

Norway Arneberg Steiro. Born on November 22, 1896 in Sortland, Norway. In northern Norway, 200 miles from the Arctic Circle. Sortland is on an island off Narvik.

PARENTS: Peder Hansen Steiro. Steiro was the name of the family farm. His mother's name is Oline Alette Marie Pederson.

Father was a farmer and did commercial fishing. He had his own boat.

LIFE AS A FISHERMAN: A rough life. Went to Lofoten after New Years and came back the first of April. Went back to Finnmark to fish. Did farm chores during the summer. In the fall they did herring fishing. Father was often away from home. Fishing was a dangerous occupation.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Ten in the family. Hilda, Hilmar, Jens, Gustav, Peder, Hilmar, Karen, Adelhud, Geneva, and Norwall. Three first children died when they were very young. Died of a diphtheria epidemic.

GRANDPARENTS: Paternal grandmother lived with them for a while. She was a tall, stately capable woman. Her husband was a farmer and a fisherman. He died when Norwall's father was one year old. Died at sea.

NAME: Steiro is the name of the place in Norway. No specific meaning for the word.

CHILDHOOD HOME: White painted farmhouse. 5-6 blocks from the water. Had a few cattle and a horse. Helped his mother with the farm when his father was gone.

GOOD PARENTS: Norwall's parents helped others who were in need. It was common in Sortland for people to help each other. Town had 2-3,000 people. Helped each other by sharing food or if they needed help with work on their farms.

Father built the house. The land was good farming, good soil, close to the water.

Grew hay, potatoes, and vegetables. The summers were short.

Mother took care of the place when father was gone. Milked and fed the cows. Took care of the family. Mother had church service at home in the winters when the weather was bad.

SKIING: They were raised on skis. Started when they were 4-5 years old. Made their own skis. The skis grew as you grew. Made of fir or pine.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES: Family closeness. They had two girls in the family who were not blood related. One was an orphan and the other was from a poor family.

Norwall was 25 when he left Norway.

SCHOOLING: Went to grade school through the 8th grade. School was a two-room log cabin. Had three teachers the time he went to school.

Took some correspondence courses after grade school. Business and bookkeeping courses.

After school Norwall went to work in a machine shop, 2-3 miles from school. Worked there for one year. Paid one krone a day, one U.S. quarter.

Worked on a fishing steamer day and night. He was the fireman and engineer.

Norwall was called into service during WWII. This caused him to quit engineering. He was trained for the service in Narvik. Was on the border patrol between Sweden and Norway for one year.

After the war he was a commercial fisherman on the same boat he had been on before. He got his certificate when he was 21 years old.

Brother Peder was in the U.S. for 15 years when he wrote Norwall's father thinking it was a possibility for Norwall to come to the U.S. Peder was in the contracting business in the U.S. Peder and another uncle were the only two from the family who were in the U.S.

Brother went to the U.S. because he did not like fishing in Norway and wanted to do carpentry. Uncle was already established in the U.S.

Lots of people were going to the U.S. Hard times in Norway.

Norwall had never thought of going to the U.S. before his brother wrote in April 1923. he went in June 1923. He discussed it with his family and wife before going. Norwall talks about the circumstances leading up to his

departure to the U.S. Doors closed to him in Norway. Seemed like he was supposed to go as he looks at it now.

MET WIFE: She was the sister of his brother's wife. She took care of her sister when she had her first child. Married in Steiro, 1922. Her name Petra Pederson. Wife came to the U.S., too.

Norwall had heard of Tacoma before he came. Did not have any clear ideas about it. Uncle's brother-in-law was here then his uncle, then his brother, and finally Norwall came.

CHRISTMAS: Baking. Everything special that could be afforded. Had a Christmas tree. House was very clean. Women worked preparing for holidays. Men were fishing until a few days before Christmas.

CHRISTMAS EVE: All business stopped at 5pm. Church bells chimed for one hour. Christmas Eve is a special time in Norway. Gift exchange.

CHRISTMAS TREE: Made decorations. Had small candles on the tree and in the window.

Norwall tells about one Christmas the family did not give each other gifts but gave those in the town who were having hard times gifts. This was the best Christmas ever.

CHRISTMAS FOOD: Cookies, grisesylte, lutefisk, meat roast which was prepared in the fall.

Norwall did not have set places when he came to the U.S. His brother had a boat here but sold it before Norwall came.

BEFORE LEAVING NORWAY: Had to get a ticket, visa. Only a certain number of people could emigrate each month. U.S. restrictions got stricter every year. They were the last ones to come over in 1923. Packed wedding presents and other things in two trunks.

Took boat from Sortland to Bergen. Stavangerfjord from Bergen to New York.

PARENTS' FEELINGS ABOUT HIM LEAVING: They saw that there was not much future in Norway at that time.

DAY THAT NORWALL LEFT: Tried to be brave, it was hard to say good-bye to his mother and father. Mother sent prayers with him as she could not go.

TRIP OVER: Waited 2-3 days in Bergen before boarding. Stavangerfjord was a good sea boat. Had a good trip. 200-300 people ate in the dining room.

There were different classes on the boat, first, tourist, *etc.* Ticket about 700-800 kroner. About \$150 for both tickets.

Mostly Scandinavians on the boat. One German on board. Six from Sortland came over together.

One friend, Roy Pederson who came over with Norwall died recently. They had worked together for 50 years.

Took 7-8 days to get from Bergen to U.S. Took 21 days to get from Sortland to Tacoma.

Herded like sheep in New York at Ellis Island. Went through an examination. Had to have a certain amount of money, about 35 kroner each. Some people were detained who did not have enough money. They were put in different rooms Ellis Island. Put chalk marks on clothes. This gave one a funny feeling.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Could see the Statue of Liberty and in the dense fog could see the skyscrapers.

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES: Caused some problems. Had an English-Norwegian dictionary.

Taken to the train station. Went to Chicago and changed trains there to go out west. Took a sleeper from Chicago to the west. Describes some difficulty he had with the conductor taking his ticket. Hard to communicate.

TRIP ACROSS THE U.S.: Could not understand the other passengers. Took 3-4 days. Ordered some food, had some with him. There was a kitchen on the train where they could cook.

Met by his brother at the train depot at 26th and 'D' in Tacoma. Train had come through Seattle.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF TACOMA: Things did not look as good as he had anticipated. Geographically this area is a lot like Norway.

Got a job in Puyallup building a school. He never thought he would be a carpenter. This was hard work.

Language different was hard at first. Began night school after he came to Tacoma.

There was a close-knit Norwegian community. At Bethlehem Lutheran Church they spoke Norwegian until 1928-1929. Attended church when he first arrived. Is still a member.

Bought land after a few months of work. Bought two lots. Built a garage first and then built a house in 1927.

CHILDREN: Orna Kristina attended PLU. Died in 1957. Pauline lives on N. 13th and Jackson in Tacoma. First child was born at St. Joe's.

Felt at home in Tacoma after one year.

'If it wasn't for my pride and money I would have gone home right away.' He was frustrated at times because of the language. There was some prejudice against his nationality. Norwall was called 'herringchoker.'

Most difficult thing about coming to the U.S. was the language. He went to night school for a while.

CITIZENSHIP: Became a citizen in 1928.

Oldest daughter spoke Norwegian. Took it at school. They spoke it at home.

Norwall remarried Mathilda Boe. She was born in Wisconsin and raised in Texas. Went to school at St. Olaf and Columbia University in New York. She came to Tacoma as a parish worker. They met at church.

GOOD THINGS ABOUT COMING TO AMERICA: Could see that there were opportunities to be had. The people were friendly.

Friends mostly Norwegians who spoke the language.

SOCIAL LIFE: Mostly through church. A member of Sons of Norway and Nordlandslaget. People in this came from the northern part of Norway.

Started working for his brother one month after he arrived in Tacoma. He built a lot of schools. List some of the places they built.

Brother had a big building company called Steiro-Hanson. Hanson was a neighbor in the old country.

In the late 1930s Norwall started for himself. Called the Steiro Company. Had a few people working for him.

Worked by himself until WWII. Then it got hard to get materials to build. Norwall's brother got priorities on materials because he worked for the government. Norwall went back to work for his brother.

Norwall helped build Christ the King, Trinity, Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup, Zion Lutheran in Tacoma and Lutheran Memorial.

ACTIVE IN CHURCH LIFE: Substitute Sunday school teacher. Held different offices, treasurer, deacon, board of trustees, president of the congregation. Was president of the Lutheran Welfare for 18 years. This place helped out those in financial need.

CHURCH LIFE: Church life is important. 'Christ is important to me.' Parents were important in influencing him.

There was an architect who drew up plans for the churches. Bethlehem Lutheran was built in 1948. Zion Lutheran in 1954. Christ the King in 1957. Good Samaritan in 1950-1951. Norwall retired 5 years ago. His business is still going.

WORKING DAYS: Did not have much money to build. Sought out donations to get what they needed. Competition worse now in the building industry.

SONS OF NORWAY: Not that active because he did not have a car and was busy raising a family. Did not like the drinking that went on in the group.

There were some differences between those who drank and those who did not.

TRIPS BACK TO NORWAY: 1952 and 1968. First trip took the Oslofjord to Bergen and then train to Trondheim, up to Sortland. Flew home. Hometown was the same as when he left. Still has contact with relatives in Norway.

NORWAY TODAY: Money seems to be plentiful. Top living conditions. People have quit going to church.

Nephews live on the home place in Sortland, Arneberg and Karl, sons of his brother, Hilmar.

Still speaks some Norwegian. Can write in Norwegian.

SPEAKS NORWEGIAN: Says a Table Prayer and the Lords Prayer.

KEEPSAKES FROM NORWAY: Still have some.

Was an act of God that led him to America, every door in Norway was closed.

Proud to be a Norwegian. Honesty of the Norwegians and religion is important to them.

Norwall did his best he was able to in America. He did not have an education to be a teacher, preacher, or doctor but he built schools, churches, and hospitals.