

PERSONAL BACKGROUND Ola Martinus Mork was born in Volda, Norway, which is on the West Coast south of Å...lesund.

His parents were Petter and Ellen Mork. He was a farmer in the summertime and a fisherman in the winter. 'She [mother] was a slave in the family, I would say'. When Petter fished, she ran the farm, did the cooking, chores, wood chopping, *etc.* There were seven children in the family. The oldest boy, Peder, got the home place. Other siblings were Berte, Sivrina, Hans, Knut, Synneve. 'They are spread all over the country'. One sister married close to home, but another went to Oslo and a third far away also. One brother never married and lived close to home.

Ola remembers his grandfather who died when Ola was eight or nine years old. His grandmother lived until 1928 about the time he emigrated.

EMIGRATION Ola had to wait to get a permit for America. He traveled by boat to Halifax, and then took an emigration train through Canada and reached Vancouver in a week. He came to his uncle's place in Tacoma. Times were very poor in Norway, and one had to get out to make a living. He planned to stay for a few years, and then 'come back again — rich, of course. But it didn't turn out that way'. Ola was the only one in his family to get a permit and leave Norway.

He happened to arrive in Tacoma on a Sunday, and his uncle wasn't home. The traveler's aid had him sit and wait on a bench all day, and 'it was hot'. The aid kept phoning the uncle's house; he finally came home and picked up Ola in the evening. Ola had left Norway on June 20, 1928; the trip took about two and a half weeks.

SETTLING IN Ola stayed with his uncle and found a job with a sawmill; times were still good in 1928 and jobs were available. He began on the nightshift, but soon changed to the dayshift. Ola was only 18, but he managed the hard labor. His job was to handle lumber by pulling it with a chain. 'You pulled lumber during the day so hard, that you couldn't hardly eat in the evening. You were so sore all over the stomach'.

He stayed at the sawmill till the next fall, and then met a fisherman who encouraged him to try that. Ola felt he had seen enough fishing in the old country, but the fellow said fishing in America was different: 'You get your own bunk in the fishing boat, and they even have a cook and even toilets'. In Norway, the 'small' boats were 40 feet long with five or six men. The boat drifted along the coast with nets for herring in the cold winter. The men slept two in a bunk, only had boots-no shoes, had no ventilation, and no toilets. Fish sold for a low price, and the men weren't paid well.

OCCUPATION Ola began fishing in America the following spring [1929], and 'from there on, I could never get away from it'. The prices, not very good here either, dropped from seven to four cents a barrel per man. Later, around 1938, prices were good enough that he and some other fellows built their own boat. Then, his situation improved so that he was able to buy a second boat with the company. He worked with this company,.....?Fish Company, for 35 years. It operated mainly in Prince William Sound and Kodiak.

1 It was a tough life because he never was home. He spent six months in Alaska and four months in California

fishing sardines. He barely saw his kids for 15 years.

One difficulty in his early days of fishing was understanding the Norwegians from southern Norway. Another difficulty was the sawmill job: 'I worked so hard that I was counting the days until I could get out of there'. After that, fishing went pretty good. In the summers, his sons were able to accompany him, and they put themselves through the university with their wages.

He attended night school the first winter and learned a little English there. It was hard to learn English on the boat.

FAMILY Ola was married in 1933, and built a little house east of Parkland. They lived there until the war. Then he had to be on the water all the time except for two-three weeks of repair. They sold that house, and moved into Tacoma. After seven or eight years, the traffic became very bad, and they moved to Seattle where he kept the boats. They've lived in Seattle about 35 years. Erling, the oldest son, attended school in Tacoma and in Pullman. Harold went to high school in Seattle and also graduated from Pullman. Eleanor studied in Sweden for a while and finished in Pullman. Three grandsons were able to go with him fishing before he retired.

The Mork's belonged to churches in Parkland, Tacoma, and Seattle, but never were too active. They also belonged to a couple of Scandinavian lodges. They still speak Scandinavian, although they never taught the children. 'There was just enough difference between the Sweden and Norwegian so we took to English'.

RETURN TRIPS TO SCANDINAVIA They have returned to Scandinavia six times, and think it's changed through the years. They enjoyed the trips more when they were younger; they went during the winter and skated and skied. The language and people have also changed. Now there are a lot of Italians, Koreans, and Vietnamese on Karl Johan [Street] in Oslo. He feels that, there like here, too many different people are coming in, and there aren't enough jobs for everybody.

He and his wife both became citizens in 1935. He attended school under a Scot woman, McDonald, who thought Ola did very well and gave him a diploma. The examiner asked Ola a question 'right out of the book' figuring Ola had never read anything: 'Who's the law enforcement department in the state of Washington?' Ola was stuck and asked for the question to be repeated to gain thinking time. He remembered the diploma and the department that issued it, and gave that as the answer. The examiner said, 'That's good enough'.

SCHOOL IN NORWAY He attended school three days a week until he was 13. Then he graduated and was confirmed. 'That's all the schooling I got'. It was six years worth in a small school with only a few kids.

There was snow and ice all winter long, and they skated, skied, hunted and trapped for birds. When they were kids, they did a little fishing in the fjord and sold the fish in town for the 'pitiful' price of six or seven cents for a big fish. It was only the poor people that fished back then; the rich people could afford meat. When he was 14, he began fishing.

His family ate mostly porridge [oatmeal mush], fish and potatoes. They had one pig a year, and when butchered, it was 'salted good and heavy'. This meat was used mostly for soup. At Christmas there was a lot of food like lefse and pastry; there was always plenty of milk and cream to make homemade food from scratch. But there was no money to buy anything. The Christmas tree wasn't put up until Christmas Eve. The kids couldn't go in before they finished milking and chores. On Christmas Eve they had a white mush with sugar, cinnamon and butter. Early on Christmas morning, they went to and came back from church in darkness; there was little light until 11 am. There was no visiting until the second or third day of Christmas.

CHURCH IN NORWAY When small, the children went with the family, usually Dad, because Mother had to stay home and work. The kids couldn't say 'boo — had to sit like a statue in church'. When they were older and didn't go to church, they couldn't do anything at home until church was over. Some people had to row across the bay to attend church. Ola and others, when they were nearly grown, would 'borrow' their boats to sail in the fjord, making sure the boats were returned before people finished church.

When he first arrived in America, he stayed home a lot. Then he attended night school and met Helen. He became acquainted with other people and attended Scandinavian lodges. He liked the country more as he learned the language. 'By the time I'd been here two years, well, I was stuck in the country. There wasn't anything like going back'.

He and Helen were married in 1933. They returned to Scandinavia in 1938, having been here for nine years and having established their own home. 'There was no question at all that we were going back'. Ola's father offered him half of the farm if he returned, but Ola knew he couldn't make a decent living with a big farm, much less half of a small one.

To come ashore in Halifax, one needed 25 dollars. Some were broke when they reached Vancouver. He had a few dollars left after buying food. Tells a story about fellow passengers waiting at the depot to be picked up by cannery or logging businesses who knew how to get cheap, healthy laborers in need of money.