

FAMILY BACKGROUND Full name is Alfreda Ohlsson Ranney, but she uses Freda. Born on July 5, 1890 in northern Norway in Kabelvåg close to North Cape. Father moved to Hammerfest and they lived there until she was nine years old. Father was Ernest Axel Ohlsson from Sweden and mother was Karin Krogstad from Trondhjem. He came to Norway as a young man, met mother and married. They had four children: two twin girls, one boy, and herself who was the youngest. Brother was Ellis Ohlsson who, after learning his trade in Trondhjem, was a chief engineer on ships. He emigrated to America after he graduated from school and being at sea. Father came in 1905 to see if he wanted to stay. He was a tailor and had his own business wherever he went. Grandfather Ohlsson lived in Stockholm. Mother's father was named Krogstad; he was a 'potte' maker in Norway—made crockery. The grandmother had died when they visited in Trondhjem in route to America.

The two sisters were twins—Lena and Anne Ohlsson. All came to America and both were married. Anne married a newspaperman, John Sole, from Norway; when he came here he began a Norwegian newspaper. They had two daughters, Gudrun Swanson and Clara Mann who live in Tacoma. Lena married a salesman and lives in Seattle.

From Hammerfest, the Ohlssons moved to Narvik which was a new place and close to the Swedish border. There was a railroad being built to ship the iron ore out of Sweden to the port at Narvik. Father opened his tailor's shop, and they stayed there until Freda finished school; then they moved to America. She was baptized and confirmed a Lutheran in Norway. She was scared that she'd forget an answer during confirmation, so she studied hard to pass. As a child she skied a lot and took a first prize when she was eleven—nice snow and hills in Norway. Children had to learn things in Norway that would prepare them for life. She made a pair of stockings—didn't like it, but did it anyway. She always lived in town, so she learned cooking, knitting, dusting, *etc.*

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY 'Wonderful'. Made all sorts of cookies and had a big time. Everyone stayed home on Christmas Day but then had 13 days to celebrate. Christmas Eve was at home with presents and tree. Food was risengrynsgrøt and pork spareribs; on Christmas Day, they had 'rype' [ptarmigan] with gravy and trimmings like potatoes. She also made cookies, julebrød, julekake, berlinerkranser, fattigmand—enough to last until New Year and stored in tin cans. Hjortetakk [cookies] were rolled and baked like doughnuts. She has an iron from Norway to make krumkake, and she continued to make these things in her home at Christmas.

In Norway, she doesn't remember going to church on Christmas Day. She remembers going with her sisters when she was very young. When they began to sing, she didn't know the hymns, so she'd sing 'Ja, vi elsker dette landet'. Her sisters were so mad, 'they'd push me off the seat. I was so little; I didn't know any different. I had to keep still'.

EMIGRATION Her father came first in 1905 to Tacoma. He had friends here who had written to him. He stayed with the Jakobsons until his family came a year later after he sent tickets back to Norway. He worked in the lumberyard until he met someone in the tailoring business, and then began work in a tailor's shop before the family came. The brother needed to finish his sailing time in order to get his engineer's license. When that was done, he came to Boston and then Tacoma.

Freda was excited to emigrate. They spent 2,3 weeks in Trondhjem visiting relatives. In May-June 1906, they left Norway by boat. They came to Hull and took the train to Liverpool. There they had a physical exam, and the examiners said something was wrong with mother's eyes. Freda wasn't allowed to return with her mother to Norway. A Swedish man asked about their problem and then made arrangements for them to accompany him. The

twins were 20 years old at the time. The ship took them from Liverpool to New York. In Liverpool they stayed in a hotel and ate mostly 'kavring' [rusk biscuits], a pickled meat and hard-boiled eggs. [Tells the story about ordering chicken at the hotel versus the train].

Mother stayed in Trondhjem with her folks and then bought a ticket direct to New York. Father and girls had readied a house by then. Girls went through Ellis Island 'they put a cross on the back and you go in different stalls like animals'.

America was so different than Norway. On the train, they bought a food package and there was a pie in it. They'd never eaten pie, and 'we threw that out the window—it was so soft and funny. We weren't going to eat that!' The Swedish man kept the girls close by; he got off in Nebraska and the girls continued to Tacoma. One had written to Dad and he was there to meet them at the depot—a little red box. He had shaved off his whiskers, and the girls didn't recognize him. He stayed at 11th St. with Mr. and Mrs. Jakobson, and took the girls on the cable car which scared Freda. They rented a house, and everyone got a job. A friend found work for Freda, but the lady fired her. [Tells the story about washing windows—see t022c.] Freda worked there for one month.

SETTLING IN AND WORK Father got his own house. Freda did all sorts of jobs; laundry, rooming house, cannery. In the rooming house, she cleaned rooms daily for which she received her room and board. It was Norwegian boarding house where newcomers came; they all spoke Norwegian until they learned some English. From here she went to a laundry, then to a restaurant in downtown Tacoma. She made pies, pastry, and custards, a skill which she learned from someone else. She had to quit that job because the flour made her sneeze. She moved upstairs and became a waitress, working from 6 am making sandwiches. She worked there until she met her husband. At the time she was staying with her sister who was married to a newspaperman from Norway. He started up and ran the Tacoma Tidende.

Her mother had arrived, but she didn't live long. Mother had cancer, and Freda cared for her until she died on her birthday in April about two years after emigrating. She taught Freda how to cook, so Freda did the cooking and housework for the family; the two older girls were working at other houses. Brother came here also and found work as a machinist. He married and had children; died of pneumonia at age of 40.

The hardest thing in America was 'that I couldn't talk'. She just picked up English; attended night school but felt it didn't help much.

After Mother died, Father met a Swedish fellow and started a tailor shop in Eatonville. The three girls stayed here as one was married, another did housework, and Freda was working. He was doing well, but somebody told them they'd read in a paper where their father had died. Freda and her brother went to Eatonville, identified their father, and buried him. They never found out what really happened to him. He wrote to the kids regularly, but never said anything about his life. That was in 1909, because sister was married the same year.

Freda found her jobs through other people. She got the Norwegian rooming house job through her brother-in-law. That place was called the Dewey House, and it was hers to manage when she was 18. So she invited a friend to help, but the friend didn't get along. Then they both quit. Next she got a job at a laundry through her sister. Then she went to the restaurant. 'I was always willing to find out something different'.

MARRIAGE Her husband, Dan [Daniel] Ranney, was a waiter at the restaurant and was from Iowa. His mother was Irish and his father Scotch; his ancestors came over on the Mayflower, 'so they were old-timers'. They started dating and decided to marry. The wedding was at her sister's house and was very simple. She wore a nice suit—purchased on time. They went to Seattle for a short trip, and came back to Tacoma to work. Then they moved to Seattle where he did more restaurant work. When they first married, he didn't want her to work, but she decided she wanted to work out instead of sewing at home. His folks retired to California, and Freda and Dan moved to Long Beach to be near them. In California Dan worked for the Ford Motor Company, and Freda did odd jobs until he in-laws died. Then she worked at Parkers Brothers store—a beautiful store in LA where she made draperies and slipcovers. Freda had picked up sewing. Wages weren't very good.

They returned to Tacoma and she canvassed Schoenfeld's, Rhodes, and other places for a job. She had learned a lot in California and easily got a job making draperies, swags, *etc.* She worked at Schoenfelds until she retired at 65. But Stebner called her and asked if she'd make slipcovers. She worked here 14 years, so she didn't really retire until she was 85. Her husband owned restaurants in Tacoma—Johnny's Oyster House on Commerce St. was one of them. They had just bought a house. He only lived there three months when he had a stroke and died in 1951. She stayed until she came to the Tacoma Lutheran Home.

RETURN TRIP TO NORWAY She returned to Norway in 1972 with two friends. She visited Hammerfest and Narvik. Their house in Narvik was still there; but both towns had been destroyed and rebuilt. She also visited relatives in Trondhjem and saw Oslo. Her friends enjoyed the trip. They took the ship from Bergen to Hammerfest, a trip that lasted five days. Then, they traveled from Narvik to Oslo by train.

Freda still belongs to Daughters of Norway and Scandinavian Fraternity. In Daughters she was a trustee, and also made the draperies for the Hall. She attended Unity Church when she had a car, but now goes to St. Mark's Lutheran. Her husband didn't like to attend church because he had gone too much in Iowa.

SPEAKING IN NORWEGIAN Inger and Freda have a short conversation in Norwegian.