

**FAMILY BACKGROUND** Anna Olena Snartemo was born June 3, 1889 on the Snartemo farm near Hagebostad, Vest-Agder, Norway. The Hagebostad community is in southern Norway; the nearest town is Lyngdal and the largest close city is Kristiansand.

**PARENTS** Her father, a farmer, was Ole Snartemo. Her mother was Asgjerd Birkeland-Hesjevollen. Father had two sisters and one brother. His mother died after the last child was born, when Ole was 10 years old. One of these relations emigrated to and lived in Seattle, possibly Johanna, Ole's sister.

Lena's maternal grandparents were Lars and Siri Birkeland-Hesjevollen. She remembers her grandmother sitting by the open fireplace to keep warm and sometimes roasting potatoes. Also remembers her grandfather teasing her grandmother as they all sat around the fire.

Lena's mother was only 18 and her father 20 when they married.

Her paternal grandparents were Hjalmar (?) and Johanna Snartemo. Johanna died from milk fever after the birth of the fourth child. The oldest girl, Gunvald (?), took care of the family then with the help of a hired girl. Grandfather owned two farms, including the one where Lena was born.

This farm grew hay and different kinds of vegetables: potatoes, carrots, turnips and rutabagas. The house had a full basement, where storage bins were used for the vegetables. There were about 10 or 11 cows housed in a large, modern barn with cement floors and stalls. Describes other aspects of the barn.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS** There were 15 children in all: Johanna and Siri (twins, where Johanna was born 50 minutes before Siri), Lars, John, Lars, Josefina, Lars, Johan (died), Lena, Noe (?) (shortened version of her real name), Olaf (died at 9 months), Lars, Agnes and Marie. Only 13 are named. There was some children's sickness going around, and three of the children named Lars died from this. Lena was sick, too. It affected one eye, and she discusses this in some repetitive length. (At 435, Lena mentions that Johanna came to America first, then, perhaps, two other children with their father.)

**SCHOOL** Lena went eight years to a one-room school that was a long way off. One of brothers, Johan, wanted to be schoolteacher. He had one more year at Kristiansand in order to be qualified, but died at the age of 19. Lena tells about an incident in class concerning a tall, skinny and pale boy who had lost his mother. Lena said that she was more interested in staying home and helping her mother than in doing schoolwork. She speaks about her best friend, Maria, at school and tells about her children and other related incidents.

**CHURCH** The church was close to the schoolhouse. There was a graveyard on both sides of the church, and it was surrounded by a shoulder high stone fence. Lena was confirmed at this church in Hagebostad. Tells a story about her aunt (father's sister).

CHRISTMAS Mother and Father decorated the tree in the living room that reached to the ceiling. Gifts, oranges and nuts were put under the tree on Christmas Eve. The children took turns peeking through the keyhole while all this was going on. The children went to church on Christmas Day. Lena states that her parents were fairly religious, always attended church. Father read the Bible to the children on Christmas Eve and on Sunday afternoons for two hours. Lena longed to be outside playing with other children.

Food served on Christmas Eve included risengrynsgrøet served with sugar, butter and cinnamon, lutefisk, lefse, potato cakes, scrambled eggs. Lena tells in length on how to select the right meat and bones to prepare a veal dish called 'sos' (?). Her mother made lots of cookies. On Christmas Day, Lena does not remember what foods were served. She thinks it might have been roasts. Tells about the outbuilding (stabbur) that contained sides of beef, pork, and hams.

Tells a story about a red fox, an April Fool's joke.

FARM LIFE Lena was the baby-sitter in the family. Older children worked outside, plowing, planting potatoes, *etc.* Sometimes Mother gave them money when they did a good job. Lena saved her money in a cinnamon can.

The house was made of logs faced with siding. There was a huge fireplace in the basement. There were two large kettles hanging over the fire, one used for cooking food for the animals and the other for cooking food for the family. Cooking was also done in the upstairs kitchen.

The basement kitchen was utilized more in the winter for Christmas and holiday cooking, the winter baking, and making items like rullepoelser.

EMIGRATION Father went to America first (see 135 also). Taxes were high on the farm, and he got behind in payment. So he left for America to earn more money by working on a farm in Pendleton, Oregon, for a man called Torgeson. He worked there three years, then returned to Norway when his daughter, Josefina, planned on marriage. When Ole returned to Norway, he must have convinced them all to come to America, because Josefina married her fiance in Tacoma.

PREPARATION FOR EMIGRATION They auctioned off all their cows, which paid full fare for John and Lena. The rest of the children, Lars, Noe, Agnes, and Marie, came on half-fare.

The date of departure was May 23, 1905. She does not remember the name of the ship. They stayed with relatives at Lyngdal, and then sailed from Kristiansand. She remembered that she was attending a sewing school at Lyngdal when she received a letter from her mother telling of their intentions of immigrating to America. Lena really did not want to go.

Lena said her mother had a nervous breakdown three months after coming to America, because she had brought her children from a high standard of living to a low one. She describes the shanty they lived in upon arriving in

America.

It was very stormy at sea. The voyage took 11 days and Lena was seasick. Relates some incidents that happened aboard ship. The ship landed in New York, but she doesn't remember Ellis Island.

Lena only remembers the red plush seats on the train trip across country; they had lice on them. Tells about some foods, which they brought with them in a basket. Father met them at the station along with a church man. They moved into the shanty she spoke of before. She tells about her sister Josefina marrying Andal who was from Kristiansand. The wedding was in the Olivet Lutheran Church at 15th and K Streets in Tacoma, where her father had moved from Oregon. He worked at a car shop in South Tacoma.

SETTLING IN Lena became a mother's helper soon after her arrival in Tacoma. Also mentions a Norwegian family that she worked for as a baby-sitter. She was able to obtain this job because her sister's employer recommended her. Speaks about trying to learn the English language, but had a difficult time. She left the employ of these people when the Swedish cook, Hulda, left to get married. Lena said her sister, Josefina, was working at a laundry making \$2 a day. Lena's next job was with the Langlow family. She remembers staying there through two Christmases. A Mrs. Gunderson and Lena did the cooking. She describes the two pantries at this house. She then was encouraged by some Norwegian friends to go to Dawson, Alaska, where she could earn better wages. Her sister, Johanna, had preceded her.

Lena wanted to enter nurses training at St. Joseph's Hospital, but her friend, Sigrid, wanted Lena to accompany her to Dawson. They went together in 1909 traveling by boat. In Dawson a man named Adams came to see the girls and hired Sigrid to work in a bakery at \$75 a month plus board. Lena was hired at a laundry because one of the women workers took a temporary leave to obtain a divorce in Seattle. Lena's salary was \$5 a day. After the woman's return, Lena was kept on because she was an excellent worker.

Lena and Sigrid rented a small apartment. She returned to Tacoma for a visit in the fall of 1913 before the War broke out. Returning to Alaska, she worked in a bakery-restaurant having quit at the laundry. She worked 12 hours a day at \$75 a month in 1914.

Recalls hearing about the San Francisco earthquake at this bakery. Gives a narration about her work at the bakery. She worked for a total of 13 years before marriage.

MEETING SPOUSE AND FAMILY LIFE Lena met her husband, Conrad Silver, at a restaurant in Dawson in which she was working temporarily that summer. A Mrs. Ellingson had asked Lena's bakery employer to allow Lena to work for her in her restaurant's dining room just for the summer months. The bakery owner obliged. Conrad came into the restaurant accompanied by his cousin, Jens Olson. Lena tells about her first date with her future husband. Four friends, Lena, Jens, Conrad, and another girl, decided to double date on a boat ride. Lena thought her date was Jens, but it was Conrad who gave her candy. He brought an accordion along also. They continued dating afterwards. Conrad was born in Joppen (?), Sweden of a Swedish father and a Norwegian (Tronder) mother.

Lena tells about Canadian heads of state visiting the restaurant where she was employed. They were on tour of Canada. (This occurred after her marriage.)

**MARRIAGE** They planned to be married aboard a Canadian ship. Lena wanted to be married in American waters, so they boarded a barge for this purpose and were married by a Presbyterian judge (?). She wore a beautiful handmade, beaded dress for her wedding. When they returned to their ship at midnight, the Captain had a wedding feast prepared for them.

During the Alaska stay, Conrad worked at many jobs: on a dredge, cutting lumber, and as a policeman. She became pregnant with Lloyd while they lived in Dawson.

They returned to Tacoma, and Conrad got a job at Brown and Haley in the writing-advertising sector. He was paid less than what she had made in Dawson.

Here Lena explains about a bakery business that she had in Dawson for a while before marriage.

Conrad quit work at Brown and Haley, and got a job at the Shell Company for \$200 a month. He was a very handsome man with a likeable personality. Seemed to be easy for him to get jobs. From the Shell Co. he worked for a big sign company

Times were financially bad, so Lena took in boarders and also patients to care for. Lena couldn't get any money from Conrad. He had told her before marriage that he could make money, but he couldn't handle it.

**CHILDREN** They had three children: Lloyd, Ardell Geraldine, and Dexter. The boys put themselves through college and graduated; she simply didn't have any money to help them. Ardell went to business college. Lloyd worked for Day's Clothing for seven years and then as a commercial artist for Poole's Seed and Nursery.

Conrad died on March 25, 1983.

Lena tells about the time when she and Conrad decided to move to Seattle; Lloyd was about seven years old. Conrad was fired from his Tacoma job. Got another job with PSQ in Seattle. He stayed in Seattle during the week and came home on Saturday. But she didn't see any of his pay. He'd borrow ahead from people and then use his paycheck to pay back all his loans. Tells about how her husband was a spendthrift and about some of the jobs he held. She decided to take care of patients again to make ends meet. Tells in detail about how she managed this. Tells a story about one particular patient.

**MISCELLANEOUS** Lena attended church as much as possible. The children went to Sunday school at a Pentecostal church with her parents. They were baptized and confirmed in Central Lutheran Church by Pastor Hoff

(?).

She never returned to Norway; too busy and no money. She built a house with the extra money she acquired.

She prepared traditional Norwegian foods in the home. Her children still do this in their own homes.

Lena adds that after the children were in school, she returned to work at a laundry for 10 years.

**SPEAKING NORWEGIAN** She says a few phrases in Norwegian: 'jeg kan still snakke norsk'. Tells about the old church and its pastor in Kristiansand, Norway.

Tells about one of her mother's relatives, Coral Steinhausen (?), that came from Norway and attended Pacific Lutheran College for five months. Although this cousin offered to pay Lena room and board for staying at her house, Lena refused to accept it saying she was the first relative from Norway who had visited her.

Conrad went to CA and never had enough money to return. She didn't send him any money because she knew he'd just spend it. She didn't ask him for money in the 12 years he was in CA; but she did quit writing to him. He phoned after 12 years. Lena tells about the conversation she and the children had with him. Then she tells about the subsequent happenings of her wayward husband — a sad, lengthy story.

Conrad died in 1983 in an Arizona rest home. He had brother and relatives there.

Lena states there were no nursing homes in Tacoma when she started hers. Relates at length about the history of her nursing home (patients in her home) and stories of some of the patients. In order to acquire patients, Lena put her name on a nursing registry and had doctors call her about patients that required home nursing care. She began this business in 1929, and because of it, managed to keep her home during the Depression while folks around her lost their homes.

At the time of this interview, Lena had suffered a broken hip and had been confined to a wheel chair for seven months.

She ended the interview recalling how she had to pick berries to support herself and her three children after Conrad had left for the Seattle job.