

Sigrid Josephine Kasen Oral History Interview, 1983

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Kasen, Sigrid Josephine
Title	Sigrid Josephine Kasen Oral History Interview
Dates	1983 (inclusive) 1983 1983
Quantity	3 file folders 2 photographs 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t224
Summary	An oral history interview with Sigrid Josephine Kasen, a Finnish immigrant.
Repository	Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections Archives and Special Collections Pacific Lutheran University 12180 Park Avenue South Tacoma, Washington 98447 Telephone: 253-535-7586 Fax: 253-535-7315 archives@plu.edu
Access Restrictions	The oral history collection is open to all users.
Additional Reference Guides	
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Sigrid Kasen was born on November 15, 1884 in Sideby, Finland, which is a Swedish community on the West Coast of Finland. Her parents were Matt Lammenpaa and Sophie R nnkvist, and Sigrid had three younger siblings: Hilma, Hilding, and John. Sigrid's mother passed away when Sigrid was twelve, and she helped her father raise the other children. In Sideby, Sigrid attended a Swedish school and church, and her family spoke Swedish in their home. Sigrid understands Finnish but cannot converse in it. In 1909, Sigrid immigrated to the United States due to curiosity and lack of work for young girls in Finland. She knew someone in Fitchburg, Massachusetts and went there first. After one winter in Massachusetts, she moved to San Francisco, California and did housework. While living there, she met her husband, Alfred Kasen. Alfred was also from Finland and did carpentry work. After they were married, Sigrid and Alfred moved to Seattle, Washington, and they had five children: Anna, Astrid, Edith, Ruth, and Melvin. Sigrid has returned to Finland once and her heritage is very important to her. Nevertheless, she is very glad she came to America.

Lineage

Full Name: Sigrid Josephine Mattson Kasen. Maiden Name: Sigrid Josephine Mattson. Father: Matt Lammenpaa. Mother: Sophie RÅŕnnkvist. Brothers and Sisters: Hilma Lammenpaa, Hilding Lammenpaa, John Lammenpaa. Spouse: Alfred Kasen. Children: Anna Kasen, Astrid Kasen, Edith Kasen, Ruth Kasen, Melvin Kasen.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Sigrid Kasen on January 18, 1983 at Foss Home in Seattle, Washington. It provides information on family background, emigration, employment, marriage and family, and heritage. Also available are two photographs of Sigrid at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

The Oral History collection project was started during an experimental course on Scandinavian Women in the Pacific Northwest. Students in the course were encouraged to interview women and learn about their experiences as immigrants to the United States. The project was continued and expanded with support from the president's office and by grants from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, from the Joel E. Ferris Foundation and the Norwegian Emigration Fund of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project was directed by Dr. Janet E. Rasmussen. The collection was transferred to the Archives and Special Collections Department.

Acquisition Information

Related Materials

To search and view Pacific Lutheran University's digitized images, visit our [Digital Assets Website](#)

Processing Note

The interview was conducted by Inger Nygaard Carr using a cassette recorder. A research copy was also prepared from the original. To further preserve the content of the interview, it is now being transferred to compact disc. We deliberately did not transcribe the entire interview because we want the researchers to listen to the interviewee's own voice. The transcription index highlights important aspects of the interview and the tape counter numbers noted on the Partial Interview Transcription are meant as approximate finding guides and refer to the location of a subject on the cassette/CD. The recording quality is good

The collection was transcribed by Mary Sue Gee, Julie Peterson and Becky Husby.

Bibliography

Rasmussen, Janet Elaine. *New Land New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest* Tacoma, Washington University of Washington Press 1993

Detailed Description of the Collection

The partial interview transcription highlights important aspects of the interview. Numbers may be used as guides to important subjects. Two numbers separated by a slash indicate that the first number is for cassette and the second for CD

Container(s)	Description
Cassette	
224, side 1	046: Sigrid Josephine Mattson Kasen. Born November 15, 1884 in Sideby, Finland. Sideby is a Swedish community on the west coast of Finland between Kristinestad and Bjoerneborg (Pori) in the province of Vasa Lan.
224, side 1	116: PARENTS Matt Lammenpaa and Sophie Ronkvist. She tells why her father had a Finnish name. Hard times in Finland during the late 19th century. Many Finnish speaking people came down from the north looking for food and work in the Swedish speaking villages along the coast. He married and settled in the town where his wife was from. He fished in the summer. Did whatever he could in the winter.
224, side 1	203: BROTHERS & SISTERS Mother died when Sigrid was 12 years old. She, her father, and her grandmother raised her 3 younger brothers and sisters. Hilma was 8, Hilding was 5, and John was almost 2 when their mother died.
224, side 1	246: GRANDPARENTS Remembers maternal grandmother, but doesn't remember her name. Paternal grandmother lived to be quite old, but she lived in Finnish speaking Finland.
224, side 1	272: CHILDHOOD Grew up in a Swedish village. Went to a Swedish school and Swedish Church. Sigrid understands Finnish and can say a few words, but she can't converse in Finnish. They spoke Swedish in her home. Her father spoke Swedish quite well. Nobody could tell he was Finnish.
224, side 1	314: SCHOOL AND CHURCH

Container(s)	Description
	<p>Didn't have to go far to go to school or church. Both were in the same village. She would often go to church with her brothers and sisters. She was confirmed at the church in Sideby.</p>
224, side 1	<p>333: CHRISTMAS Had a decorated Christmas tree. Had lutfisk, rice pudding, potatoes on Christmas Eve. Farmers would butcher animals and have meat too. People in the villages had to buy meat and it was expensive. Didn't get many presents. Went to church on Christmas Day. CONTACT WITH BROTHERS & SISTERS: Visited both brothers in Finland while they were still living. Sister got married and lived near Lake Stevens, Washington. Sigrid is the only one in her family still living. Sigrid is a tough Finn.</p>
224, side 1	<p>432: REASONS FOR EMIGRATING No work for girls in Finland. Did housework in the US. Married a man from Finland after coming to the US. Knew somebody in Fitchburg, Mass. Went to America with a woman who had been home for a visit. Sigrid had heard about America from many people. Those who had settle on America's east coast would sometimes go home to visit.</p>
224, side 1	<p>493: TRIP TO AMERICA Nice trip. Didn't get sick. Came to Boston, Massachusetts. Didn't take long on the train to get to Fitchburg.</p>
224, side 1	<p>549: MOVING TO THE WEST COAST The winter in Massachusetts was as cold as in Finland. Sigrid knew some people in San Francisco, California. Traveled by train 5 nights and 4 days. Sat the whole way. Bought only one meal.</p>
224, side 1	<p>585: WORK IN FITCHBURG Did housework. Many girls looking for work there so wages were low. Better wages and better climate on the West Coast.</p>
224, side 1	<p>604: LEARNING ENGLISH Never went to school to learn it. This was after she had gotten married. Husband wasn't sure if he wanted to take out citizen papers. Might want to go back to Finland. His father had a big farm in Purmo, which is north of Vasa and near Jakobstad. He waited so long to get his citizenship papers that she had to take out her own papers.</p>
224, side 1	<p>641: MEETING SPOUSE Met husband, Alfred Kasen, in San Francisco, CA. Had worked in logging camps. Then decided to become a carpenter. She met him at the church in San Francisco. He saw her and told his brother, "that's the girl I'm going to marry." Married for 60 years. Didn't have a wedding. Just went to a minister. Had to</p>

Container(s)	Description
	have a witness. Had a dinner that night with husband's brother and sister-in-law.
224, side 1	685: Got a house and lived in San Francisco for a while. Husband did carpenter work.
224, side 1	692: CHILDREN Five children. Oldest - Anna. Went to only 2 years of high school. Got a touch of tuberculosis. Had to go to a sanatorium for a while. Astrid - became a nurse. Edith - went to high school and college. Got married. Ruth - went to college and got married. Lives near Chicago. Edith - lives in California. Melvin - lives in Portland. Works for Centennial Flowering Company. He is a salesman.
224, side 1	763: MOVING TO THE NORTHWEST Sigrid is a little confused as to when she lived where. They lived in Portland, Oregon for a time. Her husband came to Seattle from Finland. Worked in logging camps in Washington. Went to San Francisco to do carpenter work. Some of Sigrid's children were born in Seattle.
224, side 1	805: TRIPS BACK TO FINLAND Went by herself. Her husband had nobody to visit there. His younger sister and brother lived around Chicago. His parents passed away. His older sister and her husband bought the farm from their grandpa.
224, side 1	904: CHURCH Has been active in a church in Seattle.
224, side 1	917: FINNISH ORGANIZATIONS Has never belonged.
224, side 1	920: WORK Started working again after children were grown up. Worked 2 days a week. A lot of work in the home to feed 7 people. Had to start working after husband fell and broke a leg. He couldn't work for a year. He worked for the government so he got some money from them. They got \$1000. Made a down payment on a house.
224, side 1	955: Sigrid is glad she came to America. Would have had to work for farmers in Finland. She had heard so much about America. She wanted to see what was going on here.
224, side 1	968: GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF THE FINNISH LANGUAGE Kuinka se te vol? (How do you feel?) Hyvaa Paivaa. (Good day) Finnish is more difficult to learn to speak than to understand.

Container(s)	Description
224, side 1	985: GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF THE SWEDISH LANGUAGE Hur maar du? (How are you?) God dag. (Good day) Vad goer du idag? (What are you doing today?)
224, side 1	991: TRADITIONS Her children understand Swedish. She would talk to them in Swedish and they would answer in English. She doesn't know if the children cook Swedish food.
224, side 1	1012: TELLS ABOUT THE FOSS HOME IN SEATTLE "It's a home without a home." She likes it. They keep it clean. The food is good enough for her. Some don't like it.
224, side 1	1054: IMPORTANCE OF FINNISH HERITAGE She's just as good as anyone else. "Finland - the land of a thousand lakes." A beautiful country in the summer. Sun never sets before 11:00 pm in the summer. Sun never sets in Lapland during the summer.
224, side 1	1078: LAPLANDERS Doesn't know where they came from. Maybe Asia. They aren't Swedish or Finnish. Honest people.
224, side 1	1086: FINNISH PEOPLE Honest. Borrowed money from the US twice. They paid back every cent. Other countries that have borrowed from the US have not paid back their loans. Finnish people work hard. Didn't want to have anything to do with the Russians.
224, side 2	009: The end of the interview is confusing and difficult to understand. She tells about the son of a preacher who killed a man and came to Canada. He had friends there. He's in the United States now.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Christmas
 Education--Finland
 Emigration and Immigration
 Family--Finland
 Finnish-Americans--Ethnic identity
 Finnish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interview
 Finnish-Americans--Social life and customs

Personal Names :

Kasen, Anna
 Kasen, Astrid
 Kasen, Edith

Kasen, Melvin
Kasen, Ruth
Kasen, Sigrid--Interviews
(creator)
Lammenpaa, Hilding
Kasen, Alfred
Lammenpaa, Hilma
Lammenpaa, John
Lammenpaa, Matt
Ronkvist, Sophie

Family Names :

Kasen family
Lammenpaa family
Mattson family
R nnkvist family

Geographical Names :

Fitchburg (Mass.)
San Francisco (Calif.)
Seattle (Wash.)
Sideby (Finland)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Carpenters
Domestics

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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