

Nordic American Voices
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Edward E. Almquist, M.D.
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Seattle, Washington

Interviewers: Sandra Magnussen Martin; Gary London; Janice Bogren

Sandra Magnussen Martin: [0:07] This is an interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history project. Today is June 11, 2016, and I'll be interviewing Edward Almquist. We are at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle, Washington. My name is Sandra Magnussen Martin. My co-interviewers are Janice Bogren and Gary London. So, Dr. Almquist, could you start your story by telling us a little bit about your grandparents, and how your family came to the United States?

Edward Almquist: [0:48] As much as I know. I'll start with my father's family. He was born in Rönneå, Sweden in 1852, and came here in 1879. We don't know why. We had no connection with that part of the family. He had two children born in Sweden, and then several more born here. They settled in Seattle, ultimately, in the south part of Seattle by Seward Park.

Sandra: [1:47] What was his name?

Edward: [1:48] His name was Louis Anton Almquist. He was a son of John P. Almquist. That's as much as I know.

Sandra: [2:05] Do you recall his wife's name?

Edward: [2:06] Yeah. I'm getting them mixed up between the grandparents. I never met my grandmother to a degree that I remember.

Sandra: [2:18] Well, you can cheat and look at your family history there.

Edward: [2:22] That's the wrong side of the family.

Sandra: [2:23] Well, if it comes to you later—

Edward: [2:26] Can we stop for a minute?

Sandra: [2:28] Sure.

[TAPE BREAK]

Edward: [2:31] Okay. Her name was Johanna Speigel, S-P-E-I-G-E-L. And she was born in 1857, we presume in Rönneå.

Saundra: [2:46] And they had two children—

Edward: [2:48] Well, they had two children in Sweden, and then six children total.

Saundra: [2:59] Four more in Seattle.

Edward: [3:00] One of them, obviously my father. All lived in Seattle. I knew these people that were alive, pretty well. My grandmother Johanna Speigel, died in 1929. So, obviously I didn't know her. They settled in Seattle. He was a laborer. I don't know where he lived initially, but he was listed in the Seattle Census from 1882 on.

[3:52] He went to the Gold Rush in 1898, and climbed over the Chilkoot Pass. He didn't seek gold, but built rafts, and sold them to the people. So, he made a moderate amount of money. When he came back, I think, is when he bought or had claim to a pretty large piece of property right by Seward Park— Lakewood, actually. My father was born in Columbia City. A little controversy when. About 1890. He was born in Columbia City before the Gold Rush. They must have lived either on that property, or nearby.

[4:46] It was a farm, and I guess my grandfather was a laborer as well as had the farm. My uncle, who was not the oldest person, but much older than my dad— 20 years older than my dad— started a store there, the Aqua Store. I have a picture of that. It must have been close to the 1890s. There was a picture of horses and buggies. A little tiny store that morphed into a fairly good-sized store. My dad said it was the largest store in the south part of Seattle— a regular grocery store with an attached butcher shop.

Saundra: [5:40] This was your father's brother?

Edward: [5:43] My father's brother. My father ran the store. His brother owned it. My father's brother, who was much older, sold the store unbeknownst to my dad. It was very curious. Just before World War II. My dad then had another store by Leschi, by the old ferry dock there, until the war. He sold that to join the war effort, and became a marine electrician until he retired, and died.

Saundra: [6:25] Were there any letters or stories passed down in your family from this Gold Rush era?

Edward: [6:31] No.

Saundra: [6:35] I wonder how your grandmother took care of the family while he was gone.

Edward: [6:42] Well, I don't know. She managed for quite a while without a husband. He died in 1913, and at some point she gave up the land. She donated one city block to the city. It's now Lakewood Park. There is a little plaque that said "Almquist Park," on a little bronze thing. My kids love it. I grew up right next to that park. The rest of the property went down to the lake, and such. It just disappeared. The store went through succession of owners, but it's still there.

Saundra: [7:33] Did your father and his siblings learn to speak Swedish at home?

Edward: [7:38] Neither of my grandparents would allow Swedish to be spoken whatsoever. I had an opportunity to go to study hand surgery after my orthopedic training, and tried to learn Swedish at the Swedish Club. But no one in the family spoke it at all. I never heard my grandfather speak Swedish, the one that I knew.

Saundra: [8:16] What about customs? Were there any Swedish customs that were passed down in the family?

Edward: [8:23] We had a Swedish dinner at Christmas, but no lutefisk.

Saundra: [8:32] What do you consider a Swedish dinner?

Edward: [8:34] Well, we had fish balls. I subsequently spent the year there, so brought a lot of that stuff back. What else did we have? Fish balls, I remember. They weren't too good. Some kind of a cake, and pancakes, I think, and something with lingonberries on it. But not a lot. There were no big traditions.

Saundra: [9:10] So, on your mother's side, could you tell us— first of all, the names of your parents, and if you know their birthdates?

Edward: [9:19] The name of my grandfather, who I knew, was Anderson. But I'll tell the story. That's not his real name. My mother lived to be 100. My grandfather lived to be 96. I have a picture of him bowling out here when he was just about that age. He was quite a character. He was a slave, or an indentured serf in Sweden. His mother was a maid in one of the houses of the nobility, and somehow became pregnant, and had to leave. The father was one of the Dukes, or something like that.

[10:14] She couldn't keep him, so she sold him to a farmer in Småland who was really brutal. At about the age of 13— it was somewhere in the late 1860s or early 1870s, he escaped from that, and went to a ship I think in Kristianstad. It's an assumption. I think I've heard that. That ship was sailing to Australia, so he landed in Sydney.

[10:55] I have a picture of him at some point there when he was 22, so somewhat older. At one point he staked a claim in downtown Sydney. The 1860s is when the great ships came to Australia, and supposedly discovered it, but that isn't really true, obviously. Anyway, that claim, I was told, is where the downtown post office is now. He sailed back and forth for quite a few years, I think both to Sweden, but a lot to North America.

Saundra: [11:36] What a courageous young man.

Edward: [11:37] He was then in somewhat of a position on the boat... They were sailing out of Australia, and had a load that was shifting, and the boat was leaking, and the captain wouldn't go back, and wouldn't do anything. So, they had a mutiny. They put in to New Zealand, and had a trial, but were exonerated. I think the story is true that he never went back to Australia then. I think it was probably an Australian marine company, and he probably wasn't welcome there.

[12:25] He then went to work here. He worked in Florida for a while. He worked in the late 1880s at the Chicago Fair—the big event in 1890. A very handy guy. He did a lot of construction work, and things. About that time, or perhaps just after that time, he went to Sweden, met, and then ended up marrying his wife, who was a daughter of a fairly prominent family in Gothenburg. They had the hotel that's at the train station. I think it's called the Grand Central Hotel. I've seen the hotel. She, then, somewhat later, left Sweden to join him in America, and she was excommunicated from her family. She was marrying below her status. She was a very pretty woman. He was a very small, I guess good-looking guy.

[13:44] She sailed on a ship with Mrs. Nelson of Frederick & Nelson. They ended up being good friends. They got to a port in New York, and had no idea that she was only halfway to Seattle. She was going to get a train, and had tickets, or whatever, to get a train, but was taken by a group of white slavers, at the time. Someone had seen that, some group of people. They were aware of what was going on, and they rescued her from those people and got her on the train. There was white slave traffic at the time, for European women. They put her on the train, and she arrived in Seattle.

[14:37] They lived at 4th and Cedar, on what was then Denny Hill, before the regrade process. It was a fairly high building. She says it was a small cabin without paint. [Laughter] My mother was born there in 1895. Then her dad went to the Gold Rush in 1898, and spent I think two or three years there.

Saundra: [15:13] So, both sides of your family went—

Edward: [15:16] Both sides.

Saundra: [15:17] Very adventurous genes you have.

Edward: [15:19] [Laughter] Yeah. He actually was trying to find gold, and never did. But he found a mastodon. He says they ate some of it. It was frozen. He brought back a little piece of the tusk, which I still have. That's all he brought back.

Saundra: [15:41] What was his name?

Edward: [15:42] His original name was Freudendal. When he arrived in Sydney, Australia, and they asked him his name, they said, "Oh, you can't be called that. You're going to be called Anderson." So, he was Gus, or August Anderson.

Saundra: [16:05] And then your grandmother's name?

Edward: [16:08] My grandmother's name was Fredrike Frankenberg. She came from a German family, going back to 1749. Johann Frankenberg. As I understand, he was in the steel mill business.

Saundra: [16:46] So, you grew up knowing your maternal grandparents?

Edward: [16:51] Maternal grandparents. We didn't know anything about that side of the Swedish until about 1959, because she was excommunicated— my grandmother. So, there was no communication with the family. But she was writing to one of her sisters in Denmark, and there was

some communication. We found those letters, somewhat before World War II. During World War II, one of our friends who was a reporter, Bernie Jacobson, an editor of the *P-I*, looked up this person and got their address. So, after the war, we would send clothing and food, and things to this lady. So, there was some communication.

[17:49] Somewhere along the line, a professor died with some inheritance. His will was that you had to look up all of the relatives. So, a lawyer did that for I don't know how many years, and how much cost. But we got this letter— my mother did, from the lawyer in Gothenburg, outlining all of the heritage, and the names and such of the people, and a seven-dollar check. [Laughter]

[18:27] When I lived for a year in Gothenburg, I went with my mother and her younger sister to meet the relatives. When I lived there, we met them. They did babysitting for us. I have gone back several times to lecture there, and things. I just recently was back to see my cousins. We are that part of the family's only relationship. No one else has any living children. Sweden had almost zero population growth for 30 years or so. So, that's the heritage of that part.

Saundra: [19:19] Both of your parents were born in Seattle?

Edward: [19:24] Yes.

Saundra: [19:24] And how did they meet?

Edward: [19:26] My father was in World War... Well, I'll tell you, going on with my story about my mother's family a little bit, before this. After he came back from the Gold Rush in that little place at 4th and Cedar, he took his family back to Douglas, Alaska before there was a Juneau. There was a gold mine there, being the biggest gold mine in the world— the Treadwell Mine and the Hard Rock Mine. He was kind of like an engineer, working the equipment going up and down this mine. So, my mother and all of her siblings really grew up in Douglas, Alaska. She talked about the pretty girls that she wanted to emulate that were down a certain street that was just so wonderful. He had a good job.

[20:32] Then, in about 1914, my mother was engaged to a French count. She was a very pretty girl. But he went off to the war and died. She then decided to go to nursing, and came to Victoria, and went into nursing school there for a couple years. She ended up graduating and went into the Canadian Navy for four months before the end of the war. Quite a woman.

[21:15] My grandfather was still in Alaska at that time, in Douglas. They had this mine that was supported by columns of stone. In those columns of stone was gold, and the San Francisco owners wanted more and more production. So, they were taking some of those columns down. My grandfather thought that was really stupid, and ended up leaving the place. Within months after that, the whole thing collapsed, and the mine flooded, but he left beforehand.

[21:57] He came back here, and they lived in a little house on 64th Street while he was building a large house just off Market Street. Somebody ended up tearing it down to build the QFC. Sometime while she lived in that big house, my father met her. I don't know how. He was a very big, semi-professional boxer, but had worked in the store. South Seattle is a long way. He had to walk across the railroad tracks to get to Ballard at the time. They got married in 1921. I had a sister that was

born some years later, and then I was born in 1935.

Saundra: [22:59] What is your sister's name?

Edward: [23:01] My sister is Jean. She has died. She was nine years older than I was, born in 1925, I guess.

Saundra: [23:14] Do you recall growing up that there was any continuation of Swedish customs?

Edward: [23:25] Not much. I barely remember... I was probably three or four at most. The big old house had a huge Christmas tree, and you'd go up the stairs, and there would be a hallway around the open space, and there were eight kids, so there would be all these bedrooms. I remember running around those halls, and sitting on a kitchen chair with my grandmother when there was a big wood stove in there. But that's the only thing I remember.

Saundra: [23:59] Can you tell us about your education? Where did you start school, elementary school?

Edward: [24:06] I started at Whitworth Elementary School. I was just at a reunion. I spent eight years at Whitworth and went to Franklin— four years there. I went to the University of Washington. I actually went into medical school after three years there, and stayed at the University for the four years of medical school, and I went to New York for general surgery. Then I was in the service for four years. I came back to the University for four years in orthopedics. I went to Sweden for a year in hand surgery. Back to the University in faculty, and then private practice faculty, and the research program.

Saundra: [24:52] Along the way, did you meet your wife?

Edward: [24:54] I met my wife in medical school. She was at the University, from Spokane. We were sort of fixed up on a blind date, although I knew who she was, because she had dated a fraternity brother of mine, and she was very pretty. So, we got fixed up.

Saundra: [25:21] And what was her name?

Edward: [25:22] Her name was Sally Moss. She was from a homestead family out of Spokane— Fairfield, Washington. Rosalia was the first town organized in Washington State, I later found out. A branch of the Oregon Trail came up there, and they had a little farming community. Her grandfather lived there, and was a banker. Her other grandparents were farmers.

Saundra: [25:57] Did some portion of the family happen to come out on the Oregon Trail?

Edward: [26:01] Yes. Both of them came out on covered wagons on the Oregon Trail.

Saundra: [26:06] Oh, that's an interesting story, then, too.

Edward: [26:08] Yeah. And I have some old guns from that family, one of which was a very old pistol. I got one from my grandfather here, who had several notches in it. [Laughter] I don't know

what that meant. But it was an 1800s pistol.

Saundra: [26:31] Can you tell us how you became interested in specializing in hand surgery?

Edward: [26:37] Well, originally I was interested in research, and I was about to go to Oxford on a fellowship. I took rotations in various specialties. I took a rotation with hand surgery group here, and really liked that style. So, I cancelled the Oxford thing. I had a chance to go to Sweden. That was part of the deal. That was attractive because of my heritage. So, we did that.

Saundra: [27:11] Were you married by that time?

Edward: [27:13] Yes. I was married, and we had two little boys.

Saundra: [27:16] Wonderful. So, the whole family got to go to Sweden.

Edward: [27:18] The whole family got to go.

Saundra: [27:20] For a year, did you say?

Edward: [27:21] I spent a year.

Saundra: [27:22] What year was that?

Edward: [27:22] 1967 and 1968.

Saundra: [27:26] What city was that?

Edward: [27:29] We were in Gothenburg. My kids learned Swedish much quicker than I did. I took that year of weekly lessons at Swedish Club, and I got off the airplane, and I heard something I had never heard before. It was so different. We were learning vowels, and things. A dumb way of teaching, really. But I gradually picked it up, and I still speak a little. But at the hospital, they would not allow me to speak Swedish, or try to speak Swedish. They wanted to practice their English—everyone. Except patients, I would try to communicate with the patients. But at that time, you didn't talk much to patients. Still, you don't talk. You just do things.

[28:18] Anyway, that worked out okay. My oldest boy, who is up from California right now at his high school reunion, went to play-school. He had a good time. He was the only kid in the school with dark hair, and he was teased incessantly. He got the brunt of it. He knew what teasing was all about. He didn't speak much, but he learned some swear words— obviously not from us. We didn't know them.

[29:00] My wife got a call one day from the teacher. She said, "Brian is saying bad words." We said, "Oh? What?" "Oh, I can't tell you what he said! Oh, no." [Laughter] Finally, she did, and we were laughing. We had no idea what they were. But some of the kids had taught him, and he would say something, and the kids would all laugh, of course. But he ended up having a good time. He had a little girlfriend there that thought we came from a place where there were Indians, and all kinds of things. It was interesting.

Saundra: [29:37] Can you tell us a little bit about your time there, studying, and dealing with patients?

Edward: [29:42] It was the big hand clinic in Sweden. My professor was the most-known hand surgeon in the world at the time. A wonderful guy. He became a good friend. We had neighbors in this apartment. We had a little trouble finding an apartment. At that time, it was really hard to find an apartment. My cousins had to wait seven years to get married before they could get an apartment. Both of them were living with their parents, and going off on vacations, but they had no place to live together.

Saundra: [30:19] Was this effects from the war, still?

Edward: [30:24] Well, they weren't in the war. They did very well in the war, and made a lot of money— Sweden. They were very prosperous. But they hadn't invested much in housing.

Saundra: [30:38] The country as a whole?

Edward: [30:39] The country as a whole. They were really in business, and social welfare things, but not at all in building homes, until it became a big scandal. Everything was planned at that time. They finally got it together. When I was there, Mao Tse-tung visited, and was walking down the street hand-in-hand with the Prime Minister. It was very anti-American at the time because of the Vietnam War. They were very much against that. It was pretty interesting. The television was all run by the state. A lot of lectures. Some American TV programs. *The High Chaparral* was the hit, and a couple English things. But the TV would go on at four in the afternoon, and off at ten, or something like that.

Saundra: [31:38] Were you the only American studying there?

Edward: [31:40] Yes. There was no money involved, so we had to borrow everything. We were living on cheese and bread. We got some of that farmer's cheese, which I now really like. And fish called [unintelligible 31:58], which is an English place. It's a flounder. I lived on it for the year. We did fine.

Saundra: [32:08] Did you make friends there that you still continue to stay in touch with?

Edward: [32:13] Our neighbors... We finally got an apartment. It was a military man who was gone for a year, and he was very happy to rent it to someone who was only going to be there for a year, because if someone got into your apartment, you just couldn't get them out. Obviously, I had to leave. That was a nice apartment in a nice section of town. There was no university housing available for me.

[32:45] Not long after we moved, neighbors knocked. He was a KLM representative, and ran the office for FinnAir for western Sweden. The airlines knew English. His wife had been an au pair in New York, I think. So, they knew English pretty well. We became very, very close. Some of our best friends. They'd call up and say, "Hey, we're going to Paris in a month. Join us." Or Mexico, or someplace. Their kids— one of them lived with us for a year in high school, and the other one for

about six months.

Saundra: [33:32] Oh, that's wonderful.

Edward: [33:33] I visited them recently. I talk to them once in a while. So, really, really good friends. They have both died. Smokers. They had some problems with medical care there. They were fairly young.

Saundra: [33:49] What did your wife do while you were off at the hospital?

Edward: [33:53] Took care of the kids.

Saundra: [33:54] She had two children to take care of.

Edward: [33:56] Yeah. She was a teacher, but she couldn't teach there, because she didn't speak "English." She spoke "American." They would not allow American to be spoken in the school district, which was really true. So, that was a big shock, because they did need teachers. But, no way. So, she was taking care of the kids, and doing things, and such.

[34:26] Funny story about that— one day, she was down at... it's kind of like Nordstrom's or Frederick & Nelson's that used to be here. One big store in Gothenburg. It was Christmastime, busy. She went in there, and suddenly the four-year-old was gone. Couldn't find him, couldn't find him. Went to the desk. They made this announcement in Swedish and English, and everyone was looking for him. Right outside was a tram. It was really scary.

[35:03] My wife finally saw this huge group of people out on the sidewalk, and she had an idea, I guess, and worked her way into the front, and there was my son. He had seen a little blue toy elephant when he walked in, in the window. He somehow figured out how to get into the window display, inside, and he was there, playing with it. 300 people were watching him play. Needless to say, he got that for a Christmas present. [Laughter]

Saundra: [35:40] [Laughter] Well, your family is very adventurous, I have to say.

Edward: [35:43] Well, yeah. Anyway, so... My aunts and uncles were very kind to us. We spent Christmas with them. We had *Jultomten*, or Santa Claus for the boys. They babysat. We were able to go down to Denmark. We couldn't go to a restaurant in Sweden because it was so expensive. Well, we went to one. We went down to Copenhagen, because it was quite inexpensive there, and we did have a car. We came back one time, and my aunt was so happy. She said, "Oh, I had to teach your son... He was not saying it right. He was saying, 'yellow.' He finally said, 'jello.'" [Laughter] It was the Swedish way you would say "yellow." It took him a while to get that straight. But anyway, that was fun. They had a good time with their relatives. There are only two left now.

Saundra: [36:53] That's so nice that you were able to reconnect with your family while you were over there.

Edward: [36:56] Yeah. My mom came over and stayed with us for a week or so, and visited her family. It was a very emotional reunion. I have pictures of it. It was close to Christmastime,

somewhere in the winter. We had some big festivities.

Saundra: [37:18] Did any of that family ever come to the United States to visit, after you had returned?

Edward: [37:23] Yes. They came in the seventies with their kids, and stayed with us. We had a Volvo at the time, and they borrowed that, and drove all around the Northwest. Actually, we took care of the kids. They were there once. I tried to get him to come last winter. I have a place in Maui that he would love. But he has some heart problems, and is afraid to fly.

Saundra: [37:57] So, you said that part of your medical training was also in New York? Was that before you went to Sweden?

Edward: [38:04] Yes. Before I even went into orthopedics. At that time, you had to do general surgery before you'd go into a subspecialty.

Saundra: [38:14] So, you went to medical school here, and then you went to New York.

Edward: [38:18] Two years in New York in general surgery, and two years in the Air Force in general surgery.

Saundra: [38:28] And were you in New York while you were in the service?

Edward: [38:33] It was a well-known hospital in upstate New York, Rochester, and they had a big surgical training program. We had some kind of an arrangement with the services. We would get positions which would continue our training, which were very good. They sent me to a hospital in Spokane, where my wife came from. It was a regional referral hospital. It was a good position for me, medically, continuing general surgery, as well as for babysitting and being near her parents, both of whom were alive at the time.

Saundra: [39:19] So, the family eventually returned to Seattle.

Edward: [39:22] We came back to Seattle. One of the stipulations when I went to Sweden in hand surgery was that I would come back and more or less join that group. I was part-time with the University, and part-time with that group. I would be in that practice. They had loaned me some money when I was over in Sweden.

Saundra: [39:47] So, you spent your working career here in Seattle, as well as lecturing or teaching at the U.

Edward: [39:56] I was in charge of the Hand Program at the U, and the Fellowship Program. I had a research lab there. So, I was involved in going all over the world. There weren't a lot of hand surgeons at that time, so we'd go talk about things in various places.

Saundra: [40:16] You know I have to ask you about Ken Griffey, Jr.

Edward: [40:19] Oh, yes. Okay.

Saundra: [40:22] I hear that you operated on his hand.

Edward: [40:24] I did. Andre Agassi was probably the most famous guy in Europe, in particular. He was a patient. I helped him win the Wimbledon one year. So, that was good. We were the only hand surgery people in the Northwest. So, we would do the sports teams.

Janice: [40:56] How did you happen to become interested in becoming a medical doctor?

Edward: [41:03] Well, I had an uncle— Anderson, also, who was a dentist— a well-known dentist in town. He was acting Dean for a while at the dental school. He said, “You’ve got to go to dental school and come join me.” “Oh, okay. I’ll do that.” He was kind of the most prominent guy in our family. We had a big family, and we were pretty close.

[41:35] For a while, I was playing a lot of baseball. I had some questions about going pro, but then I had an injury, so I couldn’t do that. It then became very clear that I would go on to college and go to dental school. So, I started that, and I was in the process of being admitted, or at least applying to dental school, and I was at a Christmas party with my family. One of my cousins was in medical school, a few years ahead of me. He said, “What do you want to be a dentist for? You’ll be looking in people’s mouths. Why don’t you come to medical school? You can do all these things, and whatever.” “Oh, okay.”

[42:26] So, that was about it. I was a kid. I didn’t think about it. I then stopped my application and applied to medical school. So, it was no great thinking process. It was just stupid luck, really. Stupid luck that I even went to the University. They offered me a math-physics scholarship to Cal Poly Tech in the 1950s. “Oh, no, my girlfriend is here; I think I’ll stay here.” Jet propulsion things were just getting going at Cal Poly. That might have been really interesting. Just dumb kid decisions. But anyway, I was very happy with my career.

Saundra: [43:13] Well, it sounds like you had an interesting career.

Edward: [43:16] I had a good career. Yeah.

Janice: [43:18] You mentioned that your father was a semi-professional boxer?

Edward: [43:22] He was, yeah. In Seattle.

Janice: [43:23] Are there stories about that?

Edward: [43:25] Yeah. There are some stories about him. He was a big guy at the time. Over 6’2” and 220, and maybe an ounce of fat. One story that my uncle loved to tell— Howard Almquist had this store here, and his kids were all in this area. You should probably be talking to them, too. He was driving with him in a delivery truck— one of those funny old delivery trucks from the store. And he ran off the road, and was really angry. He got out, picked up the front of the truck, put it back on the road, and drove off. [Laughter] He was astounded.

[44:16] He also played baseball. This guy who looked up our relatives in Denmark, Bernie Jacobson,

who was a reporter, told me stories of him at Rainier Playfield, hitting the baseball all the way out of the field, onto Rainier Avenue, which was a full block away, but also about 200 feet up, or so. Anyway, I didn't know much about the story, but it was boxing. He did okay, I guess. I don't know. I heard a story— he came back from the war with a bunch of broken ribs. They were taking on the French Army after the Armistice— he and a buddy. The French Army got him. [Laughter]

Janice: [45:15] And you mentioned the store is still in existence.

Edward: [45:18] It is.

Janice: [45:19] Where is it, and what kind of store is it?

Edward: [45:21] It's a grocery store. It was on 50th and Alaska, between Angeline and Alaska. Before they lowered the lake, I am told that the bus service or the tram service from Seattle going south ended at Genesee-Rainier before Columbia City. There was a big ravine that went up there. This girl I'm going to interview with next is writing a story about that creek and ravine, she told me.

[46:11] Anyway, they couldn't go up to Columbia City directly. The way to get to Renton and south was through Seward Park area, through Lakewood. There was a tram. I barely remember that. A tram going to Genesee and up 50th, and all the way up Rainier to Renton, by the water. So, Rainier Avenue now goes through Columbia City and on into Rainier Beach. Well, it was the other way. So, there was this tram running by the store, and by our house. So, that was a fairly active area. One of my uncles was running one of those trams.

[47:06] My dad told me stories of the guys on the tram— they would be coming back from Renton. Our house was right on that road. And they would stop if they saw my dad out in the yard, or someplace, because he was making homebrew dandelion wine and blackberry wine, and they'd go in his garage and get a little shot or two, and get back on the tram, and take it down to Rainier Avenue. [Laughter]

Janice: [47:37] And the store— what is the store now?

Edward: [47:40] When my uncle sold it, it became Brown Store. Then it became something else. It was sold as a Jewish-style store. I think it still is now. There are a couple Jewish temples out there. Synagogues. Quite a few people. So, there is that store. Sometime after that, the Thriftway opened up farther along. I think it's now a PCC. Anyway, it's still there. The butcher shop is no longer there.

Saundra: [48:32] So, it sounds like you inherited some of your father's athleticism by playing baseball?

Edward: [48:39] I was playing baseball, yeah.

Saundra: [48:40] In high school?

Edward: [48:42] Yeah. I had a wrist injury. I was a pitcher. At that time, I was talking to the Cubs. I was on a really good American Legion team. There was a scout that was there. I injured a wrist. I was ski-jumping at the time, and I didn't do anything for quite a while, and I ended up with a dead

bone in my wrist. So, I had to stop pitching. I ended up hitting okay, but I couldn't pitch. It was probably a good thing. Quite a few guys on that time went into the pros. One guy, Ron Santo, made it really big. But the rest of them were rattling around in the minor leagues. It's a terrible life.

[Laughter]

Janice: [49:38] What high school did you go to?

Edward: [49:40] Franklin. I was just at Franklin. They gave me a little award, and I had to give a talk, and I reminded them that our year at Franklin High School— 1954 graduating year, we won the Bellamy Award as one of the outstanding public high schools in the country. We won a bunch of sports championships, and did well in academics. We had an integrated student council. There were four of us on the student council— an Asian, and a black guy. He was the first black athlete to win a major golf tournament— Bill Wright. He's in the black athlete hall of fame for that. And then two of us were Caucasian. It was a really integrated school. I was hoping that it would remain that way.

Saundra: [50:38] That's wonderful— and in the fifties.

Edward: [50:40] Yeah, it was. We didn't know. It was just natural. Bill was a really good friend.

Saundra: [50:51] I wonder if subconsciously your wrist injury led to your interest in hand surgery?

Edward: [50:58] Maybe. I don't know. You kind of develop themes with research. Becoming somewhat of an expert, I used to talk a lot about that kind of an injury— a dead bone injury. I did do work on it, and I did a couple operations for it, and wrote parts about it for textbooks, and things. Maybe that was part of it. It was the same kind of dead bone problem.

Gary: [51:31] Explain what a dead bone problem is.

Edward: [51:34] The bone loses its circulation, and either collapses, and crunches down if forces are not taken off of it. Or, you can try to do things to reestablish circulation, get it back to life again, which happened with my wrist— not because we did anything. At those times, you just kind of let it be.

Gary: [52:08] Let nature take its course?

Edward: [52:09] Yeah. Luckily it did. It could have gone the other way, and I would have eventually had a stiff wrist. At one point, we belonged to Group Health at the time. We went in with this problem. It's very unusual. We went with this problem to Group Health. The doctor said, "What we should do is take that bone out and put a metal bone in." My mother said, "Metal bone? In that wrist joint, with all those other bones? That doesn't sound like a very good idea." We wouldn't do it, fortunately, because there were terrible problems. I would have had no wrist joint.

Gary: [52:52] So, you subsequently developed an interest in treating dead bones?

Edward: [52:56] Dead bones— it's called a lunate bone. It's called Kienbock's Disease. I was involved in a lot of papers, and book chapters on Kienbock's Disease. Something you've never heard of, and will never hear of again. But if you have it, it's a big deal.

Gary: [53:15] I'm sure that's true.

Saundra: [53:18] Did your wife teach after you returned from Sweden?

Edward: [53:22] She did. She taught while I was still in medical school, for a year. And she taught in New York for a year. At the time, she was pregnant. She substituted when we were in residency, living back here. A grade school teacher— pretty little girls; these cute kids. [Laughter]

Saundra: [53:58] We know the name of Brian, you oldest son. What is the name of your other son?

Edward: [54:05] Douglas. He lives in Seattle. They're both computer-type guys. Brian is an architect, but is involved in the computer aspect. Doug is a molecular biology graduate back east, and then became a computer... Bill Gates grew up down the street. I didn't know what they were talking about for years.

Saundra: [54:31] Are they married, and do you have grandchildren?

Edward: [54:34] My oldest is married— Brian, who is here. And my youngest has never been married. I have no grandkids. I have some borrowed grandkids— my wife's best friend's kids. They have children, and they think I'm their grandfather. My current partner is a gal I went to high school with in that same class— a cheerleader in that class. She has a bunch of grandkids, and great-grandkids. So, I have more or less adopted them as well.

Saundra: [55:09] What year did your wife die?

Edward: [55:11] Nine years ago.

Saundra: [55:14] And how did you reconnect with your high school friend?

Edward: [55:17] Well, we knew each other. I knew her husband. He died some years before Sally, my wife. We were doing things with them, high school reunions, and such. She knew I did a lot of fishing— sport fishing, fly fishing. One of her sons-in-law was quite involved in that. He was one of these people getting money and buying land on the Hoh River on the western part of the Olympic Peninsula, to preserve it from development— the Hoh Conservation. So, she wanted me to meet him, basically, to get some money for that, but also to talk about our love for fishing.

[56:09] Sally was sick for a long time, and I really couldn't leave her for three years. After she died, sometime after that, I told Helen that I would meet Phil for lunch, or something, and we got talking. She had a place out by Port Townsend— Marrowstone Island. I was living on Bainbridge. She was going to come through Bainbridge. She was living in downtown Seattle. I said, "Well, stop by, and I'll give you some vegetables." I had a big garden. It led on from there. We had seen them forever. Her husband was a neat guy.

Janice: [56:58] Are their sons still connected with their Swedish heritage?

Edward: [57:03] Yes. My son who lives here is quite involved with the Swedish Club, or what is it

called now?

Janice: [57:11] It's the Swedish Club again.

Edward: [57:14] It's back to Swedish Club again? [Laughter] Okay. Well, he's a member. He goes there a bit. He was asked to join the board, and then there was some reason he wasn't there. Anyway, he gets involved in a lot of things.

Gary: [57:32] How about you? What kinds of involvements do you have in various organizations in your retirement?

Edward: [57:40] Well, I'm very involved in chasing fish around the world. [Laughter] I like to do fly-fishing in particular. I do a lot of that, particularly steelhead. I go up to these... not much left around here. I go up into northern Canada quite a bit, or down into southeastern Washington, around Hell's Canyon, and the Snake River tributaries. And I do trout-fishing with the fishing club in the mountains of Canada, for trout. It's fun. I don't do any medical things, lecturing anymore.

Gary: [58:28] No professional connections...

Edward: [58:29] Well, you get out of the loop. For a few years, I was still giving some talks. I was at a medical school reunion recently. Next week, I'll be at where the residents are leaving the university [inaudible 58:44]. I go there once a year, and say goodbye, and things.

Saundra: [58:49] What year did you retire?

Edward: [58:51] 2000.

Saundra: [58:54] And you mentioned earlier that you are doing a second interview today, and that has to do with the Columbia City Historical Society?

Edward: [59:01] Columbia City heritage thing. My [unintelligible 59:07] part of my family was old pioneers in Columbia City. I've got some old pictures, and things. They're interested in that. They've been calling like you have. Well, I'll do the big heritage thing on Saturday. Usually we're up at Marrowstone Island on Saturday. My son is here anyway, so we wouldn't have gone.

[59:27] Well, I'm glad we got you first, so you're not too tired out from talking. [Laughter] Was there anything else that we haven't touched on that you wanted to include in your interview?

Edward: [59:37] Not that I know of.

Gary: [59:40] What is your Swedish heritage mean to you now? Is it something that you're conscious of?

Edward: [59:48] I am conscious of it. Yeah. There is an affinity. I kind of read things about Sweden, and what's going on there; the medical system. The two people who run the big hand clinics in Sweden... Well, one of them is retired. But they were students of mine, so I helped with some of their training. I've been back there, and quite involved with that. Kind of interested in their system.

They're extremely frustrated with that system.

Gary: [1:00:30] More frustrated than we are with our system?

Edward: [1:00:33] You have no idea. My friend retired and said, "I will never see the patients I'm scheduling for surgery, because we have a five-year waiting list." When I was there in 1967, we saw 100 patients. Two of us would see 100 patients for scheduling surgeries, per hour. [Laughter] It was amazing. The nurse would bring them in. They'd have a [inaudible 1:10:09] say yeah, to the nurse, this should be done. That's all. It was very strange. It isn't like that anymore. When I was there, I was barely in my thirties. But if you were over 70 and had a hip fracture, you weren't treated. And if you were over 70 and had a heart attack, you weren't treated. It was eye-opening.

Saundra: [1:01:47] When you were there, and you were seeing so many patients to determine what they needed as far as surgery, did you then do the surgery?

Edward: [1:01:56] I always had a Swedish person there. I'd had eight, nine years of surgical training by then, but still didn't do it... I may have done the surgery, but there was always someone. Mostly I was there with the professors, and those guys, learning. Fabulous learning experience.

Saundra: [1:02:20] What was the waiting period from the time they were analyzed?

Edward: [1:02:22] I don't know. I never got...

Saundra: [1:02:25] You don't know if it's gotten better, or worse.

Edward: [1:02:30] I think it's better. My friend who retired long ago was so frustrated he retired. So, it's still a problem.

Gary: [1:02:44] How recently were you in Sweden?

Edward: [1:02:46] Helen had never been there other than a cruise. So, two and a half years ago, we were in Scotland. She had never been there, either. We went back there to get to London to come here, so we went back through Sweden and visited my cousin and his wife, and then those kids who were really good friends of ours. It was really a fun experience.

Gary: [1:13:13] What do you enjoy doing when you're in Sweden? What do you look forward to?

Edward: [1:13:21] We traveled around, visiting those old places, showing Helen where our kids used to play in this Marstrand Castle. Loved some of those little fishing villages that are now retirement villages. When I was there, I sailed a little bit with my professors. A couple times, we chartered boats, and sailed through the [inaudible 1:03:49]. I sailed a lot. That was a great experience. Food... there weren't many restaurants when I was in Gothenburg at the time.

Gary: [1:14:03] Plenty there now.

Edward: [1:14:05] Yeah. There was one Chinese restaurant. Gothenburg was about the same size as Seattle at that time, in the sixties. There was one Chinese restaurant. In fact, I went there—one of

the only times I went there, I went with Leo Tolstoy's grandson. We became friends— Andre Tolstoy.

Gary: [1:14:23] Tell us about that.

Edward: [1:14:25] Well, Leo Tolstoy left Russia and had a fabulous farmhouse in southern Sweden, a beautiful place. I visited there and stayed there, actually. His son, Andre, was taking over the place, although they had rented the big house to a farmer. They couldn't take that back unless the farmer wanted to leave. So, they remodeled the chicken coop, and he was living there. I was visiting him there, in the chicken coop. This was after I came back there on one of my visits.

[1:05:07] When we were in Gothenburg, he was living there, and I knew him because of this friend who was our neighbor. They were good friends. I just got to know him. Wonderful guy, smart guy. He was an engineer. He got a little frustrated with Sweden and came to work in America for a couple years in Portland, Maine. He got frustrated with that, and went back to Sweden. I haven't talked to him for a long time. I don't know if he's still alive.

[1:05:46] But anyway, going to this Chinese restaurant to have Chinese people speaking Swedish... Swedish is pretty high [inaudible 1:15:59] and then to have the Chinese accent with that— it was really funny. And I thought I could speak a little Swedish then. I couldn't understand them, whatsoever.

Gary: [1:06:08] What kind of reputation do you think Swedes have in the United States?

Edward: [1:06:14] Well, the Swedish women have a reputation of being very beautiful. I think the reputation... Swedish-Americans, or Sweden in general?

Gary: [1:06:28] Sweden in general.

Edward: [1:06:29] Sweden in general...

Gary: [1:06:31] When you talk to people about your Swedish background...

Edward: [1:06:37] Well, they say there are a lot of idyllic things about that country. Can't we emulate some of that? But the demographics are so dramatically different, that it's hard to imagine. They talk about their medical system, and universal, and all this. But it's pricey. When I was there, there was a 22 ½% sales tax on everything.

Gary: [1:07:08] Yeah. Value-added tax.

Edward: [1:07:10] Well, that was different. It was just a sales tax. Then on certain items, a value-added tax, too. But that was supporting the social system. When these friends that were living with us in an apartment house... Well, when the one girl came to the United States for the school year, she went to Bush School, which is a private school in Seattle. My son was there.

[1:07:35] Sally had to do a lot of lobbying to get them to accept and essentially give a scholarship to this girl for her entrance. It was interesting. She was a straight-A student there, and came to Bush,

and had never written an essay, had never taken an essay examination. She was a math major in high school, and was two grades below in math. So, Sally was tutoring her like crazy. But she was very frustrated. But when she went back to Sweden, they wouldn't accept that year, because the American system was so inferior. But they all just studied for tests. Everything was geared for tests. They did true and false, and multiple-choice tests. That's all they ever did. She had never written an essay, ever. It was interesting. I got off on a tangent there.

Gary: [1:08:42] No, no. That's important.

Edward: [1:07:46] I think there are some myths about Sweden and how idyllic it is. I think a lot of things are great, but it's a very small country. Many, many cities are the size of Sweden. They think they're very tolerant, but boy, oh, boy, they are not tolerant. We saw some of that.

Gary: [1:09:18] You saw some of that up close?

Edward: [1:09:20] At that time there were Polish people coming, and people from Turkey, and they were very different people. You just didn't... Be careful of those people. It was a little startling.

Saundra: [1:09:37] Well, it's interesting, because they're one of the places that the migrants are wanting to go.

Edward: [1:09:44] And they have been accepted. And they have been treating them pretty well, but I don't know how they're being accepted in. For the years that I've been there... it was like my son with the dark hair that was teased. If blue sweaters were the thing to wear in the summer, everyone wore blue sweaters. It was just kind of amazing.

Janice: [1:10:22] Did your family have church affiliations through the generations?

Edward: [1:10:27] Well, my mother had. She was an Eastern Star, which wasn't exactly a church. My dad was a Mason for a while. She went to various churches, but my grandfather would have nothing to do with church. And my dad would have nothing to do with church. Not good feelings.

Gary: [1:10:51] Did they talk about why?

Edward: [1:10:53] No.

Gary: [1:10:58] Related to the fact, perhaps, that the church was part of the power establishment?

Edward: [1:11:03] Perhaps. Have you read the book or seen the movie *The New Land*?

Gary: [1:11:09] I was just talking to Janice about that.

Edward: [1:11:11] It's a little bit like that. Like the Irish coming during the potato famine. Ireland wasn't a great place. People afterwards thought so, but not then. It was different. When I was in Sweden, we became pretty good friends with a Swedish ambassador— actually, an ambassador from Norway, but the Consul General. There was a government-sponsored system that would get soldiers from Europe— to a large degree, black soldiers from Europe, and would allow them to go to

Sweden to go AWOL from the service, and give them a place to stay, and arrange for a female companion for three months. And gave them money.

Saundra: [1:12:19] This was during Vietnam?

Edward: [1:12:21] Yes. This was during Vietnam. This was an active program.

Saundra: [1:12:27] That's interesting, since they weren't really accommodating to other immigrants.

Edward: [1:12:36] At that time, no. But they were very much anti-war. I went to Norway a couple times, for a big conference one time. At that time, in 1960, it wasn't that long after the war, and they were very unhappy with the Swedes, and their collaboration with Germany.

Gary: [1:12:57] I was going to ask you if there was any talk at the time you were there about Sweden's neutral status in the war.

Edward: [1:13:07] Well, both the Danes and Norwegians that I talked with pointed that out, and were furious about that. I wasn't aware of quite that much, but I did see pictures of German warships anchored in Gothenburg, and pictures of German troops going through. I remember I had a patient, an ex-German soldier, who knew I had been in Sweden, and he said, "Oh, I love Sweden. We'd go through there, and the girls were so good. They would treat us well. We were driving and going to the trains to Norway." Which of course is illegal, if they were neutral.

Gary: [1:13:53] Yeah.

Edward: [1:13:54] And the iron mines were supplying Germany. So, that was... Sweden prospered hugely from that.

Gary: [1:14:07] So, the Swedes didn't talk a great deal about it, but you did hear it from the Norwegians and the Danes.

Edward: [1:14:15] Yeah. It seems to me I talked a little bit about it to my cousin. It was just not a topic of discussion.

Saundra: [1:14:29] Well, I really appreciate that you came in today, Dr. Almquist, and shared your family history with us. We will be getting a copy of the interview later.

Edward: [1:14:45] Hopefully edit some of the things out of there that weren't pertinent.

Saundra: [1:14:49] No, we don't do any editing.

Edward: [1:14:53] Really?

Saundra: [1:14:54] No. It's as it is. But that's fine. I think you have a very interesting family history. very adventurous stock that you came from.

Edward: [1:15:03] It was adventurous. Yeah. My kids should live forever. Both of their

grandmothers lived to be over 100. My grandfather lived to be 96— the Anderson one. He had a great philosophy. He didn't eat vegetables. Potatoes and fish to a degree, but mostly meat. Meat, and potatoes, and vodka. That was it.

Saundra: [1:15:34] Well, the vodka will kill anything...

Edward: [1:15:36] Yeah. He was a very feisty guy.

Gary: [1:15:39] As a physician, would you recommend that? [Laughter]

Edward: [1:15:44] [Laughter] No.

Saundra: [1:15:51] Thank you again for sharing your story.

Janice: [1:15:52] Thank you.

Edward: [1:15:53] Okay.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.