

Interview of Knute Berger  
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Interviewers: Mari-Ann Kind Jackson; Gordon Strand; Susan Haris

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**Mari-Ann Kind Jackson:** [0:11] This is an oral history interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history program at the National Nordic Museum in Seattle, Washington. Today we are interviewing Knute Berger, and we are delighted to hear your story. This is August 8, 2019. We know you came through your ancestors a long time ago. Could you please start by stating your full name, where you were born, when you were born, and then share your life story.

**Knute Berger:** [0:51] Sure. My name is Knute Olsson Berger. I was born in Seattle, Washington, on December 5, 1953. I am the third of four Knutes in the family, the first being my grandfather, Knute Berger. He was born in Oksingen, Norway in northern Norway, in 1890. He came to this country in... well, the dates are a little unclear, but about 1911.

[1:26] He was born Knut Olsson. His father, Paul Olsson, was a schoolteacher in Oksingen. My grandfather, we call him bestefar. Bestefar had gone to technical school in what was then Kristiania, and trained as an engineer. He came to Seattle. He was following his older brother, Leif. Leif had changed his last name from Olsson to Berger. We had heard that the name change was because had found there was a real prejudice against Swedes, and the name "Olsson" was associated with Swedes.

[2:16] We didn't know what the origin of the name Berger was. Berger is kind of ambiguous. It could be French, German, Scandinavian— it could be all kinds of things. I was recently on a website looking up family trees, and I discovered that my uncle Leif, who lived in Ballard, his middle name was Birger, B-I-R-G-E-R. I think he just anglicized it when he came over. So, when my bestefar came over, he changed his name to the same last name as his brother. He also [added] the "e" for Knute. I think he thought the pronunciation would be "Keh-Newt" instead of "Nut," or "Keh-Nut." Everybody called him "Newt," and Berger [Ber-jer] was often pronounced "Burger." I always say "Newt Burger" sounds like the world's worst fast food idea. I had to correct people all my life.

[3:30] The Knutes in the family all have nicknames. My grandfather's nickname was Skip, because he eventually owned a yacht that he was very proud of. He was a real sailor and boater, and that kind of thing. He ended up inventing marine equipment and logging equipment. His name was Skip. My father was Knute Eystein Berger, and his nickname was Ace. My grandfather died before I was born, so I got his nickname. I was named after him, and I got his nickname, Skip. My son is Knute Augustus Berger, and his nickname is Gus. That's how people can tell all the Knutes apart.

[4:25] My grandfather came over and went to work. He was a mechanical engineer. He could work steam boilers. He could work in a boat's engine room. He got a job up in Canada, working on a wealthy Canadian timber baron's yacht. I don't know who it was. That's where he met my grandmother. She was a Scottish immigrant who had come over a little bit earlier than he, to Vancouver. She was from a fishing village in the Highlands, northern Scotland, called Hopeman, which is not far outside of Inverness.

[5:13] Her sisters had all immigrated to the Vancouver area. She was a maid on this yacht, and he was the chief engineer on this yacht. They met, and they married in Vancouver in 1914. But he didn't want to live in Canada. He wanted to be an American and live in America. So, they came back to Seattle. My father was born in 1915, and I think kind of acted as an "anchor baby." [Laughter] My grandparents became citizens maybe four or five years later.

[5:52] They lived all around Seattle. My father was born in a rooming house on capitol Hill, on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, near Pine— Mrs. Mote's. He was born in bed there. They struggled financially at first. It was very lean times. My grandmother at that time almost died in 1919 from the influenza epidemic. My father tells the story of... He didn't really understand what was going on, because he was only four years old or so, but being brought into the sick room where my grandmother lay. My grandfather, bestefar, was holding vigil over her. It was very clear that she was probably not going to live through the night, but she did. She survived. She got better and better. So she recovered.

[6:53] But my dad said that the doctor who treated her died of the epidemic not long after. I think this made a big impression on my father, who became a doctor. I think he was very moved by this experience. I think my grandparents were in some ways an unlikely couple in the sense that they were sort of immigrants thrown together, going through a lot of hardship, building a life with very different personalities. My Scottish grandmother was (we called her granny) was the kind of person who read tea leaves, and believed in Scottish Highlands mystical things. She was not a rational person. A wonderful, bighearted person.

[7:56] He was a hard-headed, practical, inventive, no nonsense... And a very dynamic and charming person. Anyway, he ended up working at Seattle Boiler Works, and he became chief engineer at the iron works. He began inventing hauling equipment, for example, tree toppers that were used in terms of hauling timber in places they were cutting. Also, marine hauling equipment. He got some patents and became very successful. He started a company called Berger Engineering, which had a big... If you've lived in Seattle for a long time, it used to be down near the Fisher Flour Mills on Harbor Island. It was a big gray building, and you could see a sign on the side that said "Smith Berger."

[9:09] After he died, the company had been merged with the Smith Company, which was the company that invented all of the famous automated canning equipment. But in his day, he was inventing logging and marine equipment. He was very much a part of the resource economy, which attracted so many immigrants here, timber, fishing— all this kind of thing. Occasionally, I'll see on some of the older ferries a hawse or a piece of marine equipment that says "Smith Berger" on it, and that's always a thrill. He invented a kind of winch that became standard on seagoing tugs.

[9:55] During World War II, when he had his greatest success financially, and in terms of the scale of

the business, he invented a technique for a kind of winch for getting landing craft off of beaches. During the war, various kinds of landing craft became very important. He didn't serve in the American Armed Forces in World War I or World War II. He tried to volunteer in World War I, and they wouldn't take him, because he wasn't a citizen yet. In World War II, I found his draft card, so he was enrolled. But they said he was in a key industry, building stuff for the military.

[10:45] He used to joke... We used to talk about granny and bestefar, and he used to refer to the Scottish as just "shipwrecked Norwegians." Of course, if you read the sagas, and you read the history, you know the incredible connections in settlement between those countries. I did 23 & Me, and I thought I was a quarter Scandinavian, even though my name is 100% Scandinavian. It turns out, according to 23 & Me, I am only 17% or 18% Nordic. I've got a little Finn in there we didn't know about, and there is some Swedish. But I think that suggests my grandfather's background, he probably had some German or some Anglo. Something else in there. But I am 99% Northwestern European. [Laughter] Everything is from Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and that kind of thing. Shipwrecked or not, it's all the same basic gene pool.

[12:03] My grandparents had two children, my father, Knute Eystein Berger, and my aunt, Barbara Eleanor Berger. They grew up in Seattle and lived in various neighborhoods. His folks eventually were able to build a small house in Mt. Baker. My dad went to John Muir in the very early days. He went to Franklin High School. So did my aunt. They went to their neighborhood schools. My father ended up going to the University of Washington. He got a degree in chemistry, and was accepted at various schools, but went to Yale Medical School, and became a doctor.

[12:52] My Aunt Barbara... it was very interesting. She became a well-known actress. She changed the spelling of her name from Barbara Berger to "Berjer" with a "j." She also married a man who was a dancer and choreographer here in Seattle, who taught at Cornish, named Lee Foley. He also became a director of plays and choreography in New York.

[13:25] In high school Barbara started making movies with a guy who later won an Oscar, working for Disney. We just found out about this. His name was Richard Lyford. They were at Franklin together. He made these independent home movie sci-fi films in the 1930s, and some of these have been recently discovered. One was just shown at a film festival here in town. We had never seen it. My aunt is in this film. She's a gorgeous 16-year-old actress. She had a lot of charisma from the very beginning.

[14:20] It's interesting, because as an actress, as somebody with great empathy and intuition, she sort of followed my grandmother's footsteps. My dad followed... he became a surgeon and scientist. He sort of followed in his father's footsteps. After medical school, my father served as a doctor, a captain in the Army Air Force during World War II. While he was at Yale, he met my mother, Margaret Haseltine. She goes by Margie Berger now. She's 102, by the way. [Narrator note: She died at age 103 on January 12, 2020.]

[15:05] They married. After some traveling around with his medical work—he was chief of surgery at a hospital in Peru, and that kind of thing— they moved back to Seattle. They moved to Mount Baker, where I grew up and went to John Muir. I had two sisters, Kari and Barbara. We lived just a couple blocks away from my grandmother's. So, I was able to grow up in the same neighborhood that my dad grew up in, which was really great. We even had a paper route that covered some of the

same turf. I was filled with the stories of his boyhood in Seattle in the teens, twenties, and thirties. We felt very rooted in that neighborhood. My parents ended up moving to Bainbridge Island in the early 1970s, when they retired. But up to that time, we were solid in Mount Baker.

[16:15] My grandfather died suddenly of a heart attack in 1949. He was 59 years old. It was very unexpected. He had been very much an immigrant who wanted to assimilate. He was very entrepreneurial. He was very financially-oriented. His dream was to become a member of the Rainier Club, which actually happened in the 1940s. He had reached the status. In fact, I have the application that was submitted on his behalf, and he became a member. In the remarks at the bottom, it says “is there anything else we should know about the applicant?” And it says something to the effect of, “Speaks English with no discernable accent.”

[17:16] My grandmother, who had lived here just as long as he did—she still had her Scottish burr, a little bit. But he had worked in the business community to be a mainstream person. But he kept ties with the Norwegian community. My father and aunt were both baptized at Immanuel Lutheran. They were not churchgoers, particularly. My grandmother was, but she was Presbyterian. The Lutheran side was a little more formal than engaged, I think.

[17:57] When he died, my grandmother... I think she really worshipped him, and I think she embraced all the Norwegian traditions. My sisters would be put into costumes for Syttende Mai every year. Their picture was in the *P-I* or the *Times*, these beautiful little girls in their costumes. I joke... It’s not really a joke, but I tell people I was in high school before I learned that Syttende Mai was not an American national holiday. Really.

[18:38] And I remember early in high school... I was at a private school in Redmond for a while, so I was meeting these suburban kids for the first time. I remember one of them one time said, “What do you mean when you say, ‘uff-da?’ What is that? Stop saying it.” I was completely unaware that wasn’t a common expression that every American knew and said. It was just part of things.

[19:09] Our Christmases in particular were kind of a combination between Scottish and Norwegian, but we always celebrated on Christmas Eve. The tree was always decorated with candles and Norwegian flags. We had to eat a big plate of lutefisk before we could open the presents. This was Calvinism. This was real torture for us. My sister Kari, in particular, and I just absolutely loathed lutefisk. We just thought it was disgusting. Yet, we also wanted our presents. There would be this big platter we had to work our way through before we could get to the presents.

[20:03] I later had some lutefisk that was pretty up at the Norse Home. I said to my sister, “Hey, I had some lutefisk, and it wasn’t that bad.” She felt like I was a traitor. She was like, “What? What?” You know. We used to have leg of lamb on family holidays, and I thought lamb was this gray, grainy meat. I realized our grandmother would just boil the heck out of it. Then you had to put on mint sauce or something to make it edible. When I was in college, I think I had a lamb chop, and I was like, “This is a completely different species.” Well, I think she just boiled the lutefisk to death. So, granny, I’m sorry to blame it on you.

**Mari-Ann:** [20:55] What was granny’s name?

**Knute:** [20:57] Granny’s name was Thomasina Sutherland. As I mentioned, she was born in

Hopeman. While her mother, who was a Mackenzie, was pregnant with her, her father, who was a fisherman, was killed in a storm off Lowestoft in England, in 1892. She was born in 1893. In 1892, he was a herring fisherman, as all the men were in that part of Scotland. They would sail up to Scandinavia or down the British coast. A huge gale came through. Many ships were lost. He was within sight of land in the harbor when their lugger, an old fishing boat, went down, and he didn't make it.

[22:01] So her family was really poor. I think there were five girls, and a mom with no job. No wage-earner, which was one reason they immigrated to Canada. One of them got married, and then the others followed. My grandmother and her mother were the last to come over to this country. So, we had a slew of both Norwegian and Scottish/Canadian relatives both in Seattle and Vancouver.

[22:38] These ethnic things... Most people called me "Skip" growing up. I didn't really take on the name "Knut" until I got to high school, actually. I wanted to embrace the family name, and that kind of thing. But as a kid, Knut is a weird name. One, people don't say it right, and two... I've talked to people with ethnic names. When we would go on a family road trip, and you stop at the store, and they have all these little license plates with kids' names on them, there was never a Knut. I would look through those and I was like, "Why couldn't they have named me Steve or John, or something?"

[23:32] I was unconscious of a lot of the ethnicity, and in those times, I was kind of embarrassed by it. But I certainly wasn't embarrassed about the food, the cookies. At Christmas, my grandmother made fattigman and krumkake. She was an amazing baker. We had that along with her shortbread, which was the best shortbread I have ever tasted, and probably ever will taste. I've been hunting for shortbread that could hold a candle to her shortbread, and I never found it.

[24:11] But she kept those Norwegian traditions alive. She gave a lot of money to the Norse Home, and she would go out there and do volunteer work, and go to picnics, and things like that. She sent a lot of money after the war back to relatives in Norway who were struggling. They helped to sponsor some people to come over to this country after the war, one of whom was a man who became a well known fisheries professor at the University of Washington, Ole Mathisen.

[24:54] Ole was like an uncle to me. His wife Randi just died. His children, Sven and Heidi, were like cousins for me. My grandmother, who they called Ina— they were part of every family holiday throughout my growing up. Ole had fought in the Norwegian underground, something he never talked about.

**Gordon:** [25:26] We interviewed her.

**Knut:** [25:30] Did you? You got Randi?

**Mari-Ann:** [25:32] Yeah.

**Knut:** [25:32] Oh, that's good. That's great. Anyway, my grandmother was one of the people who sponsored them over here. They were very close.

**Gordon:** [25:40] Were they relatives?

**Knute:** [25:42] They were not relatives. I don't even know the story of how they hooked up. There were links... My bestefar had siblings who did not emigrate, who stayed in Norway. We have relatives there.

**Gordon:** [26:00] He stayed in contact with his family?

**Knute:** [26:02] He did stay in contact with his family. There were several who had been artists, and we had some of their artwork. That kind of thing. There was one relative of his who was a famous Norwegian artist, named Anker Skaga. The family has a gorgeous 19<sup>th</sup> century painting, a portrait of a woman in Norwegian garb. It's absolutely gorgeous. We have at least one other sketch that he did. Yeah. We definitely had those connections.

[26:45] Let's see, I can talk about my generation a little bit. As I mentioned, I have two sisters, Barbara and Kari. Barbara was born in 1945. Kari was born in Seattle in 1948. In fact, today is her birthday. I was born in December of 1953, so I am the baby of the family. We all grew up in Mount Baker. I went to Lakeside. My sisters went to Franklin. I went to John Muir Elementary School, and so did my sisters. [After] Lakeside, I went to Evergreen State College in Olympia.

**Gordon:** [27:35] It was pretty new then.

**Knute:** [27:36] It was. My first year of college was Evergreen's second year, so it was still just in startup mode. I helped start the newspaper there, the *Cooper Point Journal*. I was already interested in journalism. I had become interested in high school. I just threw myself into it. I helped start the paper, and it was the time of Watergate. Young people like me were very energized about doing investigative journalism, and that kind of thing.

[28:13] I spent four years at Evergreen, and then I was down in the Silicon Valley my senior year, and first year out of college, working for a magazine down in the Bay Area. I moved back here, and married my college girlfriend.

**Gordon:** [28:40] Her name is—

**Knute:** [28:42] My first wife's name is Diane Hucks. She's got a lot of Scandinavian in her, too. They were a bunch of Norwegians in Montana. There is a line there, in Havre, Montana. We bought a house. We lived in Ballard, up in Loyal Heights. We bought this little bungalow from the widow of a Norwegian sea captain. They were the original owners of the bungalow, which had been built in the early 1920s. Yes, we enjoyed the old Ballard lifestyle, which was great. We were way too close to Larsen Brothers. I don't know how much weight I put on, going up there. It's still a family tradition. I have to trek to Larsen Brothers right before Christmas Eve to get the kringle, because everybody has to have that on Christmas Day, still— my kids and my grandkids. So, we carry on a few of those traditions.

[29:56] When I came back to Seattle after college, I worked for a national magazine that was starting up, called Adventure Travel. I was young. We did a book and a newsletter. We did a bimonthly and later a monthly magazine, which ended up being bought by a big publishing company that moved to New York. I chose to stay here. I didn't want to go to New York. I wanted to live in my hometown

and work in my hometown.

[30:32] My parents had gotten involved in heart research. My father had left surgery. He had become a medical photographer, illustrator, and editor. But his real passion was pathology. So, the basement of our Mount Baker house was a laboratory. There was a photo studio, a graphics studio, and he was also doing work for Dr. Lester Sauvage, who was one of the premier heart surgeons in the area. My mother, who had a Master's of Nursing, became the administrator of what was called the Reconstructive Cardiovascular Research Lab, later the Hope Heart Institute, based out of Providence Hospital.

[31:20] So, my parents— the latter part of their career, from the 1960s into the 1970s, were involved in research around pioneering techniques for heart surgery. They experimented on laboratory animals. My father's job was to study the healing of things like artificial veins, artificial grafts, and artificial heart valves. So our basement was full of jars of specimens of all kinds of animals in various parts. I think some of the kids in the neighborhood thought it was very ghoulish.

[32:11] There were basement windows. It was a basement that had window wells. My dad had put wiring over the windows, because I had a basketball hoop in the backyard, and he didn't want anyone breaking the windows. But when you looked in, you'd see this guy in a lab coat with metal on the windows, working on these specimens. So the kids in the neighborhood would come over, look in, scream, and run away.

[32:47] And he had a beard, too. He grew a beard way before beards were popular. They tried to kick him out of the Seattle Surgical Society, because when he grew a beard in about 1960, a full, salt & pepper beard, they thought that doctors should not have beards; they were unsanitary, even though my father was not doing clinical... he was doing laboratory research. They actually tried to kick him out over his beard.

**Gordon:** [33:20] What supported his research?

**Knute:** [33:24] In working for the lab, he worked for Dr. Sauvage and the cardiovascular lab. He had the skill of research pathology as well as having been a surgeon. So, he could really advise on how to improve the makeup of these valves and grafts. Much of their work was supported by the NIH. I remember every couple of years they had to put in a new application for a research grant from the federal government. Warren Magnusson was a big sponsor of Dr. Sauvage's work, and made sure the grants came through. He did so much to help with care throughout this region, the University of Washington, and whatnot. Maggie was kind of a hero in our household. Although my parents were pretty Republican, they liked Scoop and Maggie. We all did, right?

[34:24] It was basically grant-supported work. Then the institute actually was able to invent some stuff that generated royalties that also helped support the work of the heart institute. There was a kind of arterial graft, a Dacron graft that they invented. The money was used to fund the work there. I worked for the Hope Heart Institute, and for Dr. Sauvage for about two years in the early 1980s, when they were undertaking a large fundraising campaign. They needed a grant writer, and I was between jobs. My *Adventure Travel* had moved to New York, and they hired me as a grant writer because I understood a lot of the work. I had known Dr. Sauvage since I was a kid. So, I did grant writing there for a couple years.

[35:22] Then I became the Managing Editor of a statewide magazine, called *Washington Magazine*. It started in the mid-1980s and continued into the 1990s. That was kind of the first big magazine startup. It was statewide. I got to travel all over. I got to do a lot of amazing reporting, following Booth Gardner and John Spellman around on their gubernatorial campaign. I worked with a lot of writers who are now well-known, but weren't well-known back in the 1980s, people like Dave Guterson, Tim Egan, all kinds of wonderful Northwest writers. It was a really great experience.

[36:22] But I left *Washington Magazine* in late 1988 or early 1989, and went to work for the Washington State Centennial Commission. I was put in charge of developing a time capsule for the state. You can see my time capsule in the rotunda of the Washington State Capitol. It's called the Centennial Time Capsule Project. It's actually a giant safe filled with a series of time capsules that will be filled every 25 years, for the next 400 years. So, we filled one of the capsules in 1989; we filled one 25 years later, and it's overseen by a group of children that we recruited called "Keepers of the Capsule."

[37:15] They were sworn in by Booth Gardner as protectors of this capsule, and they were told they would be in charge in 25 years for the update. And that worked. The new generation of capsule-keepers has recruited another group of ten-year-olds to perform that function 20 years from now. It's a kind of ongoing lesson in history thinking about the future, what kinds of artifacts to put in...

**Mari-Ann:** [37:51] How exciting for a creative ten-year-old.

**Knute:** [37:54] You know, it was interesting, because in 1989, we had a big publicity campaign. We said, "If you're a ten-year-old and were born sometime in November, and your tenth birthday is right around the state's birthday, which is November 11<sup>th</sup>, and you're interested in this project..." We got several hundred kids all over the state. Through the Secretary of State's office, we tried to keep in touch with these kids. And it proved to be really difficult over 25 years. We'd send them postcards, "What's your new address?" But you know, they go to college, they get married, their name change. Then social media came along, addresses didn't work anymore, emails didn't work.

[38:47] But we ended up with about ten to twenty that came back, who worked on the committee, and put on a big event and did the time capsule project again. There is a Facebook page. Then they recruited this new generation of ten-year-olds, and also their kids can join, so there are other people. Yeah, the organization is ongoing. It's really a fun thing. Over the course of working on this time capsule project, I became kind of an expert on the subject of time capsules. So, this is a sideline. In fact, I just had an article today on the blog of the *BIE*, (*Bureau of International Expositions*), about the history of the association of time capsule projects with World's Fairs. Anyway, that continues.

[40:00] Then I ended up being recruited by David Brewster, who is the founder of *Seattle Weekly*, and Town Hall, and many other things. David recruited me to come to *Seattle Weekly*, but to start a new weekly newspaper called *Eastsideweek*, launched in 1990. It was an alternative news weekly based in Kirkland, and designed to attract readers from the tech community and from the evolving eastside suburbs. That was a really fun project, which I worked on for a number of years. I was Editor and Publisher there. Then David recruited me to replace him as editor of the *Weekly*. Then I spent the next dozen or more years as editor of the *Weekly*, on and off. I left *Seattle Weekly* in 2006. I was part of the team which David Brewster was also heading up, starting *Crosscut.com*, an online, nonprofit

news website.

**Susan:** [41:19] I read it all the time.

**Knute:** [41:20] Oh, good. I am the only member of the founding team still there. I thought I would do it for a couple of years. It's been 12 years already. We merged with KCTS-9, so there is a new parent called Cascade Public Media, KCTS and Crosscut. So, we're part of the same organization. We have one newsroom. Crosscut is the newsroom for—

**Gordon:** [41:48] What's your feeling about the state of journalism now? It seems like we're going to be losing all our print newspapers.

**Knute:** [41:48] Yeah. The state of journalism in general is pretty perilous, if you look at the numbers— thousands of newspapers have gone out of business just in the last decade. Employment has been cut by maybe 60% nationwide. I don't think we had enough reporters to begin with. Now we have much fewer. It's a real challenge. On the plus side, I think people can get news quicker online. It's speedy. Social media can help you reach a lot more people than you could before, and you're not necessarily placebound anymore. In other words, you can do a national publication from Seattle, whereas it would have been very difficult to do that in the old print days. It was difficult to even do regional publishing in the old days.

[43:03] I think a lot of it has been a kind of correction. The model of newspapers that we grew up with in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was sort of a false model in the sense that newspapers in particular were a very inefficient way for people to advertise, but they were kind of the only game in town. There was a classic old line in advertising, which is, "I know that half my advertising works, and half doesn't, but I don't know which half."

[43:42] The internet gave specificity to that. You could see what was working, who was responding, how many. I think what people found out was that newspapers were overpriced, so they began cutting back, shifting to the new medians. Newspapers weren't as successful as they thought they were. They had been collecting a lot of money over the years that was based on this inefficiency. So, there was a major course correction there. Then, when things like Craigslist came along and began to take away all the classified ads, all the grass roots advertising, which was very profitable, print publications, by and large, lost their competitive advantage, and their business model.

[44:36] People sometimes ask me what I miss about the analog publishing days, because when I got into the business, it was before computers. I was joking that one of the first things I learned in the first newsroom I was in, was how to smoke my cigarette so the cigarette smoke didn't get in my eye while I was typing. There was a particular way you had to hang your cigarette out of the corner of your mouth while you were typing away. These are things that just don't happen in the modern newsroom. [Laughter]

[45:16] But what I miss most about it was the predictability of it. If you wanted to start a publication, you could put together a budget and a five-year plan, and be pretty sure that the formula for getting to profitability was pretty stable, and it was mostly just a matter of execution. Did you have a good idea? Did you execute it well? Now the media is not only undergoing this shift where we're losing outlets, and losing newsroom talent, but nobody has a successful long-term formula. There is no

model.

[46:00] There are successes. The *New York Times* has more subscribers than ever. The *Washington Post* under Jeff Bezos has flourished in many ways. But they're exceptions. When it comes down to local reporting, regional reporting, this is where you don't have a mass national audience where perhaps enough of them could fund you. You're reliant on a whole different model. The nonprofit model is probably going to become much more common, because there is the possibility of donors, grants, advertising. There are multiple funding sources that you don't necessarily have as a for-profit.

[46:55] So, I think we're going to have to start viewing local journalism outlets kind of the way we look at the public library, not necessarily getting government support, but being an institution that people support because it's needed in democracy, even if the market won't support it in the traditional ways. The good news side of it, the newsroom Crosscut has been growing. We've been a little bit of an exception to what's been going on, partly because of our model, partly because KCTS has been a very powerful base for us to work from, allowing us to do work on TV, which not every web publication gets a TV station. So, it's been great.

[47:48] I have been really impressed by the young people who are going into the business. Our newsroom is very diverse in terms of gender and race. We had a lot of people in their 20s and early 30s in our newsroom. I am just so impressed with the talent and the passion people have. And that's really encouraging. How they can make a real living at it over time— buying a house, having a family, that kind of thing... that's a struggle.

**Mari-Ann:** [48:28] I love reading *Crosscut*.

**Knute:** [48:30] Thank you.

**Mari-Ann:** [48:31] It's the one source I feel I can really believe.

**Knute:** [48:37] Thank you. That's good to hear. That's really important. We work at that. For one thing, we're nonpartisan. As a nonprofit, we can't endorse candidates. We have columns, people who contribute op-eds. I write an opinion column. We have people express opinions. I think we strive really hard to try to provide depth and context for the issues. We're not trying to compete with the *Seattle Times* on everything. But we feel like we can to give some history; we're going to explain. Seattle needs a lot of explaining. [Laughter] Partly because people who have grown up here are now such a small percentage of people who live in Seattle. The institutional memory has shifted quite a bit. So, I think there are a lot of people who don't understand the history of the city.

[49:46] That's kind of what I focus on— that is, try to explain why are we the way we are? What is the Seattle Freeze, which people blame on the Scandinavians? What is that? Where did it come from? And it can be on more serious issues, like why has Seattle been so segregated, racially, which it has? And there are reasons for that. I think providing that kind of context has been really valuable to people. I think a lot of the people who have moved here— they want that. They want to know. And people like us, who have lived here for a long time, it really helps to have that history acknowledged and refreshed.

**Gordon:** [50:35] I'm like you. I'm a third-generation [Seattleite]. I'm wondering, if you're looking at

Seattle and the region, aside from the “freeze,” what other ways do you think the Nordic population has had an influence? Politically, or other ways? I’ve always felt that politics, when you look at Washington and Minnesota, there has got to be some reason why we’re the way we are, a little bit.

**Knute:** [51:09] Yeah. I think that’s true. Even the Seattle Freeze thing, which I alluded to, the cultural thing of people wanting privacy, being friendly, but also wanting their private space—I remember the writer Jonathan Raban, an Englishman who lives here, described it as our “Scando-Asian” character, that it was kind of a combination of those two things. And that makes some sense.

[51:38] I think Seattle has very strong impulses that you find in Scandinavia and the Nordic countries. The impulses of yin-yang, of entrepreneurship and capitalism, and social welfare. It’s very much in line with social democracy, which is, “go out and make money,” create factory trawlers, whatever. But you go out, and there’s a strong innovation and entrepreneurship. At the same time, let’s build a community that’s responsible.

[52:24] Also, I think there is an element, too, of doing it in a fairly clean way, as I might say it. You can see the Nordic influence in the design of this building, in the sense of a world that is tasteful, that makes sense, that has order to it, but also is a palette for creativity. I think you see that in Seattle politics in a way. We don’t embrace the game of politics the way they do in Boston or Chicago, even San Francisco.

**Gordon:** [53:09] New York.

**Knute:** [53:10] New York. Yeah. These other cities. I think we tend to have a more genteel politics, or tend to.

**Gordon:** [53:17] Less corrupt.

**Knute:** [53:19] Probably less corruption, or at least more “legal” corruption. I think there is a sense that your life also includes the outdoors. That’s very strong. I have never been to Norway. I have never been to any of the Nordic countries. I have been to northern Scotland. I’ve seen plenty of pictures and movies, and that kind of thing. You can see why people from that part of Europe felt at home here. They were familiar with the landscape, the seascape. It was pretty close to what they were used to.

[54:10] I certainly think back... Bestefar being a boater. Somewhere, we have film of him swimming in Puget Sound as if it’s tropical waters, spurting water up as he’s swimming, doing the backstroke. He just thought it was hilarious that people thought Puget Sound was cold. He was old-school in a lot of ways. My father said the way he learned how to swim was bestefar rowed him out to the middle of Lake Washington and threw him out of the boat, and then said, “Swim to it.” And he rowed off and made him swim. And he’d get to the boat, and he’d repeat it. That was old-school.

[55:06] Bestefar, stories that we heard... Up in Oksingen, tourists would come up there, Germans, and people from other parts of Scandinavia, to go fishing. He and his brothers would act as guides and row people places, take them out. He did not like Germans as a result of that, by the way, the word is. He didn’t like them for other reasons, too. [Laughter]

**Mari-Ann:** [55:39] How do you spell the place in north Norway?

**Knute:** [55:44] I'll have to refer to my notes here. It's O-K-S-I-N-G-E-N, Oksingen. It's an island in Helgeland.

**Mari-Ann:** [55:59] Okay.

**Knute:** [56:02] I've got a map. I can show you on the map exactly where it is. It's an island on the coast, way up there. Not all the way.

**Gordon:** [56:14] There is still family there, I assume?

**Knute:** [56:16] Yeah, there is. I'm not sure if they're in Oksingen, but in the vicinity there is. There is family in Oslo.

**Gordon:** [56:27] You've got to go. You'll be treated like royalty.

**Knute:** [56:30] Yeah. It's just one of those things... My parents went. They had a great visit. I'm more connected with the Scottish side than the Norwegian. Ole's son Sven and I are still friends. He lives in Norway. He had dual citizenship, and chose to be a doctor in Norway. So, I see him when he comes out for visits from time to time. So, we're still connected.

**Mari-Ann:** [57:06] So, now we need to go back... You told us a little bit about... You married your college girlfriend, and you lived in Ballard. From there?

**Knute:** [57:20] Let's see. We moved to Kirkland in the early 1980s, which is where my kids were raised. My first wife and I were divorced. We had twins together, Sophia and Knute Augustus, who are now in their mid-thirties, and have kids. I have four grandkids. I remarried a woman named Carol Poole, whose family came over in the 1600s from Somerset, England, and worked their way as far as Ohio. Most of their family are farmers. Her father was a Methodist preacher. So, she grew up a preacher's daughter. We have been together 22, 23 years. A long time. She is a psychotherapist. She has a practice in Madison Valley. There is a stretch along Madison Street where there are lots of therapists.

**Gordon:** [58:38] That's where you live, right?

**Knute:** [58:39] Yeah. I live in Madison Park. We moved from Kirkland back to Seattle in 2005 or 2006. We rent an apartment at the Edgewater Apartment Complex. If people don't know it by name, if you go across the 520 Bridge and look south, you see a bunch of these brick buildings that look like either army housing or a college campus. That's the Edgewater. It was built in the 1930s. It's market rate apartments, and we're right on the water, with Madison Park just a walk away, and all the shops and buses and everything that you need. We love it there. We've been renting there for 12, 13 years now.

**Gordon:** [59:37] The first 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebration was right at the end of Madison there.

**Knute:** [59:44] Oh, is that true?

**Gordon:** [59:45] Yeah. Where the ferry used to come there.

**Knute:** [59:47] Right. Exactly. Seattle's first baseball game was there, too. Madison Park was kind of a festive event place for people in the summer. You could take the streetcars down and all that kind of thing. But I didn't know about [the parade]. That's fantastic.

**Gordon:** [1:00:07] Yeah. That was from some research I was doing on my grandfather.

**Knute:** [1:00:10] That's great.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:00:12] Do you go swimming at the Madison Park Beach?

**Knute:** [1:00:15] Occasionally. We'll take my granddaughter there. The apartment complex I live in has a pool, so I'm a little spoiled now. I can just walk out the apartment door and jump in a nice open-air pool. [Laughter]

**Gordon:** [1:00:29] You said it was built in the 1930s?

**Knute:** [1:00:31] Yeah. Interestingly, it was built on property that was part of the Burke Estate. Judge Burke's widow inherited it, and it had never been developed. The city wanted to consider getting that northern tip of Madison Park for a park. They also considered turning it into an airport, where the Pan Am Clippers would land on Union Bay. The voters in King County voted that down. They didn't like that idea. They didn't want planes on the lake.

[1:01:18] So, they ended up selling it off to a developer that had financing from the New Deal for multifamily housing. Interestingly, it was designed by John Graham, Sr. and his son, John Graham, Jr., who did the Space Needle, and Northgate. It was the first project that father and son worked on together, and it had New Deal financing.

[1:01:51] The newspapers at the time... I looked up some of these clippings. They said it was the largest multifamily housing project in that late Depression-era, west of the Mississippi. There are over 400 units there. It was an experiment in building apartments for urban families. Most of them are one- and two-bedroom. People of all ages live there, from very young people who go to the university, to older people who aren't quite ready for assisted living, living on their own, and want a safe environment. That kind of thing. It's a cool place. It's really good.

**Gordon:** [1:02:41] How do your kids like lutefisk?

**Knute:** [1:02:44] Yeah, no. Not fans. They love the baked goods. They love the Swedish cookies, and things like that, at Christmas. They both identify with their Scottish and Scandinavian heritage. It was interesting; my son's son could have been the fifth Knute, but was not. My son decided to go to my paternal grandmother's side, and his name is Logan McKenzie. So, he has a Scottish heritage name.

[1:03:34] One thing I've noticed is that just about everybody changed their name at some point, which I thought was quite interesting. My grandfather changed his name from Knute Olsson to

Knute Berger. My father was actually born Eystein Magna Berger, but he wanted to be Knute Berger, Jr., and was sometimes referred to as that. But he didn't actually change his name to Knute formally until he was an adult. He did it to honor his father.

[1:04:07] My daughter changed her name. I think there is this sort of ongoing thing of finding the threads in your family, or your associations that mean the most. Even if you're not an immigrant, you still might be searching for those connections, generations later. Who do you identify with? Who do you connect most with?

**Gordon:** [1:04:38] I think we all at some point in our lives, go searching for roots.

**Knute:** [1:04:43] Yeah. That's true. We've had fun doing the genetic testing and assembling the family tree. Some parts of the family are really well-documented. Others, not so much. It's just kind of hand scribbling, that kind of thing.

**Gordon:** [1:05:07] Do you have any questions?

**Susan:** [1:05:12] Did you find any surprises when you did the searching for your family tree?

**Knute:** [1:05:19] The biggest surprise so far was that Berger was actually a family name. We had thought it was completely made up, like something that happened at immigration that had no relation to us. So, finding out that that name was actually my great-uncle's middle name, it made sense then. It wasn't just pulled out of the blue. It was an adaptation of a family name.

[1:05:50] I remember telling my daughter about that. My daughter has been thinking about changing her married name back to Berger. When I told her that it was in fact an actual family name, she was like, "Okay, now I think I'm really going to do it." It just meant more to her that it wasn't made up. So, that was a surprise. It was a surprise to me on the DNA stuff, that I wasn't as Scandinavian as I thought. That was a surprise.

[1:06:34] I'm a good friend of Peter Jackson, Scoop Jackson's son. Peter and I did an event or two over in the old heritage center. We're good friends. He has always teased me about being a false Norwegian. Both of his parents were Norwegian, and I'm not really... You know. Of course, when I told him I wasn't even a quarter; it was like 17%, he has been needling me about that ever since. So, that was a surprise.

**Susan:** [1:07:07] One point I really liked, and I'd love it if you could pursue it a little more: you thought that Seattle and this part of the country presented a palate for creativity. Could you speak to that a little bit more? Do you think that's part of the Scandinavian heritage? Do you think that's because we're newer? Why?

**Knute:** [1:07:25] Yeah, that's a great question. I think there are a couple of aspects to it. I think it's something the Scandinavian influence takes advantage of. In other words, it seizes the creative opportunities. One of the things... I don't know whether this is solely Scandinavian, but a lot of people who came here, came here later than everywhere else. So, they could have lived in a lot of other places, and they chose to live in a place that wasn't really settled yet. It was sort of the last accessible place before Alaska. It was the last frontier in the 1850s.

[1:08:20] If you think about it, the West Coast, and the Pacific Northwest and Puget Sound area in particular, attracted a lot of utopians. There were a lot of utopian colonies, socialist colonies, anarchist colonies. The Colony of Home. The Freedom Colony on Whidbey Island. The colony up in Bow. There were these experimental communities all over the Puget Sound region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular.

[1:09:00] I think a lot of that idealism has influenced Seattle's sense of itself. A lot of these folks knew what other cities were like. They knew what other places were like. When they came here, they wanted to do something different. I think they wanted to do something that was better. So, I think that ambition to get it right, to create the perfect place... One of the ways it was expressed was, we want to build a city worthy of the landscape. Can you build a city that's as wonderful and powerful as Mt. Rainier?

[1:09:53] I think we still go through that, where Seattle politics is infused with this notion that everything carries some moral weight. The bag tax. I mean, any issue you raise... recycling, whatever, is freighted with a kind of utopian ideal of what the perfect city should be like, or the perfect policy. I think that's a virtue, and sometimes it holds us back. We lose some of our pragmatism, because we're waiting to be perfect, instead of just filling the damn pothole, or whatever it is. Which is one of the things about the Scandinavian influences: it tends to balance the utopian and the pragmatic, which is kind of what I was trying to get at earlier. I think we do that pretty well. I think there's a balance there, and that's what we strive for.

[1:11:00] The other thing, part of it, which is related, is that people come to Seattle, and they see it as a blank slate. They see us as a place that doesn't have history. So, basically, this is a place where... "I didn't like New York, so I'm going to go to Seattle, and we're going to make a new city that has none of the problems New York has, and all of its virtues." Or environmentally, "we're going to create a place that never creates any pollution, and we're going to save every orca," and do all of that. All of which is great, except I think sometimes we forget about the context. We forget about the history.

[1:11:52] A place like Seattle has history. Since settlement, we have more than a couple hundred years of history now. And the tribal history, and the geologic history, and the natural history. Are there ways we can understand this place, as opposed to just kind of bulldozing through with these utopian ideals? I think people seek Seattle from a civic standpoint, a city-building standpoint, as a place where you can come and do anything.

[1:12:32] I think that has a good side, and it has a really bad side. The bad side I think is acting out of ignorance, not respecting roots. Not respecting traditions. I think all of that is fair game for discussion. Is this tradition good? Are these policies good? I think that's all fine for debate. But I feel like a lot of the debates in Seattle boil down to these very set ideological constructs that people have brought with them. And I think that's a problem.

[1:13:19] It's a problem of creating an environment for conversation, and for learning, and for listening. It isn't to say that the old timers are right, the newcomers are wrong. It's not that simple. But I think it's difficult sometimes for new people to make connections with people who have been here a long time. And likewise, I think people who have been here a long time can find it hard to

make connections with people who are new to town.

[1:13:56] I think the other thing that Seattle has done really well, and particularly, I would argue that... The University of Washington is reprinting Roger Sale's book, *Seattle Past to Present*, which is a fabulous history of Seattle, a very particular history of Seattle, but it's really worth reading. I've written an the introduction to the new edition. The University of Washington Press is bringing it out in October. I knew Roger. I was a friend of his. So, I had a chance to read the book, and read about how the book was created, his thought process and everything.

[1:14:54] The book ends in 1976, which is when it was published. It really struck me that Seattle has gone through these boom and bust cycles. Some of the boom cycles have been really good. Good things happened. The boom cycle from the 1880s to 1910, a lot of progress, infrastructure, public power, a lot of really good city planning. The Olmsteds. All this great stuff happened. But then you have other boom cycles that are a little more problematic. I would argue the boom cycle we've been in for the last decade or so is one of those.

[1:15:42] You could argue, also, that parts of the Boeing boom... Roger talks about how there have been periods in our history where we have become a company town., and that that's not good. We became a company town under Boeing for a while. We became a company town under the railroads for a while. He talks in the book about the negative consequences of those periods. Some would argue that we're kind of an Amazon company town, and that's not good.

[1:16:14] But we also are incredibly creative in hard times. And if you go back and look at what Seattle accomplished from 1969 to 1979, the decade of the Boeing bust, the decade of massive job loss— this is the decade when we saved the Pike Place Market, we saved Pioneer Square, we started many of the arts organizations, Bumbershoot. We had the first gay pride festival. If you look at what was accomplished in that era, ending with the relocation here of Microsoft, it was one heck of a decade of civic improvement— Discovery Park, the Burke-Gilman Trail. These were things that were not accomplished by massive government spending or corporate spending. This was when we didn't have a lot of the resources, people being creative, and readapting the city to benefit the people for the long term.

[1:17:32] I think the 1970s, in retrospect, emerged as a remarkable model for what you can do. And if you can do that in hard times, you should be able to do that in good times, when you have resources. I think it speaks to that creativity that you're asking about. Another aspect of that is that Seattle was affordable. Artists could move here. Arts groups could start. Galleries could open. And they could get cheap rent in Pioneer Square. They could get cheap rent in Fremont. Young artists (or old, but certainly young artists) could come and start a theatre group, or start a gallery, or whatever. And if it didn't work, no problem. They had a place to work. They had rent they could afford.

[1:18:29] I did a story recently about this landlord in Georgetown who has rehabbed many of those buildings down there. But he's not redeveloping them. He's not charging market rate rents. He's charging under market rate rents for artists, and to create studio space. He has been a guy doing this kind of work in Seattle for decades. He basically is like, artists have been chased out of the U-District; they've been chased out of Belltown; they've been chased out of Fremont. They've been moving. Georgetown is the last bastion in the city where you can get that kind of atmosphere. Part

of the reason is landlords like this guy.

[1:19:19] It's a model that was a standard model here for a lot of years that wasn't confined to one or two neighborhoods. You could find it in different parts of the city. I think that's part of the creative formula that we've lost some of. We're attracting young people, which is good, but the economic stress is the inability to survive a mistake, which you have to... Whether you're starting a fishing business, or whether you're starting an art gallery, if you have a city that has an environment where failure isn't punished by making you homeless, you've got a city that's actually working. I think we have to find a way to get back to that city. People have lots strategies for that. Some I think are good. I wish I knew how we did it. But to your creative question, that's something we've lost. We haven't lost it entirely, but I think it's something we need to think more about. How can we get back to those things?

**Gordon:** [1:20:32] There were some outstanding civic leaders in those years, too. Jim Ellis.

**Knute:** [1:20:37] Yeah. Absolutely.

**Gordon:** [1:20:40] And you think about the World's Fair, and the people that put that together...

**Knute:** [1:20:46] It couldn't happen now. [Laughter] I'm the consulting historian for the Space Needle. I don't think I mentioned that. I wrote the history for their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**Gordon:** [1:20:58] That was my first job, was at the World's Fair.

**Knute:** [1:21:02] That is so awesome. What did you do?

**Gordon:** [1:21:04] I was an usher for the new opera house.

**Knute:** [1:21:06] Oh, wow.

**Gordon:** [1:21:09] I saw some of the greatest events. I had never seen anything like that.

**Knute:** [1:21:14] Wow. Stravinsky.

**Gordon:** [1:21:15] And that job continued when the fair closed, because the opera house continued. And there was the theater, and the Coliseum. It was wonderful.

**Knute:** [1:21:24] That's great. I always love meeting people... I attended the World's Fair as an eight-year-old. It made a big impression on me. I've been to ten World's Fairs now, in ten different countries.

**Gordon:** [1:21:41] Oh, have you? I went to Montreal.

**Knute:** [1:21:42] Oh, good.

**Gordon:** [1:21:43] And Vancouver.

**Knute:** [1:21:45] I would have loved to have gone to the Montreal Fair. That was one of the great fairs. There are three coming up that I'm excited about.

**Gordon:** [1:21:58] Really? Where?

**Knute:** [1:21:59] In 2020, there is one in Dubai. It's a big one, too, both physically and scale. It will be big. In 2023, there will be a smaller but still significant one in Buenos Aires. In 2025, Osaka is hosting a second fair. They had one in 1970. So, you've got the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, and then Japan.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:22:37] Exciting.

**Knute:** [1:22:38] Yeah. Very exciting. I'm planning to go to all three if I can make it that far.

**Gordon:** [1:22:47] I would love to go to Buenos Aires.

**Knute:** [1:22:50] Yeah.

**Susan:** [1:22:52] I do have another question. You made a comment about Seattle politics that I thought I would like you to pursue a little bit. If you look at a lot of American large cities, there is corruption everywhere. Somehow, Seattle politics seems to have pretty much escaped that, even though people aren't talking to each other maybe in a friendly way, they're still talking. Even though we might not agree on some of the ways that conversation is presented, it's still happening. How do we keep that happening? How do we keep that going on? Because I do think that's something unique about us, without corruption becoming more embedded in it, which I don't think it is right now.

**Knute:** [1:23:50] We were an extremely corrupt city for a long time. Again, that was one of the things that happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s— the tolerance policies, the payoff system were cleaned out. You had a complete turnover of the City Council, which became more diverse, and cleaner. Our city politics (and I'm talking about city politics) has been relatively clean compared to our history since 1969, 1970, 1973— in there. But it took a real... With groups like CHECC, which ran their slate of candidates for the City Council to clean house. It took them two election cycles to really get turnover there. Guys like Wes Uhlman, talk about good governance, especially in retrospect. That guy accomplished so much in his period.

[1:25:15] Yes, I think one of the values that we have is a kind of inclusion, and being heard. You can even trace that back to some of the Nordic things, people being able to stand up and speak their mind, and participate, thinking about the democracy of early Iceland, and that kind of thing, where that was unique and encouraged. Of course, it has become a kind of cartoon of itself in some ways, because people groan when you talk about "Seattle process." It's like, well, we'll talk everything to death. We'll slow down every initiative. I think in some ways, people miss the spontaneous... Somebody with a good idea just does something. The one that people point to is the big wheel on the waterfront. We didn't go through years of debating whether we should have a Ferris wheel. It just basically showed up, and people love it. There's something kind of "old Seattle" about that.

[1:26:31] To your point, I think the dialogue is really important. I kind of respect this about Seattle,

having lived in San Francisco in an interesting political time. In cities where politics is a spectator sport, like Boston, San Francisco, or Chicago, you have these columnists, and every day you're finding out what's going on at City Hall, and who's doing what to who, and who's going to jail. It's entertainment. It's like *People* magazine type of thing. And it's never been that way in Seattle. We had Emmett Watson, but it's never a strictly political kind of thing.

[1:27:15] I think we have this attitude that we like clean politics. We like people who are practical and high-minded. But I think we're suffering from some of what the whole country is suffering from, which is people digging into their niches, demonizing opposition, demonizing people that aren't adhering to a particular political platform. David Brewster used to say about Town Hall, what he loved about Seattle is that you can put on a program and fill the place with people who are eager to learn about a new civic idea. We're like eager students. People will show up— Arts & Lectures, the TV programs on the Seattle Channel, where people are being interviewed. There is a real audience for that kind of stuff.

[1:28:32] I think, though, that is becoming a niche audience, because so many other people are on some local website that caters to neighborhood grievance, or they're in some social media channel that has taken a very judgmental view. I'm worried about the amount of money pouring into city politics. We had one of the most expensive City Council races, if not ever, this week, with huge amounts of PAC money from various organizations, not only to support candidates, but to attack candidates. There is an article in *Crosscut* about that this morning, the influence of money in this election.

[1:29:26] The whole idea of going to district elections was to decrease the cost of politics so that you had vouchers, and you had people just worrying about their little part of the neighborhood. They wouldn't have to run a citywide campaign. That's not how it's turning out. I fear that between the ideological divisions that people are sowing, and money coming in, and to a certain degree, some of that nice civil debate turning into nasty discourse, or making people afraid to even bring an issue up for being viewed as being against the homeless, or against growth, or too pro-growth. I think that's really unfortunate, so I worry about the arc of where that civic discourse is going in the city. That's not to say it's not fixable, or that we can't do something about it. But just looking at that, I'm concerned about that.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:30:44] Fascinating. Thank you so much for sharing both your life story, and some of your philosophy, and some of the local history. Is there anything you haven't mentioned that you would like to talk about?

**Knute:** [1:31:00] I'm just going to look at my notes. I have two things... One Scandinavian, and one other thing I wanted to relate that I had in my notes here.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:31:18] Let's do it.

**Knute:** [1:31:19] One was, my father insisted (and he was almost two years old) that he remembered the blizzard of 1916. His memory is of being walked on the board sidewalk in his pram, and seeing these mountains of snow over the edge of the pram.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:31:49] Wow.

**Knute:** [1:31:50] And I have a memory from when I was two years old. It's a very different Seattle memory. So I know it's possible to have these kinds of indelible images. I always thought that was interesting, his eyewitness to history. He and his father also went down and visited Amundsen's boat, the Fram. It was docked here for refitting and whatnot. His father took him down to see that. We were always big on Amundsen in the family. Robert Falcon Scott was not a hero. [Laughter] But Amundsen was. We have a lot of books on Arctic exploration, Peter Freuchen's book, and other things, in the house. That was a big deal.

[1:32:49] My maternal grandfather, whose name was William Ebenezer Haseltine, was a Colonel. He served in both World War I and World War II. He was also the first one in the family to visit Seattle, during the Gold Rush. He came through in 1898, on the way to the Klondike. He had all kinds of adventures. He was there for two years. He was an engineer, also. He left MIT, and came to Seattle. He went up with a buddy. They had some claims. They also worked for a company that was building trails, and shipping stuff over the passes up there, and whatnot. When I was growing up, we were filled with these stories of the Klondike. I even have the pistol that he purchased in Seattle on his way up there, to defend himself.

[1:33:59] These connections with things like Arctic exploration and the Klondike were very much a part of our family history, the history that we talked about in relation to Seattle and Alaska. My sister went to the University of Alaska for a couple years, and worked in canneries up there. We had lots of friends and relatives in fishing, and cousins that went fishing in the Bering Sea. We were just out at the Fisherman's Memorial during the last [event, the first Sunday in May], because there is a tile there for a cousin who died, one of our family fishermen. It was a very moving ceremony.

**Gordon:** [1:34:45] Your uncle Leif— did you mention what he did?

**Knute:** [1:34:49] I didn't. One thing, I don't know a lot. Uncle Leif was very old when I knew him, and I didn't know him very well. He strongly resembled my grandfather. We knew their family a little bit, but we saw them kind of infrequently for family occasions. He lived in Ballard. I think when he came over, he was working in mills. I've seen a reference to him working in a mill in Bellingham. The interesting thing was, politically, my grandfather and his older brother were completely different. Leif was a millworker, union man, but Knute wanted to be a member of the Rainier Club. They had very different political orientations. Apparently, when the booze was flowing and they were together, some very hot political debates erupted. That's not just a modern thing. [Laughter] So, that's what I know about that.

[1:35:57] The other thing I was going to mention was a story my father told. At one point, they lived just off Dexter, right where Highway 99 is. They lived in a little house there. He was about kindergarten age at that point, five or six years old. And Boeing still had its shop on Lake Union. His father used to row over there. They were building float planes in those early days. They were doing work there near Portage Bay. His father used to row over and talk to those engineers, which I thought was interesting.

[1:36:47] Also, he used to tell bedtime stories to my father. My father was basically kindergarten age, and his father was telling him bedtime stories that were Norwegian folktales full of trolls. My father was attending kindergarten at John Hay on top of Queen Anne. He had to walk through that

greenbelt, that forest, to school every day by himself, and he was terrified a troll was going to get him. Then he became convinced that there was a walrus that lived in the woods near a little spring on the hillside there that was going to get him. He started refusing to walk.

[1:37:42] I guess his father was sort of amused and disgusted at this cowardly boy who thought there was a walrus in the woods. [Laughter] He passed on this loathing of trolls to me. My grandmother had a giant (it seemed giant) portrait of the most hideous troll you could imagine, which somebody had given her. She had stuck it in the basement of her house. When I was growing up, it was in a closet down there. I'd get together with Sven and Heidi, and we'd be playing in the basement. The loser of the game would be pushed into this closet with the Norwegian troll picture. It was really terrifying. That's just one of those weird little cultural tales. But even today, I've never liked the Fremont Troll. I don't think trolls are funny. I don't think they're cute. I don't like them. [Laughter]

**Gordon:** [1:38:57] Oh, that's great.

**Knute:** [1:38:58] That's where I am on trolls. I don't like Internet Trolls, either, but that's a whole different species. Maybe. Anyway, thank you very much.

**Gordon:** [1:39:08] Thank you so much.

**Knute:** [1:39:08] I am honored to be included in this.

**Gordon:** [1:39:11] A wonderful interview. We appreciate it.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:39:13] Yes.

**Knute:** [1:39:14] Thank you. I hope it's useful.

**Mari-Ann:** [1:39:14] Thank you so much.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.