



Anne M. Noll

Interviewer:

All right, so this is Emily Reinl. We are here in the media lab, and I'm here with Anne who is going to tell a story. So go ahead, Anne.

Anne:

Okay. My name is Anna Mullet, and that's my Norwegian name. We immigrated here from Norway in 1951. We left Norway because of economic conditions. My dad could not find a job after World War II, and so he came home one day and said, "Well, we're either going to America or to another town in Norway for economics." My mother said, "Well, just let me know where we're going because it's a little different packing for either one." But we saved our money, sold a lot of our possessions, and collected the money to get tickets for the trip over to America.

We traveled from Hogason in western Norway to Newcastle on time in England. Took a train from Newcastle down to London, and I remember going by the London homes and just being amazed at all the chimney pots that they had there. It was totally different scenery from what I was used to in Norway.

Then we went after five days in London, we went to South Hampton, took the Queen Mary to the US and I was so nervous on the trip over because I thought my mother had always said, "Oh, we need that money for buying our tickets for the US. We need that money. We need that money." So I thought, wondered if we had enough money or if they would put us off on an island somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. But we made it all the way to New York. We were met by my grandparents and my aunt. No, my mother's aunts, and we were welcomed royally to New York. Then we took a train from New York to Providence and met the rest of the family there. We lived on Court Street in New Bedford, near Buttonwood Park where my grandfather had an apartment waiting for us with them.

I remember we came to the US in May, and coming from Norway where it's cool, it all of a sudden got awfully hot and we were very, very uncomfortable. I remember being outside playing, and in that playing, we always encountered bumblebees, and I was so afraid of all the bugs and stuff going on here in America. It was totally different, totally unlike what we knew.

Then we started school in September. Neither my brother nor I could speak any English except to say hello. So one day he was in kindergarten and I was in first grade. One day my parents were walking up to the school to see how he was doing and how I was doing, and they met him on the street coming home, and they figured he couldn't figure out what he was doing. He said, "Well, they didn't sing any of the songs that I knew, so I just left." He took matters into his own hands and took care of the situation. But eventually we learned English in the classroom. We didn't have any special education on the side. It was just classroom learning. My grandmother sat out in the hallway all day while I was in school, and I don't know what she did out there or if she would've been of any help because she hardly knew any English either, but she was there for moral support.

We lived on Hillman Street in New Bedford, near St. Lawrence Church, and that's where I basically grew up, walked to Keith Junior High School and walked then to the high school when we went there. Let's see, that was basically the growing up experience. It was adapting to all kinds of new things in America and new foods. I had never had pizza until I was a sophomore in high school, and I needed a whole glass of Coke to wash down one slice of pizza. It was tomato flavored foods were not part of the Norwegian diet. Then the first time I had ever had spaghetti was when I was at college. So those were new adventures for me. My parents built the house in Acushnet in 1960, and so we moved out there into the rural part of New Bedford. It was quite a shock to go on the school bus after walking to school all these years.



My dad also started, when he came here, wanted to... He worked at an Atlantic Diesel as a foreman and for maintenance for fishing boats and the fishing fleet. But then with another man from Atlantic, he started Scandia Propeller and he, they fixed propellers, shafts and other things on fishing boats and pleasure boats, but he really had a desire and a vision to outfit the fishing fleet with... I think the drums that pulled up the fishing nets, are what? The doors that scraped the bottom of the fishing... I think it was to get low scallops or the things that were in the sand in the bottom of the ocean. The fishermen had to haul it in by hand before, but he knew this hydraulic equipment that could get it up very quickly and much more efficiently. So he outfitted basically the whole fishing fleet in New Bedford with these drums from Seattle. They were made by Marco.

The way my dad got to be a representative for them was a little funny. He often had people come stop by at Scandia just to shoot the breeze to talk about the weather, to talk about the industry. This one friend, Mr. Mitchell from Mitchell Motors on the bridge, came one day and he talked with my dad and said, "Guna," his name was Guna Gundersen. He said, "Guna, why don't you represent Marco and install the hydraulic doors like you say you want to. They're not going to come and ask you to do it unless they know about you."

So my dad did the typical Norwegian stuff and said, "Oh, no, I can't do that. That would be putting myself too forward." So Mr. Mitchell said, "Guna, give me the phone." So he took the phone and he dialed Marco, the number, and he started, "Hello, my name is Guna Gundersen, and I'm calling from Haven, Massachusetts, and I would like to be a representative of selling Marco doors in the East Coast. He went on and on and on with this fake accent. Marco, people thought that he was the real thing, but it turned out that it was very profitable, very good cooperation between Marco and the West Coast and dad on the East coast here. He would go down to Rhode Island to Cape May, even down to North Carolina to install these hydraulic doors on the fishing fleets. So it was quite a good investment on his part.

Interviewer:

What year was this when he got involved?

Anne:

In the '60s.

Interviewer:

In the '60s, okay.

Anne:

The early '60s, yeah. So the fishing industry changed because of what he did.

What else happened after that? Well, I got married to a nice young fellow from Iowa, and that changed the dynamics of the Norwegian centered home.

Interviewer:

Did you still live here after you got married?

Anne:

No, we moved to... We taught school in Philadelphia in the ghetto. We were the first white teachers in the ghetto school in Philadelphia. We did not like teaching there, so he went to graduate school after that, and I went to work to support us.

Interviewer:

Okay, so then when did you move back here?



Anne:

We moved back to Rhode Island in 1974, and that brought us close to my parents, and it was a nice move. We have three children, George, Sonya, and Christian. George is now working for the US State Department in Jerusalem. Sonya is working at a Pontifical College in Chile, and my youngest son, Christian, is in Maryland.

Interviewer:

Great. Anything else about your time living in New Bedford or Acushnet that you want to talk about, or about how you've seen the area change over time?

Anne:

Well, New Bedford has tremendously changed. A lot of revitalization, some of it good, some of it not so good, but I haven't been in New Bedford that much. Whenever I came back, it was to visit in Acushnet, and that's changed too. It's not as rural as it was. Now, it may sound strange that I said my grandparents, grandmothers met us at the boat in New York, and they took us to restaurants in New York City and then to the train to Providence. But my grandmothers were in America because they left after the war in Norway in the early '20s. It was extremely difficult economics in Norway. So every family just about had sons that left Norway to earn money in America and send it back.

Well, my mother's father left when she was three years old, and he came back to Norway when she was married and had two kids, and he had not seen her during that time except for one visit home. He kept trying to get his wife and my mother over to America so they could be a family again, but the US government always had another piece of paper that had to be filled out, another obstacle to overcome, and they had to have enough money to show that they would not be a drain on the economy. So there were many years of frustration.

My mother talks about Christmas cookies that lasted all the way till the Easter, because they would always prepare for, if your father comes home, we want to have things ready. So they would make all kinds of breads and cookies and special treats, but never be able to share them with him because he never came back home. So that was then after... Oh, it was during the depression that they could not get any work over here. The depression was rampant into Norway also. So there was poverty there too, there and here. Then after the Depression, it was World War II that Norway was occupied by the Germans, and nobody could leave or come in. So after the war, my grandmother decided she was finally going to get to America. She got the papers in order, got her plane ticket, took a little flight from Norway to England, and then I think she took a boat the rest of the... From England to the US, and that was in 1947. So finally, they were united as a family, the two of them, and we joined them in then '51.

But my other grandfather, the both grandfathers had been fishing out of New York City. That's where the fishing fleet was headquartered. But they went out to Georgia's Bank, and New Bedford was a lot closer to Georgia's bank than New York City. So the whole industry moved up here in the 1930s, and they moved up here with them.

One of my father's father was the captain of a fishing boat here in New Bedford called the Fleet Wing. He was known around the area as Big John, because his fingers were massive, he was just a huge man. There were other people that were from Norway that were in the fishing industry. One of the guy's nickname was Pontiac, because he had a Pontiac that he just loved and talked about all the time. His car was the best thing that he had. Then one guy said, one guy was called Minnie, Mickey Mouse was his nickname. He said, "Yeah, I don't mind when they call me Mickey Mouse, but when they call my wife Minnie, then I get mad." So he didn't like that.

There were other stories that went around the family about the fishing people. My grandfather was on the captain of the fleet wing, and my dad tried to go out fishing with him for one of the trips. They went out for 14 days at a time, then back home for four days. But he got so seasick, he just could not handle the trip. So his father said to him, "Guna, it's best you stay on land." My grandmother, my father was one of four boys that lived in Norway, and he grew up, married my mother, and then we came to America. But none of the other boys, none of



the rest of his family came to America. So we had my grandparents here, but not many aunts or uncles or rest of the family. So that's why I had grandparents here to welcome us when we came.

Interviewer:

Great, thank you for that nice addition. Any final thing?

Anne:

No, I'm done.

Interviewer:

All right. All right, thank you.