

FAMILY BACKGROUND Born Wilhemina Marie Strom on April 4, 1883 in Oslo, Norway. She will celebrate her 100th birthday in a few months.

PARENTS Her father was Olaf Andreas Strom born in Oslo, and her mother Marie Sahlgaard was born in Kongsberg. Olaf was in business for himself making clothing, coats, dresses, *etc.* Mother stayed home with the seven children. Both parents died young, her father at 55 from pneumonia and her mother from TB at 39. The youngest child was five. Mina is now the only family member alive.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Mina was nine years old when her mother died and 13 when her father died. The oldest sister Johanna kept the house and family and also worked for the telephone company. Eventually her brother Olaf and sister Henrietta Rebecca emigrated to America, and Mina and her other sister Inga Kristine went to Stockholm, Sweden. Mina was a little older then (about 16). They went to and stayed at one of her mother's friends. Mina was in Stockholm for nine years, working for the telephone company.

SCHOOL She attended school in Oslo and finished high school.

GRANDPARENTS Mina's paternal grandfather was a minister, pastor around different parts of Norway. Her maternal grandfather was a civil engineer for a silver mine in Kongsberg (Buskerud), Norway. She remembers visiting with her grandparents, but she was pretty little.

FAMILY HOME They lived in an apartment in Oslo. Christmas was lots of fun and celebrated for two weeks. The tree was decorated by older people, but she remembers dancing and singing around the trees at various parties.

Christmas food included some kaker, sandbakkels, cookies, pork or lamb roast, lutefisk, and rommegr t. There were candles on the tree and one had to be careful. She doesn't remember any fires; they didn't have trouble. Presents were opened on Christmas eve. Sometimes on Christmas Day, they went out to dinner at the relatives.

EMIGRATION When she finished high school in 1900, she left for Sweden. She immigrated to America in 1909 directly from Stockholm. Her sister Inga was married and living in Sweden. Her brother and sister were already in America; Henrietta had kept in contact with Mina all this time. So Mina packed her small trunk and sailed on Oskar II in March 1909 at the age of 26. (She arrived in Chicago at her brother's on April 6; after visiting awhile, she went to Henrietta's place in Omaha, Nebraska.

THE TRIP OVER The boat trip was pretty stormy; she was sick two-three days. She traveled alone but got acquainted with her cabin mate - who was sick, too. Later on, they had some fun, dancing in the evenings. The trip took eight days and cost \$500, which her sister had sent her.

IN NEW YORK A lady met them and showed them to the hotel where they stayed overnight. New York was a big place with a lot of tall buildings, but she didn't sightsee because she was afraid to walk around at night. The same

lady helped her board the Chicago train. The trip took two days. She knew a little German and English from school, so language wasn't a total problem.

WORK After a few days in Chicago she left for Omaha. Her sister was married (Mr. Pennell?), and they ran a millinery store. Mina lived with them and worked in the store making hats. She had some experience in hat making while attending school. She doesn't remember how much she was paid, but she liked it there.

MARRIAGE Mina knew her husband from Norway. Bernhard Borresen lived outside of Oslo and worked on steamers all around the world. When he tired of that, he went into fishing. They had corresponded several times, and she moved to Seattle - where he'd been for several years - to marry him in 1917(?) at the age of 35. She got off the train; they stopped at a building in downtown Seattle where they were married in a minister's office with two witnesses present. After the wedding, they went to their apartment and she cooked a dinner. 'Very interesting day', she quips. But that was okay. She was tired after the three-day train trip from Chicago, although she wasn't exactly expecting to be married right away.

(Brothers and sisters. There were seven children in the Strom family: Johanna, Henrietta, Inga, Olaf, Mina, and two younger brothers that died. Olaf Andreas was a brick mason in Chicago. Inga Kristine married and lived in Sweden. Johanna died at 21 years of age - of pneumonia she thinks. Henrietta immigrated to America, followed by Mina.)

FAMILY LIFE After marriage she did not work outside the home. They had a big house and yard with a lot of chickens. Her husband was gone fishing during the summer, so she was responsible for the home and her son, Roy Bernhard, who was born in 1919. 'I was an old woman when I had the boy!' she says. Roy first moved to Oregon when he got work in Astoria. He now lives in Salem, having retired five years ago from the Internal Revenue Service. He has two boys: one is a civil engineer building bridges in Oregon and the other works with televisions. All her family including the eight great-grandchildren live in Oregon, one grandson in Beaverton and one in Sweet Home.

Their second home, after the big house, was on 85th St, but that area was bought up for the freeway, so they moved to Ballard on 6th Ave. and 66th St. That's where they were living when her husband passed away at over age 80. He was a cook on fishing boats to Alaska and made out 'so-so'. The profits from fish sales were split equally amongst the crew. They fished from early spring to late fall; he was home only in the wintertime.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES They attended a Lutheran church, but didn't belong to any Scandinavian organizations. When Roy was in school, she attended PTA. But, she simply had plenty to do at home with the garden, chickens, eggs, *etc.*

NORWEGIAN TRADITIONS AND HERITAGE She has retained some of this, but not too much. She cooked both American and Norwegian foods, like the Christmas cookies, cabbage rolls, lutefisk, and lots of fresh fish. On Christmas Eve they had lutefisk and risengrynsgrøt. She cooked a lot of chicken, of course. She butchered the chickens but didn't particularly like chopping the heads off.

RETURN TRIP TO NORWAY She's never been back; nobody was left there.

ON BEING NORWEGIAN It means nothing special to be Norwegian. She's more American than Norwegian because she's lived longer here. Of course she's had Norwegian friends here (at the Home) like Mrs. Strand who recently died one week before her 102nd birthday. She was from the northern part of Norway and the last one in Mina's crowd.

Mina moved to the Home in 1970, 12 years ago. After her husband died, she sold the house in Ballard and moved to an apartment on Phinney Ridge. She visited a friend at the Foss Home, liked it, and moved in. She didn't move to Salem because the nursing homes weren't too good and also she didn't want to poach off her son and his family.

SPEAKING NORWEGIAN She taught Roy a few words, but he complained she didn't teach him enough. Mina tells about Oslo in Norwegian, how it probably has changed: 'Jeg ville ikke kjenne det igjen'.

OTHER MEMORIES After working in Omaha, she moved to Chicago, lived with her brother, and worked at a nursing home before coming to Seattle. Chicago was a big place, but okay. Both it and Omaha were cold with snow, but no worse than Norway. The climate is better in Seattle, but there's more rain. Certain parts of Washington look like Norway.

In Omaha there weren't too many Norwegians. Both she and her sister avoided them anyhow. Her sister Henrietta was a piano teacher, having studied piano in Norway and one year in Germany. Before marriage, she attended college in the Dakotas and taught piano at the college. She was really quite good - played concerts.

Even though America was different - for example, the food and language - Mina didn't feel too awkward. She simply got on with living.

THE FOSS HOME Mina talks about the Home, how she adjusted, likes it and engages in the activities. She used to do knitting and crocheting for the Home. She learned to knit in school in Norway, and has made over 200 round pillows, which have been sold at the bazaars. But her eyes are too poor now.

She has a few keepsakes from Norway, her mother's things like a few cups, embroideries, *etc.*

She was here in America during both World Wars, but not working then. Her husband had jobs most of that time, although the fish prices were real low some years.

CHANGES IN SEATTLE Seattle was a small village with little buildings when she first came in 1917. It's changed a lot. The Scandinavians lived out in Ballard.