

Timed Summary

Interview with Anna-Karin Fredin-Bladh

OH

Interviewer: Christine Ogilvie

Date: 20.5.2006

Note: Key words shown in bold.

START TIME	SUMMARY
0.00	Introduction – this is the story of Anna who migrated to Adelaide with her husband in the 1970's from Sweden and spent her early years in the Swedish Merchant Navy .
1.05	Anna Karin Fredin Bladh , known as Karin , born in Hanefosh in Sweden on 11.6.1952. It was a small country town of 3,000 people. The town relied on the steel factory SKF that made ball bearings as most of the people worked there. Her mother was a dental hygienist.
3.42	Karin explains that when her parents divorced, she stayed with her father for a short time. Not knowing what she wanted to work at – a friend suggested going to sea. She applied for a job with the Merchant Navy and her first trip was to Casablanca which was a very rough place. It was a Swedish ship.
7.29	She was a mess girl who did waitressing of food and washed the dishes. She did not have to cook. She wanted to get a job as deck boy or cadet but as a girl, it was very difficult to get a job and she got several knockbacks. Trans Atlantic actually told her she couldn't be in a crew as there were naked sailors. She thought this was pathetic.
9.58	Karin describes that she studied a basic seamanship course for six months on the Viking , a beautiful sailing ship and this guaranteed a job with a shipping company, she was top student. In Sweden juvenile delinquents were sent to sea to straighten them out and a few were in her course. One of her ships called in at Port Victoria in South Australia.
12.31	She was on the Kaiser for three years and then went to Navigation College . Her first job as a deck boy was on the Lake Eyre . The boat collected meat from Australia which was taken to America and used by McDonalds . It was a general cargo ship and also carried tuna. She worked the Far East route including Japan, Thailand, Australia and America . They had a lot of bad weather and storms – the chef made storm soup, everything in one pot.
16.27	Karin explains that Swedes like to drink a lot of milk and would make their own when they ran out of fresh. At one stage they had a Chinese cook on the 'Lake Eyre'. Other nationalities on board included Swedes, Polish, Argentinians, Moroccan, Finnish, Norwegian and Latvian people . The English were very class conscious and always wore uniforms.
18.28	There were a few other women on board, including mess staff and the radio officer. In Japan she was on the Hokaido and was the first female working deckhand to arrive on the coast of Japan. She was interviewed by two journalists for the Sunday papers. It generated a lot of good publicity for her company.

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21.07	Karin explains that she met her husband Sigge in the navy. He was a chief officer and she was on his watch when she was a cadet. Six months after they got married they were both in the same port in Taiwan and he collected her from her ship on his bike to take her to his ship for a short visit. They were carrying a cargo of rocks that sucked up the oxygen and gave off fumes. This led to the ship having to stay in port for 41 days.
24.38	Her last ship was a bulk carrier the Queensland . Her husband was offered a two-year posting to Australia as a chief officer. She was happy to leave her navigation course for the two years and they moved to West Lakes in South Australia.
26.48	Karin says that her only previous contact with Australians had been wharfies. She looked forward to living in Australia and thought it would be exciting. The company moved all their furniture out for them. She didn't know anyone and initially spent a lot of time watching TV and was appalled at Sir Les Patterson being interviewed by Mike Willesee , thinking it was a real politician. She expected Australia to be classless and egalitarian but she did not find this. At school she had learned about Broken Hill and the power of unions.
33.06	She explains what her life was like in Adelaide. She went shopping at West Lakes, go to the movies and to restaurants and hang out with other Swedes. She was very critical of the Good Neighbour Council who did not want to help her because she could speak English and was able to look after herself, when all she wanted to do was to make some friends. Her daughter Sarah was born in 1979 and the family later moved to Magill . She learned to drive and got her licence, occasionally getting lost in the suburbs.
41.23	A lot of the foods were the same as in Sweden but initially everything tasted like lamb. She found special butchers, including one on Glyburn Road which catered to Scandinavian tastes and was very popular. In Sweden only Southern Swedes eat lamb. They mainly eat pork.
46.00	She recalls that food and petrol were much cheaper in Australia.
47.22	When she arrived in Australia in 1976 and sailed into Sydney Harbour , she was fascinated by the jacaranda trees. She then travelled to Adelaide by ship. Her first Christmas memories were of melted candles in the windows. Cooking tasted different because of the different products used and different flavours. Now that there is IKEA she can get Swedish lollies and chocolates and Swedish meatballs and fish balls.
52.42	Karin describes going back to sea on ' the Queensland ' after her daughter was born. She decided to stay here and her husband returned to Sweden. She was happy with her new life here.
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