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Oral History Transcription with Lillian Oberg Sandstrom Anderson

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Debra Zeigler

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LILLIAN OBERG SANDSTROM ANDERSON

INTERVIEWED BY

DEBRA ZEIGLER

JUNE 13, 1979
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Interview with Lillian Oberg Sandstrom Anderson by Debbie Zeigler

This is June 13, 1979. I'm talking to Mrs. Lillian Oberg Sandstrom Anderson in Stockholm on her farm up on North Main Hill.

Q. How are you today?
A. Just fine.

Q. Where were you born?
A. I was born July 30, 1904 in New Sweden, Maine.

Q. Who were your parents?
A. Mr. and Mrs. Simon Oberg.

Q. How many brothers and sisters did you have?
A. We were twelve children.

Q. Can you tell me their names and birthdates?
A. Yes. Helen Oberg Anderson, she was married to Gotfrid Anderson, born April 10, 1903. They lived in Gardiner, Mass, they are now both deceased. Then It's me, Lillian Oberg Sandstrom Anderson, born July 30, 1904. I live in Stockholm and I have seven children.

Q. Who did you marry?
A. I married Fred Sandstrom, he was born November 10, 1901. He died May 20, 1947. We were married June 3, 1925. Then I was married to Clarence Anderson and we've been married for 30 years on Monday. We didn't have any children and we're living here on the same farm.

Q. Who's the next child in the family?
A. Roy, he was born August 3, 1906 in New Sweden, he is now living in Gardiner, Mass. Arnold was born August 8, 1908. He was married to Hildur Oberg and they lived in Gardiner, Mass., and he's deceased. Florentine Oberg Perkins, she was born August 17, 1910 in New Sweden. She was married to Donald Perkins, he was born in Stockholm. They lived in Skowhegan, but she's deceased. Rosalind was born July 21, 1912 in New Sweden, but she died October 9, 1924. Amelia was born September 3, 1916, and she died right after she was born. Roland was born May 28, 1914 in New Sweden. He married Elizabeth Jacobs of Caribou, and they live in Skowhegan. He was a farmer. Alvern was born December 21, 1917. He was married to Alida Russell of Fort Kent. They have no children and they live in Gardiner, Mass. Alden was born December 12, 1920 at New Sweden and he wasn't married. He worked in Gardiner, Mass. and he's dead now. Elbridge was born May 22, 1923 in New Sweden. He was married to Sylvia. Doris was born March 13, 1928 in New Sweden. She is married to John Barberchek.
He is from Conn. and that's where they live. He travels a lot, I don't know what he does. He goes to Germany and all over.

Q. Has she ever gone with him?

A. No, they have four children. Elbridge has nine children, Roland had four and Florentine had four.

Q. Florentine died early in life, didn't she?

A. Yes, she died in an accident. They had a camp in New Brunswick and she and another lady were gassed. They had a gas refrigerator, and they were found dead in the morning. Donald survived, they didn't think he would, but he did.

Q. How long ago was that?

A. About four or five years ago.

Q. Rosalind was killed in an accident too, wasn't she?

A. She was picking potatoes down to Olsons. She was on a load, and she jumped off to open the gates and her foot caught in a rope, and she went under the wheel. She was about twelve years old and she lived a week afterwards.

Q. Did you always live on a farm on East Road?

A. Well, they lived on East Road until they moved up to Stockholm.

Q. Where did you live in Stockholm?

A. Right down there by Melford Sjostedt's, down on School Street. The house is torn down now.

Q. Did you live there when you got married?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the Oberg family have a farm there?

A. No, it wasn't much of a farm. My father used to work out on the road and different things. Freddie and I moved up here on the old folks farm, where we are now.

Q. When were you married?

A. 1925. We didn't move up here until just before Johnny was born. He is thirty seven now. We moved up here the first of April and he was born the first of May.

Q. You used to live in a little house over there?

A. Yes, Buddy was born there.

Q. Who are your children?
A. I have seven children, thirty five grandchildren, and about seven great grandchildren.

Q. That's quite a few pairs of mittens.

A. That's right, at Christmas I don't know how many pair I knit.

My children are: Lillian married George Currie from Gardiner, Mass. and they have five children. Vivian married John Mettitt and they live in Bangor, they have six children. Buddy married Birdina Olivenbaum, they live in Stockholm and have four children. Jerry married Gloria Bedard from Skowhegan. He was in the service and met her in Gardiner, Mass., she was a nurse. They have six children, they have triplets. He was in the service for twenty six years, he's retired now. He is coming up here to take over the farm and they're going to build a house. Norma married Gordon Sund from Gardiner, Mass. They used to live there, but they moved up here. She is a nurse in the Caribou hospital. Frederick lives in New Sweden. He married Gloria Johnson from New Sweden and they have five children. Johnny married Donna Weber from Conn. They have six children. He's got his own factory, so he is a machindst.

Q. What does Buddy do for work?

A. He is a farmer and he has got a dairy.

Q. Can you tell me when your parents were married and where they came from?

A. My father was from New Sweden, he was a farmer. He went to Gardiner, Mass. to look for work, he was quite young then. He met my mother in Milford, Mass. and she came from Sweden. She was seventeen years old.

Q. Do you know when she came over?

A. She was seventeen, I don't know the year.

Q. Do you know where in Sweden?

A. Linköping. She met my father in Milford and they were married October 5, 1901. They lived there for a while, Helen was born in Gardiner. Then they decided to come to New Sweden to take over the farm. That's where the rest of the kids were born.

Q. You were born in the same house your father was born in?

A. Yes. They lived there and later on they moved to Stockholm. Two of the children were born in Stockholm.

Q. How old was your father when he died?

A. He was ninety three years old.

Q. How old was your mother when she died?

A. She was sixty, she was young. She died May 23, 1941.
Q. Did she ever tell you stories about Sweden?
A. Well, she used to work on a boat on a canal. She was a waitress. This was funny, when Helen, my sister, went to Sweden a few years ago, about a year before she died, she met three of my mother's sisters. They were out riding one day and they went right by the canal where my mother used to work. One of them said, "This is where your mother worked when she was a girl."

Q. You have lots of relatives in Sweden?
A. Quite a few.

Q. Do you write to them?
A. No.

Q. Would you like to go and see them?
A. It would be kind of fun.

Q. Do you talk a lot of Swedish?
A. Oh, yes. I can read Swedish and I can talk it.

Q. Did your mother teach you?
A. Well, when we were kids, all we spoke was Swedish. When we went to school, we didn't even know English. We learned English in school.

Q. Did you go to school in Stockholm?
A. No, New Sweden on East Road.

Q. Did you go to high school?
A. No, that's why I'm not very smart.

Q. You had to learn English in school, did you still speak Swedish at home?
A. Yes, all the time.

Q. Did your mother ever learn to speak English?
A. Oh, yes. Of course, as we grew up, it was mostly English and in later years, it was all English. We talked Swedish too, but it was mostly English.

Q. Did your first husband talk Swedish?
A. Yes.

Q. Some of your children must have learned it.
A. Some of them can talk Swedish, they understand it but the younger ones don't.

Q. What church did you go to?

A. Baptist. My father and mother belonged to the Baptist Church in New Sweden. We went to the Baptist Sunday School, but now we go to the Lutheran Church.

Q. Did you change when you got married?

A. Yes, I don't know how I started going to the Lutheran Church, it was handier or something.

Q. Was his family Lutheran?

A. Yes.

Q. Clarence is Lutheran too?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you remember about the Baptist Church back then? Did they have big birthday parties?

A. Not in the church. I can remember when I was a kid, every Sunday there was a birthday party somewhere in the neighborhood. Everybody came with a cake, I can't remember them bringing squares. Everyone had a wonderful time.

Q. There was a lot of people there?

A. Oh, yes. There was nothing else to do in those days, but celebrate everybody's birthdays.

Q. Did they ever have plays or pageants in the Baptist Church?

A. Not that I can remember.

Q. Did you ever come to birthday parties in Stockholm?

A. Not then, because I didn't know anybody in Stockholm.

Q. Did you go when you moved up here?

A. I can't remember that I did. We used to have sewing circles that I can remember. We used to take our kids and go to the sewing circles and have great big coffee parties. They used to cook and have so much to eat. We would bring all our kids.

Q. What would the kids do when you were sewing?

A. Well, we didn't sew, they would give it to us and we would take it home and sew. The kids played outside.

Q. Where did you have the sewing circles?
Q. Did it matter which church you belonged to or did each church have their own?
A. The churches had different ones, but you could go to which one you wanted to.
Q. What kind of stuff did you sew?
A. Aprons, mostly.
Q. Did you sell them?
A. They used to have an auction, and people would come and buy them. It was kind of fun.
Q. What other things did the church do?
A. They had Sunday School. Later years when I got older, I can remember young people's meetings. We lived up far away from the church, we had to walk.
Q. How far did you live away from the church?
A. From East Road up to the Capitol. We used to walk right up the hill through the woods and came out by the park. The Midsummer festivals used to be the most wonderful things that ever happened to us. We dressed up in the best clothes we owned, and we walked to church. They used to have a May pole, sell homemade ice cream, play games around the May pole. We used to think that was the most wonderful thing that ever happened to us.
Q. Were there a lot of people there?
A. Very. There was a lot of people, everybody used to come.
Q. Did they have a band?
A. Oh, yes, the New Sweden band used to play.
Q. They danced Swedish dances, didn't they?
A. I can't remember that.
Q. They had a lot of food?
A. They had booths where you could buy food, they had them right outdoors.
Q. Did they have big weddings back then?
A. I can't remember that.
Q. Where were you first married?
A. In the homes.
The first time I was married, Elsie and Albert, and Freddie and I went to Caribou and were married. We had never been in that church before.

Q. What church?
A. I think the Congregational Church in Caribou. We just went down there and got married.

Q. Where were you and Clarence married?
A. In the Lutheran Church.

Q. Did you have a wedding?
A. No, just a few people.

Q. Do you remember the day Frederick died?
A. Very well. The young people were going to have a young people's meeting. They were sitting around the table planning what they were going to do that night. The telephone rang and they were wondering if I had seen him. They went fishing the night before to fish smelt, and they didn't come home that night. He said when he left not to worry if they didn't come home, they might stay at the camp and come home the next day, so I didn't worry. That night a big storm came up, a lot of wind and it kind of bothered me, but in the morning it was forgotten. A neighbor came and asked if they had come home. It had rained so much, they couldn't work in the fields, so I said they probably decided to stay and fish some more. Around three o'clock that afternoon is when Gunnar Sandstrom called and asked if I had seen Freddie and I said, "No, haven't you?" He said no, he had seen the car and found the boat, but he didn't tell me. Then about five or five thirty, his father came driving up and I knew something had happened because he drove so fast, I thought he was going right through the barn. They had been caught in the storm and they had a small boat, they didn't have a chance. There were three of them that drowned. They were Freddie, Verner Sjostedt and Paul Boutot of Stockholm.

Q. How long was it before you remarried?
A. A couple of years. In 1949.

Q. When did you meet Clarence?
A. Well, I knew him all my life. He had a farm up in California, he lived up there.

Q. California is up north, isn't the state.
A. Yes, up in the woods. Freddie and him were good friends. He was just a farmer that used to stop in once in a while when he went to town. When Freddie died, he came and helped us, he took over and helped us with the work. Buddy did a lot, but he was young, he needed guidance.

Q. How old was Buddy when his father died?
A. I think he was about eighteen.
Q. How old were you?
A. I was forty three and I had seven children.

Q. You have been married to Clarence for thirty years now.
A. Yes.

Q. Did Freddie grow potatoes?
A. Yes, he was a farmer, he had animals on the farm too.

Q. Clarence is a potato farmer too?
A. Yes.

Q. You've been a farm wife all your life?
A. Yes, I've been a farm housewife all my life. I was born on a farm, lived on a farm, and I loved the farm.

Q. What do you like about the farm?
A. I like it in the spring when everything starts to grow, and I like it in the fall. There's lots of hard work, lots of good work. It's a good place to bring up children.

Q. Do you think so?
A. It's the best.

Q. Do you think farming methods have changed?
A. Oh, yes, I think so. They didn't put all that poison on the land like they do now. They didn't put weed killer on the potatoes. The kids had to get out there with a hoe and hoe the potatoes and dig up the weeds.

Q. Did you ever pick mustard?
A. Oh, yes, sometime in my life. We don't have mustard on this farm. We have never had any mustard.

Q. How big is this farm?
A. Oh, I don't know how many acres. It's quite a big farm. It's a nice farm, one of the best. I've picked a lot of potatoes in my day. It's a good place to bring up children, they learn to work, it keeps them out of mischief.

Q. When you worked on the farm, what time did you get up on an average day?
A. Around six o'clock, sometimes earlier and sometimes later.

Q. That was a long day, though.
A. Yes, it's not bad. I get up at six o'clock now.

Q. Your brother Elvie, is in a musical group, isn't he?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me a little about that?

A. Well, there's a bunch of them that goes around and plays. They sing gospel songs.

Q. What's the name of their group?

A. I don't know the name of it. It's on the record.

Q. Do you play an instrument?

A. No.

Q. But you sing in the church choir?

A. Yes, I sing a little, but I don't play anything.

Q. You used to work in Mass., didn't you?

A. Yes, I worked there a couple of winters before I was married.

Q. What did you do down there?

A. Housework. That's all I could do.

Q. Do you have your mother's naturalization papers or anything like that?

A. No. I have never seen them, I don't know if she had any, but she must have.

Q. She voted, didn't she?

A. I don't know that either. I can't remember anybody voting in those days, when I was a kid. They must have, but I don't remember.

Q. Did you ever vote?

A. Not until I came up to Stockholm.

Q. How old were you when you came to Stockholm?

A. I must have been sixteen.

Q. Do you have anything else you would like to tell me?

A. No, I can't think of anything. I suppose I could rattle on forever.

Q. Thank you very much, Lillian.

A. You're welcome.

End