

Nordic American Voices  
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Lawrence Rockne  
May 21, 2016  
First Lutheran Church  
Kennewick, Washington

Interviewers: Gordon Strand; Affa Sigurdardottir

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**Affa Sigurdardottir:** [0:00] This is an interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history project. Today is May 21, 2016, and we will be interviewing Lawrence Rockne. We are at the First Lutheran Church in Kennewick, Washington. My name is Arnfridur Sigurdardottir, and with me is Gordon Strand. Welcome.

**Lawrence:** [0:22] Thank you.

**Affa:** [0:22] If you would just state your name, date of birth, and then just go on from there, and tell us your story.

**Lawrence:** [0:30] Okay. My name is Lawrence Rockne. I was born in February, 1949, in Sidney, Montana. My sister was also born there, and then we moved to Kennewick. We've been in Kennewick for almost 60 years. I moved to Richland about 20 or 25 years ago. I worked on the Hanford Project, and I was too lazy to drive from Kennewick to work, so I moved to Richland, and that's where I am now.

**Affa:** [1:08] Was it your grandparents that came from Norway, or your great-grandparents?

**Lawrence:** [1:15] My grandparents both came from Norway. They didn't know each other at the time. My grandfather must have been a carpenter, because he went to Chicago, to architect school, and then moved to Montana, and started Rockne Contractors in Glendive, Montana. The "and son" came later. He built homes, and one church, I was told. Unfortunately, he died when I was about ten years old, as did my grandmother, so I don't know a whole lot about them. I am in the process of doing some genealogy.

**Gordon:** [2:08] What were their names?

**Lawrence:** [2:09] Anders would be the Norwegian name. When he got here, it was changed to Andrew A. Rockne. Our name had a "c" put in it, also. It was R-O-K-N-E in the old country, and still is. But when all the Roknes came over here, a "c" was put in our name. R-O-C-K-N-E. My grandmother's name was Borghilde Pedersen before she married.

**Affa:** [2:40] What part of Norway did they come from?

**Lawrence:** [2:42] My grandmother came from Bergen, I believe. I haven't confirmed that, however.

My grandfather Anders came from Voss.

**Affa:** [2:56] Did they know each other when they came over?

**Lawrence:** [2:58] No, they didn't. That's the kind of odd thing. They came over, and they met each other over here.

**Gordon:** [3:05] In Chicago?

**Lawrence:** [3:07] I don't know where they met. I haven't been able to find that out, either. I have a wedding certificate, and it's so old, I can't even read the whole thing. I don't remember if it said where they were married.

**Affa:** [3:29] So, he came to Chicago first, did you say?

**Lawrence:** [3:34] Yes. He had a sponsor in Chicago. I guess he went to school there and got his architect degree. Between the time he was living in Chicago and the time he showed up in Montana... I don't know what he was doing then, but he...

**Affa:** [3:55] Do you know if he came by himself from Norway, or if his family came?

**Lawrence:** [3:59] That I don't know. I don't think the family came. I don't know if he came over with somebody. I know there was a Lars Rockne already from Norway that was here. He came to the Chicago World's Fair, and brought his sled to show. He had developed a new kind of sled. He liked it so well that he sent for his family.

**Affa:** [4:33] Do you think your grandfather was sponsored by him, maybe?

**Lawrence:** [4:38] He could have been. I don't know that for sure, but that could be.

**Affa:** [4:45] Then he moved to Montana?

**Lawrence:** [4:48] Montana.

**Affa:** [4:49] And your father was born there?

**Lawrence:** [4:51] My father and his two older brothers were born in Glendive, where my grandfather moved. From there, I know my uncle went to Missoula, and my father went to Portland for a while, where he was a disc jockey on one of the Portland stations. Then he went to Kennewick to do the same, and he met my mother there. They married and raised four of us in Kennewick. Then we all went our ways.

**Affa:** [5:30] Is your mother also of Norwegian background?

**Lawrence:** [5:33] No. She always liked to say she was Heinz 57. There might be enough Norwegian to put 50% of me as Norwegian. I don't know.

**Affa:** [5:43] What was her background?

**Lawrence:** [5:45] I haven't looked too much into her background. I started genealogy, and I found out tracking the woman is a lot harder because of all the name changes that go through the tree. So, I just stuck with dad. I do have a bunch of stuff on my mom, but I have another hobby that keeps my attention more than genealogy.

**Affa:** [6:16] What is that?

**Lawrence:** [6:17] I am an amateur radio operator.

**Affa:** [6:20] Oh, very interesting.

**Lawrence:** [6:22] I got that when I was in high school, and I've been playing at that ever since.

**Affa:** [6:29] So, do you talk to people all over the world?

**Lawrence:** [6:31] Yeah.

**Affa:** [6:33] I knew that people used to do that some years ago. I didn't know that it was still very popular.

**Lawrence:** [6:41] Oh, yeah. In fact, a lot of it has advanced quite a bit, to where you have more than just talking. You can use the computer to transmit whatever you want to say over the air, and receive it also.

**Affa:** [7:04] Through the computer?

**Lawrence:** [7:05] Through the computer.

**Affa:** [7:06] Very interesting. Are there any specific countries that you connect with more than others?

**Lawrence:** [7:16] Well, I talk to Japan a lot, and Australia. Some of the east coast to Europe, you can't get a hold of too easily, because I'm so far away.

**Gordon:** [7:41] Are you just basically trolling to find somebody online, or how does that work?

**Lawrence:** [7:47] Yeah, you do. I listen a lot, and if I hear someone that wants to talk to someone, and they're out of the country, I'll go ahead and give them a call. Last night it was late when usually there is nothing on, and I worked two stations out of New Zealand. Earlier this summer, we had a big solar flare, and the band shut down real early, and we couldn't do anything. But it's starting to open up now where I can get some decent DX.

**Affa:** [8:27] Does that affect it quite a bit, when we have the solar flares?

**Lawrence:** [8:33] Yeah. That shuts down things pretty much, even some of the local

communications, the radio stations and stuff like that— it'll shut that down.

**Gordon:** [8:43] You said your father was a disc jockey? For sports?

**Lawrence:** [8:53] I don't know if he did any sports.

**Gordon:** [8:55] Oh, okay. How get he get into that field? Do you know the background or history?

**Lawrence:** [9:02] Dad was always interested in... I want to say electronics. But the first thing he took apart was his mom's clock. I guess he got it back together again. [Laughter] But anyway, he went into electronics, and got his degree for working on the transmitters, not just talking. And whenever a transmitter went down, he'd go in and fix it. Eventually, he wanted to get out of that business, because it didn't pay well. He became a meter man with the PUD and retired from there. He told me he'd get me in there, too, if I wanted to work over there. I didn't want to work at the same place my dad did. I opted for the Hanford Project.

**Affa:** [10:04] Did he go to school in Montana?

**Lawrence:** [10:08] Yeah, he did. He went to Dawson County High School in Glendive. It's now a community college. Unfortunately, when his 50-year reunion came around, he didn't want to go. That's another thing, too. He also got a letter from Jergen Rokne in Voss, Norway in about 1994. Jergen said, "We're going to have a family reunion. Can you make it?" Dad didn't really want to travel, so I said, "Can I go in your place? He said sure.

[10:49] So, I went. My wife didn't want to go, so I went alone, and I had a ball. Jergen had all kinds of activities for us, and it kept us busy. So, when I came home, my wife could tell when I walked out of the airport, that I'd had a good time, just by the look on my face. So, we went back in 2000 to celebrate Syttende Mai. And that was fun.

**Affa:** [11:21] Did you celebrate that in Oslo, or in Voss?

**Lawrence:** [11:24] We were in Voss. We did the same thing I did the last time, which I questioned— I flew into Bergen, and we stayed in Bergen for a few days, and took the rail to Voss, which is what I did last time. And we celebrated Syttende Mai. Boy, that was fun. They had dinner fixed up. A bunch of people got together. The next time I go, if there is a next time, (my wife is getting a sore back and sore knees, and it's hard to walk. Plus with flights nowadays...) I'd like to fly into Oslo.

**Affa:** [12:12] When you went to Voss to celebrate Syttende Mai, did you celebrate with your cousins, with relatives?

**Lawrence:** [12:24] Yes. We celebrated. They said the high school kids usually start... We were in bed, and they were shooting off cannons from across the lake. That woke us both up, so we got up and went to my cousin's house. They were getting everything ready. We went out on their balcony, and we watched the parades. After that was over, we went to their friend's— an architect friend. They were making dinner. We were going to eat outside, but it was raining. The gals ate inside, and the guys went out to an old Norwegian house that the architect had put on his land. And we were in

there eating, and drinking aquavit, and having a good time.

**Affa:** [13:19] Oh, great. Are you still in touch with your cousins there?

**Lawrence:** [13:25] Yeah. I don't write to them, but we talk on Facebook, and email once in a while. The one that threw the party is getting up in age now, so if I go, I'd like to go soon, but like I say, it's going to be tough.

**Gordon:** [13:48] Yeah. It is tough.

**Lawrence:** [13:49] Plus, my eyesight isn't that good anymore.

**Affa:** [13:56] When you were growing up, did your mother cook Norwegian food?

**Lawrence:** [14:03] No. When we grew up, we didn't do much Norwegian. My dad didn't know much Norwegian. I think when my grandfather came over, he said, "We just left Norway. We are in America. We are Americans." I never heard him speak anything but English. I can't remember that much about him. I remember the rhubarb patch in his backyard.

**Affa:** [14:34] So, you did not grow up in Montana.

**Lawrence:** [14:41] No, I spent maybe two years there.

**Affa:** [14:44] Did you go there for the summers?

**Lawrence:** [14:48] Yeah. Every once in a while, we'd drive back to my grandparents. But like I said, they both passed away... My grandfather was healthy, and had a heart attack and died. My grandmother was already in the hospital with tubes, and she died within a year.

**Affa:** [15:12] It says here that your wife's parents... He was from Russia?

**Lawrence:** [15:24] Yeah. He came over... Barb said he was escaping the Bolsheviks, and he came over in the 1920s. He was a really young man—He and his brother both came over. They had help getting here. They finally made it. He was a businessman. He didn't have much education, but he was a businessman. He bought some restaurants in Kennewick.

**Affa:** [15:59] He came here, to Kennewick?

**Lawrence:** [16:01] He came, and settled in Yakima. Well, several places. Wapato, Toppenish, Yakima. He was an apple farmer, and then he bought a restaurant in Yakima called Oscar's. Then he came down to the Tri-Cities and bought a restaurant called Zip's, and he built one in Richland called Zip's. Before he died, he sold them off for a pretty good sum.

**Affa:** [16:44] What about your upbringing here in Kennewick? What was that like?

**Lawrence:** [16:50] I was thinking of that last night. I think it was a normal upbringing. My dad and mom didn't lean one way or the other as far as... "Well, let's have a Norwegian dinner," or "Let's

celebrate Syttende Mai,” or anything like that. I think dad had the upbringing from his father that “This is America; we will do what the Americans do.” He didn’t know any Norwegian.

**Affa:** [17:25] Did he belong to the Sons of Norway?

**Lawrence:** [17:28] Not that I know of. My grandfather did— Anders, or Andrew. He belonged to the Sons of Norway. I found a piece of paper on him that said he was a member of the Sons of Norway.

**Gordon:** [17:44] In Montana?

**Lawrence:** [17:45] Yeah. In Glendive, Montana.

**Affa:** [17:49] When did you get interested in your Norwegian heritage?

**Lawrence:** [17:55] Dad started putting together some trees, and collecting photos. Then I joined Sons of Norway, and I met Greg Holter, who is our genealogist. I’ve taken a course from him. I wanted to trace my immediate roots, so I stayed with just the U.S.— Ancestry.com. Now I want to go a little farther, I think, so I’m going to have to pay a little more. I’m cheap. If I pay a little more, I get the whole world, global, or whatever they call it.

**Gordon:** [18:43] There are some good Norwegian sites. You have to be able to interpret the language.

**Lawrence:** [18:48] Yeah.

**Affa:** [18:49] Have you gotten any help from your relatives in Norway?

**Lawrence:** [18:54] When we went to this reunion in 1994, Jergen, who headed the whole thing up, gave us a family tree of everybody. It was quite extensive. I found part of it. I was looking for it this week. I haven’t found all of it. I don’t know what I did with it.

**Gordon:** [19:17] That’s the time you traveled by yourself, right?

**Lawrence:** [19:20] Right.

**Gordon:** [19:25] They must have treated you like royalty.

**Lawrence:** [19:28] They did. There were ten Americans there, and they treated us all good.

**Gordon:** [19:34] Ten Americans came?

**Lawrence:** [19:36] Yeah.

**Affa:** [19:37] Who were the other ones? How were the other American related to you?

**Lawrence:** [19:42] I think we’re all cousins.

**Affa:** [19:47] So, your grandfather that came over— he had siblings that came over? You're related to Knute Rockne, then?

**Lawrence:** [20:00] Yeah. I'm related to Knute. My great grandfather and Knute's father were brothers. Lars came over. He's the one that came over to the Chicago World's Fair to show his wagon.

**Affa:** [20:22] Was that Knute's father?

**Lawrence:** [20:24] Knute's father. Yeah. Then he decided to stay, and he either went back to Norway and brought his family, or sent for his family. I don't know which. There were some other Rocknes that had come over earlier. Peter Rockne— my dad said last we heard, he was a farmer in Oregon.

**Affa:** [20:56] And who was he?

**Lawrence:** [20:58] His name was Peter Rockne. He was one of the brothers.

**Affa:** [21:02] Oh, I see.

**Lawrence:** [21:03] Lars, Knute, Peter. I think there was George, and one other.

**Affa:** [21:10] And they all came over here?

**Lawrence:** [21:11] I don't think they all came over, but most of them came over. George is the one that started a hardware store, and it's been going on. Now Jergen (again, who got the reunion going) now owns the hardware store in Voss.

**Affa:** [21:39] So, he spells his name without the "c"— R-O-K-N-E?

**Lawrence:** [21:44] Yes. He's in the old country, so it's without the "c."

**Gordon:** [21:52] Did anybody in your family meet the legendary Knute Rockne?

**Lawrence:** [21:56] I don't know. I don't even know if my grandfather did, and they were cousins.

**Affa:** [22:04] You didn't hear any stories about him, growing up?

**Lawrence:** [22:08] No, other than the fact I was related to him. When I found out I was related to him, I wanted to know more about him, so I checked out a book from the school library, and I read it. And I think that was one of the smartest things I ever did, because I did a lot of book reports on Knute Rockne. [Laughter]

**Gordon:** [22:34] Was he born here, or...

**Lawrence:** [22:37] Knute? No, he was born in Voss.

**Gordon:** [22:39] He was? So, he came with the family— Lars’ family?

**Lawrence:** [22:43] Yeah. He came with Lars’ family.

**Gordon:** [22:46] I wonder where the football part came from. You read the book; I guess you know?

**Lawrence:** [22:52] Yeah. He ultimately ended up going to the University of Notre Dame, taking chemistry. He wanted to be a chemist. His teacher said, “You are good enough to be a chemistry aide. You can teach chemistry here.” He had been an assistant football coach, and he decided he’d rather coach football than go into chemistry.

**Gordon:** [23:23] There was a movie, right, of his life?

**Lawrence:** [23:25] Yeah. There was a movie with Pat O’Brien playing Knute, and Ronald Reagan playing the Gipper.

**Gordon:** [23:32] That’s right.

**Lawrence:** [23:34] Yeah. I’ve seen it a couple times.

**Gordon:** [23:43] That’s quite interesting. I forgot about the Reagan connection.

**Affa:** [23:49] When you were here as a young boy, with the Columbia River right here, were you allowed to go down there?

**Lawrence:** [24:04] No, I don’t think I ever wanted to until I started dating. I had a girlfriend, and we went down to the lagoon. You can’t swim in it anymore, because it’s so dirty. That’s as close to the river we got. I had a buddy, and he and I would go into the canyon close to us, and we’d disappear all day long into the canyon. We had a ball, just exploring.

**Affa:** [24:42] This canyon is here in Kennewick?

**Lawrence:** [24:45] Yes, in Kennewick. Zintel Canyon. Before they put the highway in, the overpass, we’d go in there.

**Affa:** [24:57] Could you go in quite far?

**Lawrence:** [24:59] We went in far enough to where we realized we didn’t want to get lost. It was quite a ways. It was an all-day thing. We really enjoyed going in there and exploring.

**Affa:** [25:16] Is it still open?

**Lawrence:** [25:18] It has turned into... they paved one side where you can walk, and the other side is just rough. I went in with my stepson and his kids, and we walked that whole thing together, and it was kind of fun. As far as Norwegian stuff, we didn’t do any Norwegian stuff as kids. Didn’t even

give it a second thought.

**Affa:** [25:50] When did you decide to join the Sons of Norway?

**Lawrence:** [25:53] In December, it will be 15 years. I think I finally decided to join when I started getting interested in genealogy.

**Gordon:** [26:10] That was after your first trip, right?

**Lawrence:** [26:14] Yeah. You're doing the math, and I can't. [Laughter] 1994... Yeah, I guess it would be. That might be part of the reason, too. I enjoyed that trip so much, and then I got more into the genealogy, so I thought I'd join Sons of Norway and take one more step.

**Affa:** [26:51] Are you involved with the lodge?

**Lawrence:** [26:53] No, I'm not too involved with the lodge. I held office. I was the marshal one year, a long time ago. But other than that, I haven't done anything.

**Affa:** [27:08] You go to the functions?

**Lawrence:** [27:10] I go to some of their functions.

**Affa:** [27:13] What was it like coming to Voss, where your grandfather had come from? Did you have any feeling about being where he had been?

**Lawrence:** [27:31] Well, it was interesting, because the information that I got from Jergen had a drawing of Voss at about the time my grandfather left— a bunch of houses. Of course, it had grown quite a bit. Not the first trip, but the second trip, my wife and I stayed at an old hotel called the Fleischers, that was spared the bombing from Germany. In fact, they had one dud that was still on the ground that they had a sign around.

**Affa:** [28:20] Did your family live on a farm? Were they farmers, do you know?

**Lawrence:** [28:28] The Roknes were farmers. That's an interesting question. I'll have to look and see what my grandfather actually did, because he did become an architect, ultimately.

**Affa:** [28:42] Did you go to the homestead?

**Lawrence:** [28:48] Yeah.

**Affa:** [28:50] I've been to Voss, so I was wondering if it's close to the lake, or downtown?

**Lawrence:** [28:58] I didn't notice when I was there. I saw a picture here recently of the Rokne farm, and they showed the lake. So, it must be close to the lake.

**Affa:** [29:14] Yeah. It's a beautiful place.

**Lawrence:** [29:16] Yeah. Both times I said when I'm over there I'm going to stop at their records and do some genealogy. I never did. I got so caught up in everything else.

**Gordon:** [29:30] The fun part. Yeah.

**Lawrence:** [29:31] Yeah. So, the third time I go back, if I can get back, I'm going to do that. I'm going to stop at the records office.

**Gordon:** [29:42] I found a lot of times you show up, and right away they see the face, and they see the resemblance to the family. That happened to me. I walked in, and it was like a was a ghost. I guess I'm related. [Laughter]

**Lawrence:** [30:00] Yeah. Well, I haven't had that experience, but I've stuck with the family. The second time I went back we stayed in that old hotel, Fleischer's. Then we were invited to my cousin's house to stay. We went there for three days, and stayed. He made us breakfast, and made us feel right at home. I had a real good time there. We had a plane to catch in a few days, so we just climbed on the rail and went back to Bergen, and stayed a couple nights there, and flew home.

**Gordon:** [30:48] Tell us about Hanford. How did you get involved? When did you first start working there?

**Lawrence:** [30:54] That's interesting, because I was working as an electronics technician for U.S. Testing. The ads kept coming out, they were looking for an apprentice. So, I applied. Well, I didn't get it, and didn't get it. I applied about four times. About the fourth time, they called me in. They interviewed me, and said, "I don't think you're what we want."

[31:20] So, I got to thinking later, and someone backed this up—you were probably not taken because you're experienced, and they'd have to give you too much credit toward an apprentice program. I didn't want credit. I wanted the whole thing. So, okay, I'll apply as a journeyman. Bang. Got hired. [Laughter] I told everybody up there, "I am the most expensive paid apprentice out there." I found my niche out there. I did oscilloscopes. I calibrated and repaired oscilloscopes. I did that for 30 years.

**Affa:** [32:05] Exactly what is that?

**Lawrence:** [32:08] Oscilloscopes are devices that not only... you can visually see signals, you can look at the signal. Kind of like a television. You turn it on, and you've got an electron beam that hits a cathode ray tube, or a screen. Except for a television, you can adjust how high it is, or how wide it is. It's another electronic tool. You can look at voltages with it, and adjust the height, and the time.

**Affa:** [32:51] They use it to run the place?

**Lawrence:** [32:56] No. They use it as a calibration device, or a device to check... If you've got something like a computer that might be turning itself off, and turning back on, or something, you know there must be a glitch someplace. They'll put a scope on it. They have post-trains in equipment, and they can watch it, and if there's a glitch at a certain point, they know what to do, and they can fix it that way. Since I've retired, I've looked at YouTube, and all the stuff you can do with

a scope that I didn't realize you could do with a scope. It's fantastic.

**Affa:** [33:47] Were you ever worried, working there?

**Lawrence:** [33:54] No. I never did. Are you talking about the radiation?

**Affa:** [34:01] Yes.

**Lawrence:** [34:01] I was removed pretty far away from the radiation. All the equipment that came in had to be checked, and if it was hot, they wouldn't allow it in the building. So, I was pretty safe.

**Affa:** [34:22] Now they have closed it completely, have they?

**Lawrence:** [34:25] It's not closed completely. There are no reactors running on the Hanford Project. There is a reactor running on another project just off the Hanford area. It's run by Energy Northwest.

**Affa:** [34:41] Is that for electricity?

**Lawrence:** [34:43] Yeah. They put out 400 megawatts of power.

**Gordon:** [34:51] Is that Bonneville?

**Lawrence:** [34:53] Bonneville eventually gets it. The power is put on the grid, and goes...

**Affa:** [35:03] And that's staying open?

**Lawrence:** [35:09] Yeah. It'll be producing for a long time. It still has radiation. They shut it down once in a while for maintenance. They have to go through certain procedures, because they don't want anyone to get in the radiation.

**Affa:** [35:31] Is this anything like the one in Japan, after the tsunami? The same kind of operation?

**Lawrence:** [35:39] I don't know how the two reactors differentiate, other than the fact that the one out in the Hanford area, I think would be the safer reactor.

**Affa:** [35:59] Was Hanford always just to produce electricity?

**Lawrence:** [36:04] No. Originally, it was to produce uranium or plutonium for the atomic bomb. I can't think right off the top of my head, but it produced some for the second atomic bomb. They did not have a third. If the Japanese would have known that, they wouldn't have given up.

**Gordon:** [36:38] Oh, I see.

**Affa:** [36:42] Was it made at Hanford—the atomic bomb? Do you know?

**Lawrence:** [36:46] I don't think it was made at Hanford. I think the plutonium was made at

Hanford, and that was shipped to New Mexico someplace, in Alamogordo. It was put together there.

**Gordon:** [37:04] They enriched it, in other words.

**Affa:** [37:06] You worked at Hanford for 30 years?

**Lawrence:** [37:11] About 30 years.

**Affa:** [37:14] And you liked it?

**Lawrence:** Well, I liked it at first, and then I got to hate it. I had the job, and it was a good-paying job, and I had good benefits, but I hated the job. I got to the point where I started taking two days off so I could have a four-day weekend, and I'd only have to work four days.

**Affa:** [37:45] How long ago did you retire?

**Lawrence:** [37:48] I retired in 2014.

**Affa:** [37:51] Oh, okay. So, not that long ago.

**Lawrence:** [37:55] No.

**Affa:** [37:55] You're enjoying retirement?

**Lawrence:** [37:56] Yeah. I had to leave early because I had meningitis, and it damaged my eyesight, and I really couldn't see too well. So, I had to leave the job early. They still called me an active employee. But as soon as I turned 65, in 2014, they said you're retired.

**Affa:** [38:24] Do you think that had anything to do with the job site?

**Lawrence:** [38:29] No. I don't know what caused it. Like I said, I was in a safe area. I couldn't ask for a better area. I was lucky when I hired on that they were looking for someone in the Standards lab. That's where I went to work, and I spent 30 years there. Fifteen of it, I hated the job. I just didn't like it.

**Gordon:** [38:58] That's too bad.

**Lawrence:** [38:59] Yeah. If I had known... Now that I'm retirement, I know I could have lived on that amount. I could have gotten a different job. Oh, well.

**Affa:** [39:14] You always live and learn, I guess it is.

**Gordon:** [39:17] Yeah. You're happy now, anyway, hopefully.

**Affa:** [39:21] You said you had a stepson?

**Lawrence:** [39:26] Yeah. My wife who is with me is my second wife, and I inherited a family of four kids real quick. There are three boys and one girl.

**Affa:** [39:43] Did you have children before?

**Lawrence:** [39:45] I didn't. My first wife had a child, and I adopted him. I put him on my tree. He's in Iowa right now. Two of the boys are in California, and a boy and the girl are in Seattle.

**Affa:** [40:09] Are they working there in Seattle?

**Lawrence:** [40:13] Yeah. She's an electrician. He is a consultant of some sort. My stepson in California has his own company, and the other one is a custodian—a job I had early in my life, which I wish I had never given up, because it was a beautiful job.

**Affa:** [40:44] Where was that?

**Lawrence:** [40:46] I was with Kennewick School District. The job I had... the only thing I didn't like about it was I was on swing, but it was a fun job. Nobody around to bother you. All I had to do was go to the schools, pick up the towels, wash them, and get everything ready to go out the next day, and I was gone.

**Affa:** [41:21] Anything that you would like to talk about, or tell us?

**Lawrence:** [41:29] I think the highlight was both trips to Norway to visit my relatives over there. There was one gal, Eline. She was a cousin. She lived in Bergen. When we went back to Bergen, we saw her. We bought her dinner, and talked to her for a while. I've got a cousin— his last name is Ringheim. He had a farm up above Voss, and he took me up there for lunch. He had lox, or as Barb referred to it, "raw salmon." And he had goat cheese, and I don't know what all, but it was good. He has since converted one of his barns into a hotel and a restaurant. He sent me pictures of that. It's one place I would like to visit again.

**Affa:** [42:45] Do you know the name of the restaurant?

**Lawrence:** [42:47] Store Rokne.

**Affa:** [42:50] Oh, okay.

**Lawrence:** [42:52] Yeah. Look that up on the Internet.

**Affa:** [42:54] Yes. Very nice.

**Lawrence:** [42:57] Yes, it's a nice place. I have pictures of him building it. I guess he does quite well.

**Gordon:** [43:08] So, you really reestablished the connections to Norway.

**Lawrence:** [43:13] Yeah, I did. I told my wife the first I trip I took over there by myself, and I came back and said, "I want to retire there." Of course, she said, "Uh-uh. I'll never see my kids."

**Gordon:** [43:32] That's true. Yeah.

**Lawrence:** [43:35] People kept telling me you don't want to go there; it's too expensive. Well, I didn't think it was expensive. Then the second time I went, the exchange rate was ridiculous. It was \$100 bought 900 kroners.

**Affa:** [44:00] That is good. Yeah.

**Lawrence:** [44:03] Yeah. I couldn't believe it.

**Gordon:** [44:05] It fluctuates.

**Lawrence:** [44:07] Even in the U.S., they said to bring money. So, I went to a bank in Kennewick, and I said, "I want to exchange \$100 for the equivalent kroner. And they gave me 700 kroners. That was more than I got last time. Then I flew into Denmark and said I needed more. They gave me 800 kroners. Then I ran out of money in Norway, so I went to the bank, and they gave me 900 kroners. I couldn't believe it.

**Affa:** [44:43] That's quite good. It's interesting that your grandfather came here, and you were the one who is making the connection again.

**Lawrence:** [44:55] My grandmother that came to America went back to Bergen one time, and she came back, and she said, "I'm never going back. It's too big."

**Gordon:** [45:12] Too big?

**Lawrence:** [45:12] Too big. Yeah. It just got too big. It's not what it used to be. It's kind of like the Tri-Cities. I'm 67, so I've been here over 60 years. And it was nice. Now it's just too big.

**Gordon:** [45:35] Interesting.

**Affa:** [45:36] Yeah. I don't remember if we asked you— do you have sisters and brothers?

**Lawrence:** [45:41] Yes. I have two sisters, and a brother who is Kennewick. I have a sister in Kennewick, and I have a sister in Astoria.

**Affa:** [46:02] Interesting. Have they been back to Norway? Are they interested in going back?

**Lawrence:** [46:09] No. I don't know if they're interested in going back, but they haven't been back.

**Affa:** [46:15] Not even after you told them what a good trip you had?

**Lawrence:** [46:19] No. I took home all kinds of pictures.

**Affa:** [46:29] We were in Astoria a few years ago, and we were interviewing in Naselle, in Washington State. We were told there are a lot of Scandinavians or Nordics in Astoria that we

should go and interview.

**Lawrence:** [46:46] Yeah. Whenever we were in Astoria, my wife would stop at Finn Ware and buy all her nice things.

**Gordon:** [46:57] We interviewed that woman.

**Lawrence:** [46:58] Is that right? She's an interesting woman.

**Gordon:** [47:02] Yes, she is.

**Affa:** [47:05] Anything else you can think of?

**Lawrence:** [47:12] I can't think of anything... I was up last night, wondering... Well, first, I saw those guys who were in World War II, and I thought, holy cow, I can't compare to that.

**Gordon:** [47:27] Oh, well, no, we're doing all kinds of... We wanted to find those people because we knew time was... But now we're doing a lot like yourself— second and third generation, like me, too, and getting their stories.

**Lawrence:** [47:48] My dad was in the Navy during World War II. He went in in 1942. He didn't say much about it. I know he was on an island. I have pictures.

**Affa:** [48:02] In the Pacific?

**Lawrence:** [48:04] In the Pacific. Yeah. When I asked him, he said he was a radioman on that island. Later in life we noticed that he would get on the bed... He'd go to bed, and in the middle of the night, he'd wake up and crawl across the top of the bed, and he'd go, "Bang, bang!"

**Gordon:** [48:32] Oh, really?

**Lawrence:** [48:33] So, we're wondering if he was in a little more combat than he let on.

**Gordon:** [48:38] Yeah. So many of them don't want to talk about it.

**Lawrence:** [48:46] I know.

**Affa:** [48:50] Do you know if he talked to your mother about it?

**Lawrence:** [48:52] I couldn't tell you.

**Gordon:** [48:54] That's interesting. He was replaying something. It wasn't just a kids' game.

**Lawrence:** [49:02] I don't think so. No. It wasn't a kids' game. This was not once or twice. He'd do it... It got to the point where my mother put another bed in the bedroom, and he'd get up.

**Gordon:** [49:17] So, he did this later in life.

**Lawrence:** [49:19] Yeah.

**Gordon:** [49:20] Oh, interesting.

**Affa:** [49:22] Did he ever go to any reunions with his buddies?

**Lawrence:** [49:26] No. He didn't go to reunions with his buddies, and he didn't go to high school reunions. I'm surprised he went to his own retirement party.

**Affa:** [49:48] It seems like a lot of you have gone into electronics, or something to do with engineering.

**Lawrence:** [50:02] Well, my dad was in electronics. That's the only thing I ever knew. He was an amateur radio operator, too, so he had his equipment, and he'd be working on it. He'd work on other things. I always believed that if my dad could not fix it, it couldn't be fixed.

**Gordon:** [50:27] Oh, wow.

**Lawrence:** [50:29] So, the natural thing for me, I guess, is when I graduated from high school, I just gravitated toward electronics, and that's what I spent the rest of my life doing.

**Gordon:** [50:43] Yeah. That's great. Well, we thank you so much.

**Affa:** [50:49] Thank you.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.