

Nordic American Voices
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Kaja Englund
February 1, 2010
Bothell, Washington
Interviewers: Mina Larsen, Laila Lee

Mina Larsen: [0:03] This is for the Nordic American Voices Oral History project. Today is February 1, 2010 and we will be interviewing Kaja Englund. We are at the home of Kaja Englund in Bothell, Washington. My name is Mina Larsen.

Laila: [0:19] Lie: And my name is Laila Lie.

Mina: [0:22] Kaja, can you tell me your full name?

Kaja: [0:24] Englund: Yeah, it's Kaja Englund, and my maiden name was Guttormsen. So I was born in Norway in Larvik [0:36.4] in 1922. And so we moved to Drammen later, where my dad bought a watch maker shop. So he was a watch maker for many, many years. When I grew up he tried to get me to work with him as a watch maker but it didn't work. [1:04] That was in Drammen. Of course it's very close to Oslo. And I had a wonderful childhood there. And I did a lot of things. I had a lot of energy. Swimming in the summer and did some competitive swimming. And joined the Drammen swim team, and that was a lot of good years there.

[1:41] And in the winter time, of course, we were blessed with a lot of snow and skating rinks. So I was over there and training too. First I had some old skates and they bent on the front. So I showed them to my dad and I said, "Oh, they're just bent." "Yeah, you shouldn't go on your toes." he said. So one Christmas there was a square package. I opened it up and it was white figure skates. They called them Sonja Henie skates.

[2:21] I think I slept in them all night. They were just so nice. And, oh, I went over to the skating rink the next morning, and I did that all the time. I just skated and it was a fun time.

[2:41] I also joined the Drammen Skating Club. It was a lot of races they had and we entertained. It was...You know, suddenly it got more figure skates, a lot of girls started. And so we kind of entertained out on the ice. And I never forget when you had to go out there alone. I always think about it when I see figure skating out there. Oh it just makes me nervous, because oh I was nervous. My legs were very, you know, they didn't work good. But it was a fun time.

[3:28] My mom made me some nice skating dresses. One I liked very well was a blue velvet. And, of course, we had to have sweaters under because it was cold out there. And I look at them now and they don't hardly have anything on. That must be so good. But, anyway, that was a fun time.

So, and let's see now. Instead of working with my dad, I was there one and a half years. But I was too restless to be a watchmaker. So I got a job in a photo store and I worked there for 10 years. I worked in a photo store. And I liked to make pictures, and I enlarged and I did retoshering -- what's that? Retoshering, yeah. So that was really what I liked to do.

Mina: [4:35] Is that what you were doing when the war started?

Kaja: [4:38] Yes, I did that.

Mina: [4:41] Tell me about your sisters and brothers.

Kaja: [4:43] Yeah, I had one sister Liv, she was one and a half years older, and of course I had my brother. We were the best of friends all our life. We really...you know I miss him now and he's gone.

Mina: [5:00] That was Ola.

Kaja: [5:01] That was Ola, and then it was Norma. She was about seven years younger. Then later in life there was one more and that was Tove. And of course I just adored her, because I was seventeen years old when she was born and she was so cute. I read stories for her and she remembered everything. She was just a comedian and she still is at seventy. [5:42] So we had a lot of fun together and I always appreciated my dad in the summer time. He always rented a cabin by the sea. So we were swimming all summer long and he took the bus forth and back to work.

Mina: [6:02] Where was that?

Kaja: [6:03] That was outside Drammen. I can't quite remember what you called those places, but it was just a wonderful time together and we got to be pretty good swimmers. [6:23] Let's see now. Yeah, we moved a few places. I think my dad was pretty restless and he had four, five kids. It was hard to find a place, but it was always togetherness. And mom's good food, bless her heart.

Mina: [6:54] So how old were you when the war started?

Kaja: [6:59] Let's see now. My youngest sister was born in '39 and the war started in 1940, ninth of April, I'll never forget it. We heard some rumors that it was going to be a war but we didn't believe it. Not little Norway. [7:28] So there was one morning I remember we all were getting ready to go to work and we forgot to turn the radio on. And we saw people running down the street, and papa said "What in the world is this?" I said "Turn the radio on." And then it said that Norway was invaded by the Germans.

[7:58] They were off the fjord, and pretty soon they would take over the whole Norway. That's why people were running, and I think they went up in the hills or they got to their cabins like we did.

[8:16] We went up to our cabin and we had view over Drammen. So we could see what was going on, and we'll never forget when they came marching into Drammen. We could almost hear them, all the way up on that hill.

[8:35] And then we saw machine guns all over, every corner. And we were just scared to go back, but papa said "We have to. I've got to watch my store. And I have to go to work."

[8:54] So we all just went home, and it was just weird to see all the Germans taking over everything. And they were in our stores. They must have been starved because they ate up all our food. They bought all the clothes they could get, and I think a lot of stuff was sent down to Germany. So at least we all got to our works and papa did OK.

[9:29] And so, let's see. Yeah, and then war was going on, lot of places in the world. And it was fairly quiet in our town but there was marching, and we were scared of them of course.

[9:57] But we could at least go to work. And so anyway, let's see now. Yeah. The highlight, I think it was in '42, a dancer came into Drammen to teach ballet and dancing. Boy, that was right up my alley.

[10:25] And I was so happy she got there. And she was a good strict teacher though. She was. This little woman. She was Chinese, Russian, and Danish Person. She must have been just four foot nine I think and with power.

[10:44] Her name was Elana Prolova. So, but, boy, we had to train and she saw to it that we did. And I came home sometimes so tired and my dad couldn't figure out why I did all this. But I loved it. And later when we got good enough, because she had children's parties, and teenagers, and grown-up.

She put on a show in Drammen's Theater, which was a beautiful theater. And what did we call it? [inaudible 0: [11:15] 11:28.2] . It was absolutely a beautiful theater Drammen. So we went on the stage and put on a show every year. And so, life went pretty good for me, I should say. It was worse for the housewives who had to get dinner together for the whole family. And just mama stood in line, just to get a few items.

Mina: [12:00] So food, that was scarce?

Kaja: [12:01] It was scarce, it started to get scarce. Yes. And we were lucky to have my little sister, because she was allowed to get real good milk. And so, mama used some of it for her coffee and some for other food. But anyway, so that was that. [12:22] And I always think about how the housewives, how they contribute to our life. In their shopping bags that they always had, with their scarf around their head, they brought London newspapers in their shopping bags.

[12:44] And they delivered that to somebody. And I was so proud of them. Nobody was scared to do something. So that was all right for me because we didn't suffer too much. But poor mama, she fried herring in cod liver oil. And I remember that, that you were hungry

enough to eat it. And they said we were so healthy because that was good stuff. So anyway, life went on.

Mina: [13:29] And you got really involved in dancing and then you were doing skating too?

Kaja: [13:32] Yeah.

Laila: [13:34] And theater?

Kaja: [13:35] And then that was also a fun time in my life. Her husband, my dancer's husband called me up at one time, and said "we have a part for you in a show in Drammen's Theater. This is a good play. You are supposed to be a Spanish dancer." And, woo, I just thought, "Can I do that?" And then I thought, "I have to at least try." So they checked out all the people they had hired for this play, the name was "Min nevo Herr Greven" [My Nephew the Count]. Jens Aas, owner of Aas Bryggeri [Brewery] in Drammen, he was also there and Fremont Clausen and then there was lot of people. And then so, so everybody was tested. My name was Lolita Conchita from Palo Belle Chere. And then so I had to learn to talk very funny, and I had to say, " [inaudible speaking in Spanish 0: [14:30] 14:42.9] . And this was how my part was the whole thing. It was a fun part.

[14:56] And people was happy to have a place to go, and we had twelve full houses. And people stood in line to get tickets, and even though I had Germans in each house, I had a good time with the theater. And then so, from then on, I had another part, that was later played and Henke Kolsta was the director, and that was fun because he was famous in Norway.

[15:38] And then we, we had the , that show, that show "Den store barsedipen [The large christening]", and I was Toralfa. And that also went really good. I played a cheap girl, and somebody was shocked that they had hired somebody like me, because they thought I was one of the girls from the street. [laughter] But anyway, I must have done a good job, yeah. So there was Henke Kolsta.

[16:15] And then later, I got a job on Jahr where they made all the films in Norway. I was just kind of background person. But Henke, he was there. And he said, "Toralfa, are you here?" Yes, I am here because, I'm there where the action is. And that was...

Mina: [inaudible 0:16:40.6] [16:40] ?

Kaja: [16:42] Oh yeah. And there was Elolf Arle from Sweden. And it was Georg Fant from Sweden. So I got food friends with them. And it was just a fun time. I felt like I belonged. And I would liked to have gone that way and the whole group was going to Sweden and make a film. [17:11] But I couldn't go, I had a job in Oslo. And I always thought about it, that would have been fun to go with them. But I was not supposed to. And then before long, we got a letter from...

[17:31] Let's see now, I got a, I am going too fast now. And...just a minute.

[pause]

Kaja: [17:42] OK, I was still in Dremmen with all this excitement going on for me. [17:55] We always wanted to work underground, and plan something so we could help the Norwegians. And somehow I got involved with somebody. And he asked me if I wanted to be involved in the underground. So, Ola and I, we both joined.

[18:20] And it was a secret life that my mom and dad didn't even know. We were involved. I think my dad, he understood and he's always said to me, "Be careful, Kaja." "I am OK," I said. But the work we did was very secret-like. Even we didn't know what was going on, except we delivered letters.

And we met somebody and they gave us these letters. And I remember I took the letter on the bus, for example, Up to Konnerud outside Drammen, and there was people gathered together, and there was the home front we called it, and I was proud to be in it. To really do something for Norway.

And because I know there was a lot of people working up in the mountains. And we know we were good skiers so they couldn't get us. This was what we was always kidding about. Ola too, he was also working. We had different names, you called it [inaudible 0: [19:21] 19:47.1] .

[19:49] And I think my name was Tora at that time - Tora. And later it was Kirsten. And so this is all we knew about the ones we worked with. That we knew these names.

So, anyway, Ola and I worked I think in '44 and into '45. And there was all this "rashia" we call it in town where Germans discovered there was something going on.

[20:29] Because there was a lot of people working in the home... In the home front. And that then sadly, Ola got caught. He looked like a *Jøssing*, we called it, and that means 100% Norwegian.

Mina: [20:49] Were you both doing the same kind of work?

Kaja: [20:51] Yeah.

Mina: [20:53] Which was carrying the letters.

Kaja: [20:54] Carrying letters. And we had to sure hide them. And we just pretended like nothing. Anyway, so, he got caught. And then... So they found out my full name, and went down to the house. My mother, father, and me and my little one, little sister, we went up to Konnerud, because we had a cabin up there. So, we were there. But Norma was home and all these Germans came and scared her to death.

"Where is the family and your sister because, Ola is arrested." And I'll never forget it, when they came up to Konnerud, and we were in our cabin. And I heard those boots on the porch. And the door flung open.

[22:02] I was sitting with a sandwich and that dropped to the ground because I knew all the things I had done. Oh, I think I prayed so hard. And then so, they said, have you been in the home front?

So I of course, said no. Well you might as well admit it because your brother is already at Grossman. Which was what we call *Buskruds Helvete* [Buskruds Hell], because it was so bad there. And so, of course, they just hauled me away.

[22:48] They used to take the whole family. But I think my dad was smart. I didn't understand before later. But he said, Kaja, "what are you up to now?" He said. Instead of, working against these people.

[23:07] So I thought about it a little bit. He didn't even feel sorry for me that I was arrested. But he was smart to say that. So they stayed home. I remember my little sister. I remember her last words. Kaja, "come back pretty soon." And I thought, am I coming back? Because I was scared to death of these Germans.

Mina: [23:31] And this cabin you had, was that used for anything else?

Kaja: [23:35] No. It was just rented out to people. Yeah. So my dad always rented cabins. OK, so, he drove them down to Drammen, and right up to Grossman that I had heard so much about. It was just a big house that they had made into, lot of cells, and, whatever you call it.

Mina: [24:10] It was a kind of a prison.

Kaja: [24:11] They...torture people there. So I got off there and they took me down in the basement where all the cells were, and then I met Ola there. His hair was hanging down. I know he had gone through something. [24:31] And I found out later he was really tortured. They put him in ice water so he was going to say, is your sister in there, and he said no, all the time. Oh, you might as well admit it because she's down in the basement.

So anyway, and after wards they said, yeah, we will get some heat in you, so they started to pound on him. You know they used a *kølle* [club] I said [inaudible 0: [24:49] 25:02.9] . That's a big stick, yeah? They just [inaudible 0:25:12.4] . So anyway, the best thing they ever did, they put us, a cell next to each other. And I didn't know it was him. Because I heard his, what do you call it? Oh he was....

Mina: [25:36] Kind of moaning? Moaning?

Kaja: [25:36] Moaning, yeah. He was moaning, and I thought, who is this? "Oh it is Ola he said." "But is it you Ola?" "Kaja, oh God, are you here also?" So anyway, so when we were sitting there down in, I call it a dungeon. The bathroom was a hole in the floor. [26:07] And the Germans came every night to pick me up and took me upstairs for interrogation, because they thought I was tired enough to say something. I never had played a better part in my life, when I was sitting there. There were all these Germans around me and they're talking to the interpreter.

[26:33] And I did not admit anything what I was doing. I just said, well somebody gave me a letter, I don't know who they were. I just played the dumb blonde. I did a great job. I always think about that. I have to say that. They just gave up on me.

[26:53] And back down into my cell. And I heard Ola in and out once in awhile, they just kept on hitting him. I was lucky that I wasn't hurt. One German just took my scarf and just tried to choke me or something, but that was nothing.

[27:21] So anyway, the interrogation kept on every night. Ola and I, oh we were so smart, that we were next to each other because we planned what to say, so we didn't have different stories. Oh, that was so smart. But they were dumb for letting us be so close.

Mina: [27:49] Kaja, didn't they bring in another person too that you had worked with?

Kaja: [27:52] Yeah. So, anyway, so, the days went by so slow because there was nothing there but a wooden bench and this window. And, I remember I did some exercises to keep in shape. I told Ola what I did. Now Ola, hanging up in that window is [inaudible 0:28:23.7] ,] now I do a back bend. I think if they open the door and saw it, and so he even laughed at it. We did. [28:36] But anyway, soon Ola and I, we sat down in that place for 14 days, and that was a long 14 days. And in the meantime, yeah, I had a eyebrow pencil in my pocket. So I started to write a few things on the wall there, just to have something to do.

[29:03] I wrote the whole Lord's Prayer "*Fader Vår* [Our Father]." And then God help everybody here. And a lot of things like that. I have the paper on that, the pictures of it. And so that was kind of neat that I could do that.

Mina: [29:28] Do they show that in the newspaper later?

Kaja: [29:30] Later, yes. But the Germans didn't like me to write, and they didn't understand what this prayer was. But you know, I think I became very Christian down there because I was down on my knees every day. I remember one time, I said oh Lord, help me out. Because I heard people getting killed and shot and everything, and it was so ... there because the sun came in the window? You know? After I was praying, and I just said ... I know you heard me. And it was just my little time alone. [30:11] And then so, one morning, I heard Ola's door open, and they came down and picked him up. And he was ... never came back that day. Oh that scared me. I thought maybe they just did something to him. And then anyway, later in the day, somebody else was put in there. And so again, I took the chance to ask who it was. So he said Tora, I know your name is Kaja. And I said "what is your name?" I knew his nickname. And he said Charles Tronson. Oh that's good. Because we better hurry up and make a story together here, before they pick us up.

[31:21] Yeah, "I was just going to come down and take you to a movie tonight. But you were not home, and they arrested me and here I am," he said. And so, got that cleared. It was so good that we had the same thing that he could say. So anyway, then the Germans came and just hauled me out of there, took me by my shoulder and put me into his cell. And I think I said first... "Charlie what are you doing here?" And he said, "do you know this guy?" And I said "yeah, he was going to take me to a movie tonight."

[32:07] And so, anyway, did you work together? No, he has no idea what I was up to. That he went down to my house because he wanted to invite me out. And then so I heard him leaving and I thought, wow, they let him go. If they had known that in his home, he was so involved with London news and the home front and everything. Oh, he wouldn't have been living today.

[32:59] It was good that we made up this story. And I was so good about, "oh my gosh, what are you doing here?" So that was great. So, after that, he left. And I felt so lonesome down there alone in that cell. And then the next day, they opened my door and said, arouse. So they took me upstairs and they led me outside. Oh, sunshine.

[33:30] Oh that was so nice to see. Well maybe they'll let me go home. They put me in a big truck with four machine guns. And I thought, now what? And there were some other people sitting there. I didn't know them.

[33:52] We didn't dare to talk together. And then so, they just locked the door and started to drive. I had no idea. And so I thought, oh gosh, I wish I could go home.

[34:10] Anyway, we drove for, I don't remember. I can say an hour or two. So we ended up in, yeah, I think, Oslo first. And they drove through Oslo. And then suddenly, this was outside Oslo, and they says, Grini concentration camp. Oh, I heard about that. It was scary to get in there. So, we had to give away everything we had in our pockets and stuff like that. And then so we got led into this big building.

[34:56] And there were lot of prisoners there. And I'll never forget when we walked through the courtyard to the men. Because we did, to get in, and they saluted us when we came like this, carefully. And so they knew we all had done the same kind of work. So anyway, I go in the building and one Norwegian lady came. She had been there four years. And so she became, kind of, a real boss, over people that came in, and helped them.

[35:41] And so she said to me, "would you like to have a shower?" And I said what? I hadn't washed my face in 14 days and not my body. It was the best. And she even gave me a gray uniform that was clean. And so, I thought, well, things aren't too bad here. Because that was great. And then so, I got taken up to a big hall with a lot of people. They were sitting sewing and mending things.

[36:19] I was so glad to have something to do. So we mended socks for the prisoners on the other side. And then later, they asked me if I wanted to move down to the barracks. So, it's just 12 people in each barrack. So I said yes, that would be great. And it was really nice. And we became really good friends. And sometimes we had little parties at night. And everybody had to do something, entertain something. And of course, here, I did my back bends, and my splits. I did my theater plays for them. And that was so neat. Yeah.

And somebody had been out in the garbage can and found some potato peelings and made potato cakes over a stove that was in the corner there. Oh, that was good stuff. We got a soup bowl with cabbage. That was cabbage soup with salt peter in it. That was our meal.

And we got a piece of bread. You could have it right now or you could have it all day. We ate it all right now so nobody was going to steal it from you. And so that was our food.

Mina: [37:44] That was all you got in one day?

Kaja: [37:46] Yeah, that's all we got in one day. So anyway, and later I got a job down in the washroom area, where we wash clothes for the prisoners, by hand. And there was a lot of dysentery, amongst the prisoners. So, it was not a very pleasant job. At least we did something, and helped. I can never remember how long I was there. But I remember my knuckles were just sore after scrubbing. [38:27] But that was better than sitting doing nothing. So we were there and there was always guards down there. This German woman was always there watching us that we did our job. So it got to be late in '45, and then so, we were washing clothes that day, I remember so well. And we all had our gray uniforms on. And then we heard some noise outside. It scared us so, because otherwise we didn't hear anything. But there was noise.

[39:17] We thought, this was the end of everything, the war, or everything. And then, so, the German guard said, arouse, told us to march. And so, we were huddled together. I can just still see us down the corridor. Gosh, now what? So we got up in the courtyard, and people up there were just jubilant.

[39:48] We didn't understand anything until we heard over the loudspeaker. I can hardly said it. Norway is free. And oh my gosh, that was when the Norwegian flag went up. It was just unbelievable. So, I'm sorry but, that's so still with me.

Mina: [40:19] You're wonderful.

Kaja: [40:19] Yeah, I'm always there when I tell it, because it was so fantastic. Five years is a long time. It's a long time.

Mina: [40:32] A long time to be occupied.

Kaja: [40:33] Be occupied, yeah. Right. So anyway, then, oh, so everybody of course were hugging and crying, and we were just so happy together. And then I thought, I wonder if my brother is here? Or did they do something with him? And it was a ladder there, on this wall, it must have been a 12 foot wall. So we took turns going up. Because a lot of the women there had their husband on the other side. [41:14] And then so, it was my turn to go up, and Ola and I always had a whistling signal together. And so I puckered up and I got that so loud as I could. And then it answered. And there he came. And I saw him come walking. This tall skinny guy.

[41:41] He had been sitting in a cell there. So he was not allowed to go outside. But that night he was out. And oh, we waved and, oh, we were so happy that we were both alive. And then so they had to be careful so it wasn't a turmoil, so they had to be careful.

[42:06] So they took a few people at a time to meet their husbands, their boyfriends, and I got to see Ola the next day. And it was just fantastic. And we had a lot of things to talk

about. So anyway, there was buses there ready to take us home. Ola couldn't go because they couldn't find his papers. So he had to wait.

[42:36] So they took us into Oslo Center. I don't know how they could have gotten things together so fast after the war because there was a lot of Swedes. In fact there was a lot of Danish food in places. Do you want some food? Do you want some clothes? We took whatever we could. And so I remembered when I was at Grini I had a sweatshirt and I embroidered "Grini", and then my prison number, 19, 606, there, I got it.

And so I had that on my chest and I... "*Har du vert på Grini?*" Have you been in Grini? Yes, I said I just got out today. Oh my gosh, they were just so happy for me that I got out. And walked down to the railroad station. And I rode for free on the train to Drammen. And it was about an hour on the train. And somebody on the train said, "Oh my God there are so many thousands of people on the railroad station because they're waiting for their people to get home or prisoners or whatever."

So when we got to Drammen I just got off. And people are just so elated. And my girlfriends from the dancing group, they were crying and carrying on. And, oh it was just so wonderful to see everybody. A couple of strong guys, what to you call it? - *Gullstol*. Yeah, they carried me down the *Tollbugata*. Oh my gosh, it was just a fun trip until I got home. And mama just said, "Oh thank you're home." They didn't show their feelings to much in Norway. But she was happy to see me.

[45:10] And I can remember she said, "Kaja, what are you hungry for?" Because then I could get anything I wanted. We never did that in Norway. We could never eat what we wanted. We ate what we got. So I said mama, can you make me some oatmeal soup? "Kaja, you don't like that?" And I said, we got that the last day at Grini, because the Swedes had made it for all the prisoners. They must have been cream in there because it was so good and we were starved of course.

[45:52] I never forgot that oatmeal soup or whatever. And so she made it. And it wasn't quite so much cream in there but it tasted good. So anyway, and the next day Ola came home. And he had a few girlfriends that came to see him, and were hanging on him, he doesn't want to go home. Oh, Ola and I had so much to talk about, and to our parents, they didn't know anything what we were up to. And so it was really something.

Mina: [46:31] Was he an older brother or younger brother?

Kaja: [46:33] Ola was two years younger. And we were together all the time. And so...

Mina: [46:43] It's amazing that the Germans – when you were at Grini - that the Norwegians and could takeover so quickly. They got you out, you know?

Kaja: [46:51] Yeah, this is so true, how they could do this. Because they arrested all the German guards right away. I saw them haul them away. Ooh, that was great. It was an electric fence around the whole thing. Guardhouses, and I saw them being taken down. Oh my. They must have known something ahead of time.

Mina: [47:21] I think they did.

Kaja: [47:22] Yeah.

Part 2

Laila: [Inaudible 0:00] . You were talking about when you lived in Drammen and when the war first started. How did you get the newspapers and what about the radio and all that?

Kaja Englund: [0:18] Yes. Of course, I don't know how all those newspapers came out but I do know things were quite secret like. But somehow we got hold of the newspapers. I think that also came from somebody got some London news. But I remember when the Germans took all our radios and I think that was so sad because it got so quiet in the house. We couldn't have anything on, no music, no news, no nothing. And we had to deliver them some place. I remember my dad said: [1:01] "They are not going to get this little one, I am going to keep it." And we said: Oh, do you dare do that? Somehow he took it to the cabin. I have no idea how he got it up there. He built an extra wall, a double wall and put the radio behind it. And that wall he could take it aside. So every day he listened to the London news from his little radio.

We was standing outside as a guard in case somebody should come. And so that's why we got a lot of news because somehow they knew how the war was going. We didn't know anything. Never heard about how things were going. And of course there was lot of things going up in the mountain as we heard afterwards. A lot of Norwegian guys, they were fighting for their life up there.

Laila: [2:12] Your dad, did he go up there daily or was he able to go there that often?

Kaja: [2:17] Yeah, because he had to be in store so it was mostly on the weekends he got it. At least we heard something and that was great. [Inaudible 2:45] . We missed music, of course when we moved here. I think that the war was over then. [Inaudible 2:50] after the war. We got rid of all the Germans right away. Then the American soldiers came in. They occupied and took care of everything. It was, it was so... I call it, it was fantastic to have them because they were so generous. They were so kind. Being that I was a dancer, I was invited up to...they had a place in - *Frimur Loshen* we call it. They had a 22 man orchestra. You know, the big band. I just couldn't believe it how beautiful it was.

Oh! And we danced all night. In fact we danced almost every night. And I came home to my dad and said, "I am going to America." That's what they do over there. So I tell you, five years without anything, it is awfully hard. I was in my prime age. I must have been 18 to 23. So that was really nice. And we even invited the Americans home and they were happy to get a good home cooked meal. And so...

Laila: [4:12] Did they stay a long...for a long time, like in months or...

Kaja: [4:14] It was more than that. I don't remember how long they stayed but it was quite a while. They really put some life in us. I really mean that. I still hear them, "Hi, Blondie." So anyway, this was a fun time. It was.

Laila: [4:42] So that was when you started on thinking about coming to the United States?

Kaja: [4:45] Yeah, and then at first, the newspaper came out after the war. And there was the pictures of myself up at Grossman. And with all this stuff I had written on the walls. And it was kind of nice to get that, because I couldn't take pictures of it before. So, it was in the newspaper and there was a little article about me in there. And that's where Ola was tortured and I think that was about it and all of the people from Grini. There was about 20,000 prisoners there. And so...

Laila: [5:31] So, that was in the newspapers clippings that we can take a picture of?

Kaja: [5:34] Yes.

Laila: [5:37] So, that was right after the war then?

Kaja: [5:38] That was right after the war, ya. I think they were celebrating for days and days on end. Nobody wanted to go home and go to bed. I remember that so well. Oh my. And so, anyway... [computer sound] I'm stuck. OK?

Laila: [6:05] OK.

Kaja: [6:06] So, I worked in a photo store in Oslo then for I think that was five years. And that was [Inaudible 6:12] and it was a very nice company that I got kind of sick and tired of the dark room. And hoping I could do something else. But there wasn't too many jobs to be gotten after the war and we were happy to have something to do. [6:31] Then we got a letter from America, from my aunt Anna, *Tante Anna*. That was my dad's sister. And they hadn't seen each other for, I don't know, for years. And I had never met her before. We were so excited about her coming. And then I still remember her on the boat that comes, this refined lady.

[6:58] And my dad was so excited there, seeing his, as he called her, his little sister. And so, anyway, Aunt Anna came home and stayed and I don't remember now how long. But Anna and I, we got along just so, wonderful. And then because she came here, we wrote together a little bit. I said I had America fever. I would like to get over there.

She wrote back and said, "Oh, Kaja, please come with me and when I am going to leave..." Oh, I was so excited. Oh, I saved money. I got my ticket. I think it was 1000 crowns for the ticket to America. And so, the time came in. We had lots of good time and she said it was so want to be acquainted with all these Guttormsen kids.

Yeah, so the day came that we were going to leave. It was kind of emotional. I was just going to stay one year, so I told everybody, oh, that year is going to go so fast. And so, we were on the pier and there was Stavangerfjord. And we said goodbye and we just cried our head off. It was hardest to say goodbye to my little sister.

Tove, I call her *Nusse*. And I still call her *Nusse* at 70 years old. And so, anyway, so we got on Stavangerfjord and the boat took off and we waved so long as we could. And out of Oslofjord and around the coast. And they all started to be...very rough seas. So, we start getting a little bit sea sick. So, we stopped in Stavanger and got some more passengers with us.

And then it was over to the Atlantic Ocean. And then it was a strike, so they couldn't have *bagasje med oss* [take the luggage with us]. And we got over there, and it was in November, and then the boat was just bouncing around something fierce. Everybody on the boat was sick, even the people in the kitchen, and I still remember *tante* and I we walked around with little brown bags, and being that we had such a good sense of humor, we thought everything was so funny.

But we sure didn't feel good. That was 10 days over, and then we came into the harbor, the New York harbor, and we saw *Frihets Gudinnen*. What do you call it?

Laila: [10:36] Statue of Liberty.

Kaja: [10:37] Yeah, Statue of Liberty. It was a little bit foggy, but we saw it, and it was at Thanksgiving and they served Thanksgiving dinner. I had never had turkey in my life, and we were really hungry. We hadn't eaten in almost 10 days, just some crackers and stuff. And so I thought life looked a little bit better. [11:01] And so, we got into the harbor and we just had some hand-baggage, because we couldn't get our baggage, and then, I guess we took a taxi to Grand Central Station.

[11:21] Anna's cousin was also there. Her name was Ragna, and she lived in Chicago, so we stopped in Chicago. And I thought that was kind of neat to do that. I'd heard about Chicago. And then, the next day we went to Minnesota. Anna's husband came, Uncle Ed came to greet us. Oh my gosh he could talk a little bit Norwegian, it was great. He was so proud because he had gotten a new grandson, and his name was Steve.

[11:59] He had a car, so he drove from Minneapolis up to Alexandria, or to Nelson, where they lived. Tante and I was not feeling too sharp yet, we could still feel all the waves. But anyways, it was nice to get in the house. So I was looking at this little city they had, and of course I came from Oslo and I didn't know how I was going to handle this little town. But people were friendly and I got acquainted with a lot of people.

[12:42] Then we went of course to visit my cousin Nora and her husband, and three little kids. They had a farm not too far from where Anna lived. They were building next door so they lived in a temporary little house. So anyway, Nora got sick and so Anna and I had to step in and take care of the kids and everything because she had to be in the hospital a few days.

[13:24] But I looked around the little farm house and we kind of melted snow so we had some water and stuff like that, but they were looking forward to getting a bigger house.

[13:43] I think Anna could see it on me that my humor was not on top. So I said you know I've got to get a job because I'm going back home in a year, and I need to get money for my ticket back home. So she said, "Just so soon as Nora gets home, we will both take the train to Minneapolis and get a job."

[14:13] So anyway and it was always fun to be with her, we could laugh at anything I mean it, I never had so much fun with anybody as her.

[14:25] So then we went to different places and ended up at one place I got this job - Lake Harriet Blvd. I still remember it in a big mansion with some very rich people and I was going to take care of two teenagers.

[14:49] Oh, it was hard on me because they were so spoiled coming from a war torn country. I looked at my two dresses hanging in the closet and she had a closet so full and she said she had nothing to wear. I still remember that. [laughs]

[15:08] But, anyway the poor kid she got more clothes sent up to her to try and I couldn't believe this. The boy was a little bit easier to take care of. I remember this was a fun thing to do because he could come in my room and talk to me and so I said, "Have you ever gone skiing?" because I had my skis there and I got new ski boards from Uncle Ed for Christmas. I was so proud of those were just the best I ever had.

[15:46] So I was going to find a place to go skiing in Minneapolis. There wasn't too many places because they said there was a nice hill someplace. So he said, "I'd sure like to try it" he said and before we knew it there come from this door the best skis and the best boots and the whole outfit for him. I was happy for him and the chauffeur took us to this place. The cook made us some sandwiches so I thought this is kind of nice.

[16:20] So we went skiing and he was so excited, this kid was. It was some of the best thing he had ever done in his life. I still remember I'm standing there and "Oh, Kaja watch me, watch me" and I said, "Oh, John you're doing great."

[16:39] So then after we got home we sat on the bed back in the steps there so I sat down and said "John there's one thing you have to learn now when you get older and get a girlfriend you have to take her shoes off." So he says "OK, I'll do that" and then the mother came.

[17:02] She was so mad at me because I was a servant and he had to take my shoes off and I got fired. In fact, I was happy to get out of there, I was.

[17:17] So Uncle Ed he came and picked me up and it was so wonderful to see him. It was like coming home to see Anna and normal people. That was really OK. Anyway, from then on, lets see...

[pause]

Kaja: [17:45] Yeah, so I stayed with Tante Anna in Nelson for a little bit there and we were just happy to be together. We were also very glad that I was feeling better and could take

care of her house and her kids. [18:11] We started to plan a trip, but I told my aunt I said, "You know, I thought everybody had a swimming pool and a convertible in America," because that's the films we see in Norway you know what's going on over in America.

[18:30] So Tante Anna said we had to work here too and I start to realize that people have to work for a living. We started to plan a trip across the country to Montana to my other aunt and uncle there. And so that was kind of, I was looking forward to seeing them. And Anna said then you will see where I homesteaded. And I homestead in Montana.

[19:02] And I thought that is great. I would like to see that. So we drove for days and we stopped on the way to see more relatives. And everything was just fun then. So then we came to Malta, Montana. So then we came to the little city there, it wasn't too bad. And so Anna said we've got to drive a little farther.

[19:32] So then we came to the prairie. So I looked at this prairie and was like there is nothing there. And then so way down there there is where Uncle John and Aunt Lorraine lives. And I said, "Gosh, people can't live here." I said.

[19:51] "Oh yeah," *Jada, Jenta mi*, this is it where they live. They lived here many years and this is where our homestead is. And the story was just kind of neat to hear, how people could do this.

[20:06] So we drove down and met uncle John. That was my dad's brother. And then my aunt from Stavanger. And they had a tiny little house and there was hardly any trees around. Because I don't think trees can grow there. It was cactus and I just couldn't figure out how people could live there. But they loved it. They got used to it I think. They had a lot of cattle.

[20:40] Oh yeah and then my cousin Oscar, his name was Oscar Guttormsen. Just like my dad. And his wife Sylvia there. And we got along. She had one girl and then she was very pregnant with twins. They were going to be due in September and then I would not be there. But anyway, so, I stayed there for one month and Tante Anna of course had to go back home.

[21:16] I stayed there and she and I had a good time because she was teaching me how to drive a car. And I still think about her, so pregnant and out there in no where. It was just, I thought about that many times. But anyway, we took the chance and we had a good time.

[21:33] I was kind of happy to leave. I had one more stop, then I was going to go to Norway. So they said good bye and they told me that they had a good time when I was there because I told them so many stories. Because you know, I was a comedian too at that time. And they just enjoyed the trip over of the boat and so they said they never had so much fun.

[22:07] So that's all it took. So anyway, so we drove, and then, let's see now, yeah we went to the railway station. And they bought me a ticket to Seattle and that was very nice. And I said goodbye to them.

[22:23] And I sat on that train and we went through Montana. Then I think it was Glacier Park and I saw some mountains. I thought, oh this is beautiful, it looks like Norway. And I don't remember how long the trip took but anyway, I enjoyed sitting on that train. So next stop was Seattle and I loved the surroundings. I saw all the mountains in Washington State. And I thought, wow, it feels like home.

[22:58] And so, in the station comes my aunt, Tante Gina, so I was bragging away in Norwegian. And she said, "No, you've got to start to talk English now, you are in America." OK. So I did the little English I could. I thought well maybe they have a nice big house. No, it were just a tiny, little house over in White Center with a little yard.

[23:34] And that's where they have lived all their life in America. He worked off and on, and you know, not to complain but he celebrated my coming there for days. So, he was, I'm going to say he was drunk for days. I didn't like it and he argued with me. Why I didn't like the Germans. He was not the right person to discuss that with me. Well you should have been a communist. That would have been better.

[24:20] And so, anyway, I thought, "Oh I can hardly wait till I get back to Norway." So I...I don't remember how I got on this bus and downtown. And everybody was meeting because they were going to pick berries. So I picked berries for a whole day and made \$2.75. So I didn't think that was worth it.

[24:41] And then so I got to have a job. And so I finally had the bus downtown to the unemployment office. And, oh I heard this lady calling somebody. She said, "Oh, she's really nice and she's Norwegian." And oh yeah she said, "You got the job. To take care of the kids and keep them in the Highlands."

[25:08] So anyway, "Somebody is going to come and meet you. You take the bus so and so to that place and then they will meet you." So here comes a big Cadillac and then the lady was there and she was so friendly and so nice.

[25:29] And little Michael. And he said to me, he looked at me and said, "You've got a little pig nose," he said to me. And his mother said, "Oh Michael you can't say that." And I said It's OK. We're going to be good friends I said. So we came to their house and it was a beautiful big house of course.

[25:50] But they were so human, her husband was just so wonderful to me too. There was a girl she was 10 years old and Michael was three, yeah.

[26:04] And they were easy to take care of. My job was, oh my gosh, the cook drove us to the swimming pool. There was a community swimming pool in the Highlands at the time. And oh my gosh, me and the swimming pool I finally got one. And of course I was a swimmer. So I was teaching the kids how to swim. And I did some acrobatic with all the kids around. So I thought, now this is America.

[26:38] And you know the neighbors were the Boeing people. Yeah, the owner of Boeing. So, and the woman I was working for she was the sister to one of the wives to Boeing,

something like that. But they were so nice. They were so ordinary, you know. So I had a really, really good time with them and they liked me.

[27:18] So, Missus, I mean the lady I worked for, she said to me one day, "You know Kaja all the kids around here envy Michael because he has such a neat nursemaid." Oh, so I thought that was kind of cute.

[27:42] So anyway I started to, yeah, I had some days off, yeah. And I thought I better go visit my aunt and uncle out in White Center. I caught like three buses to get there but I still don't know how I did it. But you do. And they were happy to see me. She says we've got a visitor.

Because I told, I invited somebody over and I said, Well that's nice because I never saw any people there." Yeah, so anyway, he's a nice man and his wife left him and he has a daughter. So anyway I met him and his name was Eric Englund and he had a daughter. Her name was Judy and she was eight years old. Oh, and he was Swedish and *han snakka svenska til meg, Forstosh* [he spoke Swedish to me, you understand] and it was so neat to hear that somebody could say something.

[28:49] And so we got along just beautiful. He said would you like to take a ride, I can show you Seattle a little bit, because my aunt and uncle never had a car. And so we drove around and the three of us had a good time. And he took me out for lunch, that's something that I never did.

[29:12] And so anyway, so we got home and my poor uncle he was still at it. And so Eric came back and came back several times and I said, "Wow, he never came to these cities often." And I thought that's great, we started to kind of connect somehow. But I was going to go home to Norway, so that, you know.

[29:43] But anyway, it was so strange that life is the way you feel and his daughter kept on, "Daddy, why don't you marry Kaja?" And so, I said, oh my gosh, that's impossible. But anyway, so Eric got at it too and you know, "I can send you home every time you get homesick," he said and all these good promises.

[30:15] So anyway, I went back to work at that nice place out there and I told her that I had found a man. She said, "Kaja, I want to meet him. I want to see if he's good enough for you." And of course Eric was a Boeing worker, and of course she supported Boeing people she was married to it. And Eric had been down there 42 years.

And so she was very impressed over what he was doing and how long he had been there. So one day I said, "Oh, he wants to marry me, what am I going to do?" And I even wrote home and started to write something about it. "Mama help, because he wants to marry me" and mama said, "We're going to miss you Kaja but he is good to you and I think this is your *shebne* [destiny] then it's all up to you.

[31:29] So anyway, and the lady I worked for, she said, "Kaja I can guarantee for you that you can stay with us for a long time." Because my visa was up in November and this was in

October. And then, so, anyway, make a long story short, we did get married in a little church. And all the, I can almost say it was kind of sad wedding.

[32:05] The only one that was there was my uncle, again, and aunt. But it was Eric's sister and husband too that was also Swedish. We of course, rented the church first and then the wedding dinner was down in their basement, in the rec room.

[32:25] And so, I remember they had a good meal for us. And my uncle was, yeah, he was not good. He said a lot of things to me that I shouldn't have heard because I got so sad. And, just like, I don't know if I can say it, but anyway, he said, "I'm sure you can't wait until you get out there today, tonight." Anyway, so, I knew what he meant.

So and I just say to Eric, "Let's go." Then I came outside that house and I just bawled my head off because I thought about my family that was so neat and a wedding with them would have been so fantastic and there I did this but anyway it was there and I did really love Eric so we had a nice little honeymoon. We just drove all over and I didn't care if where we went because everything was neat.

[33:47] So anyway we went back and picked up Judy and he said that he had an apartment that but he bought a house right away and that was kind of nice to get a nice clean new house. I was so glad I got a washing machine. Wow! We got a television and oh, I thought I had it made. Eric had a nice car. Boy, so we had just a really good life there. And the homesickness that is something else. And you get a letter from Mom and you cry. You write letters and you cry.

Anyway, soon we moved to a couple of different houses and one house I like that was an older house and there was overlooking Mercer Island. Had a beautiful view and I said to Eric, maybe someday we can move over there. But anyway no that's too expensive over there.

[35:08] So anyway, that is not the point that my brother, he wanted to come over. He just felt lonesome for his sister. "It's not much fun over here," he said. So then he came and he just took one look me because I had lost 30 pounds at least. And he said, "Oh gosh." He thought I was so skinny. "What happened to you?" So I said, well, homesick.

But anyway, I already had my Ola, *ja*. He was one and a half years old. Cute as they come. And I was pregnant with Jonny and I still was homesick and Eric said, "Yeah now I can send you home because Ola is here." So he has a place to stay. I was so happy and the three of us live in and all the boys looked so nice in their red jackets and I had a red coat. They were so blonde and so nice.

[36:17] That's right. I had only first, there was Ola. That was... Yeah. Ola one and a half year. I'm ahead of me know.

[36:27] But that's OK. So we came home and there was something wrong with the plane and we had to stop someplace on the way. So we were very late coming in and that's right. So then I came to Norway nobody was at the Airport and I thought that was so funny. And

then because it was eight hours later, we came and found out later that they all where there.

It was about 30 people just waiting for us. But we were so late and I Pappa called my cousin in Oslo and said, "Take the car and drive right into the airport see if his Kaja is there." There we were the last people in the airport. The kids are tired and they wanted to go home and it was just Ola then . I get mixed up.

[37:33] But anyway, so we drove off to Drammen and there was a house full of people and everybody was so happy to see us and of course I was happy to see my momma. I don't feel too good with my pregnancy either. Any way, it was great.

[37:48] Anyways, I was a little sick and I still had some diapers take care of. My sister Norma, bless her heart, she says, "I'll wash them for you." And so I kind of missed my washing machine, you know. I thought, OK, already I started to think about the things I had.

[38:10] And so, and my dad was crazy about Ola. Ola puts his arms around him. And of course, he didn't want us to leave ever. And so I thought everything was the same. I came home and it wasn't really. My girls friends were kind of gone and all married and moved or nobody did the same thing anymore. What I thought about.

[38:42] And so, I started to see, Oh gosh, I miss the car at Eric's house and I miss the TV, and oh, I missed my washing machine most of all. And I started to think about, it won't be so bad to go back. And that trip really helped me, even if it was hard to say goodbye to my mom and dad.

[39:06] So, papa, he just couldn't let go of this Ola and they almost had to take it away from him. And so, and he was kind of a little sick on the plane too, poor guy. And so when we got home to Seattle and it was kind of good to be home. And I was happy to be with my brother, too, so we had some very good years.

[39:38] And then, I had my Johnny, he came. And then later I had Norman, and the last one was George. And every time in the hospital they'd say, Mrs. Englund, you've got another boy. And of course I was hoping for a girl but I wouldn't trade any of them.

[40:03] So anyway, let's see there was another time, yeah, I had yeah, we moved to Mercer Island, that is right. And we moved to an older house that we said we were going to fix it up and it was right on the water. And to me it was a living place. And so I started a ballet school there and in a little schoolhouse and I made a little money, it was kind of fun.

[40:40] And I took driver's license, and oh, I thought that was really something. And I started to save up the money. And I told Eric that I would take a couple of the kids and go to Norway. Johnny and Olaf stayed home because they had a lot of things going. And so I took Norm and George, 10 and eight years old, and we went.

[41:06] You know we took this trip, and I remember that again there was something wrong with the plane and so we stopped in Anchorage for a long time. And you know they just had

an earthquake a couple of days before. I remember that we took some sightseeing trips and saw all the houses that were collapsed and all this. So it's good that we didn't come before.

[41:37] But anyway, so, we went home and it was *Jensys Glede*, it was good to see everybody. And Norm and George they said, "Mom, we don't like it here. We don't understand what they are saying because they talk so fast." So anyway they started to learn the language, and a lot of kids that went to school they had learned a little English, so, this was great.

[42:13] And of course Norman, he liked girls already at 10 years old. [laughs] So he had fun with some girls that came to visit. Papa said, "What are you doing here they just are kids." But anyway, it was a fun time together, with my sisters and all the kids and so forth.

[42:39] And then I just kind of started to think about what I was going to do when I got home to Seattle, or to Mercer Island that time, and I thought, "I don't feel like starting on the ballet school."

[42:58] I was 50 years old and kind of had enough, because I did a lot of acrobatic to give the kids that I was teaching, and I even had a recital, and I thought that was really brave of me to do. All the parents came, and I had the kids out there and I had just the regular phonograph, you know, that I put on. And they did OK, and the kids, they curtsey and the parents are very impressed with their kids were so polite and all that.

[43:35] So anyways, this was great, and so, I didn't start more classes there. I didn't, because I thought, "I want to stay home right now." So, let's see. Yeah, we build another house next to the old one, and that was quite a project and I loved using hammer and help, you know, because I enjoy that. So, we got this beautiful big house, my gosh, four bedrooms and all the kids got their rooms.

[44:19] So, in the meantime, I started to refinish something. I had a chest with some rosemaling on it and I took the pattern off because I thought, "I'm going to base paint it first and then do something." I never...And then somehow, I got so excited. They're talking so much about the rosemaling in Norway right now, and here, too, in America, and I never thought about sitting still long enough to do it, but I loved it. I just bought a lot of stuff before.

[44:56] So, I talked to my good friend Inger Svenson, and she said to me, "Do you know that one rosemalar is coming through town? His name is Sigmund Aarseth, and he's one of Norway's best painters."

[45:11] So I said, "Oh, gosh, Inger, get with him so we can take a course."

[45:16] And then so, we both did, and then later, somebody else came, Nils Ellingsgard. He was a Hallingdal painter. Very, very modest. And so, Inger and I took tutoring and had some classes for him. And he stayed with me four days on Mercer Island, and he painted some big doors for me, and I was in awe of this man. And Inger had the same thing done, so she was happy to get some work done to her house.

[45:52] So, anyway, these two fellows had to go back to Norway, so everybody said to Inger and me, "Why don't you start some classes, too, because we'd like to learn something." So, Inger and I were brave enough to start classes down in Sons of Norway. You know, the old building?

And we could take in 20 students, and we did get 20 of them at the time. So, we did the best we could and I think we did really good. Inger had more knack than I had, because she had been in a painting school in Norway because she was really a good artist. But anyway, I did my best and I learned as I went, and our classes was good.

[46:52] Later, and this was kind of a little bit far away from me, to go to Ballard all the time, you know, or down there to Sons of Norway. I said to Inger, "You know, maybe we should try split up and, you know, have our own classes." So she continued having the classes there and I had classes on Mercer Island. It was so easy for me to be right there and teach it at the same time and that--

Part 3

Kaja Englund: [0:03] Yes, so we had a good class going on Mercer Island and it was just a fun time together. [0:10] Later, I got a call from Poulsbo and they wanted to know if I couldn't teach up there. So that's what I did. I was there several years. And then Bremerton called, Sons of Norway and I was there. Eric and I stayed overnight someplace and then we went to Bremerton the next day. And we had our classes there, so that was a fun time.

[0:43] But, you know, after a while, because that is quite a responsibility to teach, so I kind of quit it. I just wanted to paint for myself and go to all the art shows and festivals. So I had a lot of them going. I was down in Oregon one time, and over at Edmond's Festival. And, oh gosh, look at this there were so many places. And then I was invited to The World's Fair in Spokane that time, so I was there.

[1:26] And then... Oh, yes, the fun thing was, of course, in Poulsbo Mr. Kay or the president said, "Yes" he said, "Kaja, King Olaf is coming and we're going to have lunch for him here. What are we going to do Kaja, because we are going to have to give him something?" So I said, "How about [laughs] maybe he needs some rosemaling?" And he said, "Wow". Mr. Kay said, "That's a good idea."

[2:06] So anyway, I got busy, and I think Inger did something too, for the church that he was going to be in. and she painted a chest for him. So it was all right. We were lucky, both of us. I painted a ...it's called a sleigh bench. It was not big enough that you could hold it. And then I had to hold the speech for him in Norwegian. It was kind of neat. I just wished him a good trip then.

I said: [2:47] "This is a big day for me to see you again because it's 30 years since I was *Honør bryggen i Oslo* . Then the king's family, then your family came back. I was there. So, this is a big day for me to be here with you" or something like that. And then, "Have a good trip home and say hello to Norway and say hello to Mama and Papa Guttormsen *i Drammen* from Kaja ", I said to him and people laughed. They thought that was funny.

I don't know. Mama said somebody called. She said that it was not him. It probably somebody. He got the rosemaling. He took it and he said that was nice rosemaling and then he bowed. He was so easy to talk to because he was so humble. You could feel that because I felt so brave standing next to him.

Laila: [3:54] He was a peoples' king, wasn't he?

Kaja: [3:58] He was a peoples' king. You are not kidding. He went on a bus and took out some money and he just...he wanted to pay for himself. The conductor said: "No, no, no." "Oh, yeah. I am going to pay for myself." I remember. But anyway, so that was a fun time, too, and I feel so honored to do that. Went home and the newspaper on Mercer Island came down to the house and they heard about this and they wrote an article about 'The King and Kaja'. That was such a great, you know, good story and so anyway that was a...Where am I going?

[4:51] Yeah, that was a fun time, when I was out there in Poulsbo. I was out there quite often, to all of their festivals. Later, I got an invitation to the Space Needle for their Scandinavian Days, and they came out here and they said "Oh my goodness, can we borrow all your dolls?"

[5:16] Sure, I was saying "You can take anything you want", so they took a lot of my things, because it was all going to be decorated in the Space Needle, up on the upper deck. And then there were from the Scandinavian countries, and I was in charge of Norway. I was supposed to sit and paint, and I did that, so people were so excited about my painting that they bought these things back. We almost had to buy two of the same kind, so we can tape them together so they will dry if you touch them. So anyway, there was a lot of people coming to this.

[6:07] Tante Anna, she was there, she was 95 and she sat down and did her own hardanger. That was neat. And you met a lot of neat people. I almost have to tell this story, because it's kind of cute how small the world is. There's one man who came to talk to her a bit, and so he came over to the rosemaling, and Anna and I looked at each other and we looked at this man. We both got together and said "Oh, you look so much like my dad", I said. "Are you Norwegian?"

[6:49] "Yes, I am Norwegian." Anna said the same thing, "You look like my brother." So we kept talking away, and I said "Where are you from Norway?" and he said "I'm from Oslo, but I'm in Drammen quite often because I've got some business going there with somebody, and his name is Oscar Guttormsen." That was my dad. "Oh yeah, Oscar and I had a lot of good business meetings together." And I thought that was so strange, because at first he looked at him, and he was a good friend of my dad. That was just unbelievable. Up in the Space Needle.

[7:36] So there's a lot of incidents like that, so I think that was two fantastic months for me, because I got well known and people like what I did. So I got invited to Spokane, the World's Fair in Spokane, and that was kind of neat because my son lived there. We got together a little bit. And so I enjoyed that for a week. Life went on, and the kids grew up. All

my four boys, I'm very proud of them. They're involved in sport, and Johnny in music, and it was kind of fun to see them grow up, but I kept on painting.

[8:34] And then of course, at the beginning my kids said "Mom, you are hooked on this." I said "Oh, it gives me such a pleasure, and I'm so glad I never quit, because I'm still doing it after 35 years." Pushing 88, I'm doing great. So long as my hand will work, I shall do it.

Laila: [9:02] And you're making dolls, too?

Kaja: [9:04] Oh yeah. In my spare time, I am sewing some dolls. I get the dolls, and I sew the Norwegian costumes on them. They have been awfully popular, too. Some of them have been very big, and all the way down to Barbie size. So that has also been a fun project, because I can sit at night and do some of the work. Yeah, so I am a busy lady. I don't know. Yeah, and like I said, the boys were growing up and did OK for themselves, and then yeah, we sold the house on the Mercer Island because it was a lot of work. Eric had retired, and he didn't feel like doing too much work, and so we just moved up to Bothell in a mobile home, double wide, and it was just enough room for us. I even got a workshop.

[10:19] And so I really liked it, and it was safe up here, and not too much work outside. We enjoyed it. So, Eric started to not feel too good. Poor guy, he passed away. I can't remember the year of it. Anyway, he finally passed away and it was very sad, for the boys too. And so I had to manage to be alone, and it's amazing what you can do alone. I had my hobbies, so I was very lucky to have something to do. Let's see. I thought it would be nice to get back to Norway, so I told Inger "I'm going to go back and celebrate my 70th birthday."

[11:24] Inger says "I'm coming with you", and that was kind of nice that we both went, and we both said "Yeah, let's have a big party." So that was great, and we had, oh gosh, what do you call it? I should have that. It was a little island, and there's a restaurant right in there. Anyway, that's OK. I can't remember right now. We had that, and we had all of Inger's family, and all of my family. And we had a Hawaiian party. We brought a lot of stuff from home, the lace and the whole works, so that was just a fantastic party.

[12:14] So then after that, I went and stayed with my sister, and I had a telephone call from an old boyfriend, and he wanted me to come and see him. And I wasn't quite sure if I dared to do it, he wanted to see me. So the next day, we went over to see him and I remember him so well because he was so talented, and he was so good in music. So then, when we saw each other, something happened. I don't know how he felt, I felt something. He was so handsome. There he was, he had his best suit on and his grey curly hair. So we had a good evening.

[13:09] I went up to his house, he lived in a second story, and it was so full of paintings. It was just like a museum up there, it was so beautiful. I knew he was good to paint, but I didn't know he had come this far. It was just fantastic what he had done. So I was due to go back to Seattle, and Kjell said "Oh that's too bad, because we should have been together some more" and I said "Oh, you have to come see me!"

[13:41] "Yeah, you never know" he said. So the next year, he came over to visit, didn't he? And like I said, something happened to us, and he said "I wish you'd like to go to Hawaii while I'm here." So we packed up and we went to Hawaii. So he said "Well how about getting married." And I said "How can we do that? You have a house in Drammen and I have a house in Seattle."

[14:15] "Well we can travel forth and back" he said, it was no problem for him. So anyway, we found a place, a little church, and it was a Swedish minister even. We had a couple that I knew take care of everything, and we got married in Honolulu. It was so neat, and the kids before had ordered a dinner. They didn't know what our plans were, because we said we'd elope, and so they paid for a nice dinner for us. And so, after we got married, I called my boys one at a time. I said "Thank you so much for paying for this wonderful dinner, and Kjell thanks you too. By the way, we got married today."

[15:10] And it was quiet on the other side. They were in shock, I think, but anyway, I called everybody and said the same thing. And I knew they were talking. Anyway, we came back home and the boys got very acquainted with mom's new husband, and so Kjell had to go home. He said that his ticket, he had a ticket to go back home. He didn't know what he was in for, did he? So I said "I'll go with you", I packed up and I went with him home, and told his sister that we had gotten married and all that. That was kind of neat, the whole thing, all of his friends and...

[16:10] And so, every year we went back to his house, and every winter we stayed in Bothell. He liked that, so it worked out really good for us. Kjell painted some fabulous paintings, and I kept on painting my rosemaling, so we got along just perfect. We understood each other. So in a way, there were 10 very good years with him, and he died in Norway, so it was easiest that way. Ola and Gale happened to be home visiting, so they went to the funeral too. He said some good words, whatever he could say in Norwegian. It was so cute.

Anyway, I came back to his house, I started to pack up all my belongings. And he always said "If I don't come back to you some day, you take whatever is in that suitcase." I took some things, and he wrote down a few things that I should have, but I couldn't bring too much. And so it was a lonesome trip back to Bothell, and like I said, life went on. I missed him, and still do, and I've got a lot of memories in my house with all his paintings.

Laila: [18:03] Those are some beautiful paintings that he did.

Kaja: [18:08] Oh, I call it Tideman og Gude. He's just a European painter, and his music. He couldn't play a note, and it just came out. So everybody just enjoyed him so much over here. [18:44] Yeah, so I came home to an empty house, and it was strange. I missed him so much, but you know I was so glad that I had a big family and we were together so much. All of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, I am just a lucky grandma that has so many around me. And I still paint, and I go to Bothell Lodge for the Christmas Bazaar, and then the Heritage day in Bothell. And then I have been up at Poulsbo lately for the Christmas Bazaar

up there. I do that every year. So I keep busy, yes. I enjoy my painting and I hope I have many good years. [audio ends]

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