

Nordic American Voices  
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Ted (Howdy) Ormbrek  
September 19, 2015  
Seattle, Washington

Interviewers: Michelle Eastman; Dan Kaylor

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**Michelle Eastman:** [0:08] This is an interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history project. Today is September 19, 2015, and I'll be interviewing Ted Ormbrek. We are at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Ballard, Seattle, Washington. My name is Michelle Eastman, and with me today is Dan Kaylor. So Ted, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Ted Ormbrek:** [0:39] Well, I was born in Woodinville, Washington, on November 9, 1925. My name is Theodore Howard Ormbrek. My parents were Theodore Ormbrek, who didn't have a middle name at all in his early life. And my mother was Helga Matilda Jorgensen, who married Ted. That marriage occurred in Bothell.

[1:14] My father was living in Woodinville after his father moved out there. My grandfather was Gilbert Ormbrek. It actually was Gunnleik Ormbrek. When he first came to the United States, he stayed with his uncle, Olav Ormbrek. Uncle Olav had three boys- my grandfather's cousins. One was Gunnleik, and the other was Esleke, and another was Kjestl. So my grandfather decided to change his name to Gilbert. He wanted to be an American citizen as quickly as possible.

[2:02] After about one or two years, my grandfather moved in to Ballard, and he started the Normander Singers in 1888 or 1889, and then he joined the Norwegian Male Chorus in 1889. He lived in Ballard until 1901, and then homesteaded out in Woodinville. His farm was located between about the Snohomish County line and Route 9 at the north end, and south along that route, and up again to the east end to Woodinville Duvall Road. I don't know what the acreage is. It's somewhere between forty and eighty acres. I know there are records that show what that is. But that became a homestead.

[3:09] My grandfather had married in 1895 in Ballard- one of the Fosberg women. She was the oldest of the Fosberg people. Her name was Kari Ormbrek, Kari Fosberg to begin with. My dad and another son were born in Ballard. The second son was Fritzjof. He died in 1918 after they moved to... I think it was during the Spanish Flu epidemic. The next one was Gudrun, and then there was Harold and Chester and Gill and Ruth and Ole and John and Gustav. So there were ten children. This is important, because this later became a very important part of my life.

[4:25] I lost my mother at about the age approaching four. At the time, I wasn't old enough to remember the details, but I was suddenly aware that I didn't have a mother. My father put two of his older children- my older sister Gloria, and myself in a children's home in Everett. Then the youngest, Shirley, was too young, and was staying with close family friends that took care of her. She was less than a year old.

[5:05] It was shortly after that, about a year and a half, that Gudrun, who was Helga's sister-in-law... Gudrun was very close to Helga, it turned out. They both had children born within a week of each other. They both worked in the Fall City Mill, which my grandfather started with Paul Schroeder as a partnership. The family was cooking and preparing food for all the loggers at that time. So Gudrun knew what happened to Helga, and she pretty much kept in touch with Helga her whole life. My mother apparently had had mental disease.

[5:56] In any event, Gudrun apparently was very involved with talking her mother into taking me into her household. My grandmother was widowed in 1926. Here I was... She was widowed several years already. She was moving into Ballard, and allowing the homestead to be leased to workers who would keep working the cows. It was mostly a dairy farm.

[6:28] So, all of a sudden, my sister and I were taken out of the children's home into the Ballard house of my grandmother. And I'm pretty sure Gudrun was the instigator of all that. It was important to know this, too- that Gudrun was the replacement grandmother for my growing children as they came on the scene.

[7:00] So, living with my grandmother, I was about five years old. I remember right off, being with my... They were like older brothers to me. Gus was about six years older than me. John was about nine or ten years older than me, and Uncle Ole was about thirteen or fourteen years older than me. So they became my uncle-brothers. Gus was still going to school. John was just graduating from high school. And I was getting ready to go into Whittier Grade School. My grandmother was not the legal custodian. So it came about that I got into school late through the circumstances of the family. So I started grade school at the age of six and a half or seven, and they skipped me a grade.

[8:01] Immediately I got involved with Mrs. Delduca, who was the glee club teacher, and I got involved with singing. So she realized that I had a pretty good voice. I remember in the process, we all sang Christmas music at Christmas in schools at that time. They had me singing... the glee club was walking behind me, and I sang a solo of "O Holy Night," going up and down the hallways at Whittier Grade School.

[8:33] An interesting thing about Mrs. Delduca, that being in the midst of the big Depression, she out of her own expenses was providing harmonicas, because they didn't have an instrumental feasibility because of the cost of instruments. So people in there were doing that sort of thing.

[8:56] Living with my grandmother, she had formed alliances with other women in the neighborhood. Some of them had apple trees and pear trees. We had... My uncle John, right out of high school, worked with his brother-in-law. Ruth Ormbrek married George Draglin, who owned the [inaudible 9:22]. He was in the fishing business with the trollers. So we had fish coming in. And then Gudrun married Ole Edwards, and he was in the halibut... I believe Ole Edwards was even on the Old Sunset halibut sailing vessels. So we occasionally would have halibut, too.

[9:54] My grandmother was always canning everything. Gudrun still had about three or four acres of the farm when she married Ole Edwards, so she had that part of the farm. So we had produce from that. Much of what was going on in the household was strictly on a bartering basis, instead of having to earn money. One of the things I remember- we would heat the house at 1216 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Street.

They didn't have "northwest" at that time. They had the old Ballard addresses that had to do with Ballard. So it was 1216 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, even though we were at that time part of the City of Seattle.

[10:44] So we had two loads of sawdust per year to heat this house. It had two large bedrooms upstairs with this vent from the lower area where the sawdust burner put all of its heat into one room. It drifted to the ceiling and through the vent to the upper area. So, two loads of sawdust, eight cubic yards, each. It became my job, as I got older to toss in the sawdust. I helped with the chicken coop and the twelve chickens, and all that, and cleaning the chicken coop, and getting the kittens out from underneath the chicken coop that were born. [Laughter] And things of that kind.

[11:31] But anyway, we had a raspberry crop there right in the heart of Ballard. One of the things... It was one dollar a cubic yard. So it was two eight-dollar loads of sawdust that heated the house for a whole year. So we heated the house for sixteen dollars a year.

**Michelle:** [11:52] Where would the house be, present day?

**Ted:** [11:55] It still stands there. It was owned by a family from Italy for a long time, and they rented it out. The neighbor next door bought it, and I visited with him, because I went back to look at it, and he is doing some upgrading of the house. But it's still the same house, still on the northeast corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Northwest 73<sup>rd</sup> Street.

[12:22] Going to school at that early age of second and third grade, I remember one time the teacher left her glasses on the opposite side of the room. They had two desks, two blackboards, and reversible seats in the room. This was the style of the classroom. She wanted her glasses, and I didn't know what she was talking about. I went to the desk, and "glass, glass..." There's a glass top, here on the top of the desk. She said, "No, my glasses." So it dawned on me. I said, "You mean your *brillers*? Because I didn't know "glasses." My grandmother wore reading glasses, and they were called *brillers*. And the same thing with scissors, were *saks*. So I was just a little bit mixed up with language, but not much, because mainly we wanted to be speaking English, and so did all the sons and daughters of that family.

[13:23] Anyway, at that point, I had made a lot of friends in the neighborhood. My sister and I were up with the Planter children at Woodland Park Zoo. We saw some goose eggs right next to the fence. So we found out we could reach under the fence and get goose eggs. The Planter boys got two goose eggs, and my sister and I got one. My grandmother, seeing this goose egg... "Where did you get it, where did you get it?" And all this sort of thing. We were hemming and hawing about that. But she didn't want to waste the goose egg, so she took it to bed with her at night, and she kept it in the warming oven on the woodstove during the day, in paper towels and things, and cloth.

[14:25] So, we actually hatched that goose egg, and it eventually grew up and got to be a real big nuisance, so Gudrun took it in on her farm, and eventually she traded it for a couple cords of wood. It won a prize in the Snohomish County Fair. But we never admitted that we stole this goose egg from Woodland Park Zoo. [Laughter]

[14:52] In the fall, you had to come back to school and write what you did during the summertime. So, I wrote the story about the goose egg. The teacher sent a note to my grandmother, and some of her sons had to read it for her, and make sure she understood it, that I was lying about what I did.

[Laughter] So my grandmother... the sons helped her, but they had to write a letter, so I took it back to the teacher, that was exactly what happened with that goose egg.

[15:26] Anyway, I began to sing with the glee club. What we had, being a matriarch of the family, the Christmas gatherings were the big, big things for the year. We still had the Norwegian flag. We waved it out there for Syttende Mai and those things. But I don't recall that there were any parades going on in Ballard at that time. If there were, we weren't involved with it. Anyway, there would be around 30-35 people. We would get the lutefisk out of the barrels at Olsen's, which became Johnson's, and now has disappeared. The lutefisk was still soaking in lye. We had double laundry tubs, and it was a job to pick the lutefisk up and then put fresh water in the other tub, and then back and forth over several days, to soak out all the lye as much as possible.

[16:43] She prepared on the woodstove... She polished it. There was a special stone. She went across it, and wiped it clean, and threw some flour on it, and she'd make flatbrød and lefse. All the preparations, she baked everything on that wood stove. All the bread we had was from... the big drawer that swung out. It was a big bin full of flour. She was constantly baking and canning, all of her life. Anyway, everything would be ready, and all the people would come, knowing that they already had name-drawing for that year. So everybody had a name, one present to give.

[17:37] One of the things was, they remembered the grandfather. He was less than sixty years old when he passed away in 1926. He had some celluloid collars, and there was a piece of bark from the old Fall City Mill. The celluloid collars were given as a matter of consensus in the family- who should have the highest esteem and recognition for the year. They got the celluloid collars. The piece of bark was for the one who was the least... the one who was the big jokester for the year.

[Laughter] Whoever got the piece of bark was the one that said, "Oh, I shouldn't be that! How come I got it?" And the celluloid collar, yeah, okay... [Norwegian word 18:40], which means... don't get swell-headed, don't be a [Norwegian word 18:46] just because you got the celluloid collar.

**Michelle:** [18:49] What are celluloid collars?

**Ted:** [18:50] They attached to your garments, and they were just visible.

**Dan:** [18:58] It's what... They didn't have collars like...

**Ted:** [19:02] Yeah. The war came on December 7, 1941, and the last one to get the celluloid collars was Uncle John. And he was a very draftable age at that point. He went into the service in 1942. I went with Uncle Ole, and we drove John down to Fort Lewis. I had just turned sixteen then. He was the last one to get the celluloid collars. He got into the Army. He had worked in the fish boats, of course, and he had lost one knuckle. They had to remove the knuckle entirely, so he had a short finger. So he writes home in basic training. They were getting out of basic training. He said, "They're sending me to typing school." [Laughter]

[19:53] Anyway, he finally got in and they realized that he knew about boats, so they sent him up to Alaska, and he got on these crash boats that were out in the islands where they built these brand-new aircraft landing platforms that they made out of just steel grating. Their job was to get out there as quickly as possible and rescue the pilots, because they were coming out there in fog and bad weather, and they didn't have all the electronic equipment they have now.

[20:27] So, he had his crew up there in Alaska. He got involved with marrying this nurse, Rosemary. She was with child when I got home. She had just given birth to her child, Jack. All of a sudden, [my grandmother's] household was filled with family again, getting out of the service. Gus was courting a woman, [Pat Periard], and got married, too. He didn't have any children yet. His child was born the next year, in 1946. So my grandmother needed help.

[21:22] It turns out that my uncle Chester lived across the street from my future wife's family. Both of these girls, Cousin Doris and Betty Berry. Alice was widowed with these two daughters. Alice was Betty's mother. She had married Floyd True Berry, who was in World War One, originally. He had his own trucking business. He had died already. So she moved in with her own parents, the Foresters. They lived across the street from Uncle Chet.

[22:09] So, Doris and Betty had gone to Webster School here. They had just graduated, and they became the babysitters. So, when I got home... I inherited Uncle Gus' 1930 Model A with a rumble seat. I remember driving Betty back to her home from my grandmother's house a couple times. She was just a fourteen-year-old kid. I was twenty years old, out of the service at that time. But I got ahead of myself.

[22:42] I got into the Navy in 1943, October of 1943. I tried to get in in the beginning of the school year in September, because already Gus and John were in the service. We had two stars in the window. I didn't want to wait around any longer, so a friend of mine, Bud Cooper, and I went down to join the Marine Corps. He got into the Marine Corps. That's a long story about him. The guy that ran the recruiting office said, "You've got a C-2 profile." I wasn't very big. I weighed about 130 pounds. So he said, "Go across the street to the Navy recruiting office." That was right on top of the old Embassy Theater, on the northwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Union, up on the second floor.

[23:40] So I got my papers there, and finally convinced my dad to sign them, because he still had legal jurisdiction. So, I got into the Navy and went to Farragut, Idaho. I had training for one month in Chicago after boot camp. I got a two-week boot leave. That's important, because I came home and walked down to Ballard High School. I had been sick when I first came home, but I got well enough to go down there. After talking around in my school rooms a little bit. The teachers got a hold of me and had me take the final exams for the year. I passed the solid & spherical geometry, and I also passed my physics test. That was important. I never would have had enough high school records to get my diploma later on. But I haven't gotten to that yet.

[24:45] Anyway, I got into the service and went to California and took training. Then I went to Treasure Island and did my final training. I went into an outgoing unit and got aboard the *U.S.S. Mount Olympus*. And that was just back from the invasions of Leyte and Lingayen. And we got aboard that, and I was in the electronic technicians, third class. I had to go up and service the antennas up on the king posts. I had to climb up out on the yard arm, not when we were underway, but I had to... That's what the chief petty officer had me do.

[25:41] The first thing I did was climb up, wiggle out on the arm of the king post, open up the housings and take the [drying] bags that keep the electrical stuff dry, take them out and put new bags in, and go around and do that so I could work up in these areas. Then I got to work later on in the shop and the CIC room, which became my eventual [post]. That's the combat information center,

where all the radar and stuff is. And we had all the communication equipment for the entire invasion fleet for an amphibious operation. That's what these ships were- Auxiliary General Command, they called them, or General Communication Ship. By then, [Vice Admiral] Wilkinson was the flag officer onboard.

[26:30] So, I learned how to do quite a bit of electronics stuff, and I had the training, which was important for my records. So we got into Hawaii, and then into Guam, and then we were traveling between Guam and Leyte, back to the Philippines. We were running in the dark, at night. We had our para-vanes out for possible mines. So we were traveling without escort. We could see in our CIC room that the ship was going to be on a collision course with some other ships. We knew they weren't Japanese, because we had an IFF code we picked up- Identification Friend or Foe signals.

[27:26] We told the people in charge of CIC were notified in the bridge that we were on a collision course. I don't know what happened, but we ran into a fleet tanker, despite all that, and we almost went down. I remember I said, "Maybe I should go up for a visual." This guy put his hand on my shoulder, and he said, "You stay right where you're at, buddy." So, I did. But we almost went down. One of the escort vessels came alongside in case we had to get off. Anyway, the guys managed to patch it up, welding and bracing and everything.

[28:15] We went with a list of about 35 degrees, and very slowly into Leyte. We took over the harbor facilities. The Admiral came on as SOPA. He could order whatever he wanted. "Supreme Officer Present Afloat." So we got repaired. We went up in the dry dock off Samar Island. We were there... We'd use all salt water showers. The ship got so heated up, we couldn't sleep below deck. So we took our mattresses and put them in the saltwater showers and then laid them up on deck to sleep at night, and we threw our boondocks into the showers to keep them wet. We put on whatever would fit our feet.

[29:05] When we'd go swimming, and they had a marine detachment onboard. They kept him up on the boat boom and let us go swimming. First of all, they were sure there were no sharks, and if they saw sharks, we'd all come running in. But we'd see them. We were coming back in, and they'd be shooting sharks. We could see the sharks attacking each other. Because if they hit one of them and it was bleeding, the other ones would immediately come and attack it. So that was the kind of swimming we did.

[29:41] Then we went in eventually to Luzon Island. We had been down around Zamboanga and so on, and then up to Luzon and Subic Bay and into Manila Bay. We were there until they dropped those two bombs and the war ended. I remember that. We knew the war was over. We had just gotten the news, because we had nothing but communications onboard. But there was another ship with a four-star admiral, Admiral Turner, on the bay. Until he blew his horn, nobody else was going to blow their horn. That's protocol. We waited a half hour for Admiral Turner to blow the horn. We were all convinced he was mad because the war ended. [Laughter] But that's neither here nor there.

[30:35] Instead of getting on the Liberty Party like the rest of my division- it was [assigned to shore patrol duty] - ten percent of all the Liberty Party [were sent to shore patrol duty]. And the same thing applied to the Army's [military police] from the old Italian campaign. But they had a terrible time in Manila. It never got written up, but the Army took over the anti-aircraft guns, and they were shooting them off, and flak was coming down. I was put on shore patrol duty. I ended up at Pasig

River Landing, and it started to rain real hard.

[31:21] So my job... the shore patrol man told me to turn the guys over. I suddenly started to realize that some were [in the puddles], and they were so soaked they could have drowned. So I turned guys over, and they were being returned to their ship by shipmates, picking them up and carrying them down the stone steps to the sea wall at the river landing to the LCVPs to get back down to their ships.

[31:48] Anyway, the war ended [September 2 in Tokyo Bay. We landed the 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary Division in several locations in the Bay.] We went up to Hokkaido, because a whole bunch of stuff was going on there. The Russians were coming down from the [inaudible 32:05] Island. So then we ended up in Shanghai. I finally got a trip back to San Pedro aboard a DE- a destroyer escort. I checked my bag in at the King Street Station. I had a handbag and my sea bag. My sea bag had a Japanese rifle from an officer, and a whole bunch of other stuff [I hoped to save as mementos.]

[32:37] I checked my bag in at the King Street Station, and the chief petty officer in charge of our group from San Pedro didn't notice. After I got my discharge papers, I went back on the ferry and went back to King Street Station and picked up that sea bag and rifle, and I gave it to my Uncle Chet, and he had it re-bored and used it as a hunting rifle. He had a lot of trips out with his brother-in-law, and he got a mountain goat, and stuff like that.

[33:05] Anyway, that's the story. I didn't include the fishing boats. This is before. When they had to pull the boats up for recaulking and painting they had a guy named Ole Orflot, who would make arrangements. You could make arrangements with him to have your boat put up on his cradle and pull it up on the beach at Fisherman's Terminal. There were a lot less docks there then, and they had kind of a beach area. And he had a steel rail that went out into Salmon Bay. With a big cradle on it, to secure your boat. It was about a 42-foot troller. They'd pull it up, and they'd start blowtorching the paint, and scraping and scraping. They'd take the loose caulking out, and re-caulk and re-caulk. Then they'd repair everything ready for painting, and they'd paint it. The final coat was copper for the bottom of the boat.

**Michelle:** [34:11] Was this prior to the war?

**Ted:** [34:13] This was before the war. Yeah.

**Michelle:** [34:14] Okay.

**Ted:** [34:15] I should have told that, because that was important. My job...

**Michelle:** [34:20] How old were you at this time?

**Ted:** [34:21] I was about ten, twelve years old then. They dressed me up in old junky clothes, and a hat. The last bit of copper bottom, I'd lie on my back and paint the bottom keel and that area. Being a kid, that was my job. If I finished that job, I got to go change my clothes again, and when the boat was ready to go, in fishing season, I got to go with them. And we went through the Locks, and as soon as we got to the West Point area, they let me [inaudible 34:55], which is, stand by the wheel and take the fish boat down into Elliott Bay. They'd go to Pier 46 and take on ice. There was no

refrigeration in those days. Clallum Bay, at that time, still had ice. You could get ice there, and you could sell fish there, too, instead of going all the way back to sell in Seattle. But that all burned down later on, all that at Clallum Bay.

[35:25] But anyway, I'd get off where Pier 46 is, and I'd walk up and catch the trolley home. In those days, school kids got onboard a trolley for three cents. I'd go all the way down to the Alki Natatorium in Alki in the summertime for three cents and a four-hour transfer. I'd go all the way down and swim at the natatorium, and come back to Ballard on the trolley.

[35:53] Another thing that happened to me when I was at Whittier Grade School... In 1934, the *U.S.S. Constitution* came into Seattle, the only time it has been to the west coast. It was at Pier 90. So our whole class got to go down to Old Ironsides. That was a big treat.

[36:15] Skipping ahead to 1992, I had my knees replaced. I had so much osteoarthritis. So Eric, who was then about three and a half or four years old, stayed with [Betty] and me. He came over, and I'd entertain him. I'd be in the family room. I think Carleen bought these kits, and we made the *Titanic* and Old Ironsides. We put it all together with glue all over our hands, and all that jazz.

**Michelle:** [35:56] Who are Carleen and Eric?

**Ted:** [35:58] [Carleen is my daughter, married to Neil Zimmerman. Eric is their son, my grandson.] When I got rid of everything [during my house sale]. I had this picture in 1934 of the Old Ironsides, and I said, "That's Eric's." So, this is a little vignette. You know when you're cleaning a house out... Another granddaughter, Teresa, the cuckoo clock that we had at the house. The cuckoo clock goes to Teresa. So I had to go over this whole list when we were moving out of the house- the house we lived in from 1952 until last year. I moved into the North Haven on March 10<sup>th</sup> last year. The sale went final June 3<sup>rd</sup>, but this is when I moved out.

**Ted:** [37:56] Carleen was six weeks or two month old, roughly, when we first bought that house. The other two children weren't born yet. So, we moved in there on Labor Day weekend, 1952. We lived there all those years, and I built upstairs... I finished the upstairs two bedrooms, and also we built a dining room and a family room and remodeled the bathroom and the kitchen, and things like that, and built an extra fireplace in the family room. Patios. Put in my own side sewer. A long time for living in a home.

[38:52] Going back... In the thirties and forties.... Finally in about 1937 or 1936 I got a red wagon from my dad. My grandmother didn't have any place to hide it. My dad realized it would be too visible being in the house there for a month or so. So we were good friends with the Orstrups, next door. She was an old lady with a bad hip, and it was pinned. She became widowed at about the time I was living there. He was an old man, as I recall. Anyway, the son worked for the post office. He was a mailman, and a good friend of my uncle's. He liked to do photography, and he did these pictures of a person shaking hands, with the camera, and whatever he was doing.

[40:02] Anyway, my dad decided that the wagon would be hidden in Mrs. [Orstrup's] kitchen under her table. My grandmother knew about this. So every once in a while during that pre-Christmas period, my grandmother would think of some excuse to have me go over to Mrs. [Orstrup's] and give her something or get something from her. I kept wondering, why is my wagon underneath Mrs.

Orstrup's table, this poor old lady with a pinned hip?

[40:41] Finally I did get the wagon, but being a very enterprising fellow, I knew that down at Paterson's grocery store at 70<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, they were selling potato sacks that were too heavy for some of the women to take home. So I went down there, and I parked my wagon, and I had a little sign there, I'll help you bring your groceries home. So occasionally I'd get a customer, and I'd get a dime for pulling a sack of potatoes, and stuff home for them. That was my first enterprise.

[41:25] My others, I had gotten a *Seattle Star* route, which was my first route. It was so thin a paper, you could fold it into squares. Being a square, it was like a Frisbee, you know. I learned to throw a *Seattle Star* in that condition in the most remarkable ways. There would be those brick porches with a portico opening in the brick. I could get it so it went right through that portico opening, and it landed there. If it didn't, I'd pick it up and put it where it [belonged].

[42:00] Then I got a PI route. The guy charged me twenty bucks for taking over his PI route. I found out he wasn't supposed to do that, but I paid him. That was the Jansen boys. That was a big, big route. You had to get up early, early in the morning. I got there at four in the morning, to the paper shack. It went from 65<sup>th</sup> to 85<sup>th</sup> from 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Northwest, which is huge. So I had to bring them in stacks. I remember one place up near 85<sup>th</sup>, or just a block south, it was an apartment building. It was on the second floor, and the guy had a string going down that I had to tie the paper around and pull the string. I think that woke him up in the morning, but he pulled his paper up. [Laughter]

[42:56] Anyway, I did have the paper routes, and stuff like that. Then, after I had been married for a while, I got to thinking about the Norwegian Male Chorus. I still liked to sing a lot. So I joined that. I know even then before... My cousin Harold Edwards, Gudrun's son, he was six years younger than me, and he was also born in the same house I was born in and Gudrun took over, after my dad's marriage had ended. He became a Lieutenant Colonel in Strategic Air Command. He died just about six months ago. His remains are at Tahoma National Cemetery. I took his widow down there. We went down together. We had someone drive us, because I didn't know how to find this place, and I don't do that much driving anymore. He and I were very close, and he had joined the Norwegian Male Chorus, too.

[44:09] The Sammamish Valley Pioneer Picnic was out at Cottage Lake. The first time I remember it was at Erickson's Grove, at the south end of the lake. I must have been only about seven or eight years old. I remember everybody was excited, because all of a sudden, here comes this beautiful pair of horses, and a fancy wagon. It turned out it was the Woodins- Mr. and Mrs. Woodin, who [founded] Woodinville, and also gave the two acres for the Woodinville Cemetery. They were in their seventies or eighties, I don't know at the time, being just a kid. There were just two older people, and everyone gathered around them. I guess that was the last time I recall seeing them.

[45:09] After that, we moved to what was eventually to become Norm's Resort. This was before it was Norm's Resort. I've got pictures of the 1939 and 1942 gatherings of several hundred people. I'm in one of them, wearing my uncle's hat. That was in [1939], I think. Anyway, I've got those at home.

[45:37] Then eventually they moved... as the number of people that went to it got smaller and smaller, we moved to Blythe Park. Still, I'd say over half the picnic now is my Ormbrek and Fosberg

side relatives, coming to Blythe Park, the third Sunday in July.

**Dan:** [46:03] This is in Bothell?

**Ted:** [46:04] In Bothell. I remember going to the Bothell Lutheran Church out there. I know that my great-great uncle Olav... I think he came here about 1873. He was one of the founders of the Bothell Lutheran Church. His son Esleke became Ormbrek Street, because Esleke built a house about half a mile from Bothell Highway up to his house. So Ormbrek Street ran up to his house. I do remember my sister and I... Gudrun must have taken us there, because she knew Esleke. Mrs. Esleke had the nicest cookies. I can just remember those sort of things as a youngster.

[46:58] The Bothell area is quite involved in... Great-great Uncle [Olav] Ormbrek and his family there. Esleke was some sort of an official. He did the calligraphy, all the beautiful writing of documents and things like that. I don't know what his official position was, but it must have been enough so that they decided to name a street after him. They named that street, because it went up to the house that he built himself. That house is still standing, and it's being used by several different businesses. Unfortunately, Bill's Chevrolet took a big chunk of it out, and the way the roads are being managed, there's not much of it left anymore.

[47:47] But getting back to the church, I introduced myself, and I said, "Could I look at some of your old records?" I went back, and back in the 1880s and 90s, they recorded people's names and how much they put in the offering for the day. My Uncle Olav, in 1891, gave ten dollars. [Laughter] And I thought, I wonder how much ten dollars in 1891 would be worth today with compound interest. But anyway, [it was worth a lot] in those days, as far as money is concerned...

[48:27] And then I went to the Bothell Cemetery. He had children that died before the turn of the century, of diseases. He never got to see the fulfillment of their lives. I still have people... I think it was Gunnleik's children, who had twin brothers, fraternal twins, Walter and William. William worked for the Seattle Fire Department. He won an oyster-eating contest that the fire department had back in the fifties or sixties. He's two weeks younger than me- both of those cousins, distant cousins. He had 144 oysters, or something. [Laughter] He was a big man.

[49:28] I don't know what else... I've got the newspapers. Oh, confirmation at Ballard First Lutheran, Pastor Haavik. The blessing of the fleet started then. The Norwegian Male Chorus sang and took up the whole balcony of the Ballard First Lutheran Church. And that's when I remember hearing that, I've got to join that chorus someday. And that's what I did. Of course, they had this picture. When I first joined the chorus, they were rehearsing down at the Norselander. At that time, there was a fellow who was a historian, [Carl Moe]... I can't think of his last name.

[50:17] Anyway, I didn't know he was going to do this, but all of a sudden, he introduced me. He said, "His grandfather was in the original chorus in 1889." And I thought... [Laughter] I don't want to be called out special. But anyway, that kind of surprised me. I did know him. He had somehow talked about the families. He was in the original chorus, and of course, he stayed with it until 1901, when he moved out to Woodinville. But I'm pretty certain he came back for the Sangerfest occasionally. And I think he was with the AYP Norway Day group. They had 400 singers.

[51:10] And it just so happened... A friend of mine who did historic movies for the city, Ward

Collier, found that Councilman Ruud, R-U-U-D, had filmed Norway Day at the AYP. He found out his granddaughter lived in West Seattle. He got the film, and sent it to Portland, and had it reprocessed on mylar. Then he arranged to have it introduced at the... One time I went to this luncheon of the commercial club, because he was going to show that film. And I sat down with this gentleman who was in the fishing business. And it turned out when we were talking to each other, that we were cousins. He was a Mr. Larson, who was from the Jorgensen side of the family. His mother, I think, was a [inaudible 52:11]. She married a Larson. This was her son, and he was a fisherman. He said, "You know what? You're my first cousin." That was a surprise to me.

[52:27] Another thing about this business, Hallie... My cousin Harold... I mentioned Gudrun was a best friend of my mother's. Gudrun found... I didn't know this. I just thought my mother was dead by this time, and I didn't know what happened to her. Apparently, Gudrun had gotten Alzheimer's, and Hallie sold the house where his parents were living on 67<sup>th</sup> and about 28<sup>th</sup> Northwest. Somewhere in that area. And Gudrun and Ole were living there until Ole died and then Gudrun got Alzheimer's and had to be institutionalized.

[53:14] Hallie had, by this time, as a retired Lieutenant Colonel, also had a real estate license. He was in the real estate business, and sold his parents' home, so he knew the people who bought it. And Hallie had lived in Ballard, also, and he had a habit of taking these 5K... He would go out and run, keep himself in condition. He was passing by his parents' old house, and they spotted him and flagged him down. They had a letter addressed to Gudrun, his mother, and gave it to Hallie. He opened it up, and it was a person down in Tacoma that had been the caretaker, and was writing to Gudrun. And he realized it was talking about... She's still living there in this home in Tacoma.

[54:17] And he brought it to me, knowing that this was going to be all news to me. By that time, my children were grown, pretty much, and I had young grandchildren for the first time. Theresa and Isaac were sister and brother from my son's family. So, first of all, Betty and I and my older sister went down and visited her. She would talk to Betty, and let Betty put her sweater on, and button up her sweater... She wouldn't let Gloria and I touch her. And I tried to talk to her in Norwegian, and she said, "I don't speak that anymore."

[55:03] The caretaker... I forgot her name, but she said, "You know, she went to a special ethnic concert, and they played different music. They played the Norwegian national anthem, and she stood up and was just crying." So, when she finally passed away... This was in the seventies, I guess. I forget... Well, about 1980, I guess. She died in 1986. And I got a stone made in Norway of marble, and we had her ashes put in next to her original husband's grave in Washelli. And we had a graveside ceremony with my pastor, and I told him all about it, what I knew. I sang the song, "Open My Eyes that I May See, Visions of Love, Thou has for Me." It has to do with her children, too. I sang that as part of the ceremony. We had quite a gathering in the family. But because Gudrun was so close to Helga, this became sort of a thing that was a special secret. How much have I got left?

**Dan:** [56:39] Going back to... Is it your grandparents who came to America?

**Ted:** [56:48] Yes.

**Dan:** [56:48] Why did they originally come to...

**Ted:** [56:52] There was a story about that...

**Dan:** [56:56] If we were more specific... Why did they come to the Northwest, or...

**Ted:** [57:03] Well, I know one reason why they left, in the case of my grandfather's farm, the family was getting bigger than what could support the children.

**Dan:** [57:11] You always hear this slice of the pie kind of thing where it becomes...

**Ted:** [57:17] Yeah. And he was the oldest son, so he had odels rights. In those days... That has become cancelled now in Norway, but that meant that he was the only one that had the right to sell the house or sell the farm. He also, with the odels rights, his heirs had the right to buy it back. And I'm not sure, but I think I understood that they actually sent a lawyer over, since my dad was alive at the time he sold it, he had to sign his odels rights away. But that was later.

[57:56] Anyway, the Fosberg side, they lived in Lom, in Gudbrandsdal area. It was more of a big farming belt compared to this mountainous west Telemark area, which was near the town of Høydalsmo. That's where my daughter Carleen got the Bikstad. The Bikstad was a book, and she still has it, of the Ormbrek name. "Orm" is a derivative or serpent, and "brek" or "brekke" was I think a rocky hill. And Ormbrek was still in the [book] with two "k's," at the end, and my grandfather dropped one of the "k's" to keep it less complicated.

[58:43] But even the song "Landkjenning" is about Olaf Tryggvason. Olaf Tryggvason, his boat was a serpent name of some kind, because that's where the bow of the boat was made into a serpent's head. It was a special serpent's head, because he was a chieftain, or king, or whatever. He was the one that eventually, by force, or whatever, brought Christianity to Norway. And then the Danish and Swedish kings waylaid him and destroyed his fleet. Every Söngfest ends [with this song], which is about Olaf Tryggvason.

**Dan:** [59:42] Do you think there were other relatives in this Puget Sound area? Why they specifically came to this area? That's quite a... It's always the story of coming... really scary, coming all the way from the old country, halfway around the world, let's say to Ballard.

**Ted:** [1:00:09] Well, he had... First of all, his Uncle Olav [was here].

**Dan:** [1:00:13] Okay.

**Ted:** [1:00:13] He must have had some kind of idea that he could pay off his passage. But with the women, they always had to have a job ahead of time. So, when my grandmother came over... As I understand it, she worked for a rather rich family that had to do with the lumbering business. So she became a maid and a house cleaner, and all that sort of thing. And when she got married in 1895, the owners she had been working for... And this is probably less than five years that she worked for them before she got married... They gave her a bird's eye maple set, bedroom set. And in the middle of the Depression, she sold it for 600 dollars, which was a huge amount of money. And I remember that bird's eye maple set had to be sold.

[1:01:18] [My grandmother Kari Fosberg was the oldest, and] they had also people on the Kitsap

Peninsula. Most of them settled over there. One of her sisters settled just north of the Ormbrek homestead. What was her name? Anyway, they relocated over near Carnation. I think the last... she had a daughter who was ninety years old who just passed away a couple years ago. Hallie and I went to her ninetieth birthday party.

[1:02:13] But the story about the mother, my grandmother's sister- she herded cows on this old gravel road to get up to the Woodinville-Duvall Road, over several days to get up to the herd of cows. I don't know how many- eight, ten, twelve cows. Her husband was fishing, or whatever. Anyway, he couldn't be home during those months he was working elsewhere. And she did the job of herding those cows over to the other location [in Carnation] where they were relocating. These were the kind of people they were.

[1:02:49] My grandmother, I remember even after... She hadn't lost the farm yet. That was in 1936. But other people were using it. She had a cow up there that was a lead cow. She would tell me how it was her job to bring the cows in at night when they were ready to be milked. They had a little stream running through the farm, and they would use it to put the milk canisters in to keep them cool. She would go to her lead cow and ring the bell, and the other cows would come up to it, and she would lead them into the barn. She'd tell me how they'd do this sort of thing. But the reason she came over is because they already had this job lined up for her.

**Dan:** [1:03:37] That's usually the way I understand it. There was always a brother, or a sister or an aunt or an uncle who was here. I'm always interested in asking that, because how did the original aunt or uncle, whoever that may be, come here? Usually the stories you here are always the follow up, like you're talking about. On another subject, we know that you've been able to keep the Norwegian Male Chorus going. Are there other activities...

**Ted:** [1:04:15] I belong to Sons of Norway Lodge.

**Dan:** [1:04:16] ...And so on that you've been able to keep alive in your family, like Sons of Norway?

**Ted:** [1:04:26] My daughter is the one that probably is the great heritage-keeper, Carleen. Gudrun became such an influence in her life. She loved what Gudrun seemed to represent. She knew that I had been sort of out of it since I got into the service and all that, and got married. But I always would go out to the Sons of Norway Lodge in Bothell for our lutefisk dinners. Hallie and his family had people that worked in the kitchen. He had three children by his first marriage. Marcy is still out there as a pharmacist at the Rite Aid store there in Bothell. John is a successful businessman. Karen, the oldest daughter, is up in Alaska.

[1:05:26] But both John and Marcy, especially John, are active in volunteering at the Sons of Norway Lodge in Bothell. So, that's where we go for our lutefisk dinners. I even had my grandchildren and great-grandchildren go with me to these lutefisk dinners up until this last year. It's just too much. But I had two of my great-grandchildren eat lutefisk. One was only eighteen months old. His first taste. I had four great-granddaughters before I got a great-grandson.

**Dan:** [1:06:08] So, what do they think about lutefisk?

**Ted:** [1:06:10] My grandson thought it was great, but I think he's the only one. [Laughter] Anyway,

they missed going out this last time. I said I just can't take it anymore. They have to wait in line to get in, and then you buy a ticket. You're standing around. There's no room to sit down. There's a few seats here and there. And then finally, you go in in groups of about twenty into a section that is going to be the next group to be called in, and they serve family style. It's an ordeal. It's a remarkable ordeal, because all those people suffer through that to be able to have 45 minutes to sit down and have lutefisk dinner and talk about how great it is. [Laughter]

**Dan:** [1:07:00] Of course, some people may think that just eating lutefisk is an ordeal.

**Ted:** [1:07:03] [Laughter] That's right, too. I remember when my sister and I, our job was to... Gloria and I would wipe the dishes with a dishtowel. It was 45 minutes after everybody had dumped the stuff in the sink. And they cleaned it, and we were cleaning silverware, and it wasn't silverware anymore- it was black. [Laughter] Because this stuff never did get soaked up the way you do now. This is purified lutefisk they have that is frozen, you know.

**Dan:** [1:07:34] From Port Townsend, I believe...

**Ted:** [1:07:36] Wherever they... In fact, there is some kind of requirement that they can't have that lye in it. [Laughter] The idea is, it might be harmful. [Laughter] We got rid of it through the laundry tub the best we could.

**Dan:** [1:07:54] There are various other stories you hear about how to soak...

**Ted:** [1:07:59] I remember going with the Male Chorus when they opened the Poulsbo Sons of Norway Lodge. And it was the very first opening ceremony, and we sang at the opening ceremony for the Poulsbo Lodge, the Seattle Chorus.

**Michelle:** [1:08:17] How long were you a member of the Norwegian Male Chorus? Are you still singing with them?

**Ted:** [1:08:21] I first joined about 1976 or 1977, somewhere in there. They were rehearsing at the Norselander. I was with them about eight, nine years, and then I quit the chorus, or took sabbatical, or whatever it was, because I was so busy with different things. One of the things was activities in the Wedgwood area that I was involved with, and my church activities, also. I got to be a member of their [choir] in 1962. Not glee club, their choir. Betty and I took membership classes. Neighbors of ours had been members of that little Presbyterian church. We really thought that was a good church to get started with. So, in 1964 we officially joined our Wedgwood church. Then I became a deacon, and then an elder for a while. It was just too much going on, so I quit the chorus during all those years and years of being involved there.

[1:09:45] Hallie was back in the chorus again, so I decided, doggone it, I'm going to rejoin the chorus. So I've been a member... The first... Oh, I've had about 25 years or so, all together in the chorus. I think. I have eighteen or nineteen years... Maybe 26 or 27 years. I haven't figured it out yet. But yeah, I've gone to about 21 Sangerfests.

**Dan:** [1:10:22] All along the Pacific coast?

**Ted:** [1:10:25] Yes. The furthest I've gone was San Diego. Been to a lot in the State of Oregon- Eugene and Salem and Astoria. Bellingham, on the north end, I've been to that. Of course, Tacoma is actually one year older than our chorus. They make a point of letting us know that. [Laughter] We had the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opera house in Everett, so we went and had the Sangerfest at that. We've been all these... It's going to be in Everett again next year. I've enjoyed the chorus, and I've been able to get into the pronunciations of the Norwegian language, gradually.

[1:11:26] There are people there that are native Norwegians. Many of them are at the age that they were youngsters there in Norway during the occupation. And I became aware that there is another holiday that is observed, maybe unofficially, but May 8<sup>th</sup>, I believe is called Freedom Day in Norway now, when the German army laid down their arms.

[1:12:01] Some of my relatives on the Fosberg side, I know, were in the Norwegian Underground. One of them was rumored to have died because of his activities in the Norwegian Underground. Ted Fosberg, as you know, is my dad's first cousin. My dad is 28 years older than me, and Ted Fosberg is nine years younger than me. Chester Fosberg was the youngest of the Fosberg boys, and he didn't have a child until late in life. Ted Fosberg became the International President of Sons of Norway, and is still active in going to the Syttende Mai Parades.

[1:12:52] I remember my uncle Ole and Chester. We went down to visit Chester when Ted Fosberg was born and was just a few months old. He was so proud of this, that he had a child, finally. I remember it was down there in South Seattle somewhere he was living somewhere at that time. Riding as a kid with them, I don't know. Here I was, about nine or ten years old at the time. Ted Fosberg became a [chemical] engineer, too. He was very successful as a chemical engineer. I don't know the details.

[1:13:38] I went to work for the City of Seattle as an electrical engineer, and I got my own little design group. I converted the bascule steel bridges from the old motor generator sets to get the DC power through silicon rectifiers and a newer type of science there. I converted all five bridges. I did all the arterial street lighting system. I became a member of the Illuminating Engineer Society. I became involved with that science. I had a design group that handled the electrical portions for the pumping and treatment facilities for sewage and water. The city engineer under the charter at that time did all the engineering, except for city light.

**Dan:** [1:14:42] That's another story, the city light.

**Ted:** [1:14:45] That's another story. So anyway, I got involved as an engineer. Anyway, it keeps me alive. We have engineer's retirement luncheons...

**Dan:** [1:14:58] Did you spend all your career...

**Ted:** [1:14:59] I still meet colleagues for the retirees to go to the luncheons every quarter and three months.

**Dan:** [1:15:08] That's good they're able to keep up events like that, and you're still able to go to them.

**Ted:** [1:15:16] I know I haven't said everything, but...

**Michelle:** [1:15:20] I did have one more question. Coming back to the Norwegian Male Chorus and the history... Because I understand you were a historian for a time with the Norwegian Male Chorus?

**Ted:** [1:15:37] I was a historian, but... Somewhere in the process from moving from the Norselander, and then moving here to the Nordic Heritage Museum, and whatever was done for remodeling, they lost almost all the records. The only records I was privy to that I took back... since I'm retired from that position, was a book that went back to 1903 on Sangerfest. I remember seeing that Pastor Ole Haavik went to a 1919 event in Spokane- the pastor of Ballard First Lutheran Church. I don't have that record anymore. But we just don't have sufficient records, except for the... Since they moved here, they kept all the minutes of the various meeting, and all that. They have those in boxes.

[1:16:48] But the original records that went back to 1889, if they kept them, they're pretty well lost. The only one who has a picture of the original chorus... It was in a round frame down there at the Norselander. I saw it hanging on the wall, that picture. That's missing. They said they just had copies of that. Alf Knutson still has the sources of those original chorus pictures, but not the original. So I have very little I could add. My position as the historian was to say, "Oh, my gosh, what happened to the records?" It's just too bad that the original stuff just somehow disappeared. I think they kept some of it in a storage room that was cleared out for some reason and they had to move it. We were tardy in recovering what we had there.

**Michelle:** [1:17:56] Is there anything you learned about the history of the Norwegian Male Chorus that you would like to share, or anything interesting that you learned about it?

**Ted:** [1:18:09] The only thing I could think of was this film I have of Norway Day at the AYP. They do have films of the chorus. There were 400 members from various choruses in the Northwest. The lead chorus going in the parade was the Seattle chorus. That film is available at the Seattle Public Libraries. It was redone. The city decided that my friend Ward Collier's efforts needed to have a professional workmanship. So they hired a filmmaker, and they had... He was a radio... He had conducted Norway Day and that sort of thing... Norway Hour on the radio. I can't think of his name right now. But anyway, he is given credits on the filmmaking. [Wally Nelskog] did the narration in both English for our conception, and in Norwegian.

[1:19:23] The Norwegian film was sent back to our Sister City, Bergen. Our Sister City, Bergen has a copy of Norway Day at the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition. And it shows in the film the Viking ship coming in from Kirkland on Lake Washington, which was nine feet higher, and into the dock at Union Bay, and the Vikings getting our with their shields, and then it goes into the process of the history of the Eidsvold [Constitution] Day assembly, and goes into the various elements of celebrations. They had a wedding day party, and a parade. They even had some of these old 1909 automobiles, but that that has nothing to with Norway.

[1:20:20] They had the Hardanger [inaudible 1:20:23] playing the violins at this wedding parade, and all the rest of that. It ended up finally with the 400 members of the choruses for the Sangerfest. It's all in this 20-minute, roughly, Norway day film. It has been converted to DVD. I only have the

original VCR. I tried to get it done at the Bartell store, and they did a terrible job. The DVD didn't turn out so it's usable. I'm very disappointed. I wanted to show it at North Haven Retirement Home. But that's about all I can add...

**Michelle:** [1:21:10] What was the name of the DVD?

**Ted:** [1:21:12] Norway Day at the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition. It should be in the library system, and they do have an archivist office in the city now. If you have difficulty, people who are computer-wise can find his phone number and contact him and get a copy. I just have the VHS copy in my room.

**Dan:** [1:21:46] Okay.

**Michelle:** [1:21:47] Yes.

**Dan:** [1:21:48] Well, it's been great.

**Michelle:** [1:21:49] Thank you so much.

[TAPE BREAK]

**Ted:** [1:21:54] I talked to my cousin, Tom. He is one of Ole and Virginia's... Virginia, his mother... Ole was married to Virginia, who was a nurse at Ballard Hospital, which was a twelve-bed ward up there on the third floor. I don't know how they got together, but he did. She did an interview here within the last several years. She's been in Columbia Lutheran Home now for several years. The chorus always goes there, and to the Norse Home for Christmas. Out last event of the Christmas season is to go sing at those two locations. She's there.

[1:22:53] She had six children. Her oldest daughter, Karen, has been there, also. She had quite a bit of brain damage from a disease. I can't remember the name of it. Anyway, she has been at the Columbia Lutheran Home. And Virginia is going to be 99 this coming February, and I'm going to be 90 this coming November.

**Michelle:** [1:23:30] Congratulations.

**Dan:** [1:23:31] Amazing.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.