

Nordic American Voices
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Peter Henning
May 11, 2013
Stanwood Historical Society
Stanwood, Washington

Interviewers: Gordon Strand; Brandon Benson

Gordon Strand: [0:01] Today is May 11, 2013, and we are at the Stanwood Area Historical Society and Museum in Stanwood, Washington. We are interviewing Peter Henning. This is Gordon Strand, and Brandon Benson is my co-interviewer. So Peter, please tell us your name, when you were born, and where you were born, and give us some of your family history.

Peter Henning: [0:27] All right.

Gordon: [0:28] Especially the immigrants who came to this area.

Peter: [0:31] Okay. All right. I am Peter Henning. I was born January 3, 1922, the youngest of four children, to Peter and Nanny Henning. My father came from Sweden in 1883 when he was fifteen years old. My mother was the youngest of four children. She was born in Verdi, Minnesota. Her brother and two sisters were born in Sweden. So, they're basically... both sides of the family are Swedish.

[1:14] My father started in Minnesota, worked on the railroads. His father had come here a couple of years before that. Things were very difficult in Sweden at that time. He came to what they called Dollarland at that time. I'm sure you heard that phrase before.

Gordon: [1:34] Yeah. [Laughter]

Peter: [1:35] So, he saved enough money for my father to come here. He came with his half-brother Johann. There's a book written about my father with more of the details, so I won't... I'll spare you a lot of the detail. But after spending five years working on the railroads and on a couple of farms... Incidentally, in Sweden, milking cows was a woman's job, as we know. So, when the farmer told him he had to milk some cows first thing in the morning, he decided that if he showed the farmer he didn't know how to milk cows, he wouldn't have to do that anymore. That wasn't the answer he got. He learned to milk cows, or he walked down the road. [Laughter]

[2:24] Anyway, after five years, he came out. His half-brother was in Seattle, working on the Eastern Railroad line that went out towards Redmond. So, my father decided to come out here, and went up to Winnipeg, or I guess... Yeah, Winnipeg, where he got the train that took him out to Vancouver. And then by ship, he came down to Seattle, and then found out that his brother was working on the railroad. So, the next day he hopped on top of a freight, and sure enough, he got out in the Redmond area. And he saw his brother there. So, his brother left the job, and they came into Seattle, and celebrated each other, having not seen each other for quite a while.

[3:19] The Montlake Cut- my father got a job working for Mr. Serby, who was the sheriff of King County. He owned a property that is now Laurelhurst in Seattle. That was his hunting preserve. My father had the job of looking after his dogs. But at the same time...

Gordon: [3:44] The sheriff?

Peter: [3:45] The sheriff of Seattle. That was quite a trip from downtown Seattle out there. [Laughter] To Laurelhurst. Anyway, they were digging the Montlake Cut- the first one, at that time, so his half-brother Johann and he spent some time working on that. It was more or less a channel through there that's been widened and widened over the years.

[4:10] Then he found out that he could... He wanted land. And he got up to Arlington, but he found out that all of the good land along the Stillaguamish River had already been taken by the people that we know that are still there. So, an old Swede told him he knew where he could find a couple of good properties. So, he found a couple homesteads up near the Skagit County line.

[4:41] Then he had to work in order to build them up, so he got a job in the woods, and stayed with a family, and found himself working on what became the Great Northern Railway. And they were building the tote road, which is the road you build to get supplies out to where the railroad is being built. By the time they got to Grotto, that part was done, but the contractor saw that my dad was pretty diligent. So, they were building five switchbacks that went over the top of the Cascades. My father got the contract to build that top switch.

[5:30] When it was all done, in December of '92, he had made two thousand dollars, which he promptly put in the bank. And in 1893- there was the well-known panic of '93, and he lost everything, and had to start all over again. And he did that. He got some timberland over on the Olympic Peninsula. And John Nordstrom- the founder of the Nordstrom chain of stores was a good friend of his, and was working for him, logging.

Gordon: [6:14] Working for your dad?

Peter: [6:16] Yes. Uh huh. And I knew John Nordstrom. He would come up to see my father from time to time. Of course, when we needed shoes, we got sent down to Second Avenue. [Laughter]

And it was really the sons that made the Nordstrom chain what it is. The early John Nordstrom was just a humble guy. A very nice man; kind.

[6:41] So, then along came the Gold Rush. My dad sold everything that he had- what little he had, in the way of logging equipment, and took the first boat up to Dyea. There he looked at what was going on. Am I taking too long here?

Gordon: [7:03] No, no.

Peter: [7:04] No. And he saw that they were building a... There's a thousand steps or something, and they had to carry a ton of material up to the top of the pass in order to be allowed to go down the Yukon. So, my father looked at all of that, and he saw that they were building a tramway, so he got a job clearing the right of way for that tramway.

[7:34] Also, before he left Seattle, he took all the money that he had, and converted it into dollar watches and sold them on the ship on the way up. So, he had a suitcase full of dollar bills, and at the end of the first day, when he had just enough money to pay the men working for him, he opened it up and said, "I guess you guys want to get paid." "Sure." "Well," he says, "I think I've got enough here to take care of you." So, sure enough, he got the job done.

[8:04] Instead of going up to Dawson, he came back to Seattle, and that winter he bought eighteen tons of supplies, and thirteen horses, and in the spring of '98, he took them back up to Dawson, where he sold all of that. He had a portable sawmill, which he took out to the King Solomon mines, about fifty miles out of Dawson. So, he sawed lumber, which the miners used for their drifts.

[8:35] So, to make a long story short, he mined the miners, and in 1900, when he came out for the last time, he had done very well. I have no idea how well, but he rounded up his father in Minnesota, and they went back to Sweden to see his mother.

[8:57] And he dearly loved his mother. She was a baker. By then she had a little bakery going. And she never kept books. So, if you came in: "Do you know what my account is?" "Yes, four dollars and ninety-one cents." She kept everything in her head.

Gordon: [9:15] Wow.

Peter: [9:16] She is the one that is the bright star in our family. She was a tremendous... I didn't know any of my grandparents, but she is the one that I would have liked to have known. [Laughter]

Gordon: [9:25] Yeah. Yeah.

Peter: [9:26] She was known as a very powerful woman. Then he came back, and in 1901, he bought

the whole side hill that is East Stanwood now, from Dr. Maynard Johnson's grandfather. And [he] had it platted, but kept seventeen acres for himself, and that's where he built a house. That property actually went down to the railroad tracks. It was five or six acres on the other side of the railroad tracks, behind the commercial part of East Stanwood.

[10:05] Then in 1902, he married Emma Ingve. They had a little girl who died when she was four months old. And Emma contracted tuberculosis, and three years later, she passed away. It was another ten years before he married my mother. But when he was through with his grieving, he got a job up near Hanes Skagway. There was a Catholic mission at Hanes, and up there farther was the Porcupine Goldmine, and no way of connecting the two. So, each one of them had built four or five miles up the Chilkat River, and from the Porcupine down. But they had the big dog flash cliff.

[11:10] So, the federal government put that out for bids. My father took it, and there's about twenty miles there- mostly cliffs that had to be blasted off. Again, I think he took it for about eight thousand dollars. Remarkable in today's... And then there was work to be done in British Columbia, but the premier of British Columbia was so ticked off at the United States government because they had maneuvered to bring the border of the United States all the way down along the coast. So, in retribution, he said he would give no jobs to American contractors, only to Canadian contractors.

[12:08] So, my dad found a company up there- Palmer Brothers Engineering. So, it was Palmer Brothers and Henning. I'm going to slide over a little bit. They built quite a bit over that way, thirty miles from Abbotsford to Chilliwack, and fourteen miles up the Fraser River from Hope to Yale, and then eighty miles up under Mount Robson. Part of that was on top of the Grand Trunk. So, when the Grand Trunk is running, and you're building a railroad above them, it's very difficult.

[12:54] Finally they said, "Let's spend the whole winter." And they spent the whole winter loading dynamite in all along. And one morning they called the Grand Trunk in Edmonton, and they said, "We're going to fill your tracks up tonight," and when the blue smoke started to come over the phone, he just hung up. But they set off the blast, and they had a beautiful road bed, and the Grand Trunk was completely filled. [Laughter]

[13:27] Oh, to kind of finish my father's story- he married my mother in 1914. They were still working on the railroad up there, so she got to see that. Then he built a house on that property where my brother and my two sisters were born, and then when mother found out she was pregnant again, they moved that house and built the present house that's still up here on the hill, and that's where I was born.

[14:01] My mother came out here with her parents in 1902. Her father's name was Ilaf Carlson. He had a livery stable instead of a taxi. And then when cars came along, he started buying cars. He had the first Ford Agency in Stanwood. Again, I never got to meet him. I never met any of my grandparents. Maybe I should stop there for a minute if you've got some questions now, or am I

doing okay?

Gordon: [14:47] Well, no, you're doing great.

Peter: [14:49] Oh, okay.

Gordon: [14:50] So, your mother came with her parents out here. Why did they move here, do you think, from Minnesota?

Peter: [14:55] Oh, conditions were not good. It was right on the corner with South Dakota. Elkton, South Dakota was right next door. It was difficult making a farm there; the dust and so on. I think either Grandmother or Grandpa had some relatives out here, so it was an easy move for them to do that. So, she went through the schools in Cedar Home here, and married my father. She was a good mother to my brother and two sisters. We had a wonderful time living in the house up on the hill. Dad had also built a log cabin down in the lower part of the seventeen acres we called the park, and had dug a lake with an island in the middle of it.

Gordon: [15:53] Really?

Peter: [15:54] Yeah. Oh, we just had great fun when we were kids going down there, and there were ducks down there, and chickens and whatnot.

Gordon: [16:06] Did that area build up quickly around it? You said he platted the land?

Peter: [16:11] Yeah. It's all houses now.

Gordon: [16:12] Yeah. It wasn't while you were growing up?

Peter: [16:14] And the seventeen acres is all houses, too.

Gordon: [16:16] Yeah. Oh, it is?

Peter: [16:17] And the original house that I grew up in is still up at the top of the hill. I guess you can see it. I don't like to look over there anymore.

Gordon: [16:26] Oh. Yeah.

Peter: [16:27] But you can still drive up to that house.

Gordon: [16:31] Is it true that that's where all the Swedes lived, in East Stanwood?

Peter: [16:32] Who?

Gordon: [16:34] In East Stanwood, was that where all the Swedes lived?

Peter: [16:38] I have never heard that. [Laughter]

Gordon: [16:40] Oh. I thought there was some rivalry between the two parts of Stanwood.

Peter: [16:44] Well, I'll tell you that story, too. You'll hear a different story from other people.

Gordon: [16:50] Okay. [Laughter]

Peter: [16:51] But I think this, as far as I know, is real. Everything was Stanwood. Of course river traffic or water traffic was what brought people here. There were no roads or anything. So, D.O. Pearson, at the mouth of the Stillaguamish, that's where he set it up. As most of you know, it's called Stanwood because it was originally Centerville. The post office said that's too common, so he said, "We'll take my wife's maiden name." Which was Clara Stanwood. [Laughter]

[17:24] Well, then the Montana Railroad built a railroad from Seattle to Vancouver. It's now part of the Great Northern. So, a little community built up around that. So, parents wanted their children to have any elementary school of their own. Oh, and by this time, people were logging up in Cedar Home, and Pleasant Hill, and Village, up in those areas. They wanted something closer, in Stanwood, than to have their children trucked down there. Three times on the election it was voted down. So the people in East Stanwood said, "Let's have a school district of our own." Or something.

[18:19] They tried to do that, and the state said the only way you can do that is if you incorporate- then you can have your own school district. But otherwise you're at the whims of the election, and the majority of people lived in Stanwood. So, they set about incorporating East Stanwood, and then an elementary school was built there in East Stanwood, and up in Cedar Home, and Village, and so on. So, that's the story.

Gordon: [18:49] So, the motive was to get their own school.

Peter: [18:51] Yes. But there were very strong feelings about. Then when East Stanwood had its own high school, then there were football games. And they got so wild that... oh, I think the last game that was played, Albert Haugen got hit so hard that he didn't know where he was for a couple of days. They finally decided that they better not have any more football games. [Laughter]

Gordon: [19:21] So, did you go to East Stanwood?

Peter: [19:22] Yeah. I sure did. And I graduated from Lincoln High School in 1939.

Gordon: [19:33] So, how did your folks maintain Swedish traditions in the home, or did they?

Peter: [19:38] Oh, we did. Yeah.

Gordon: [19:40] Okay. Can you tell us about that?

Peter: [19:41] I might say one other thing, too. I think there were five Norwegian Lutheran Churches in Stanwood. We weren't allowed to go to any of them. [Laughter]

Gordon: [19:53] Are you serious?

Peter: [19:54] We went to Sunday School in the Swedish Baptist Church in Cedar Home, and when it got time for confirmation, we went up to Mount Vernon to the Salem Lutheran Church. [Laughter] Yeah. Ethnic heritages were strong back then. [Laughter]

Gordon: [20:11] Wow. I mean, you're serious? You would have not been allowed in?

Peter: [20:15] Oh, I think not. Yeah. My dad was pretty strong-willed. He was also county commissioner here for six years- 1920 to 1926. He built several buildings. He was probably the chief motivator for the commercial activity along Colby Avenue in Everett. I'm not sure how many of the buildings he owned, but a majority of them. Then in 1929, that all went down. The buildings were so empty that he would have to sell one to pay the taxes on the other. It was very difficult for him.

[21:03] But before that happened, when we were little kids, in 1927, Dad wanted to go back to Sweden once more. So, he arranged for us to spend a year over there. We went down to New Mexico first. One of the men that he had worked for on the railroad up in Canada owned five hundred acres down in New Mexico. He wanted Dad to help him with the cattle business. Between leasing state and federal land down there, they had a farm that was five miles wide and twenty miles long, sitting on top of the Great Divide- the Rockies.

[21:54] Every year, they would bring in a carload of forty white-faced bulls, and then the sixteen hundred cattle longhorn gradually became that. But then things were so difficult in the thirties that they eventually sold that farm, although it still operates down there at W-Bar Ranch.

[22:21] So, we went on from there to Washington, D.C. and New York, and boarded the *Gripsholm*, the first true motor ship. All of the other ships that used diesel fuel used it to run boilers, but the *Gripsholm* was the first one that had a diesel engine that turned the props. So we boarded that. And in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the loudspeakers came on one night, and they said, "Charles Lindbergh has landed in Paris."

Gordon: [22:54] Oh.

Peter: [22:55] And the ship went wild. [Laughter] I mean, we were sent to bed early that night. [Laughter]

Gordon: [23:02] How old were you then, about?

Peter: [23:03] Five years old.

Gordon: [23:04] Five years old, okay. You remember that?

Peter: [23:06] Oh, I remember it very well. Yeah.

Gordon: [23:08] Oh. Wow.

Peter: [23:10] We had... one of his brothers had a house there close to Hudiksvall, which is one hundred miles north of Stockholm, and we stayed in that house. We came back in '28, and everything was fine until everything hit the fan until '29.

Gordon: [23:39] Did you go to school in Sweden, then?

Peter: [23:42] No. My brother and two sisters did.

Gordon: [23:45] Oh yeah. You were five.

Peter: [23:46] But I learned Swedish out in the street. [Laughter]

Gordon: [23:48] You learned... okay.

Peter: [23:49] Yeah. So, I had a pretty good command of the Swedish language, but I still don't know how to write. But I can carry on a decent conversation, or I used to be able to.

Gordon: [24:07] So, the Depression hit- the crash.

Peter: [24:09] Yes.

Gordon: [24:10] Your dad lost everything, or...

Peter: [24:12] Well, pretty much. You know, life changed, but every fall there was a pig that was butchered, and a half a cow, and then one of Mother's sisters would come down, and there was

furious activity of cutting and canning; making sausage, canning vegetables, canning fruit. And we literally lived out of the jar in those years. Mother wasn't allowed to make white bread, so if we went into Everett from time to time, and went to the Monte Cristo hotel and had a piece of white bread, that was like an ice cream cone. [Laughter]

[24:58] But you know, those were good years. I don't say, "Gee, those were tough years." We didn't really know it. But... So, I went to Lincoln High School. I was valedictorian, and I got a four-year scholarship to go to Washington State. But Dad wasn't real keen on colleges. He thought kids that had nothing to do could go to college. So... [Laughter] He had just bought a farm down near Silvana, and gave me the chance to go down and run it for him. To me, it was big equipment down there, and I had a chance to run that. Then in January...

Gordon: [25:52] That didn't bother you, then?

Peter: [25:54] Huh?

Gordon: [25:55] That didn't bother you that he didn't want you to go to college?

Peter: [25:57] No. It was exciting down on the farm. We were clearing land and filling in the swamps, and we had new tractors and whatnot. I enjoyed that. And I truly took in the farming attitude. We were talking at a meeting that I was at this morning. A fellow was talking about blocking sugar beets. When you plant the seeds, you take out fourteen inches, and you essentially leave one beet.

[26:34] And we had sugar beets. So, in '39 and '40 we had seven or eight acres of sugar beets. There was a refinery up in Bellingham, so when we dug the beets, we'd take them up to Conway, and there was a loading station that put them in big hoppers, and the train took them up to Bellingham. And then somewhere in the early '40s, they closed the refinery. But yeah, I remember that. And there was a Mexican labor camp here in Stanwood, so we could get help. They used little short-handled hoes. I don't know how their backs stood it, going along.

Gordon: [27:15] Tough work. Yeah.

Peter: [27:18] So, then my brother had bought a jersey cow, and Dad had built a barn for him up home. So, he was milking about twenty cows by hand. I usually milked nine or ten of them in the morning before I went to school. Then when I went down to Silvana, I started with jerseys, too, so the herd that my father put together, we gradually culled them out, and put in nothing but purebred jerseys.

[27:57] After the war, a lot of milk had been fixed up for Grade-A, and you got a better price for that, so everybody wanted Grade-A. But now there was a surplus of milk, and Darigold would take

every bit of milk that anybody wanted to ship. So, they found themselves carrying most of the surplus, and the price they set was much lower than Arden and Carnation and Meadowsweet could take. So, it was a lot of unease there.

[28:37] So, I guess I was the rabble-rouser in the Silvana area, and there were others in Carnation, and all up and down the Puget Sound area. We were mad at Russ Walts, who was head of Consolidated Dairy Products- Darigold. So, we arranged for a meeting with him to tell him what we thought of him. [Laughter] And he quickly turned that around, and he said, “You know, I’m your friend. I’m not your enemy.” And it turned out Russ Walts is one of the greatest men I have ever known. I had absolute admiration for the man.

[29:18] He showed us that we needed to get together so that we could help each other. We eventually put in, with the help of an organization that I was president of for ten years- Washington Milk Producers- we had enough strength in the Darigold group to force a federal marketing order, which said that all farmers would be paid the same, regardless of where they shipped. So, either a processor like Gardner or Carnation would pay into the pool, or they’d take out of the pool. So, everybody got paid a fair price. There were some problems with that. One summer when we held our milk out, there were tires of tanker trucks that were shot out. It was a pretty rough summer.

Gordon: [30:17] This was right after the war?

Peter: [30:18] Yeah. that would have been like ’47 or ’48.

Gordon: [30:23] You and your dad were working together in milk production?

Peter: [30:26] Yeah. My dad was not in good shape then. He died in ’55. He was eighty-seven. By then it was just totally my operation. So anyway, then we saw that there was consolidation that could be made. Darigold was organized by counties, so each county had an organization of their own, and a manager, and he ran them like their own little fiefdoms. Meanwhile, Carnation and Arden, etc. were closing down their country plants, and were consolidating everything into Seattle. Darigold needed to do the same thing, and over their dead bodies did they want to do that. So, it was very, very slow.

[31:23] By now, Russ had retired, and Louie Aragnoni was the head of Darigold. At one of the meetings, he leaned over to me, and he said, “When did you go to college?” “Oh, Louie,” I said, “It’s been seventeen years since I got out of high school, and I’m not smart enough to go to college.” “Okay,” he said. “You take a correspondence course in math this summer, and then come back and tell me about it.”

[31:54] So, I did, and I found the beautiful world of math. To make a long story short, I enrolled as a freshman at the University of Washington in 1956, when I was thirty-four years old. And two years

and three months later, I took twenty hours a quarter.

Gordon: [32:19] Oh, my.

Peter: [32:20] And we moved to Boulder, Colorado to go to graduate school. When I first started at the University of Washington- this is after seventeen years- I loved chemistry, and my chemistry teacher was the one that had encouraged me to go. So, I enrolled in chemistry. The first midterm- there were about three hundred in the class- and after we came back in, the professor said, “I know you guys must have been spending your time at the HUB, and your scores show it. The average was... I don’t know, twenty-four, twenty-five. But one guy got a ninety-six, and he’s a dairy farmer and drives one hundred miles a day.” [Laughter]

[33:09] So, I thought, “Well, if it’s that easy, maybe I’ll tackle physics.” So that’s when I entered the wonderful world of physics. We moved to Colorado in January of 1959, and in 1964 I had a Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics. I spent twenty years in that field, a couple of years with Aerojet General while we were trying to duplicate the conditions at the center of the sun, which is impossible, practically. There is enough deuterium in the oceans of the world that if we could convert it all- you know, fusion- we would have enough energy to power this planet for millions of years.

Gordon: [34:05] Do you think that will happen- the fusion?

Peter: [34:07] Well, that was fifty years ago, and today we’re still trying to make it happen.

Gordon: [34:12] Yeah.

Peter: [34:13] The work at Livermore in California, and in Russia... It may happen someday, but there have been papers written that said that it could never happen at all. We’ll wait and see. But that was a good time. Then I left Aerojet and joined Varian Associates in Palo Alto. I was with them for thirteen years. They make linear accelerators that are used for cancer therapy. That was all new, because at that time cancer therapy was taken care of by... [pause] [laughter] I’ve been talking too long here.

[35:15] Anyway, Varian’s linear accelerators were new, and they needed someone to do a little pioneer work on the east coast. So, I got sent to the east coast for three years and did a lot traveling over that time, but preaching the gospel of linear accelerators. And today, Varian... At that time, those machines were selling for a hundred to two hundred thousand dollars apiece. Today they sell for ten to fifteen million dollars apiece, and have all kinds of capability they didn’t have back then. So, it was a good time. Have I been talking too long, here? [Laughter]

Gordon: [35:59] No, it’s fascinating. What happened to the farmstead back here?

Peter: [36:07] Oh. You know, I still own the farm. So when we went to Colorado, I had a man that was running it for me- George Laffin. And in 1977, he said, "I'm ready to retire." And I said, "Well, we better sell the farm." So, I had an auction with the cattle and equipment and whatnot, and that took me out of farming.

Gordon: [36:34] And that was near Silvana?

Peter: [36:36] Yes. Uh huh. Then I came home to see the new owner, Neil Cinema, get started. And before I knew it, I had bought some ground, and started developing. My son came out from New Jersey and joined me, so we spent from I guess 1980 to 2000 developing about eight hundred thousand square feet of office and warehouse space, mostly in King County- Totem Lake, Kent Valley, Woodinville, in Snohomish County on Airport Road. In 1999, we sold all the buildings. We also had one building we built down in Mountain View, California. It turned out be right in a high-tech area. As a matter of fact, it's right where Google is located.

Gordon: [37:55] I was going to say... Yeah.

Peter: [37:57] So, they finally leased the building from us, and another fellow bought it. My son was with me- my oldest son, Peter Richard, and was our chief financial guy. My daughter Cheryl went to Colorado State, in art. She never liked commercial art, though. She married a boy from Iowa, and they came out here. They live now in Brownsville, Oregon. She found her niche was in counseling, and has a Master's degree in counseling from Oregon State.

[38:45] The next son was Craig. Craig loved to help me on the farm, and then found out he had to go to school, which he didn't like. At any rate, he wound up a civil engineer. He got a Master's degree in construction management from Stanford. He worked for several of the large construction firms building dams; eight-foot diameter pipelines out into the ocean for sewer lines- a variety of things. And then he got a chance to buy a small railroad company of his own, building short lines. So, he followed a field there and did very well. Then in 2007, he came down with prostate cancer, and it had gone to the bone, and we lost him in 2009.

[39:49] My youngest son, Mark got an education in Ellensburg and taught over in Bremerton to autistic children. He thought he could do something for them. But after three years when he was all bruised and battered and decided he couldn't do it anymore, he looked for something else. In the summertime, he had worked for a landscape company on Mercer Island. That guy wanted to sell out, so we managed to purchase that. So today, Mark has a landscape company based in Redmond- Signature Landscape- and he has one hundred and fifty people working for him.

Gordon: [40:35] Wow. Yeah.

Peter: [40:40] So, what have I left out? [Laughter]

Gordon: [40:43] Let's talk again about your Swedish heritage.

Peter: [40:46] Okay.

Gordon: [40:47] Did you... You mentioned one trip you took with your folks.

Peter: [40:51] Yes.

Gordon: [40:52] Did they keep close contact with their family in Sweden?

Peter: [40:56] Very much so.

Gordon: [40:58] And were there other trips after that?

Peter: [41:00] Yes. I made six or seven trips to Sweden. And it's passed on to other generations. So, my kids are now talking with my cousins' children, and they're coming out here this summer, so we make visits back and forth. We keep the family ties pretty well connected. My wife was Norwegian. She was a Marstad from Arlington.

Gordon: [41:28] Oh, yeah.

Peter: [41:29] So, we have visited Norway two or three times. She passed away in 2001. So, I've been alone since then.

Gordon: [41:40] Yeah, that's really [inaudible 41:41]. Yeah. So, what was it like when you were growing up in this area? What sort of organizations? Did the Swedes band together? There was a church? You mentioned the church.

Peter: [41:57] Yeah. Salem Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon.

Gordon: [41:59] Oh, okay. And Swedish Baptist.

Peter: [42:00] And the Norwegians have Sons and Daughters of Norway, and the Swedes have the Vasa Lodge. There's one down towards Issaquah. I've been there once or twice. And there's a Vasa Lodge in Mount Vernon, and I've been to that a few times. But I haven't been a joiner of any of those organizations, nor was my wife.

Gordon: [42:29] What about your dad and mom? Were they involved in any activities like that?

Peter: [42:34] Well, they kept their friends and relatives, but they didn't belong to anything.

Gordon: [42:46] It sounds like your dad was really an entrepreneur.

Peter: [42:49] He was. Very much so. The book about him is called *The Builder*. And he truly... everything was a project for him. He had great command of how to get things done. I know the heritage society here has copies of that book, and another five hundred are being printed right now.

Gordon: [43:13] I think we have it in the museum's bookstore, too.

Peter: [43:15] Yes. We're giving them to museums. I think they sell them for fifteen dollars apiece or something. I get nothing out of it.

Gordon: [43:21] Yeah.

Peter: [43:26] And David Buerge, who wrote the book, also wrote a book about me, called *The Son*.

Gordon: [43:33] Oh, okay. Yeah. He's a good author.

Peter: [43:37] They have some copies of that here, too. The Nordic Heritage Society down in Seattle has always been near and dear to us, as the one up here was. I have one sister that's still living. She's out in Warm Beach. Ninety-six years old, but is not in good health.

Gordon: [44:01] She's not?

Peter: [44:02] No.

Gordon: [44:02] It was recommended to me today that we should interview her. Would that be possible, or...

Peter: [44:06] I think so. You won't get an awful lot out of her, but I think that would be great if you would.

Gordon: [44:12] Is she a Fjarlie now?

Peter: [44:14] Fjarlie. Yeah.

Gordon: [44:15] Marguerite? Yeah.

Peter: [44:16] Yeah. Married Harold Fairly. She was widowed three times. She married Frank Forstrom, and they had two sons. Frank was an eighth grade teacher at Lincoln High School and taught violin, and Arnold Anderson taught seventh grade, and was a great singer, so the two of them

were called on to perform a lot. But now all those folks are gone. And then she married Bernard Quandy, and he wanted to log up in British Columbia, and then later he owned a crab boat, but neither of them were very successful. And he had a stroke and passed away. I think they were married for twenty-five years.

[45:14] Then in later years, Harold Fjarlie, who had been married... at any rate, they had been high school sweethearts. They got married for I don't know... probably ten, fifteen years or something. And that's been a few years now that he's been gone. I think that would be great if you would go up and try and interview her.

Gordon: [45:39] If you think it's... yeah. Maybe we should call you? Go through you to arrange...

Peter: [45:45] I'm going to go up and see her now, if you'd like to follow me.

Gordon: [45:51] Oh, I don't think we could do it today.

Peter: [45:53] No, no, but I mean just to see her and see if she would be willing to do it. It's up to you.

Gordon: [45:56] Oh. Maybe. We've got a lot of stuff to pack up.

Peter: [46:00] Yeah. Yeah. No.

Gordon: [46:05] Yeah. But let's do that in the next... You're up here in Seattle now, right? Up at the north...

Peter: [46:13] No, I live in Bellevue.

Gordon: [46:14] Bellevue. Yeah. But I mean, you're not down in Palm Springs, obviously.

Peter: [46:18] No. No, I'm home now until late October.

Gordon: [46:21] Okay. Let's see if we can do it sometime in these next few weeks.

Peter: [46:24] Yeah. Yeah. I'll help you make any arrangements you want.

Gordon: [46:28] Great. Oh, yeah. Anything else, folks? Peanut gallery? It's a great story. Anything else? What do you want to add, Peter? Anything? How did you get involved with the museum? I think I know, but... [laughter]

Peter: [46:49] Through my sister Marguerite.

Gordon: [46:51] Is that right? Okay. I didn't know.

Peter: [46:52] She and Harold would come down here, and they would invite...

Gordon: [46:57] Oh, this museum.

Peter: [46:58] Uh huh. And they would invite my wife Helen and myself to come. So, I made a couple of talks at those affairs. Who is the chief curator here?

Gordon: [47:15] Karen? I don't know.

Peter: [47:16] No. Dan... Anyway, maybe he's not anymore. I think he's retired now. I used to know him.

Gordon: [47:31] It seems like a very close community, still.

Peter: [47:34] Yes. Yes.

Gordon: [47:35] I mean, a lot of sense of history.

Peter: [47:38] Camano Island has been a great... In 1926- something that should be in here, too- in 1926, my father bought forty acres out on Camano Island, for two thousand dollars, which included seventeen hundred feet of beachfront, waterfront. [Laughter] It wasn't worth much back then. Land sold from forty to fifty dollars an acre, and there were no roads out here, you know. He had great vision, and he had great vision of what that could be. So, he had a road built down there, and our whole family- the fifth generation is now growing up out there.

Gordon: [48:21] Is that right?

Peter: [48:22] Thanks to his foresight back then. He had great foresight.

Gordon: [48:27] And you're next to...

Peter: [48:30] Cama Beach. [Inaudible 48:32] Beach.

Gordon: [48:33] Who joins you up there?

Peter: [48:36] [Inaudible 48:36].

Gordon: [48:39] Somebody else we talked to that has property on Camano... Now I can't remember.

Well, anyway... They're... It'll come to me.

Peter: [48:55] It could be to the north. There's several people on the bluff up to the north.

Gordon: [49:01] Oh... on the board... Floyd Jones. Isn't he near you?

Peter: [49:08] Oh. Oh. No, no. He's at Sundine's Beach next to Juniper.

Gordon: [49:17] Yeah. Okay.

Peter: [49:17] Yes. Floyd's a good friend of mine. [Laughter]

Gordon: [49:20] Yes. I know that. We interviewed him.

Peter: [49:24] Did you?

Gordon: [49:24] Yes.

Peter: [49:25] Oh, good.

Gordon: [49:25] It was delightful. Yeah.

Peter: [49:26] There's a great Swedish family, too.

Gordon: [49:29] Absolutely. Yeah. He's the one... he talked about your place.

Peter: [49:35] Uh huh. Yeah.

Gordon: [49:36] And some of the other families up here.

Peter: [49:39] Did he tell you his whole story?

Gordon: [49:41] Pardon?

Peter: [49:42] His story is remarkable.

Gordon: [49:43] Oh, yeah.

Peter: [49:44] Good lord.

Gordon: [49:46] Sharecropper from Missouri, right?

Peter: [49:47] Yeah.

Gordon: [49:48] Yeah. And thank God for the G.I. Bill, right?

Peter: [49:52] Yeah. Yeah.

Gordon: [49:53] You know? Yeah.

Peter: [49:55] And he was the only one out of a family of seven or so... You know, he just had the itch to learn. Remarkable guy.

Gordon: [50:03] Yeah, he is.

Peter: [50:05] Yeah.

Gordon: [50:08] Well, good. I think that's a tremendous interview. We really appreciate it.

Brandon Benson: [50:13] Thank you.

Peter: [50:14] Oh, good.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison Goetz.