

Svanhild Johanne Knutsen Sortland. Born in Haugesund, Norway on February 2, 1913. This is close to Bergen.

PARENTS Martin Knutsen and Jenny Foerre. When Svanhild was 5 years old her parents moved to Bømlo, an island outside of Bergen. Sortland is a fishing village. Lykling was the district she lived in. 5-6,000 people lived on the island. Mostly fishing and small farms on the islands.

FATHER Father was a fisherman. Fished all seasons. He had his own boat and was sailing along the coast before Svanhild was born. Lykling was her father's home place.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Ten in the family, some died so there was never more than eight.

CHILDHOOD HOUSE 3-4 rooms, kitchen. Mother was a seamstress. Did sewing for her family and others. Children all had their own chores to do. Helped mother with sewing projects.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Brothers went with her father on the boat, later went sailing. Magne died when 23 of pneumonia. Olaf was a sailor, steward on a ship. He died in 1975. Johannes was lost during the war. Peder Johannes worked for a marina.

SISTERS Magde has a grocery store close to Haugesund. There was no money to go to school. Many Norwegians worked in stores. Two sisters are alive and married in Norway. Svanhild, the only one to settle in America. Five brothers and five sisters. Her sisters are all married two have died.

Sister married to Roekness and lives in Osterøy, north of Bergen. Gina Kalavik, her other sister, lives near Haugesund.

Mother was from Haugesund.

GRANDPARENTS Maternal grandparents were Johannes Førre and Sønniva Førre. Paternal grandparents were Godskalk Knutsen and Martha. Godskalk is a Scottish name. They were all fishing people. Good living at the time. Always fishing.

Sold fish to big cities. Shipped much to France, England, and Germany. Dried fish went to Italy. A big market for fish at this time. Father first went to sea when he was fourteen and half years old on a seilskute, which had no motor.

During the depression fishing was a good job. After the war people got more money, more education.

Things so different now in Norway. Svanhild will never get used to the system in Norway again. ‘Like night and day.’ People do not worry about anything anymore, ‘taken care of from cradle to grave.’

Old people understand the changes better because they lived before and after the war. The young people do not know what it was like before the war.

Was happy as a child. Did not have to know anything different. Family closeness important. Worked together and helped each other out. After 16-17 years old went out of house to work and live.

Always had lots of fish and mother baked bread. ‘Day went day by day,’ always healthy. 6-10 children were in many families. Children enjoyed playing with one another, good times. People were peaceful, knew each other. Glad she grew up when she did. Good parents.

Schoolhouse was close.

CHRISTMAS Fish popular for holidays, cod. Christmas Eve had rissengroet, meatballs. Christmas Day had roast, pork, fruit pudding, julebrød, lefse, and cookies.

CHRISTMAS EVE Went to church at 5pm. Could hear the church bells ring at 5-6 in the country and city. They rang in the holidays. Not lots of presents.

CHRISTMAS DAY Could not run around much. Sang around the Christmas tree, played games with the family.

SECOND CHRISTMAS Julefest, held celebration in the prayer house. Barnefest for the children. Jultrefest went until January 20 days of Christmas.

Father would fish during the week, he was home on the weekends. He used to come home every night but the money situation caused him to work more. He was a carpenter on the boat.

Money has made a difference in Norway, things changed after the war.

TROLL STORIES Always heard stories in the evenings, a big deal for Svanhild. Always loved storybooks. Lots of eventyr. Did not believe in trolls but it was still scary.

After school and confirmation she went to town for work. Worked as a cook and maid in a home in Haugesund. Lived at this place. Did this until she was married. Worked at two different places in Haugesund in 12 years. During the war worked for her sister in the grocery store.

Met husband Erling when he was home on vacation from boat, they traveled to town together. Her brother worked on the same boat. He did fishing, gone for long periods of time. After the war she never knew if her husband was alive or not.

Married in Sortland church. Wore a long white silk dress. Small wedding. Not many couples could afford a honeymoon. Start building a home right away. Married in 1939.

War started, Erling went in December 1939. She moved back with her folks, lived with her sister and worked in the store.

Germans were all over Norway, took over everything. Searched houses looking for soldiers.

Worried about her brothers and husband. Very hard time.

People went to church during the war. Lots of meeting, missionaries. 96% were Lutheran missionaries. Mostly Lutheran in the country.

Communication with Erling done with a Red Cross telegram. Message was often old when you got it.

Erling joined the American Army in England after the war was over. He told Svanhild that he was going to America with the troops. He surprised her in Bergen before he left. He stayed in Norway for a month.

Plane crashed in Copenhagen, which put him in the hospital for a few days before he came to Norway.

Erling had planned to stay in America for year he wrote he wrote to Svanhild and asked if she would like to come to America for year. She could get a free trip to America on the war brides boat. Left Oslo with the group July 1946.

Svanhild ended up almost in the basement.

No cargo on the boat. Storm on the Atlantic. Svanhild ended up in the hospital because she was so sick from the

trip.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS Shocked, seemed wild. Helped to see other Norwegians around. Eight girls came over from the home place. Adjusted pretty easy to new things.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP Did not have to wait four years since her husband was in the army. Had to stay on her own. She lived in Ohio.

LEARNED THE LANGUAGE Interested to learn. Used her Norwegian and English Dictionary. People were very helpful. Her doctor could Norwegian. When her son was born she could read his little storybooks.

Svanhild worked in a restaurant in Tacoma for 10 years when her children were grown. Helped in the kitchen.

CHURCH Not real active. Helps as she can, Sunday school, *etc.*

ORGANIZATIONS Have not held an office. Is active in the Sons of Norway. Husband's schedule made it hard to attend meetings.

Children learned Norwegian. Son, Egil Arthur married Beverly Pearson. She is a violinist. He is a pastor. Was always a good child. Had a parish in San Antonio, Texas. Studied at Gonzaga in Spokane. They have two children, Christina and Corina Marie.

Daughter lives in Tacoma. She has a daughter and a son.

TRIPS BACK TO NORWAY Higher prices, new home, changes occur in many ways. More work since the war.

She remembers Norway the way it was. Young people expect more.

A new kind of people in Norway. They think and live differently. So many things that did not exist when Svanhild grew up.

FEELINGS ABOUT BEING NORWEGIAN Feels good about it. Does not know anything else.

TRADITIONS MAINTAINED Holidays, cooking, religion.

Svanhild learned to be a good person, learned religion in school. These things were also in the home.

Says the Norwegian Table Prayer.