

Randi Kirkemo, maiden name is Nilsen. Born January 1, 1910 in Larvik, Norway. This city is south of Oslo.

PARENTS Dina and Carl. Mother's maiden name was Halvorsen. Father was a sailor. Mother was a housewife. Father was gone for long periods of time. He left when Randi was four months old, she did not see him again until she came to the U.S. in 1922, 12 years old. He went all over the world. Mother was a single parent.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Borghild, Margit, and Rolf.

GRANDPARENTS Barely remember any, just paternal grandfather who was working in a glass factory in Larvik.

LARVIK CHILDHOOD HOME 20,000 people. Had a big mill. Railroad met there so there were many doings. Was also a port there so many boats came in. Lumber mill. Lived in a big apartment, belonged to the mill. Those that worked at the mill lived there. Nice neighbors.

Mother worked. At Christmas she made julekake for various people. Helped people when they had babies.

SCHOOL Started at age 6. School in the neighborhood until fourth grade then went to the big school in town until seventh grade.

CHILDHOOD ACTIVITIES Swimming in the summer, skied, and skated in the winter. Sometimes the whole fjord froze. Church activities.

CHRISTMAS Baking, brother cut all the wood. Went to church at 5 o'clock. Brother went out and got the tree, mother decorated it. Children could not look at it until it was all done. Decorated with baskets, nuts, candy, oranges and candles that you lit. Danced around the tree on Christmas Eve. Mentions songs that they sang around the tree. Randi still makes the julekake that her mother used to make. Mother made good fattigmand, she describes this.

FOLK BELIEFS Mother believed in the Julenissen. Would put out mush for them on Christmas Eve. Mother said that she had seen one when she was little girl.

Father would write to the family and send them things.

REASON FOR COMING TO THE U.S. Came to the U.S. because her father had been writing to his wife. He was still in the U.S. He was in San Francisco and came to Seattle on an oil tanker for Standard Oil. He worked for them until he retired.

PLANS FOR COMING OVER Father wrote and said he would send money. Remembers packing, filling a big wooden box. Planned for a permanent move.

THINGS BROUGHT OVER Clock that had been a wedding present. Bedding, dyne (down comforter), pillows, figurines, clothes. Margit, mother, and Randi came first.

Left Norway July 1922. Left Larvik the 22nd, went to Oslo and stayed there with friends until the boat left. Went on the Stavangerfjord.

Felt sad about leaving friends. Excited about leaving at the same time.

BOAT TRIP Nice ship. Lots of good food, four meals a day. Four people stayed in a cabin. A big storm came up, many were sick. Took ten days.

LANDING IN NEW YORK Remembers getting peaches from a friend, had never seen them before. Did not like the fuzzy peeling.

ELLIS ISLAND 'Quite an experience.' They put all kinds of cards up. Did not know what they dais. Had to pay so much for head tax. Went through a line for the doctor. The lady who had been with them in their cabin did not make it through. Had lots of things to carry.

FIRST IMPRESSION Had little boxes prepared for them with sandwiches. No butter on sandwiches; mother said 'Don't they eve have butter in America?' Coffee was sweet here.

Took the ferry to the train station.

TRAIN TRIP Did not speak any English. Wasn't easy to manage. Couldn't understand what the man in the train station said.

Tells a story about the first time she saw a black person, he was the porter on the train.

Stopped in St. Paul, Minnesota, Randi's aunt lived in Clear Lake, Wisconsin. She was supposed to meet them. She did not know what time they would get in; she had been meeting trains for two days. She was there when they arrived. There were people there to help the immigrants. A Scandinavian man helped them.

Visited in Clear Lake for a week to ten days. Comments on the tall corn.

Tells about the first time they had ice cream in Chicago. This was a real treat. Mentions her experience in bakery.

ARRIVED IN SEATTLE Were tired when they arrived. There were loggers on one train, they played craps all night long.

Train trip from Chicago to Seattle took four days. Met father in Seattle. Describes this.

Father had bought a house in West Seattle before they came so they moved right in. Had to wait for their big box to arrive as it was shipped separately.

Father worked on a boat in the Sound for Standard Oil. In West Seattle, Pigeon Hill was all Scandinavians. Spoke mostly Norwegian. Mother never really learned to speak English.

SCHOOL Went to school in September, put her in the first grade. This hurt her feelings. They did it so she could get adjusted. The teacher could speak Swedish. Quickly moved up the grades until she made it to the grade she had been in when she had left Norway.

IMPRESSIONS OF SEATTLE At first she thought there was nothing but telephone poles. Loved it, so much like Norway, water and trees. Had a lot of friends from Larvik that lived there.

MOST DIFFICULT THING Language. Could not express yourself. Learned to say wieners, had these often.

MOST EXCITING THING Lonely at first. Got letters from Norway and would cry. Hard for her when she was with the little kids in school.

MEETING SPOUSE She was 16 when she first met her husband. He was from Tacoma. They went together for three years. George Kirkemo. He came from Horten, Norway not far from Larvik. His name was Johansen, but he did not like that name so he changed it to Kirkemo, the name of his place, when he had first come to the U.S., means a place near the church.

Went to West Seattle High School and took typing. Got a part-time job in an office at a school. Quit when she was a junior because she knew she was going to get married. Married when she was 19.

MEETING HUSBAND Oldest sister helped them get together.

WEDDING Married in a Methodist church in West Seattle. Had Norwegian food. Lutheran church there was so small.

CHURCH Went good when they got to Seattle. Pastor Nesvig's church. Took the streetcar. Church was important to the immigrants. Had a lot of doings like when the fishermen came home. It made them feel at home.

Came to Tacoma after married in 1929. Returned to Seattle often for Scandinavian functions.

MAY 17TH IN SEATTLE Had a big celebration at the Masonic Temple and then at the Civic Center. This day was special in Seattle. Chorus sang. August Warner was the leader of this group. Had a dance where they danced all the Scandinavian dances. Still celebrate this day in some way.

Husband worked in lumber, in a door factory. Husband off for one year during the Depression. He made about \$200 dollars. He worked for the WPA, the park.

DAUGHTER Daughter was born during the Depression. Diane lives in Puyallup. She is keeping up the Norwegian heritage. She could only speak this when she was growing up. She was four when she began learning English. Not active in Norwegian clubs.

CHURCH Went to Central when it was where the Court House is. Then went to Covenant Church. Joined Central Lutheran in 1958.

TRIPS TO NORWAY June 1963, went first to England, then Paris. Were supposed to go to Amsterdam but did not make the connection. Went to Copenhagen then to Oslo. Met by George's brother and wife. They stayed with them for about two and half months.

Saw her girlfriends in Larvik. They had a party for her at the Grand Hotel in Larvik. This was an exciting time. They were surprised that she could still speak Norwegian so well. She has always spoken Norwegian a lot at home with her husband.

Fun to be in Larvik after many years. Recognized many people. Still have cousins in Larvik.

KEEPSAKES Still have pictures and silver.

Speaks Norwegian, says the Table Grace.

NORWEGIAN HERITAGE Proud of it. Norway is a beautiful country. They are honest and proud people. Glad to be in America.