Interview of Grete Haslund Dixon and Leif Haslund
On October 13, 2011
At Bothell, Washington
Interviewed by Gordon Strand and Abby Taplin

Gordon: [0:01] I will turn this one on. Today is October 13, 2011. We're in the home of Grete Haslund Dixon in Bothell, Washington. We are recording an interview of Grete and her brother, Leif Haslund, for the Nordic American Voices Oral History Project at the Nordic Heritage Museum. Could you start off by identifying yourself and giving us your name and the year you were born?

Grete Dixon: [0:34] My name is Grete Dixon. I was born in 1930 in Seattle at Swedish Hospital.

Leif Haslund: [0:41] My name is Leif Haslund. I was born in 1933, also at Swedish Hospital.

Gordon: [0:46] Thank you. We've been going through a lot of your pictures. I know you've got a tremendous family history here...as you know about your parent's origins and the reason for their immigration. Their immigration story, in other words.

Grete: [1:08] OK.

Leif: [laughs] [1:09]

Grete: [1:10] What do you know?

Leif: [1:11] I suspect that you're better at it than I am.

Grete: [1:13] I have done a lot of research and I'm doing genealogy. I found out that my father came to the United States on October 24 of 1907. He was 25 years old. He came from Oslo, Norway.

Abby: [1:30] Can you give us his full name, please?

Grete: [1:33] Leif Spørck Haslund [Born 24 October 1882 and died 31 March 1952]. His mother, Grethe Spørck, came from Aalesund, Norway[inaudible 01:44]. He came here because he had...He came across the United States, he came into New York. He came across to Seattle because he had a brother who was here who was married to Lita who was a masseuse. I think he did similar kind of work. I'm not sure how they came here. Anyway, my father came to see them. They
eventually went back. They had a child here and then they went back to Norway. That was my uncle Sverre Haslund[2:10]. Then, my mother came in 1926, I believe, to visit her friend, Møilea Lepsoe. She had been a neighbor of my mother's [in Bergen] and they had gone to school together.

[2:37] My mother [Ruth Fronsdal Haslund] took some classes here and office type work. Then, she decided it was time for her to go back to Norway.

My father had met her, and evidently, he was enamored by her, so he asked her to get married. They did elope and went over to the Olympic Peninsula [2:47]. When they came back a lot of their Norwegian friends had a big party for them. That's kind of the story of how they met. There were a lot of parties among the Norwegians and they must have met at one of those parties.

Gordon:  [3:18] What did your mother or father say about the region? Did they plan on staying in the United States or was there a particular reason why they chose to leave Norway and come here?

Grete:  [3:30] I think things were tough in Norway when my mother came. Maybe there wasn't a lot of work, and actually, she had two sisters who had already come to the United States. [3:39] One of them lived in Boston to start with, met her future husband, went back to Norway, and then came back and they married. The other one married a Dane, and they moved to New Jersey. He was a representative of cheese from Denmark.

[3:56] The two sisters lived in New Jersey all those years. I don't think they ever got back-and-forth to each other. In those days, you didn't travel much.

[4:08] There were 22 years difference between my mother and my father. My father was a bachelor all of the years from when he came here in 1907, until he married my mother in 1929.

[4:22] He was a musician, and he played a lot for the Nordic Sons of Norway in concerts. They had a large community of musicians that enjoyed each other. He was in those days a gay bachelor.

Abby:  [4:44] Do you know what brought them to Seattle?

Grete:  [4:49] For my father, I don't know why he came. He had studied to be a concert pianist in Berlin, because a lot of times, in Norway, they didn't have that kind of a university. A lot of them went to Germany and other places to study. He had probably finished up his studies if he was 25. At some point, he had to be in the service. They had their compulsory service, so maybe he didn't get right off to Berlin. [5:23] He didn't really become a concert pianist because he had some kind of cramps in his hands when he played. He was a nervous person, I guess. Anyway, when he came here, he went to work for...


Grete:  [5:43] Yeah. Forest Ridge Convent[05:45]. They had just started up … the Sacred Heart nuns just started a school. In about 1910 to 1952, he was a teacher at the school there, a music
Now, my mother, she came to see Mølle Lepsoe [Ingrid ‘Molle’ Lepsoe] and then didn't intend to stay, but she did stay. Maybe my father didn't intend to either, but he found work here right away. Actually, his first job was at Rhodes Department Store. He really didn't have any money.

[6:13] There was a lady named--her name wasn't Mrs Utne at the time, but they both were kind of starving artists. At lunchtime, they would go home to his place where he was living in some hotel downtown. They would have a box of strawberries or something, and then they would read my grandmother's cookbook, his mother's cookbook, and they would pretend like they were having one of these delicious meals and they would eat their strawberries.

[6:41] That is a story that my mother wrote on.


Leif: [6:52] I think one of the things certainly that kept them here was the Norwegian community was very strong. A number of them had been successful. They were willing to help each other. It was comfortable in that way. It gave them kind of a feeling of belonging. Certainly, everything about the northwest is reminiscent of Norway. It isn't like you moved to the desert. You can feel comfortable that way as well.

Gordon: [7:27] Tell us about the house then on Capitol Hill. That seems to be an important player in this whole story of your parents. What do you know?

Grete: [7:42] I actually have looked down at the Historical Pioneer Museum, and I had the dates of where they were living in the different years. [Because they have directories even before there were phones telling where people lived and worked.] But in the census they were living at 520 13th Ave North up in Capitol Hill. They were living there in 1920.

Gordon: [8:07] Or east, is it?

Leif: [8:09] At that time, it was. They renumbered or renamed the streets. What used to be 520 13th Ave East became 520 13th Ave North.

Grete: [8:21] I thought it was the opposite.

Leif: [8:23] The city had gotten bigger. [laughs]

Grete: [8:25] Oh, OK.

Leif: [8:27] They had to adjust.

Grete: [8:30] Anyway, that is what I remember about that.
Leif: [8:38] A typical bachelor. I think my father had always lived with a bunch of people. That was much more common I think in those days, certainly than now. It wasn't unusual to have a number of bachelors in a house.

Grete: [8:54] Or boarding houses were very common in those days.

Leif: [8:56] Boarding houses, yeah.

Grete: [8:57] It became a boarding house later. I forgot about that.

Leif: [9:03] But even after my father got married and so forth, it didn't change the idea that many people would live in the same house, and they didn't have to necessarily be related. Of course, it was a large house. [9:19] I'm sure my mother had to cope in many ways. She ended up having two children and a house full of people. [laughs]

Grete: [9:26] Although it was a big house, they didn't intend for it to be a boarding house. In 1929 they married, the depression came in 1930, so these men who were living there, they stayed. [9:42] I know my mother said that when she came and she moved into the house, she opened the closet door up in the bedroom and all of this stuff from Alaska came falling out, all this heavy duty clothes and things, because some of these people maybe were working in the fishing industry or maybe in the forestry service, or whatever.

[10:03] I don't know that all of them came without jobs. Maybe they had a job waiting for them when they came.

[10:10] She had to cope with a lot of things like that, and in the drawers, because as they became a rooming house, that is with mother cooking for the people. It wasn't her idea. She had maids in Norway, but she handled it beautifully. Her family did. The house [on Capitol Hill] was big, and they could have parties like they always had.

[10:40] I think it was a good life, even though she had to work really hard. They were very gracious and courteous to so many people of the community, in the Norwegian community. They all loved coming to our house.

Abby: [10:54] Was this a house that your father had lived-in as a bachelor and he just brought your mother, and turned it in?

Grete: [10:58] Yes, he did. I don't know if he told her that as they moved out, they would be there by themselves.

Gordon: [11:07] On average, how many people were living in the house as boarders, and they were paid boarders so to speak?

Gordon:  [11:20] Three or four?

Leif:  [11:22] I don't think mom ever cooked breakfast. I think everybody was on their own there. Weren't they?

Grete:  [11:27] I know sometimes she did.

Leif:  [11:28] I know they did get dinner.

Grete:  [11:30] I know my father did some breakfast. Maybe on Sunday morning he did breakfast. You said how many rooms in the house? Sometimes they were all full, and sometimes we got to have our own room. It just depended.

Leif:  [11:43] I think it was very normal for us to have three or four. During the war, it was more crowded for sure. At that time, I just slept on a bed up in the attic. It wasn't a room. The eaves were right there.

Grete:  [12:03] Oh, yeah. I remember if it was summer time, it would be really warm, and probably very cool in the winter. That was five-bedrooms you said, and one bathroom that they all shared, but that wasn't unusual in those days. They had to figure that out according to their work schedules. [12:27] A couple of times, we had couples that lived-in one of the larger bedrooms. One time, we even had somebody who had a child I think, or at least they came to visit once in a while.

Gordon:  [12:39] They were largely Norwegians, correct?

Grete:  [12:41] Largely, they were. There were some Americans. I don't think either of us learned too much Norwegian, but we got the idea of the sing song. I did take Norwegian lessons at the University of Washington before I went there when I was 20, and then later on I took classes again. [13:00] They put me in an advanced class and I thought, "Oh, my goodness! I don't know if I can do this," but it all worked out. Things came back to me, and I did well in the class. I loved it. I can talk to the taxi drivers and everybody in Norway a little bit.

Leif:  [13:19] She went to Norway for a year.


Leif:  [13:24] You turned 21 on the boat, didn't you?


Grete:  [13:29] On the ship. It was on the freighter, on the Van Liner. It was a great trip, six weeks.
Gordon: [13:36] That was after the war, I assume.

Grete: [13:38] Yeah, it was 1950. My cousin was here from Norway, and one of our relatives was related to the ship's owner, and so we got this free trip all of the way through the Panama Canal. It was a six-week trip. [13:54] As young people, we made friends with some of the crew and played Whist in the evenings. We had our wind-up phonograph. We would sit on the deck and enjoy the sun, and write letters. Anyway, six-weeks we had a great time.

Gordon: [14:13] Did you ever meet your grandparents? Do you know anything about them other than what you had told me?

Grete: [14:17] I met my mother's father. My mother's mother died in 1921, and I was in Norway in 1950. I did meet him, and he died a few years later. That was nice. At least I met one relative. That was the nice thing here is that everybody was aunt and uncle, all the Scandinavians that were friends with my parents. They were our aunts and uncles because we had no relatives here.

Gordon: [14:45] That was your family then?

Grete: [14:47] Yeah. That was family and that is why I think they liked to gather so much together and have parties. It didn't matter what day of the week it was. If it was somebody's birthday or anniversary or something, they would have a party. [15:02] I think about it now, how could they do that? Because they would come and they would have a cocktail, and then they would have dinner with three kinds of wine, and then they might have liqueur with their coffee in the living room, and then they might have beer. They always had music and singing, and sometimes dancing. That was during the week sometimes.

Abby: [15:26] As kids, did you get invited to these parties or were they things that happened for the grown-ups and you guys had to stay out?

Grete: [15:33] I don't think we sat at the table. Did we?

Leif: [15:35] No, but we would be around. We would talk with people and meet with people. [15:43] The same thing with the boarding house atmosphere. These were in pre-television days, and what people did in the evening was to sit around and talk, or they would play cards, or you would listen to the radio sometimes.

[16:01] You met so many different people through the years that you just got used to being around people. If somebody had a goofy viewpoint, well, they had a goofy viewpoint. You didn't get too excited about it. You just took it for what it was.

[16:20] Certainly, by and large, marvelous people.

Gordon: [16:23] Tell us about some of these people that you have learned about or remember, and a little bit of their history.
Grete: [16:32] One thing I think was really great too is that they had great conversations at dinner, people from all different backgrounds of life. They spent a lot of time discussing all kinds of topics. I remember one time, I was keeping warm over the radiator. There was heat coming up there, standing in the dining room. I made a comment and then my father said, "Oh, you don't know anything." [16:58] I still remember that. I packed in my little two cents. You wouldn't do that today actually. You would kind of encourage them, "Well, that was a good comment," or something. It was interesting that I still remember that. I probably didn't know much, but I was trying to learn. [laughs]

[17:20] Who do you remember, Leif, particularly?

Leif: [17:26] For me, there was a couple that I almost looked at like heroes. There was Calle Nergaard who was that downhill skier and Gunner Drage who was a jumper. They were both there at the same time, and both incredibly modest. I think Calle Nergaard was going maybe to the University of Washington.

Grete: [17:50] I don't know. I don't remember that, but I do remember that he was on the Silver Skis up at Mount Rainier.

Leif: [17:56] Yeah. He won it two years in a row. If he had won it a third year in a row, he would have been able to keep this huge silver permanent cup.

Grete: [18:06] I think it was a bowl, actually. There were a bunch of them.

Leif: [18:07] It was a bowl. Yeah, it was. Yeah, right. Not a cup, but a bowl. It sat in our front den for whatever, those two years.

Grete: [18:18] As far as I knew, it was there.

Leif: [18:21] He chose to go back to Norway. I'm under the impression that he then skied for the Norwegian team in 1948, the Olympics in the downhill. It wasn't all so grand, but still it's quite an achievement. [18:37] Then Grete "Haga"...


Leif: [18:42] Was it Daga?


Leif: [18:45] Oh, Drage, you're right. Absolutely. Yeah, Drage. [18:51] He jumped up at the Milwaukee Ski Bowl. In those days, it was all so active over in Leavenworth. One time, he went back to Chicago and did an exhibition and a jump at Soldier Field back in...One of his tricks, which is hard to imagine is that, whether he did it off the ski jump or some other place, but he had a somersault that he could do at work out of the office.
Grete:  [laughs] [19:16] That was early.

Leif:  [19:19] One size jump or another. One time, he was totally wrapped up and was sore because he'd fallen. He wouldn't say anything. He wouldn't say ouch if he had to.

Grete:  [laughs] [19:33] Big bandages?

Leif:  [19:35] They just took it as part of what they did.

Gordon:  [19:38] Uh-hmm. Why were they here? Do you recall?

Leif:  [19:42] I don't. It might be that with Calle that he was going to be in the University of Washington. With Gunner, I'm not sure. He was doing some sort of work, but then he left also. [20:01] How about our crazy Swede?

Grete:  [20:05] Certainly, from the Swedish Club? The one that ran the Swedish Club?

Gordon:  [20:09] Who's that?


Grete:  [20:13] Yeah, he was vivacious and always into sports. [20:19] You and your friend, Joe, were in the kitchen. I was in the entry hall. Joe Oscarsson comes running in the house in the afternoon. I remember it was a nice sunny afternoon, been out doing some kind of sports, probably playing tennis.

[20:35] He ran upstairs to get himself a shower and was quickly down the stairs. He went and had a drink of Vodka. No, no, no.


Grete:  [20:45] Aquavit. [20:47] He was going to go meet his girlfriend, which I assume was the one that he married. Joe remembers that vividly. Joe and Leif still ski on the ski bus, so we've talked about how goofy he was and fun he was.

[21:04] I know. You know more of the story about them going on the boat.

Leif:  [21:08] Yeah. Part of the story that I remember was he decided to go back to Sweden. I believe he had been working here for American Can Company, probably as a production engineer or something. He got on the boat and got as far as San Francisco, and decided he wanted to get off the boat, and come back and get married. [laughs]

Grete:  [21:31] He was in love?
Leif: [21:32] Yeah. He was in love. He decided that. Then he did, he married his girlfriend, and then they lived here for many years. His wife is still alive, I believe.

Grete: [21:43] Yes, somebody said she was. Christine, I think, told us that.

Gordon: [21:48] You said something about an association with the Swedish club. Can you fill-in that a little bit?

Leif: [21:54] He ended up becoming the first manager for the Swedish Club and did so for many years.

Grete: [22:01] A long time. [crosstalk]

Gordon: [22:04] At this current location or elsewhere?


Gordon: [22:07] No. I mean, but on Dexter?

Leif: [22:09] The one that's on Dexter Avenue.

Leif: [22:15] Just a curious aside was that my good friend, lifelong friend, Joe Portteus, was in sales. He ended up calling on the Swedish Club and they connected again, knowing each other, so that was fun for Joe.

Grete: [22:35] He asked Joe, "What's your name?" He said, "Joe Portteus." He said, "What kind of a name, Swedish name, is Joe Portteus, anyway?" [laughter]

Leif: [22:48] He thought it should be Scandinavian at least. But he wasn't.

Grete: [22:52] No. He was selling stationary and things they needed in their business there.

Leif: [22:58] I think one of the more notable people, we talk a lot about Sonnichsen. Sonnichsen, the painter, lived there in the house.

Gordon: [23:05] Give his full name.


Leif: [23:08] That would be Yngvar. His brother -- where I'll come to later -- Engelhart, also lived with us. I think before Grete and I came along, I think Yngvar was part of that household.

Grete: [23:24] His brother. They call him Sonke, S-O-N-K-E. I'll think of the rest of his name, but that's the way I've seen it, anyway.
Leif:  [23:35] I think, at his effort, they built a small cubbyhole bedroom up in the attic, in one corner of it. I think Sonnichsen stayed there. Then another room got added on what we called the landing. It was half-a-floor up. It was built over the top of the den and that added another bedroom to the house. Somewhere, between Yngvar and...

Grete:  [24:05] Sonke?

Leif:  [24:07] Yeah. [laughter]

Leif:  [24:08] I'll get those first names. [24:14] We were not there when Yngvar lived there.

[24:19] Quite a bit later, after he had retired, the architect, Sonnichsen, lived with us for a number of years. A grand old gentlemen. He had worked for Priteca, a noted architectural firm in Seattle that is known for building these ornate rococo movie houses up and down the West Coast, like the Orpheum, Pantages, what will you.

Grete:  [24:55] It was a company of Pantages Theaters. They had them in Los Angeles and San Francisco, I believe -- besides his brother doing all these houses around Seattle under the Priteca name.

Leif:  [25:16] I'm not sure what became of him. I know he lived with us for many years. He had to be well up into his 70s at that point.

Grete:  [25:22] He died in the 60s – Yngvar. Engelhart died in the... Yngvar died in 1938. He was hit by a car. His wife had died in 1913, so he was a bachelor for a long time. [25:41] People, in those days, weren't buying a lot of paintings. That was a more a European thing to have oil paintings on your wall. When Sonnichsen came, Yngvar Sonnichsen came to Seattle in 1908, he needed money to live.

[26:00] My father gave him the room up there in the attic. I think he painted things for us, quite a few pieces, and for other people. I am sure the Scandinavians bought them, because I know several that have some of his paintings.

[26:15] Then he had to go to work in Alaska and Eastern Washington, fishing or picking apples, or whatever he could do to make money.

[26:23] We appreciate his art that we have in our homes.

Gordon:  [26:26] How long do you think he lived in your folk's home?

Grete:  [26:29] Off and on, he lived with us after his wife died in 1913. Since my father had a house before that, he had two houses before that... [phone ringing]

Grete:  [26:41] Excuse me. [pause]
Grete: [26:55] Yes, my father had a house. The first one he had was up on Capitol Hill on 15th Avenue and Madison. Then the next one he had was down in Washington Park. In both places, they had other people living with them. He had other people. [phone ringing]

Grete: [27:13] Excuse me. Let me go get that and let me see who it is... [pause]

Grete: [27:24] We were talking about him living there off and on. My father having the two houses.

Leif: [27:26] Yeah, the two.

Grete: [27:28] They had people living with them then, in those two houses.

Leif: [27:39] It's hard for people today to realize how tough the Depression was. You were talking about 25 percent of the people out of work. Today, they're up in arms because it's 9.1 percent or whatever it is. [27:54] You can imagine an artist trying to go around and peddle his wares in those days. [laughs] There wasn't a big market for it. Obviously, he had to scrape along and got the help of friends.

Grete: [28:05] No. If he died in '38, then that was...

Leif: [28:07] He died in '38.

Grete: [28:08] No, that was still the time of the Depression.

Leif: [28:10] He was very prolific. He did what he could. I have one thing...

Grete: [28:18] We're not doing it yet.

Leif: [28:19] ...done with less than the best materials. I suspect that he was perpetually broke and whatever money he had was to go for canvas, oils, and whatever, a tough deal.

Gordon: [28:33] He had been trained as an artist in Norway, to your knowledge?

Grete: [28:38] No. He had been trained, actually, in Holland and France. I will move to say Holland or just say The Netherlands, I guess. Do you want to put that in, too? This wasn't about him, but it's part of the house, part of the interest of the house. We'll go on with...

Leif: [28:57] Then the architect brother...

Grete: [29:00] An architect lived with us. My father during some times...OK, I can start with that. You can go ahead. Or is it on now?


Grete: [29:10] Go ahead? [laughs] Here, all this time, I thought we were just talking. [laughs]


Grete: [29:16] Yeah, he did live with...off-and-on. One time, you said you went down to his apartment [29:20].

Leif: [29:22] I have a recollection of going... there with my father.[crosstalk]

[29:24]

Part II

Grete: [0:00] The Frieles, we didn't talk about them too much, and we just spent... We haven't started yet. I thought she was doing you, when you were talking about Seattle, and the houses and stuff, because that was interesting. The small houses.

Leif: [0:16] We can go back to that. I also don't want to leave the Skolmans out of this. Are we on film?

Grete: [0:22] Yes, we're filming now. You spoke about how the homes were small, maybe in the Ballard area. Seems like they were bigger up on Capitol Hill. We were pretty close to Volunteer Park. Some of those homes were really large. I don't suppose my father would have bought the house unless he... He didn't know he was going to be marrying my mother, and he had all his bachelor friends there. [0:50] He was 48 when he married my mother, so he probably thought he was just going to have this house with a man living in it all through the years, keep having a good time. One of the couples that did come to the house were the Wollenwebers. He was a doctor, and they sang beautifully. That was fun.

[1:18] We had our wedding reception there, my husband and I, in the family room. Then we did talk about this a little while ago, was that we had sailors who were living in our home recovering.

Leif: [1:38] During the break here, we talked about a couple of different things. I am not sure what got filmed and what didn't. Do you want us to go back and visit those issues?

Gordon: [1:47] Why don't we go talk about them again, because we didn't...

Grete: [1:51] I think that was interesting too.

Leif: [1:53] Well, from time-to-time a sailor with one of the maybe Norwegian American lines or whatever, would break a leg or have an appendicitis and so forth, and need a place to recover. It wasn't unusual for them to be with us for some period of time. Maybe until they got healed or the
next ship came in they could get on board with. [2:20] I am sure that those people were referred by the Stangs.

**Grete:** [2:27] Sure, being the consulate.

**Leif:** [2:29] Being the Norwegian Consulate and so forth, it would be a natural for them where those people were referred. [2:40] Another thing that we talked a little bit about was the housing. Again, of course we grew up in a boarding house. It was very common in those days, because so many people came into Seattle during the war worked for Boeing or the shipyards or other things, that the city was absolutely crowded.

[3:07] I remember even that for very short periods of times on my paper route that there were people that were living in a garage. At least they were out of the weather. Not that, that lasted for very long, but everything that could be turned into housing, did.

[3:28] If you step back a couple of years, during the depression that there were houses on Capitol Hill, large ones, that were empty.

**Grete:** [3:36] Really?

**Leif:** [3:37] The one up on 14th and Mercer, on the SW corner was empty. They had a pool table in the basement. Of course, we managed to creep in there and play pool. Then there was an even larger house that was on the way up to Volunteer Park.

**Grete:** [4:00] Right near the park.

**Leif:** [4:01] A huge house.

**Grete:** [4:02] Gorgeously restored now.

**Leif:** [4:05] Went through a whole city block with the grounds and so forth, and that was empty. Those all got turned into boarding houses, and down on the corner of 13th and Republican. So, anyway it wasn't unusual. We keep coming back to the same thing, but people lived where they could. If you found a roof and a place to eat and so forth, you were on your way I guess.

**Grete:** [4:41] Well, another thing was people starving. They didn't get handouts probably, but they would come by and wanted to work, and can they do some work for you. I remember my father saying that he hired people to do yard work, and things like that. [4:57] Then there were homes, a lot of times there were those alleyways, and these transients you might call them, would put an 'X' or something on the garage if that was a place that people were good to them. They would find the right ones to go and ask if they could get some food or get some work and then earn some money for food.
Leif: [5:21] It was definitely like day and night. What Grete is referring to, I think was more in the '30s. But then as they started to gear up for the war and got involved in the war and so forth, then you went from entire change to where people who maybe were unemployed now had multiple choices, or whatever. It just went from where there was vacancies to where there was nothing vacant.

Grete: [5:48] So many people coming across country to work.

Leif: [5:50] From people being fortunate to have a job to where they could get work wherever. Just an absolute change.

Gordon: [6:04] We haven't talked about what traditions did you enjoy in your home. What sort of things did your parents celebrate that you could identify as a Norwegian tradition for instance?

Grete: [6:20] It was different for us because we did have Americans in our home. So, I don't remember ever having Lutefisk, which is what a shame that was.

Leif: [6:31] Had to give up something.

Grete: [6:32] Or Lefse too, my goodness! So, they were missing out a lot, but I suppose a lot of the other families who didn't have boarders didn't. [6:44] I don't remember a lot of Scandinavian dishes. It could have been meatballs. I remember Sunday morning, sometimes smoked salmon, or what do you call the other kind? Anyway, you have it with your eggs in the morning, and that was always a specialty.

I think we had our goat cheese and cod liver oil. That is one of the things that we had, but I remember having that in the kitchen in the morning. Then my father coming home maybe about 3: [6:59] 00 from school, and then we would always have a little snack on the table and some goat cheese. My mother did make spinach soup, and my friends would come and they would say, "Ick," but I loved it.

Leif: [7:24] Oh, Lord, yes, to this day.

Grete: [7:27] Sorry to say there weren't a lot of things like that, but just the joy in our home and the stability in our home. I think were very important, and then being comfortable with a lot of people always.

Gordon: [7:46] Did they belong to any organizations, the Sons of Norway, things like that?

Grete: [7:52] Maybe my father did because he played his music there. They went to the original one that was just down there on Olive Way. That was the original one. [8:02] In fact, that one was the architect, Sonnichsen, Engelhart Sonnichsen, which we finally remembered, and Sonke Engelhart Sonnichsen, and then his brother did the paintings and the murals. Those are the murals
that are now down in the Sons of Norway in Ballard, in the new place, and those were huge. That has been a very big building.

[8:32] They were transferred over to there, but I don't know where they were in-between. They were just at the Ballard School I think for a long time.

Gordon: [8:43] A little bit by Norselander down on 15th, when that was ...

Grete: [8:47] No. They were never in Norselander.

Leif: [8:50] Well, you talk about Norwegian culture, or so forth. Certainly, we will start with Christmas, very much so. We celebrate Christmas Eve, which is certainly Scandinavian.


Leif: [9:12] Christmas was a very big deal. I mean, decorations. My mother would start doing the cookies and so forth, her wonderful spritz.

Grete: [9:23] That is true.

Leif: [9:24] And Fattigman, and so forth. So, that definitely was different than most families where they celebrate it on Christmas morning. While we had a boarding house, and certainly many Americans among them and so forth, whenever the parties came along, they were definitely Scandinavian because those were their friends. [9:55] While they may have known American families, or I should say families with other cultural backgrounds, certainly the core of what they did was always Norwegian get-togethers. So, Norwegian was spoken in the house, because they all got together and that was what they spoke.


Leif: [10:23] They took care of one another. It is just hard to say. For that part of our life, we might as well have just been in a Norwegian community. [10:45] The guests in the house, if I refer to the people that lived there, the boarders and so on, as guests, they would be in their rooms or they would go somewhere else whenever these parties went on. It wasn't like it was a mingling in that way.

[11:06] Those were large parties, and particularly the ones that were in the afternoon. If you had dinner, you could only see 12, 13, 14, or whatever it was. But if you had an afternoon cocktail party, you could open the doors and have 40 people in there, and they did.

Grete: [11:23] I think I remember them doing the table in the dining room and then going out into the hallway, an empty hall.

Leif: [11:29] I am sure they did.
Grete: [11:30] I am sure they had some very big parties. The Mack's, also he is the one who painted the rest of the paintings that Sonnichsen didn't paint. It was the brother of Egil Mack, and they lived in the Washington Park area, I guess.


Leif: [11:52] But Egil, was a banker, wasn't he? Wasn't he a banker?

Grete: [11:55] Yes, and one of his sons was a banker. One of the grandsons, I am going to try to call and see if he would be interested in being ... I don't know how much he knows, but he lives in Snohomish, and I just found his phone number too. [12:09] So it was Egil's brother, I forget his first name, who did the other paintings. I did visit one of Egil Mack's sons, who lived in Kirkland. I noticed they had nice paintings on the wall too by this Uncle, who went back to Norway. I think he went back to Trondheim. Who else would there have been then?

[12:35] The King and Queen staying with the Frieles. They remodeled their home. They had a big home up on the backside of Capitol Hill, near 23rd.

Leif: [12:49] 21st, 22nd, something like that.

Grete: [12:52] They remodeled and had the King and Queen stay with them. I think there are some pictures that you might have there. Leif was there. Some of the young children that were not in school yet were there, like the Fritzner's son.


Grete: [13:04] The Busch children, and Melsom's son. The Melsom's son, he also became an aerial photographer and he is still alive. So, he could probably tell these stories too. They are out in the Sammamish area, he and his sister.

Gordon: [13:22] What do you remember about the King and Queen visiting?

Leif: [13:26] I don't know.

Grete: [13:29] He was standing out in the front by the stairway.

Leif: [13:30] Just that I got dressed up and my hair combed, and I had to go have my picture taken. That was part of it.

Grete: [13:37] You had to have your little suit on with probably your short pants.

Grete:  [13:41] And your little leggings. It was probably an excruciating time.

Leif:  [13:43] I don't remember how old I was at the time, probably six. I don't remember a lot. This is kind of a non sequitur, but years later, a friend of mine had a lawn mowing business. I had retired and she was having an operation and asked if I could handle her lawn mowing business. [14:07] One of the lawns that I had to mow was right across the street from where that picture had been taken with the King and Queen. I looked over there and my gosh, here is this big Swedish flag hanging off the building.

Grete:  [14:28] Here it was, it used to be a Norwegian flag.

Leif:  [14:30] Something had happened along the way. It had slipped from being a Norwegian home to obviously a Swedish home. Grete talks a lot about the Lepsoes and so forth, up at the Salt Spring Island, and of course she was close with Ingrid their daughter and so forth, so for her that was a special Norwegian family. For me it was the Gjolmes. [15:00] My parents felt that I should somehow get a feeling for rural life, Because of the war, the Gjolmes, ended up buying a small, I should say farm or whatever, on the water, up on Whidbey Island and so forth. I went up there for a number of summers, and so forth.

Grete:  [15:30] Their boys were fliers in the war, and so that was nice for her to have a young man there and kind of took the place of them when they were gone.

Leif:  [15:42] And both of those sons flew B38s and were assigned over in England, and that was a very rough go over there. Tid I know had been shot down at least once, and had his back injured as he tried to bail out. I think Tas maybe had been a little bit more fortunate of the two sons. The story that Grete became part of, Reidar Gjolme had been an agent for Norwegian American Lines.


Leif:  [16:26] Yes, the father. I think you had gotten some literature or whatever about his background. If you don't, we can get it to you. Anyway, Reidar had settled here in the Seattle area and married Ginkin Gjolme, who was a gifted singer and collaborated many times with our father and so forth on different musical ventures. [16:56] The two of them then found themselves up on Whidbey Island. They still kept their house in Seattle. They had chickens and ducks and a couple goats, and God knows what else up there, and so forth. It was a great place.

Grete:  [17:23] It is probably the kind of life she came from in Norway perhaps.

Leif:  [17:25] She just loved it up there. I am sure she is the one that really liked it the most. [17:31] If I come back to the story that involved Grete a bit is that Reidar had on the mantelpiece a small cup, and it was from Holmenkollen. What it was for having won Holmenkollen. I don't
remember the year, but perhaps 1902, 1903, or something. The cup was no bigger than that. When Grete and I were in Norway and...

**Grete:** [18:05] We went up to Holmenkollen.

**Leif:** [18:06] We went up to Holmenkollen and our niece's husband...

**Grete:** [18:12] That's our cousin's husband. He had been president of the organization, the Holmenkollen...

**Leif:** [18:19] ...and the museum. He had offered to take us up there so that we could see it. This was not...I don't know...It wasn't open, but he had all the keys.

**Grete:** [18:28] He was able to get in.

**Leif:** [18:29] He had all the keys. He ran the darn place. We go up there. As we went through, looking at the evolution of skiing, to this museum, and particularly of ski jumping, they had this one cabinet. In there, were trophies that had been donated back to Holmenkollen from previous winners. There was none in there as old as Reidar's. Not only that, they got bigger, of course. This became a more elegant proposition. [19:10] On the bottom of the ski jump, there was a display and it listed the people who had set the hill record. There --- Whatever the year was, 1901, 1902 -- Reidar Gjolme and it was 28-and-a half meters.

[19:30] That's only 100 feet. You have kids today that go off a bump and go further than that. You have to take into consideration the equipment and everything else.

**Grete:** [19:42] That was the old Holmenkollen, too. The new one is probably much bigger.

**Leif:** [19:50] There was his name up there. I was just stunned.

**Grete:** [19:55] Somebody you knew.

**Leif:** [20:00] Help me out now. What was our cousin's...

**Grete:** [20:03] Elizabeth?

**Leif:** [20:04] Elizabeth, yes, but her husband's name?


**Leif:** [20:07] Sunde.

**Grete:** [20:08] He actually jumped here at the University of Washington, when he was at the “U Dub,” during the 50s, with a couple of other Norwegian guys.
Leif: [20:16] I told him that we knew where the cup was, because we knew that Tas, his son, had it and was still alive.

Grete: [20:24] He was still alive, living in California.

Leif: [20:26] He was still alive, living in Los Angeles. We said we have the number. We'll give him a call and see if they're interested, maybe, in donating that cup to the Holmenkollen Museum. I'm trying to think of what Tas's wife's name was.

Grete: [20:43] Was it Dorothy?

Leif: [20:46] No. It will come to me. We got a hold of her and Tas was very sick. He had cancer. He was in a bad way and was unable to come to the phone. [21:03] I gave her the information who to contact and all of that. I said, whether you want to do that is up to you. I find out later that she did. She sent the cup to Holmenkollen and it's now residing there, so that was a nice little story.

Grete: [21:19] We have to look. He actually came to do ski jumping in Japan, didn't he? Is that how he got over here to start with?


Woman 1: [21:24] I think you might have that story, too, from Christine.

Gordon: [21:27] This is Reidar...?


Grete: [21:32] They just had the two boys, Tid and Tas. They were both in the war.

Leif: [21:37] Neither of them had children. Neither of the boys had children.

Grete: [21:41] Remember, you talked to him one time. He said, "My son is sitting here. I had him when I was 50 years old.

Leif: [21:46] Oh, he did?


Leif: [21:49] I didn't...Tas did?

Grete: [21:49] It would be fun to get in touch with them, wouldn't it?

Leif: [21:50] That would be.

Leif: [21:57] He died in his mid-50s.

Grete: [21:58] When you speak about going to Whidbey Island [22:00], also there were several families, like the Stangs, the Wollenwebbers, the Fritzners...Not Wollenwebbers, excuse me, Wennerblads.


Grete: [22:14] That's two ladies who also were in this community. They were librarians, right behind Garfield High School at our library up there. I remember going to their house. They had this beautiful dish with a fish. It must have come from Japan. They would open it up and there would be goodies underneath it. [22:36] If you were a good girl, you'd get a piece of candy from that little dish. That was always fun. They all had their places up there and they all communed in the summertime.

[22:45] Once in awhile, my parents would actually get a little cabin, a very little cabin, and they would leave Leif up there all during the week. Then they'd come back up on the weekend again, so they probably rented it for several weeks. That's one of the few vacations I remember my parents having.

Gordon: [23:02] Christian Stang, was he a boarder at some point?

Grete: [23:04] He was a boarder when my mother married him. In one of the pictures I have, he's sitting on the porch. Stang and Busch, who actually ended up working on Vancouver Island, the Forestry Service, he was there. And this Gustav Falk, I really don't know much about him, a tall, good-looking guy. I remember after he married, he lived up on 23rd, near Montlake Terrace, not Montlake Terrace, but a Montlake Seattle.

[23:40] Yes, and I was a flower girl. Because Lillemor [Lillemor Stang] was visiting -- He probably told you this -- with some relative. She came down for some party and she met him. She went back to Norway and must have gathered up her many suitcases or trunks and sent them over, too.

[24:02] I've known them all my life. He gave me away at my wedding, too, which we had in Stub's Church. You didn't know much about Stub's Church, Emanuel Lutheran Church.

Leif: [24:15] He was your godfather, wasn't he?

Grete: [24:16] He was my godfather and then Mrs. Beldsoe was my godmother.

Gordon: [24:21] I've heard, always, everybody talks about Stub. Who was Stub? How'd he get to be...
Grete: [24:28] I think he started out maybe back in Minnesota or else it was his father. I was helping a friend lookup something back in that area and there was a Stub who'd come to their church, because he was probably a higher up. He might have been the son of this Stub. [24:49] He was down there in that church, Emanuel Lutheran Church, down near the bus station here for many years. They even have a Norwegian service and then an English service. I was confirmed there. I actually took my children down there. We saw the pictures of me when I was confirmed. I saw the church.

[25:07] Then I learned that he and his wife and two children, had lived right in the back behind the sanctuary for many years.

Gordon: [25:18] That was a church that many in the Norwegian community went to, is that correct?

Grete: [25:20] Yes, because they had Norwegian services. A very fine church. I was blessed to go to Confirmation classes, but a lot of times I was too tired, so I'd stop at a friend's and end up taking nap. I hate to say this, but when it came around to me answering the questions, I didn't know the answers.


Grete: [25:46] Really?


Grete: [25:49] Maybe that happened at the Confirmation service, where I had my white dress on and all that. My poor parents must have been a little embarrassed. They didn't know that I didn't go to all the classes. [26:02] But, you know, it stuck with me. I'm a Christian now, not in the Lutheran church. It wasn't all lost.

Gordon: [26:09] You mentioned Ulland, too, which is, of course, Osborne and Ulland.

Leif: [26:12] Yes, Olaf.


Leif: [26:16] We've been unable to decide whether Olaf should...

Grete: [26:20] I don't know if he ever lived with us. He might have stayed for a little bit. I just remember his brother.
Leif:  [26:27] Yes, Ragner definitely was with us. Somehow, Olaf was good friends with our parents. Of course, he ended up becoming one of the owners with Osborne and Ulland.

Woman 1:  [26:41] Osborne, yes.

Leif:  [26:46] I'll have to think about some of the other names that were in there as part ownership of it. For us, it was a great ski store. Olaf was always good to us whenever we went down there, and there are side stories. I ended up playing golf with him. He had a group that played golf. I asked him, "Can I join you?" [27:22] I think they finally got tired of me, because I would show up hungover or whatever. They were more serious about the golf than I was. They typically played at 8 o'clock in the morning at Mount Sy or whatever, on Saturday mornings, or Sunday mornings.

[27:43] One time, Grete's husband and I were down there. Olaf was talking with us. We were looking at skis. Olaf said, "Well, I have this new ski. I want you to try it out for me." The name of the ski was called Ply Mold. They were white.

Grete:  [28:05] Something new.

Leif:  [28:05] They were made out of something, out of plastic and so forth. All of the skis up to that time had either been wood or metal. He loaned them to Bill. Bill and I were up at Hyak skiing. There was a maintenance road there during the summer. When the snow came, it tended to build a little bit of a roll and you could go down there and fly off this thing. [28:31] Bill always went 60 miles an hour when he was on skis.

Grete:  [28:35] He did not stop.

Leif:  [28:36] He came down there. He hit that roll and the ski loaded up and broke. The tip went up. It had to go 30-feet up in the air, whatever. Of course, Bill tumbled so much, the ski was destroyed. I wasn't there when Bill took them back. I said, "What happened?" He said, "We'll have to take a look at it." He said, "Well, that's why we tested them."

Grete:  [29:03] You got to be the one.

Leif:  [29:05] But I was with him when he broke it. It was a wonderful fall.

Grete:  [29:09] Well thank goodness Bill didn't get hurt or broken.

Leif:  [29:12] He was virtually indestructible, I think. Olaf was fine. I think he was nice to me and to Grete...