told you he came with him the first time. They were good friends from Sweden.

After, it so happened that I married him instead of the first one. He told me after you were married he said, “When he took me down to see you I said “Look out I may take the girl away from you.” He did.

**Janet:** What was your husband’s name?

**Esther:** Joseph. It’s so funny that time.

**Janet:** Tell me about the Swedish dances. Where were they held? How did you happen to …?

**Esther:** In Historic Hall in West Roxbury in Boston. We used to go there. They used to have it once a week or more times sometimes.

**Janet:** You mentioned you went back to Sweden to be married. Why did you …

**Esther:** No, I got married here.

**Janet:** You got married here?

**Esther:** We took our honeymoon to Sweden.

**Janet:** Was that nice?

**Esther:** It was wonderful. He was a wonderful man.

**Janet:** Your husband had also emigrated from Sweden?

**Esther:** He came from Småland in Sweden. We went to see his place too and stayed there and we stayed home in Degerfors.

**Janet:** How did it seem to you going back to Sweden having lived here for some years? Did you feel like you wanted to stay in Sweden or did you want to come back here?

**Esther:** I don’t think I like to stay in Sweden. I got so used to it here that I wanted to come back.

**Janet:** Do you know what it was about here that you liked?

**Esther:** It was easier to get your living for one thing.

**Janet:** Did you continue to work after you were married?

**Esther:** Now and then. I worked in Thompson Spa for a little while after we were married. You know Thompson Spa, don’t you?

**Janet:** No. What did you do there?

**Esther:** We were up in the serving room. Send down the money down to the customers.

**Janet:** Did you have children?

**Esther:** We had one boy.

**Janet:** His name?

**Esther:** Richard. He has gone through Harvard by the way.

**Janet:** Wonderful.

**Esther:** Now they have a family, has three children himself.

**Janet:** Is he in this area in Massachusetts?

**Esther:** Yes, in Vermont. He just lost his wife the 26th of October, he feels terrible. He always used to call her every day on the telephone and he [inaudible 00:45:23] the same thing to say. Then one day he couldn’t get her and he kept on calling and calling and never got her.

He said, “I think I better go home, because I can’t get my wife, I have to go home and see what’s wrong.” And he came home called from and he came to the front door and called and no answer.

He had to go down through the cellar and up that way into the house. He came up to the bedroom there she was on the floor. He said, “Helen.” All he got from her was, “Ah.” She never came to.

**Janet:** Was she ill?

**Esther:** No. She got a shock or something.

**Janet:** Are your grandchildren grown up now?

**Esther:** There’s only one son. No, what’s the matter with me? I’m getting ahead of myself. I’m talking about myself, I got only one son.

**Janet:** You have one son, but he has three children?

**Esther:** He has three children.

**Janet:** Are they grown up?

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Do you have great-grand children?

**Esther:** I have great-grandchildren. I have a great-granddaughter who is going to get married in September.

**Janet:** Did your son marry someone who was also Swedish?

**Esther:** She was born here of course but she was Swedish, Swedish parents.

**Janet:** How about your grandchildren are they -The one that’s getting married is she marrying a Swedish boy?

**Esther:** No, she’s a great-grandchild.

**Janet:** How is this time of your life in your old age, now you’re 90? How do you feel about this time? This time after you’re retired, after your children are grown after …

**Esther:** I don’t know what to say to that. It isn’t what it should be, that’s for sure, but this is a nice place and I couldn’t ask for any better. I had to be somewhere. Before I came here my -He said you may have to go into a Swedish home. In fact, Pastor Kyle if you know who he is.

**Janet:** No, I don’t know him.

**Esther:** He was always after me and he says, because I belong to that church. He said, “Why don’t you go into the Swedish home, it’s nice.” I said, “No, I don’t want to, I want to be independent and I want to live by myself,” which I did for quite a while.

It so happened that the manager of the place where I lived said she found me on the floor and I have no idea about that. [Inaudible 00:48:50] the doctor said I couldn’t be alone. The next thing I know they took me in here, here I am. I had nothing to say, but this nice, it’s very good.

**Janet:** Do you feel you could be living independently at this time?

**Esther:** I probably could to a certain extent. I had somebody to come and do my work, but I don’t think I could do things completely alone.

**Janet:** How do you feel about your Swedish heritage, you came here as a young woman 19 years old …

**Esther:** I think it’s very nice to be Swede.

**Janet:** Do you feel you have certain qualities that are Swedish?

**Esther:** Yes, I do.

**Janet:** What are they?

**Esther:** I don’t know what to say, but I really couldn’t tell you.

**Janet:** How about American, do you feel as though you are an American as well?

**Esther:** Yes, I do.

**Janet:** Do you feel overall that you made a good decision to come here?

**Esther:** Yeah. I couldn’t have done any better in Sweden that’s for sure. I had people that wanted to help me and I had aunt’s that was. I have one aunt especially she was very well off. She was married to a farrier in Denmark.

She wanted me to come there. [Inaudible 00:50:47] can’t understand Swedish, but my father said, “I don’t want you to go to my sister and be a maid, I’m too proud for that.” He said.

**Janet:** Be a what?

**Esther:** Be a maid.

**Janet:** A maid?

**Esther:** Maid. You know what maid is? Somebody that works in a house.

**Janet:** A maid? I’m sorry [inaudible 00:51:24].

**Esther:** Yeah, maid.

**Janet:** He didn’t want you to go to his sister and be a maid.

**Esther:** Because she had people that done her work in the house. She was very wealthy and I don’t want to go to her. Otherwise I could have gone there instead of to America.

**Janet:** What do you think? Do you think it would have been a good idea for you to have gone …?

**Esther:** No I don’t. I did the right thing. I never regretted that I come here.

**Janet:** Just looking back on your life, do you think you’ve changed? I mean of course you’ve gotten older, but as far as things you believe in or your attitudes toward life or people. Do you feel like you changed a lot in your personality over time?

**Esther:** I won’t say that.

**Janet:** Did you raise your son in ways that were similar to the way you were raised, do you think?

**Esther:** Very much yeah.

**Janet:** Is there anything else that we haven’t covered that you can think of that has to do with your coming here? Do you have advice you would give to somebody who was coming as a 19 year old woman to this country from someplace else? Would you have any advice you think might be helpful?

**Esther:** I know I couldn’t have stayed at home. I had to do something, it was just as well to come here as anything else.

**Janet:** When you first realized you were coming here, it sounds as though you were sad because you realized you had to leave what you knew. Then you met people on a boat and that was fun.

**Esther:** That’s right.

**Janet:** Then you got to your aunt and uncles and that was difficult in a way?

**Esther:** Difficult in a way is right.

**Janet:** Then you had to go out to work. It sounds like it seemed bad, then good, then bad. It sounds like you went back and forth a little bit as far as how you felt about being here probably. Do you remember when it changed for you, when you felt that you were happy that you had come and that you wanted to stay?

**Esther:** I felt that there was nothing else to do, I just had to be satisfied and that’s that. Then, as I said after I met my man and got married and that was it, because I was very happy, he was a very nice man.

**Janet:** You had a happy married life?

**Esther:** Very happy.

**Janet:** Is there anything that you’re very proud off, that you feel makes you feel proud in your lifetime that you’ve done?

**Esther:** I’m not that great. I think I done the right thing and that’s all I can say.

**Janet:** You did the right thing?

**Esther:** I think so.

**Janet:** Yes, it sounds like …

**Esther:** It couldn’t have been any better. As I said very happy life, and we had our own home. We lived in Medford for 35 years. We had our own house and everything. We had our boy and when he was baptized as a baby belonged to church and always belonged to the church.

**Janet:** This is the Lutheran in Cambridge?

**Esther:** The Lutheran Church in Cambridge.

**Janet:** In Cambridge?

**Esther:** Yes. I couldn’t have done any better. Then I belonged to [inaudible 00:56:49].

**Janet:** Were these Swedish?

**Esther:** Swedish.

**Janet:** In Medford or Cambridge?

**Esther:** Cambridge, [inaudible 00:56:59] in Cambridge, but then in [inaudible 00:57:03] all in different places.

**Janet:** You always kept your associations with people?

**Esther:** With Swedish.

**Janet:** With Swedish people?

**Esther:** That’s right.

**Janet:** Do you still do some things that are carryovers from Sweden? Do you make certain kinds of dishes that you knew from Sweden or are there other ways that you carry on Swedish traditions?

**Esther:** Some, I guess.

**Janet:** Can you think of anything that you cooked when you were married that was a Swedish dish?

**Esther:** No, not right off.

**Janet:** It sounds as though you had a wonderful marriage and a lovely son. I think that’s a lot to be proud of.

**Esther:** I had a wonderful life, very nice. I couldn’t have wished for any better.

**Janet:** I think that’s nice place to end.

**Esther:** It’s all right. I have no other place to go that’s that. My son has his own home up in Vermont. He’s trying to get rid of it because he don’t like to be alone. I don’t know how things is going to happen there I don’t know.

I have no place to go as I said, because he is alone and my granddaughter is married and have her own family. I can’t expect to go to her. I have to take care of myself and this is about the only place that I can -This is good as any.

**Janet:** I was going to say this is a very nice place. I think we’ll end here we’re at the end of the tape. I want to thank you very much Esther for allowing me to interview you.

**Esther:** [Inaudible 00:59:06] effort as much …

**Janet:** It was very good and you remembered a lot of things. It is of great interest I want to thank you.

**Esther:** You’re welcome.

**Janet:** I’m here in the Swedish Home in West Newton. It’s July 20th 1995. I’m speaking with Esther Carlson, Esther Bolin Carlson. Esther came from Sweden in 1923 when she was 19 years old. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I’m signing off.