Swedish Immigrant Oral History Project
Ruby (Ostrom) Thomas
July 22, 1999
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SUBJECT : Interview with Ruby (Ostrom) Thomas, Superior, Wisconsin

INTERVIEWER : Dr. Joanne Hanson-Stone

PROGRAM : Swedish Immigrant Oral History Project
City of Duluth Sister Cities Commission

Interviewer’s NOTE: Ruby (Ostrom) Thomas will be doing a one-woman interview. She
will ask and answer the questions for the Swedish Immigrant Life Oral History project with
the Sister Cities of Duluth.

What members of your family moved to Minnesota from Sweden?

My mother came here, my father; my mother’s two sisters came here also. I believe my
mother came alone and the two sisters came at a later time and they arrived together. My
mother’s grandfather came to Minnesota. His name was Olaf J. Emnel. He came here when
he was 72 years of age and he died at age 92. He is buried in Braham, Minnesota. He came to
the US on May 16, 1893 and died here in 1913. That is my mother’s grandfather. He is buried
in the cemetery right along side the church in Braham, Minnesota. So he died the year after
my mother immigrated here. My mother came over in 1912. She came on the Lucitania and
she came one month in March – one month before the Titanic. She moved to Duluth in 1916
and was married in 1922. As a child I remember them talking so much about the Titanic and I
never really knew why until years later and in fact after seeing the movie Titanic and looking
up these dates I realized that my mother would have been on the Titanic had she waited one
more month before coming to this country.

What was your father’s name?

My father’s name was Neils Albert Ostrom. His father was Oskar Ostrom and his mother was
Anna Greta Wickstrom Ostrom. My mother’s name was Anna Gunhild Johansen but I think
she went by Johnson in this country. Her father’s name was Johan Magnuson and her
mother’s name was Sophia Emnel Magnuson.

When did your family members come to Minnesota?

I believe my mother came to Duluth in 1916 and my father came on June 12, 1919.

Where were your mother and father born?

My mother was from Veswanda and that is in the province of Smoland which is in the
southern part and my father is from Norbottans. And I’m not sure if the province is Morjard
but he is from Norbottans. In Sweden.
What did they do in Sweden before coming to the US?

I cannot answer that question because they never talked about it. I absolutely know nothing about their childhood or what they did in Sweden.

What motivated them to leave Sweden?

I cannot answer that question. My mother and two of her sisters came over and left one sister behind and Hilda was left behind and she was the second from the oldest of the five actually one child had died so there were four sisters left and one of them stayed home. We often wondered if she stayed home to take care of the old folks; we really do not know why Hilda was left behind.

Circumstances that led to your parents?

I cannot answer.

What path did they take to get to northern Minnesota?

I am going to assume my mother came by train; she came through Ellis Island and I am going to have to assume she came by train from New York to Minnesota. My father I found out came through Canada. He had immigrated through Canada and I can't honestly say when he did that. I immigrated to the US from Port Arthur, Canada on the Canadian Northern railway; my last foreign residence was Port Arthur, Canada. And that's what I have on his declaration of intention. He was a laborer and it has his height and his weight and it says I was born in - and it says Norbottens Lan in Sweden – Norbottens Lan on the 27th of March, 1888. He came to this country from Canada through International Falls on or about the 13th day of June 1919.

Did your parents become US citizens?

Yes they did become US citizens. I have Dad's papers here and the date at the bottom is April of 1925 and my mother's is March of 1926. Now that is after they were married because they were married in 1922. On both of these petitions for naturalization there is a declaration on the bottom that states “I have lived in this country for five years” and I assume that's why they had to wait until they took out their declaration of naturalization.

When were you born?

I was born – I'm going to say St. Mary's Hospital of Duluth, although I'm really not accurate on that, but I was born on October 10, 1931 in Duluth, Minnesota.

Brothers and Sisters?

I am the youngest of three children. I have an older brother named Ronald who was born in 1926 and I have a brother Raymond who was born in 1929 and I Ruby was born in 1931 and
we were all born in Duluth, Minnesota. Ronald, September 3. Raymond, August 22 and I was born on October 10, 1931.

Childhood recollections of northeastern Minnesota? What did your father and mother do to make a living in Duluth?

My father came over here and on all of his papers it always lists laborer; his specialty was carpentry work. I know he worked at many of the shipyards and I can't name which ones but I do know he worked at various ones; he also worked at the steel plant in Morgan Park at one time. My mother before she was married and at the time she got married was working for Chester Congdon. I think she did mainly upstairs work; I think she mended, worked on draperies and I heard her talk about sewing clothes for various children in the family and she did kind of upstairs work and I think she lived there at one time because I think she was telling me once that she was ill and was in the sick room on the second floor at the Congdon's and they took such good care of the people who worked for them. She even talked about them taking her with them to their home in Iron River and for some reason or other they even took her with them to Yakima, Washington to another home out there. Then she was home with her family and raised her family and when my father died we children were in grades 7, 10, and 12 and she went back to work to support our family and that was very usual because most of my friends did not have mothers who were working. They had mothers who were home. She went back and worked at the Congdon's and then a few years later she got a job at the Bethany Lutheran Children's home which was a short 4 block walk from our house on 40th Avenue West and of course working at the Congdon's way out on 33 Avenue East she took the bus all the time when she worked out there.

Where did you live growing up?

We lived at 630 North 40th Avenue West. It was a two family home; it had an apartment on the first floor and an apartment on the second floor and we called them flats. First floor flat - we lived on the first floor and there were two bedrooms; the boys had one bedroom and they had bunkbeds which was really quite a novelty at that time and my mother and dad had the back bedroom off the kitchen. I slept on a roll away bed - it was in the dining room and every single night we put the rollaway bed down and in the morning we folded it back up and mother of course being a seamstress had made a pretty cover to put over it so when it was over there in the corner of the dining room it looked rather attractive during the day but I grew up sleeping in the dining room living in this flat. After we got into high school and my father had died and my brother Ron went away and Ray I think went into the service - I can't remember the exact year - I am going to say probably my junior year or senior year in high school - when it was mother and I alone we moved to the second floor and there was one bedroom and a living room ,dining room and kitchen and bath, and then she rented out the first floor.

What are your memories of your mother, father, other relatives?

We had no relatives living in our home or in our neighborhood. My memories of my mother are basically her being a homemaker, cleaning, cooking. We grew up in the era where you
washed on Monday, you ironed on Tuesday and I can't remember if she cleaned on
Wednesday and baked on Thursday; I can't recall the rest of the week but she always had this
routine where she had to do certain things on certain days of the week. I have very few
memories of my father because I was only 12 and in 7th grade when he passed away. I do
recall him going to work and coming home from work. Not a great deal beyond that.

What language did you speak?

We spoke English.

What attitudes did your parents have about their native land?

I think they spoke the native language to each other but we always chuckled that they spoke
in Swedish when they were talking about something they didn't want us to hear about.

Did they encourage you to speak Swedish?

No. They did not. I have no idea why they did not encourage that.

Do you speak Swedish?

I don't speak very much Swedish today. I have taken the classes and I studied with Ivan
Ilander at UMD and I have taken a few classes and I took one in night school for about 6
weeks but I don't really retain it very well. I don't know why. When I read something in
Swedish and I have a class or something and I understand it and we talk about it, it's fine but
when I get away from the actual formality of the class I often do not remember what I
learned. I have gone to two Swedish elderhostels. And we have to take classes there and so I
have learned some of the basic words or phrases and etc.

What is your earliest recollection of your home?

I don't know what my earliest recollection would be; we lived in a part of the house that was
a two family home. We lived in the lower half of course, the bottom flat or the first floor flat.
I don't have too many recollections other than just growing up in that house because I was 2
when we moved there. So I have no memories of the house we lived in before that. What was
it like? It was probably just a very ordinary, plain, conservative home. Mother sort of the
homemaker and dad out working.

What were your activities in your home?

We did a lot of card playing. I can remember putting the card table up and playing 500,
hearts, maybe go - fish; something like that. A lot of board games: maybe checkers, Chinese
checkers, those types of things.

Were there any special events?
I would have to say the holidays stand out in my mind. My mother's two sisters settled on the Duluth Heights. Now in order to get from West Duluth to the Duluth Heights, you take the streetcar downtown; then you get on the incline and it was torn down I believe around 1939 or 1940 but I can remember the incline. I can remember the conductor calling out "east car clear" or "west car clear"; then when we got to the top of the incline we took another street car. The one sister lived on Palmetto Street. Now today it is Central Entrance but I still to this day call Central Entrance Palmetto Street. The other sister lived up on Gillette Street; we had a little farther to walk to get to their house. But if we went up there for Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Year's, we took the street car, incline and the street car and came home the same way Christmas Eve. I can remember coming home late at night pitch dark and mother and dad and three kids carrying shopping bags with packages and the presents that we had exchanged in the evening and going through this whole process to get back home.

Social programs, dances, or neighborhood – we had a lot of dances at the Woodman Hall on the west end where the Smithian lodge met. The Smithian lodge was a Scandinavian lodge and then they had clubs for each province and I am not sure if they are sort of a branch of the Smithian Lodge. I think everyone belonged to the main lodge and then they each had their own province club. Mother belonged to the Smaland's Club because she was from Smaland. And that is where mother and dad went – they met on 21st Avenue West and Grand Avenue in the Woodman Hall – doors right in the middle and you go right straight up a wide staircase when you walk in the door – they had a large hall and a small hall; they had Christmas parties all the time up there. They had Santa Claus come and we danced and they had programs; we children were on programs there. We stood up and sang or read poems. I think my mother had me up there performing or reading something perhaps or singing a song or doing something. Lots of dances there. The neighborhood Merritt Park's community club was right across the street from us and they had little activities going. They had summer picnics, summer outings, programs, flower shows in the fall; everyone would enter their flower into a flower show and we would have people come there and view the flowers and they would give little ribbons like that to the people.

What was your neighborhood like?

Well the language would be English and I can't say my earliest recollection but we lived in a very friendly neighborhood. When I look back on my childhood I can still name who lived in almost every house going in each direction going from my house and in each direction. We lived on a corner and I can name many many people. Peterson's and the Newmann's – they owned the Newmann's drugstore -Bloomquist's and across the street we have the Johnsons and in the other direction we had the Larsons and then we knew everybody and the children knew everybody. It was a friendly neighborhood and people went back and forth a lot. I think the mothers probably coffeeed a little bit around the neighborhood and the mothers were all at home taking care of the children, washing clothes, cleaning and they all knew each other. It was a very friendly or what is referred to as a blue-collar neighborhood. There wasn't anyone who stood out as having a great deal of money or luxuries and I can't think of anyone who stands out as being extremely poor. Maybe we were all poor. I don't know.

Best friends and what did you do?
My best friends were those children who lived in the neighborhood because those were the ones you pal’ed around with. We played games in the evening; we played kick the stick – we put a stick and leaned it against the curb and the person who was up would kick the stick with their foot and they would run to first base across the street to second and over to third and back again. It wasn’t busy and there weren’t cars whizzing down there; we didn’t do it on 40th Avenue where it was a bus route and ambulances and fire route - We did it on the little side street going off 40th on 7th Street. We played draw a magic circle and hide and seek, kick the can, basically a lot of those games are really the same; you kick something or you throw something or and then you run to the different bases before you were tagged out. Those are the types of things we did. We didn’t have a lot of toys or a bike. I think my two brothers and I had one bike that we shared and everyone didn’t have all the luxuries of toys that the children seem to have today. We had to improvise and make up some of our own games. Then again my best friends were those youngsters who lived in the neighborhood.

A week ago in July of 1999 a friend of mine who I grew up with four doors down from me called me from Duluth; she was visiting her older brother and I met her over there at Perkins on 40th Avenue West which was not there when we grew up and oh we had the best visit about all the things when we were children and all the fun we had in the neighborhood.

Where did you go to school?

I went to Merritt Grade School, West Junior High School and Denfeld Senior High school and eventually UMD where I got my degree in elementary education. We spoke English in school.

What do I remember?

I remember that they were pleasant schools. We had nice classrooms. We walked out to West Junior and if it was cold we took the West Eighth Street bus and I got it right in front of our door it went along 8th Street and went down maybe 57th Avenue West, maybe a block back to West Junior. Most of the time we would walk. Denfeld of course we walked all the time because that was at 44th and 6th Street. I have very nice memories of my school that I attended -very very nice memories. Of having a lot of fun and being in a lot of activities and not going on a lot of trips and things like that. None of those types of things ,just kind of like a good fun education.

What city?

In Duluth. I started in 1949 at UMD and I finished in 1953.My classes were in the old UMD, Old Main, the building that has now burned down.

What church did you attend?

When the children in the neighborhood were young many of them were not Catholic and went to a little church called Ebenezer Baptist. It was on 40th Avenue West and 4th Street.
They had a marvelous Sunday school program, a wonderful Bible program, and we went there a great deal. Of course the church of the Swedish church is really the Lutheran church and when we were a little bit older and able to take the bus and everything I can remember them starting to go out to Elim Lutheran. I am going to guess about 3rd grade or so but we were old enough to take the bus to church – we would take that out to the West Duluth. Elim was about half a block or a block on Elinor street right near West Junior high school and the public library in West Duluth. It later burned down. I was confirmed there. After confirmation I was very good friends of many people of Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity so when I got into college and was going to UMD I kind of started to swing away from Elim and go to Holy Trinity, so eventually I had a letter of transfer sent over to Holy Trinity and that is where I was married. I don’t remember any families things at church. I don’t know if my parents really went that often. They probably went on confirmation Sunday and these special days. I was in the choir and maybe some Sunday when we were doing a special number she would go but I don’t recall going a great deal of the whole family going out the door and going to church. Of course we had no car; we took buses all the time, so I don’t have too many memories of that.

**What church do you attend?**

Zion Lutheran Church in Superior, Wisconsin. I am a musician and I have been the assistant organist all these years. I play for weddings, funerals and I have taught music in the Sunday school, I have directed Christmas programs many many times and I have accompanied soloists on various instruments. This is where our children grew up; when they were in band they played their instruments in church and they were in programs and maybe on Easter, and I have been extremely involved at the Zion Lutheran Church. When I first came to Superior and was married in 1958 I transferred my membership over to Pilgrim Lutheran but I never really got too involved over there; when we purchased the house in east end we decided to join together the Presbyterian church so for a couple of years we were members of First Presbyterian right here in Superior and I was teaching bible school there too, working with the music a little bit in that church. But then eventually I drifted back to the Lutheran church, which is kind of where my heart was. I always said when I left the Presbyterian church I had the feeling I wasn’t leaving; the feeling I had was that I was returning and coming home because this is where I felt I belong. Many people say, “oh, you left our church,”and I sort of answered them and I said, “no, I didn’t leave anything; I am coming home and I am going back.”

**What social groups?**

My parents were very active in the Smithian lodge. They met in the Woodman Hall on 21st Avenue West and 3rd Street. The door to the lodge area was in the center of the building right there on the sidewalk and when you opened the door you went right straight up a long stair case and I can remember as a child thinking that was really neat to go up and down those stairs. They had the large hall and the small hall. Over the years and I don’t know if this was from the beginning or what but each province had their own little sort of branch or smaller club having to do with the Smithian lodge and mother being from Smaland they were active in the Smaland club. But the big parties at Christmas and the summer picnics - most of those
were the entire Smithian lodge that ran those. My father was probably active in the labor movement. I am thinking that we went to a lot of labor meetings in that same building. And of course on Labor Day we had big huge picnics and democratic picnics out at the zoo; they called it Fairmont Park at that time. Today they call it the Lake Superior Zoo.

**What Swedish organizations do you belong to?**

I belong to the Duluth Swedish Cultural society. They meet on the 3rd Sunday of the month. I have made myself a Swedish costume and for quite a number of years I have been going around and doing Swedish programs. I play the piano and two other gals who sing go with me and we all wear costumes and we do performances at the big rosemaling event that has been held in various locations. At the current time they are holding it in the Curling Club building here and we get our two hour slot of time and wear our costumes and they sing songs in Norwegian and Swedish and I play all these songs and we entertain at quite a number of Scandinavian events throughout the area. I also have gone to the Swedish Elder hostel twice up in Bemidji run by the Concordia Language School and I have gone there for 5 days and taking classes and painting little Dalla horses, on looms, eating Swedish food, trying to speak as much Swedish as we can. I also went to one weekend event that was only a three night event and that was called a Swedish Adult weekend. Elder hostel you understand is age 55 and older whereas the adult weekend was age 18 and older and I even end up playing the piano at quite of number of events when I go to these activities. I am also a member of the Swedish Institute down in Minneapolis; however I do not get down there very often. Twice I have gone down on Mother’s Day for their big brunch that they have and they always have music playing while we are eating that brunch.

**Social events when you were growing up?**

Well I have to say the things we attended were the Christmas parties and I can remember they always danced. My memorable experience would have to be dancing with my father and uncles and they just thought it was great to have accordion music going and to have all these parties going and Santa Claus came and we had these big huge meals and parties in connection with the Smithian lodge and those are the things that stand out in my memory.

**Parents or family friends?**

I honestly cannot think of anyone other than my mother and her two sisters.

**How did your parents speak of their lives in Sweden?**

I honestly can say they shared nothing. I do not recall them talking about their life in Sweden at all.

**Were they content to leave Sweden?**

I honestly do not know because they never really talked about that and we didn’t inquire about those things.
Did your family keep in touch with Sweden?

Yes, they kept in touch. I think there were Christmas cards that were mailed back and forth at Christmas times. Of course there were no long distances phone calls or anything like that. In 1954 my mother went back to Sweden for the first time so we’re talking from 1912 to 1954. She went to visit – she went on the ship of course; in 1954 we were still traveling by ship and she went over to visit the home where she was born, I would assume, and grew up. Now living in the house - it’s the old farmstead - is the one sister who did not come over here, Hilda and her husband Johan. Their daughter Margit and her husband Ivar Solomonson- and I believe two children, Inger and Berto. Only two at that time. I went to Sweden that summer I was on a trip through Europe with about 20 people. Dr. Ivan Nylander, a Swedish teacher from UMD, was our guide and we also went over by ship. We flew from Minneapolis to New York and then took a ship over and landed in Holland and started out there and when we got up to Norway I left - Copenhagen - and I left and went by myself to Vislanda? where my mother was - my mother was there for - I’m going to say for 10 weeks -and I was there for 2 nights to visit in that house where my mother grew up.

Did they ever come here?

When Hilda and Johan had passed away and Margit and Ivar had three more children after those first two that we saw in 1954; she had three more children. They had been over here twice. They came over once- Margit and Ivar with Hokan and Helene, two of their children who were single and they traveled to this country and my mother was not living. My Aunt Judith was living and they stayed in her apartment, which was at that time King Manor in downtown Duluth and Hokan and Helene slept over here in Superior in my house. Then a few years later Margit and Ivar, my cousin and her husband came back; well by now my aunt Judith had passed away and they came back with their daughter Inger and her husband Leif. So we had four guests again and they stayed here at my house- all four of them stayed here at my house.

Do you kept in touch with relatives?

Yes I do a little email to Leif. Now we have instant messages going across all over the world. I have his email address and occasionally I will drop him a little note to keep him up to date. Leif is my cousin Margit’s son-in-law and he has been here and visited here at our house. When they came the last time Margit and Ivar and her daughter Inger and Leif and I -the five of us- drove to Madison; it’s about a 6 hour drive- for a wedding of another family member. We were there two nights and – we went to a party Friday night and Saturday was the wedding and we stayed Saturday night and we left Sunday night in Madison and came all the way home. So we had a wonderful time. So I do keep in touch with my relatives. Margit and Ivar are still living and I had Christmas cards and I had pictures of them at Christmas time almost very year; they will send me pictures and of course when you have seen them then of course you make it a more definite association.

What Swedish traditions do you remember in your family?
I can’t think of too many Swedish traditions, probably only the food. The goodies that she made at Christmas time you know and lefse and sylta and those potato dumplings and Swedish meatballs. I can’t really recall any definite traditions. Most of the traditional things would have been with the lodge, like the mid-summer in Lincoln Park. The parents all brought their children and we all had these huge outings.

Play a musical instrument, sing in a choir?

My father was a little musical. He sang in the choir. I am trying to locate through my two brothers a picture of him in this choir. I can’t recall the name of the choir;1 am not sure if it was a Swedish choir or if it was a choir. He was the one when I was in third grade he wanted a piano for me to study piano. And we got a piano and I still have it today. The piano that my father bought me when I was in third grade and I started taking piano lessons and I do think probably my musical talent is probably inherited from my father. I don’t recall any wood carving or medical traditions or anything like that.

What holidays were celebrated?

The traditional ones, Christmas, Thanksgiving of course; New Year’s. Other than the food no other traditions.

Do you continue any traditions today?

I don’t believe that I do continue any of those.

What Swedish food or drink do you remember?

I guess I have to say those potato dumplings. We called them kubkaka but I think it’s krupkaka. and then I think Swedish meatballs. The two foods that were the bases and potatoes. Potatoes, potatoes, all the time. I think we had potatoes at every single meal and when my Swedes came and visited me in this country in recent years they have told me the same thing. That they eat potatoes every single day.

What did you enjoy eating or drinking?

I guess I answered that in the previous questions. The potatoes and the Swedish dumplings and Swedish meatballs are probably the things that I remember the most and the things that I enjoy today.

Any family heirlooms?

I can’t really think of any.

Are they still in the family?
I don't think I have any in the family. I have a few table cloths that are made in Sweden I suppose and brought over here or maybe they were sent to my mother as gifts over the years. I have no idea if she brought them with her or if they are things that were sent to her after she arrived here. The other thing I remember about my mother is her constant sewing, crocheting, knitting, and embroidery. My mother could alter any piece of clothing - make it larger, smaller, and she was so conservative if a coat was worn out she would tear it apart at the seams and turn it to the good side of the material or the color was maybe not as faded and make a smaller coat maybe for me or for someone else out of those large pieces of fabric. She could look at a pattern of crocheting in the newspaper and rather than send for the pattern she could take a magnifying glass and magnify the stitches and all she had to do was look at it and she could make doilies like you couldn't believe. I have many many doilies - we call them dukes in our house - and I have many of them here in my home that mother made over the years and I think my Aunt Judith and I am the same way. I crochet and I knit and I sew and mend and do all of those things and I think I learned that from my mother. Mother didn't have TV, she had a radio; well, you don't have to look at a radio so when she was listening to the radio whether it be the soap operas, one man's family of her community problems - program like Jack Benny she always had a crochet hook or knitting needle. She didn't waste that time just listening to the radio. Now we have to watch the TV and it's a little bit different.

Are you married?

Yes I am and I have four children. I married Kermit Thomas from Superior, WI in 1958 June 21. At the Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in the West End of Duluth. My spouse - his mother is of Norwegian descent. Her maiden name was Strommen and he is of Norwegian descent and his father Thomas probably is more of an English background.

How did your parents feel about your marriage?

My mother I am sure was very happy when I got married. I was 26 years old and I think she was getting a little bit concerned that I wasn't going to get married and I think she wanted all of her children to be married and settled while she was still living. There was no problem there.

We have four children; they are all boys. Kyle was born October 11, 1960 here in Superior WI, the twins Donald and Dale were born February 13, 1962, and the fourth boy was born June 27, 1966 and Gary. Four boys.

Do your children identify with their Swedish ancestry?

I don't know if all of them identify that greatly with it. They probably heard a lot about it as they were growing up; they called my mother mor mor and I don't know if they knew why. Dale ended up taking a Swedish class and started learning the words for grandmother and grandfather and that is when he learned what mor mor was and the mor mor was of course my mother. Dale is very active in Minneapolis at the Swedish Institute in friends encouraging Scandinavian traditions. It is a social group and he served as president for several years in
that organization. When he was in college getting his degree in engineering he did go to
Sweden to Utebala? where he did an internship at a Johnson Construction company in
Utebala? and at that time he did some extensive traveling beyond Utebala? to visit all of the
relatives. Then Gary and Dale went back another time so that would have been Gary’s first
trip over and Dale’s second and they visited the relatives in Sweden on that trip also.

Other than that I think just hearing me just talk about Sweden and seeing all the Swedish
embroidery that I do and I have a lot of cross stitch and scenery pictures with the Swedish
flags on them and things like that and seeing me go to these Swedish programs and putting on
costumes and things would be kind of the thing that they would identify most probably with
their Swedish ancestry.

I have a table in the living room my mother brought back when she came back home in 1954
; she had it in her trunk. In 1954 you traveled with your trunk and she had this table which
comes apart and so — it’s round and it’s about a yard wide and it’s split in the middle and it’s
inlaid wood and then has a huge base and then a claw foot you know of wood that goes out
four directions. It’s really a neat table; it spins up and down so when it’s low down it’s kind
of a lamp table and then when you twist it up and turn it and turn the little knob it’s more at a
eating level table. So you can put chairs around it and eat. It’s a little higher up when it’s in
that position. A chair will tuck under it. It also has two extension leaves and they are just
plain wood; they are not finished in this inlay wood like the table itself. I have a little sewing
box in the living room that looks like a footstool and you lift up the cover and the inside has
places to put needles, threads and the pin cushion attached to the back of the cover and it’s all
empty inside so you can pack all of your knitting inside of it. Both of those items are from
Sweden.

What do you do for a living?

My husband owns a printing business right here in Superior. His father had it
before him and he now runs that. I was a schoolteacher. I graduated from
UMD in 1953, majored in elementary education. I taught in Duluth. I taught
for one year in a suburb of Minneapolis. I also took two years off from my
teaching to become a stewardess for Northwest Orient airlines because they
really only flew on the northwest and they didn’t have all these California
and Florida runs. I never had the opportunity to fly the orient however; I was
based in Minneapolis and the crews that went to the orient were based in
Seattle. So I flew out of Minneapolis for two years with Northwest Orient
Airlines. After having my family I never went to public teaching but when
the last boy was around 4 maybe I started taking on some piano students and
I have never been able to quit that; I keep getting calls and I have had as
many over the course of the years as 20 a week and probably as few as 12 or
13 depending on how many youngsters are interested in piano lessons so I
am very involved in that and with the other piano teachers in town we do
programs and we take our students to the zoo and various places and nursing
homes and the teachers get together and do all these extra-curricular
activities with our piano students so I have been doing that for a long time. I
think I mentioned that I play for weddings, funerals and of course a lot of programs. These are all very small, moneymaking things but are things that I do more for the enjoyment of it and I'm not doing it for a living. Just extra things that I do.

Where do you live?

We live in Superior, WI.

In closing when you look back on your life growing up in the Swedish immigrant household how would you describe it?

I can't say that it was any different than my neighbors who did not grow up in a Swedish household. I went in to play at my friends' homes and they were all different backgrounds and their histories were certainly different than mine and their mothers were home and basically did the same things my mother did and their daddies went to work and I can't honestly say that being in a immigrant household made my life any different. I didn't think of it being different at the time, maybe it was and I didn't know it.

Family history – what did you think about the immigrating?

Well I guess I have to say I am glad they came and met each other and had their family and raised us here. I certainly have no ill feelings about them coming over from Sweden.

When someone asks you about your background how do you answer them?

I probably answer them honestly. I tell them they were Swedish immigrants when they came over and settled in Duluth and raised their family there. I am certainly very quick to answer.

How do you feel about it?

I feel very fine about it. I have no problem with that at all.

I need to make one correction to the tape and that is my reference to the Woodman Hall is located in Duluth Minnesota on 21st Avenue West and 1st Street and I misinformed you on this tape that it was on 3rd Street. 3rd Street was where all the Smithian parties were held. My father was active in the labor movement and I think we also went to Woodman Hall for parties and gatherings there with his activities but the Smithian Lodge is on 3rd Street and 21st Avenue. I think the downstairs maybe had a couple of stores or businesses because we always went in the door which was at the middle and went right straight up the stairs to the second floor. Maybe they owned the building. That will be in some archives in Duluth.

END OF INTERVIEW