Nordic American Voices
Nordic Heritage Museum

Interview of Povl Lasbo
March 20, 2015
Port Stanley Schoolhouse
Lopez Island, Washington

Interviewers: Gordon Strand; Affa Sigurdardottir

Affa Sigurdardottir: [0:09] This is an interview for the Nordic American Voices oral history project. Today is March 20, 2015, and we will be interviewing Povl Lasbo. We are at the Port Stanley Schoolhouse on Lopez Island, Washington. My name is Affa Sigurdardottir, and with me is Gordon Strand.

Gordon Strand: [0:31] Thank you. Thank you, Povl, for being here and for participating in this project. We'd like you to start by just giving us your name, the year you were born, where you were born, and some history about your family. I understand you're from Denmark. Your immigration story, and especially, of course, how you came up here to Lopez Island, too.

Povl Lasbo: [0:53] Yes, that was a long journey. I'll be taking you through that entire journey. I was born in 1949 in the small, provincial town of Assens, which is on the island of Funen in Denmark. Assens was and still is a sleepy little town of five thousand people surrounded on three sides by fertile farmland, rolling hills and little villages, and on the fourth side by the sea, which is the Lillebælt, or Little Belt, which is one of the inland waterways of Denmark.

[1:34] So it is and was a port town as well as a farming support town for market for the surrounding farmers. Although, it did have some industry. A lot of it was actually farm-based as well. The biggest employer in town was and is the sugar factory, where they were taking in the beets from the farmers in the fall. The whole town smells of the sugar that is being made.

[2:07] What they turned out there was the raw sugar, the thing that is very expensive now. But back then it was the cheapest sugar, which then got shipped out of town to another sugar factory and turned into the white refined sugar. We children would hang out at the sugar factory and wait for the sugar to come down the slides to the trucks, and hope that one of the bags would burst, and we would be all over it like vultures.

[2:36] Another employer was a fairly large brewery, which produced all the standard beers that were produced in Denmark back then, which was essentially just the pilsner, or lager, as they call it in America. The brewery has now turned into more of a microbrewery style, at least the beers they turn out, and they're very successful at that.

[2:59] There was a tobacco factory, which was established in 1864. Although the premises of the factory have now been turned into a cultural center, the factory, the producer still exists in the fifth or sixth generation of the same family. They now make mainly snuff, which is shipped to Sweden.

But they used to do cigars and the most popular pipe tobaccos that were available in Denmark.

[3:27] Other than that, there was a shipyard because of the port, and there was a small fishing fleet. Lots of fresh fish was always available. Then there was a ferry that would run from Assens to the mainland of Denmark- Jutland, just north of the German border. It would run back and forth there. It is not there anymore now, because bridges have taken over the transportation.

[3:58] Assens is a cute little town with lots of old houses dating back to the 1750s, like row houses, and narrow streets, and of course all the old-fashioned shops they had as I grew up- grocery stores and bakers and butchers and coffee and tea, and tobacco, movie theaters, shoemaker. All of that stuff, which essentially is all gone now. I went back not very long ago, and there was only one store left that existed back when I was a kid, and that was the toy store. It looks exactly the same as it did back then, but all the other stores have disappeared, or been converted. None of the stores that I mentioned are here.

Gordon: [4:47] What did your father do?

Povl: [4:48] We will get to that. [Laughter] Assens is also at the end of the railway line that came in from Odense. That one has also disappeared now. I was born on one of these very small, narrow streets, a street called [inaudible 5:07]. [Inaudible 5:09] actually means "a slap in the face." So "a slap in the face street" is where I was born. I have no explanation for the name of the street. There is only one other street in Denmark called [inaudible 5:23], to the best of my knowledge. So I was born on the upper end of that little narrow street in a very small row house, where my parents had very recently moved.

[5:36] They were photographers, and they had their photo studio on the ground floor of that little house. We lived on the first floor, and on the second floor lived the town's tobacconist. They had no children of their own, and I sort of became their adopted child. As soon as I could start crawling up the stairs, I spent my time up there, and ate their pickled cucumbers. That's what I've been told. I do not remember it.

[6:04] At the other end of that little street was a big half-timbered house, which probably went all the way back to the 1600s. That was the birth house of the Danish naval hero, Peter Willemoes. It is now a museum. Actually, my dad helped make the museum because of his photography skills. His photographs are hanging there that he made from other materials.

[6:04] Peter Willemoes was in the Battle of Copenhagen during the Napoleonic Wars, where he became a hero by essentially defeating the fleet of Lord Nelson. If you visit London and see the monument for Nelson at Trafalgar Square, you'll see the Battle of Copenhagen listed as one of his victories, but they actually lost that battle. Willemoes in particular inflicted big losses to the British fleet.

[7:04] The only reason they can claim it as a victory is because they won the negotiations the next day, when Nelson negotiated with the Danish king. The Danish king was a lunatic and gave up. That's how they won. Willemoes was then killed a few years later in another battle with the British. But before he was killed, he was the darling of Denmark, and lots of songs were made about him.

[7:31] As I mentioned, my parents were photographers. They married just ten months before I was born. They had met in the town of Middelfart, which is just 20 miles or thirty kilometers north of Assens.

Gordon: [7:50] Rifa? Did you say Rifa?

Povl: [7:51] No, Middelfart.

Gordon: [7:53] Oh, sorry.

Povl: [7:54] Which is sort of… I'm sorry about that. It will be like Middelfart, but the "fart" is not a fart. "Fart" means "going from one place to another" in Danish, and Middelfart is the place where the biggest crossing was between the island of Funen to the mainland, Jutland, which was all done by ferries. Later we will talk more about that. My parents met there, and they moved to Assens shortly after they married, to start his business.

[8:26] To get back to Middelfart, where they met- it's known now for its bridge between Funen and Jutland. There are actually two bridges now because of the heavy traffic. The first bridge was a major engineering feat back in the 1930s because of the strong currents in the water there, and the depth of the water as well. It is what they call a cantilever bridge, so it is actually angled to the bottom of the sea there.

[8:57] The reason I mention that is because my grandfather, whose name was [inaudible 9:03], was one of the leading people in building that bridge. He worked for a major Danish construction company called Monberg & Thorsen, which also built the second bridge there, which is a suspension bridge. He was involved in many other building projects both in Denmark and outside of Denmark throughout his life.

Affa: [9:26] Was he an engineer?

Povl: [9:27] He was what was called a foreman, which means he was leading some of the sub-projects. He was responsible for… As I said, it's the cantilever bridge, but on both sides it's arches, and his responsibility was the arches on one side. I think it was the Funen side. Then he was responsible for the road, for the automobiles and for the railway that also goes across the bridge. So that was his responsibility. He was not the designer of the bridge; he was actually out there in the field working and having people work for him.

[10:04] As a reward for his work, he got a medal from the King of Denmark, Christian X, together with the other leaders. The picture you see over there is about a dozen people that got a medal for building that bridge. Because as I said, it was not only a big engineering achievement, but it also connected essentially east and west Denmark for the first time, with a bridge.

Affa: [10:31] And the reason it was such a big engineering thing is because of the current there?

Povl: [10:41] Well, yeah. At that time, suspension bridges were not really an option. They were not quite into that. So they had to essentially set pillars in the water. So they put some big boxes out there that were then lowered to the bottom of the sea, and then they built the pillars on top of those

boxes. That of course, was difficult because of the current, and the depth as well. The family albums have a lot of pictures of what all happened as it was being built. The bridge is of course still standing, but it's beginning to show signs of age. It is the only place the trains can cross from east Denmark to west Denmark.

Affa: [11:27] Wow.

Povl: [11:28] As I said, he was involved in many other projects until he retired, so he was practically never home. We didn't see him very often until he retired. He was not very happy in his retirement, because he was used to this free life and being many places. The furthest he went was Jamaica, where they did some projects.

Affa: [11:52] Oh, wow.

Povl: [11:54] And they built another famous bridge in Denmark, which is called Storstrømsbroen. Same problem there- lots of current. Then they did the dam from main Jutland to [inaudible 12:07], which is the way you get from [inaudible 12:10].

Affa: [12:12] This was your father's father?

Povl: [12:14] That was my mother's father.

Affa: [12:15] Your mother's father.

Povl: [12:15] Yes. Right. I think for now that is enough of him, but we will talk about him… He was married to… His wife was Edith, and she came from a poor peasant family. I think they lived first in Copenhagen, and then they moved out to Middelfart while the bridge-building was going on, which took several years. They lived on the Jutland side in a rented house. While they were there, they built a house in Middelfart itself, which I've been told the basement that was built like a bunker, was made from concrete that was either diverted from the bridge or left over from the bridge. [Laughter]

[12:58] So they built a house there, and that is where they lived from 1936 onwards. Both my grandparents lived there until they died. My mother lived there until she met my father and then moved to Assens. She had an older sister and an older brother. The older brother died in 1942. His name was Povl, spelled just like me, and I'm obviously named after him.

Affa: [13:34] Did he die during the war, because of the war?

Povl: [13:37] He did die because of the war. I was actually not going to talk about that, but now that you have asked me, then I have to talk about it.

Affa: [13:45] Okay.

Povl: [13:45] My grandfather was a very domineering person. I could talk a little more about that. He was not very interested in his daughters, but he essentially wanted to run the life of his son. He wanted him to follow exactly in his footsteps, becoming an engineer, and things like that. He was not allowed to live his own life. He graduated, and got sent off to a school, and while he was there,

in drunkenness as far as I've been told, signed up to volunteer for the German army.

Affa: [14:23] For the German army?

Povl: [14:25] Yes.

Gordon: [14:26] Oh.

Povl: [14:26] I actually thought until later in my life that he was a resistance fighter. But no, he was not. He volunteered for the German army. My grandfather tried to get him out, because he actually did not mean to do it. It was just an act of stupidity. But he could not get out once he had signed for that. And I think it was part of the defiance, as well, of his father, that he did it- to get away from him.

[14:56] So anyway, he was then shipped off to training in Germany. I think we're talking 1941 or early 1942, or something like that. They all came back… All the ones that volunteered for the Danish brigade came back to Copenhagen after their training, and did a parade in Copenhagen, which resulted in big riots against them, and fighting in the streets. They were obviously not very popular, having volunteered. We have not talked about it, but of course at this point, of course Denmark was occupied by the Germans…

Affa: [15:27] Right.

Povl: [15:27] …Since April of 1940. I will talk more that.

Affa: [15:32] Was this unusual that the Danish young men would sign up for the German army?

Povl: [15:39] Well, there were a lot that volunteered. I mean, it was enough to form a whole brigade, however many people that would be.

Affa: [15:46] Oh, wow. I had never heard this.

Povl: [15:48] Yeah. It was called the Viking Brigade.

Affa: [15:49] Oh, wow.

Povl: [15:50] So then once their training was over, and they left Copenhagen, they got shipped off as cannon fodder to the eastern front in Russia. My uncle died within the first couple of days, on his own birthday. He got blown to pieces.

Affa: [16:08] Wow.

Povl: [16:09] They essentially got so decimated during this fighting that they ceased to be a brigade, and they just got absorbed into other German armies because of their lower numbers. But it was some of the hardest areas to fight in in Russia, is where they got sent to.

Affa: [16:28] Wow.

Povl: [16:29] Which was just south of Leningrad.

[Crosstalk]

Povl: [16:42] Now that we're talking about World War Two, in Middelfart, of course there were of course a lot of German soldiers because of the bridge, which they would have to defend in case of Allied invasion in Denmark. If they were to defend it, they would have to blow it up. For that reason, there were many, many German soldiers [inaudible 17:07]. I have a reason later… It was not just because of my uncle, to get back on this, but it is all part of the story.

[17:12] Just talking a little more about my grandparents and my ancestors- on my father's side, my grandfather was a restaurateur. I think that's how you say that in English. They lived in several places. My father was born quite late in their life. At that point, my grandfather ran the railway restaurant, the station restaurant in a town called Langå, which means "long river." That's on the Gudenå River in Denmark. That was a railway hub, so there was also a restaurant at the station there. My father then grew up in this town.

[17:50] He had an older brother and sister. Just a little side trip here, the older sister was a lot older than him. He was a latecomer, as I just mentioned. His parents were quite old. But his sister claimed that we had a Jewish ancestor in the family by the name of Knoblauch. We all thought this was very funny. Actually, when I moved to America, we went shopping in Kirkland for some Scandinavian furniture. The owner of the store, his last name was Knoblauch, which actually means "garlic" in German. It's one of those ridiculous names that the Germans assigned to Jews. His name was Knoblauch, and then we sort of joked that maybe we are related. His name was [inaudible 18:46] Knoblauch, I think.

[18:48] Actually, the Danish government has put all the birth registers online, and I managed to not just find the Knoblauch in my family, but I also found out it was my great-grandmother. My father's mother's mother was this Knoblauch lady. But not only that, she came from the same town as [inaudible 19:10] Knoblauch had said he came from. So we might have actually been related.

Affa: [19:14] Yeah.

Povl: [19:16] If you look at our ages, he was about a generation older than me. So potentially, his grandmother might have been a sibling of my great-grandmother.

Affa: [19:25] Interesting.

Povl: [19:26] Yeah. I mean, it's a very unusual name, so that's why it's not at all unlikely. But they're also from Funen, the same town there. So that's a little side trip there.

Affa: [19:37] Do you know how she ended up in Denmark?

Povl: [19:39] How the Knoblauchs came there?

Affa: [19:40] Yeah.

Povl: [19:40] No, I haven't gone that far yet. So technically my grandmother was also Jewish, although there was never any talk of that. They were certainly not practicing Jews, or anything. My grandmother wasn't. But truly, my grandmother did not look like a typical Dane, and both my father's sister and even my father did not look like typical Danes. They all had big noses like myself. Maybe that's from the Jewish side, but I don't know.

[20:16] Before we leave my ancestors, I'll go another step back, and that is to my grandfather [inaudible 20:23], the bridge-builder's father. He never married my grandfather's mother. His only contribution to our family was that he made her pregnant, which happened in the town of Aalborg in northern Jutland. He was there… I think he might have been from Copenhagen, but I have not been able to find information about him yet. I think he was from Copenhagen and stationed there as a dragoon. Like you know, the mounted infantry. He probably then seduced my great-grandmother. He, as far as I know, paid her off and then fled to America after this.

[21:08] I'm not sure what he did in America other than I think he worked for Remington. He did return back to Denmark, and he was either a wealthy man at that point, or he became wealthy in Denmark and maybe he represented Remington for the rest of his life in Denmark. I don't think we're talking typewriters, because the Danish army was actually equipped with Remington rifles. So that might be where the connection is. But I know he died in the fifties, and I know there were obituaries in the main Danish newspapers. I at some point just have to see if I can find it. I know his name, and I know what he did.

Affa: [21:51] Did he every stay in touch with his child?

Povl: [21:54] On the contrary. My grandfather, after he came back to Copenhagen, he did go to see him in his office, and my great-grandfather refused to see him.

Gordon: [22:03] Oh, jeez.

Affa: [22:04] That's sad.

Povl: [22:04] Yeah. And my grandfather was a bitter man his whole life, essentially.

Affa: [22:11] Yeah. That's sad.

Povl: [22:12] Yeah. And it's not just sad for him, but his son that we talked about who volunteered for the German army. When he came back from his leave and went to see his father the bridge-builder, he refused to see his son as well.

Affa: [22:26] Oh, wow.

Povl: [22:28] So they never saw each other again.

Affa: [22:31] Before he died.

Povl: [22:32] Yeah.

Affa: [22:34] Oh, wow.

Povl: [22:34] And my grandmother never forgave my grandfather for that.

Affa: [22:40] Did he ever speak about regret or anything?

Povl: [22:45] No. He was not a very personable man. Definitely not. And actually what happened to him, that would be part of the story… What happened when he died, his room in the house that they built, nobody was allowed to go into it. Everything was left exactly the way it was when he lived in the house. And we will get to that, because that room is going to be important. [Laughter]

[23:12] To get back to my very immediate family, I have three sisters. One is three years older than me. One is three years younger, and the last one is fifteen years younger. She was a latecomer. The two youngest ones still live in the town that I grew up in, after Assens, which we will talk about later- where I went after Assens. And the oldest one, the one who is three years older than me lives not very far. So unlike me, they have not moved much in their lives.

Affa: [23:46] So all three of them are in Denmark.

Povl: [23:48] They're all in Denmark, and they're all near the town of Ribe, which we moved after Assens, which I will talk about later. So if you add up the years that I've been talking about- me being born a year after my parents married, but having a three-year-older sister, that's obviously something that doesn't quite add up. [Laughter] It was something that wasn't really talked about much. It was just like we assumed that they met each other, and then they had a child, and then they got married, and that was it. There was really nobody that suspected anything, including my older sister.

[24:33] At their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, at which time I would have been twenty-four, I got up and made what I thought was going to be a funny speech, and said, "As the firstborn child of this marriage, I would like to say some words." Some people thought it was funny, but some of the older people that were there definitely thought that this was something that shouldn't have been mentioned, that they had had a child before marriage. But still, there was nobody that really talked about the potential that my sister did not have had the same father as me.

Affa: [25:07] You didn't know that?

Povl: [25:09] Nobody… Well, it's not something you really thought about. But I started thinking about it. Then after seeing family photos that my grandmother would show me of my sister after she was born, she actually lived at home with my grandparents, together with my mother. There was no presence of my father in those pictures. Then when I think about what my father told me about where he was at the end of World War Two, because obviously my sister must have been conceived… If she was born in January of 1946, she must have been conceived right at the end of the occupation of Denmark. I know my father was still somewhere else at that point, and he was definitely not Middelfart until several years after World War Two.

[25:58] So I started essentially being convinced that no, she must have a different father. When you

think that this happened, that she must have been conceived right at the end of World War Two, you immediately think German soldier. Or maybe a celebration of the freedom from the Germans. So those were possibilities.

Gordon: [26:19] It was wartime.

Povl: [26:20] Yeah. And I did not want to bring it up. Then when my father died, which happened only some three or four years ago, I did let my mother know that I would like to know what the story was. Sorry, I have to step back here. I talked about the Danish birth registers all being online. So of course the first thing I did was look up my sister. There it says she was baptized in 1946. It says "unknown father." So of course that just confirmed what I had already more or less concluded. Then it said, "adopted by Nils Lasbo," – my dad, in 1951 or 1952. So there it was, all black and white, what had happened.

[27:12] My sister never, ever suspected it. She didn't find out until she had to request a new birth certificate. Her original one, my parents had convinced the local authorities to not write anything about it. So he appeared as her father on her birth certificate. When she got the new one, it said, "adopted by." So she found out. She must have been at least fifty, or something like that when she found out.

Gordon: [27:41] Wow.

Affa: [27:41] Wow.

Povl: [27:42] She got quite bitter about it. She has not told her own family anything about it, and will not talk about it.

Affa: [27:49] Did your mother tell you anything about it?

Povl: [27:51] Yes. That we will get to now.

Affa: [27:53] [Laughter]

Povl: [27:57] So yes, I let her know that I would like to know the story. It was like a year after my father died. We were sitting having breakfast together. I was visiting. She said, "I'll tell you." And she actually talked for two days. And yes, my theory about the German soldier was correct.

Gordon: [28:21] Oh.

Povl: [28:22] But it was truly a love story. He was not a Nazi. They fell in love probably in 1943 or something like that. He was a young officer- handsome, athletic, personable. He was the liaison officer between the Germans and the Danes, essentially, dealing with the local authorities in Middelfart- with the people of Middelfart and the Germans on the other side. So he had to be a friendly person, essentially, that could make people cooperate, because that's what it was all about.

[28:59] They met essentially because of my uncle who had died at the front in Russia. The Germans started sending care packages to my grandparents after it happened. Then one day he showed up,

knocked on the door, and said, "Are you finding the packages helpful? Anything else I can do for you?" So they invited him in, and he started becoming a friend of the family, and then they fell in love, my mother and him.

[29:30] That lasted through 1943, and then he decided to desert from the German army. She helped him do it. All of a sudden he showed up at the house one day. She came home, and he stepped out from behind a bush, and said, "I need your help. I am deserting from the army." He had deserted together with another soldier. So there were two of them. He wasn't there. He had hidden him somewhere else near, in a little estate… actually a place where there are supposed to be ghosts. That's where he had him hidden.

[30:16] So he was hidden there, and Hans- that was his name- was now in my grandparents' house. My mother had to go out during the night to retrieve that other soldier after curfew. You run the risk of being shot if you're in the street, because you're not supposed to, but she went there and got him and got him back to the house as well. So now my grandmother and my mother were the only ones living in the house at the time, with my grandfather being gone, of course. They had these two German soldiers in the house, in uniforms.

Affa: [30:49] Wow.

Gordon: [30:51] Deserters, though.

Povl: [30:51] Deserters. Yes. So my grandmother said, "Hans can stay, but not the other one." So they dressed him up in some civilian clothes from my uncle, from his room. Then my grandmother lent him her bicycle, and he set off in his civilian clothes on the bicycle. He had some friends that lived just north of the German border. She gave him instructions once he got there to put her bike back on the train to get it back to Middelfart. So he must have biked over the bridge out towards Germany. That's all we know about him, other than the bicycle did come back.

Gordon: [31:36] Amazing.

Povl: [31:37] So yeah, he must have made it at least to the friends, but where he then hid out or whatever, we don't know. Hans himself of course got dressed in civilian clothes as well. My mother had a job in a toy store. She was essentially running the toy store. She hid him in the basement there. That's where he lived, which was actually downtown in Middelfart. So he lived down there in that basement. Of course, she brought him food.

[32:13] Then what happened one day was that the owner of the store showed up to do inventory, and all the inventory was in the basement. [Laughter] But he managed to stay ahead of her and was not found. But my mother decided she'd better get him out of there, and he moved into their house, into Povl's room, the one that was off-limits, and he lived there the rest of the war.

[32:36] Even when my grandfather would come home, he would not even know there was a person living in there, because nobody was of course allowed to go into the room. Whenever there was an air raid, they would all run down to the bunker basement that they had made with concrete from the bridge, except him. He was not, of course, allowed down there. My mother's sister, who lived close by would also seek shelter in that basement.

[33:06] So they didn't know anything about it. Just my mother and grandmother knew about this deserted German living in the house. He would essentially spend his time painting. My mother would bring him painting supplies. He was painting children's fairy tale paintings, which actually hung in my bedroom when I grew up. I didn't know about it.

Gordon: [33:28] Do you have the paintings?

Povl: [33:29] No. They got rid of them later. But I have pictures where you can see the paintings hanging on the wall. They were over my bed. They actually put them in the toy store to see if they could sell them, but they didn't sell, and then my mother just kept them. So then the war ended of course on May 5, or May 4 in the evening in 1945. He put on his German uniform again and stepped out in the street and walked off together with all the other German soldiers, because there was absolutely no way he could have stayed in Denmark. They had to leave the country.

Gordon: [34:06] Did they ever search for him, though?

Povl: [34:08] Yeah. We will get to that. [Laughter]

Affa: [34:13] So he went back with the German soldiers?

Povl: [34:15] All the German soldiers essentially just started walking back to Germany. They had to leave, get out of the country. They weren't allowed to stay, not a single one of them.

Affa: [34:24] Right.

Povl: [34:24] They had to get to the other side of the border. So he just joined them. Of course at that point, nobody cared about whether he was… And I don't even know if they knew that he had deserted, or whether he had been sent back to Germany, or died on the front. It was quite chaotic, of course, in those times.

Affa: [34:43] Yeah.

Gordon: [34:44] Chaotic, yeah.

Povl: [34:45] So he left. But they had gotten engaged before that happened, officially engaged. But my grandfather of course still didn't know anything about it. [Laughter] And then she found out she was pregnant, which must have happened during the very last days of the war. She told him, and he of course couldn't do much from down there. She applied for permission to go to Germany, to cross the border. The Danish government would not let her. She actually went to Copenhagen to talk to the foreign ministry, and they said, "No. There is no way we can let you cross the border."

[35:24] All of northern Germany was refugees, and even southern Denmark, on the Danish side of the border. So it was very, very chaotic. All we know is he stayed several years there before he then went back to southern Germany, which is where he was from. He was then married there and had a child there. My sister tried to contact him, but they were not interested- when she found out what had happened.

Gordon: [35:54] Oh, really?

Povl: [35:54] But they did not want… And he was still alive at that point, but did not want to…

Affa: [36:00] He didn't want to get in touch with his daughter?

Povl: [36:03] No. No. He had another daughter now in Germany, so that would mess things up too much, probably.

Gordon: [36:12] Yeah. But the people that saved his life…

Povl: [36:14] I know. Yes. Yeah. My mother did admit that she probably was used in hiding him.

Gordon: [36:21] Yeah.

Affa: [36:25] Wow.

Gordon: [36:26] What a story.

Povl: [36:27] So, that's the end of that story. Back to Assens now, where I said my parents had moved after they got married to start this modest photography business. It was fairly hard times in Denmark in general, of course, because this was after the war, but certainly also in their lives. Assens, as I said, was a small, sleepy town, and there was really not much business to be gotten there. But it was not unhappy times. We certainly didn't lack anything.

[36:56] But we lived in small quarters, and moved around quite a bit, first from the little place on [inaudible 37:04], and then they actually got a business, and moved the business to the main street, which was very close. Then they built a house- a very small house, but in the nicer quarters of Assens, but they lost it, because they couldn't keep up with the payments. Then we moved to lesser quarters after that [laughter], several times after that, actually. We ended up in what I would call tenement quarters in one part of town. I mean, a very nice housing, but what you call tenements or apartments, or whatever. But it was actually not a bad place to grow up, because there were lots of children to play with.

[37:46] We lived there when I started elementary school when I was just a little shy of seven years old. Assens was actually a great place to be a kid. My parents let me have essentially the run of the town. I spent a lot of time out and about in some forests where we had the boy gangs that would fight each other. I spent even more time, I think, on the harbor itself, where I did a lot of fishing and just watching the boats.

[38:18] My best friend, during his childhood, his dad was the captain on the ferry between Assens and Jutland. Whenever we wanted to take a ride to the other side and come back, we could do that. We could hang out in the pilot's house on top of the ferry, of course. We were allowed down in the machine room where the engineers worked. It was fun.

Affa: [38:39] That was fun.

Povl: [38:39] Yeah. I also joined the Cub Scouts in Assens, which actually made a big difference in my life. I almost immediately got promoted to be what we called a gang leader. The whole Cub Scout organization in Assens would be a flock, and inside the flock we had gangs. Each gang had a leader and an assistant leader. Whenever we had competitions and stuff like that, the leader would get to carry the flag of that particular gang. Then assistant gang leader would be at the end. You would walk in your row there.

[39:25] I got quite ambitious wanting to make sure that my gang was the best gang, and would win most of the competitions. So I started training the outside of the official… And simulating the competitions. Because we sort of knew what questions would come up, what kind of problems you would have to solve, and stuff like that.

[39:46] So I [inaudible 39:48] and we did become the best gang in the Assens flock. Then of course the privileged boys, if you were the best gang, the gang leader – me- got to carry the big flag for the whole flock whenever we were out and about competing with other flocks in other towns and forests and stuff like that. So that was actually a great time.

Gordon: [40:09] Yeah.

Affa: [40:10] How old were you then?

Povl: [40:11] That was from eight until eleven, or something like that. My best friend, not the ferry best friend, but another best friend- he was a gang leader of one of the other gangs, so we were actually actively competing with each other all the time about being the best, because he was as ambitious as I was. He ended up being a leading lawyer in Denmark later.

[40:39] He was half a year older than me. He got to join the real scouts at twelve. I was only eleven, and I did not get to join. Actually him and I together made a petition for me to join the real scouts, but it was turned down. So we got split up that time, which didn't matter too much, because it was just before we left Assens, anyway.

[41:07] We were also both members of a shooting club where we would meet, I think once a week, or maybe once a month, in the basement of the school, and shoot with what was essentially .22s at targets with competitions and things like that. His dad was a hunter, and he had been a resistance fighter during the war. We would also compete there. The very last competition that we had there, I beat him and took home first prize in the shooting.

Affa: [41:38] So you shot with real guns?

Povl: [41:40] Oh, yeah. They were real .22 guns, in the basement, at targets.

Affa: [41:45] Wow.

Povl: [41:48] I mean, Denmark is not a place where it's [inaudible 41:52], but there was a lot of hunting going on Denmark.

Affa: [41:54] Right.

Povl: [41:54] And that was why he was in there, because his dad was a hunter. So his dad wanted him to learn to shoot. And yes, his dad was mad the night that I beat his son in the competition. [Laughter] And that was the last week before we left Assens. I've still got the silver spoon that I won that night.

Gordon: [42:12] Oh terrific.

Affa: [42:12] Oh, nice.

Povl: [42:13] Yeah. The school I went to in Assens was still very old-fashioned compared with how schools are today. Corporal punishment was not completely frowned upon.

Affa: [42:28] What was not?

Povl: [42:29] Punishment. Physical punishment.

Affa: [42:30] Oh. Yeah.

Povl: [42:31] I certainly was beaten up a couple of times. Once a teacher went mad, and I remember myself on the floor, getting beaten by him. Another one gave me a bloody nose because I was unruly when we were standing in line. He also used his ruler to hit us over the fingers with. But that was totally accepted by the parents. Actually, my parents talked to the teacher who gave me the bloody nose at the yearly school board, and they were all just laughing about it. "Ha ha, that was funny." [Laughter]

Affa: [43:05] How do you spell the name of the town that you lived in?

Povl: [43:08] Assens?

Affa: [43:09] Yeah.

Povl: [43:09] A-S-S-E-N-S.

Affa: [43:11] Oh, okay.

Povl: [43:13] So I completed my elementary school still in Assens, which means up through fifth grade. In fifth grade, you sort of leave that part of the school and go into the sixth grade. The school system in Denmark at that time was that you got sorted at this point. You either went into the A direction or you went in the B direction. Although it sounds weird, the A direction was for the lesser kids, the ones that were not good students. A stands for *alminde*, or ordinary. B stands for bookish, essentially.

[43:56] There right at the end of the fifth grade, of course all of us who would like to move on in life were quite fretting about whether we got selected to go in the A direction or the B direction. I remember that clearly, standing in the street, having a conversation with another boy about whether

we were going to be selected for A or for B. This was something that really meant something to us. Both him and I did get into the B direction, and everything was okay.

Gordon: [44:28] What kind of a percentage of a class would have gone that direction, do you think?

Povl: [44:34] I would almost say 50-50.

Gordon: [44:35] Is it? Okay.

Povl: [44:36] Yeah. So this was actually one of the first times that something happened in your life that would eventually have consequences for how your life would move forward from there. That happens, as I said, quite early, at twelve years old, or something like that. Or it happened back then. I'm quite not sure it is…

[44:59] Right around this time, there was a strike of lightning. I would often go home from school for lunch because I lived about a ten-minute walk away. My mother would be there with lunch ready, which of course would always be the Danish open-faced sandwiches on rye bread. Invariably, one of them would be with liver pate. If you didn't go home for lunch, then you would have brought a box of exactly the same lunch to school and just eat it there instead.

[45:30] But one day I was home, and there was a knock on the front door of this little apartment where we lived, and I went out and opened it, and there stood the father of one of my play-friends in this area there. He was a somewhat feared man in town. He was what is called the [Danish word 45:48] or [Danish word 45:49], which means essentially bailiff, the guy that collects taxes.

[45:55] He was there because my parents had fallen behind on paying their taxes. So he came into the apartment and took inventory of what was there that they could potentially take away to cover the taxes. I think the only thing that he had on his list was the TV, which I think we had acquired five years earlier, when TV came to Denmark. It was just like a tiny little black and white.

[46:22] So he left, and my mother was crying. Essentially what she said was, "We have to get out of this town." That was what then happened. They started looking at what to do next. The first thought was for my dad to join his sister in Aarhus, the second-largest town in Denmark. She had a photography business there, and he would then join her, which thankfully did not happen.

[46:49] Instead, I'm not sure how it came up, but they found a business building for sale in the town of Ribe, which at that time was a bicycle shop. The owner was selling it. It was an old building. At one end was living quarters, which was about similar in size to what we had. The other end was the shop that faced out to the main shopping street in Ribe. So it was a good location.

[47:24] They managed to borrow enough money to acquire the building. My dad and his apprentice essentially moved to Ribe and did all the work getting all the grime out from the bike shop, because it was also a bike repair shop. They got that all fixed up, and they built a studio on top of the shop itself, a photography studio. And they got the living quarters ready and everything.

[47:50] Right before the move, I was sent to Middelfart to spend a couple weeks with my grandparents before I moved over there. My grandfather had retired at that point. It actually wasn't

very pleasant with him there, because he was just sitting there, an old man; grumpy. Although he probably wasn't older than what I am now. But he was an old man, just sitting there listening to the radio all day. But I did what I did in Assens, and I spent my days out in the streets of Middelfart, and went fishing down on the harbor and brought home a lot of cod. My grandmother was very pleased with all the cod I caught for them.

[48:32] So I spent two weeks there, and then I got to go to Ribe. I arrived there. I had been there before earlier in my childhood, because Ribe is sort of like a destination in Denmark, because it's a very old, historic town. I got to go there now for real, and I was very excited about it. I got into the house. I'll describe how it was.

[48:55] It was sort of a longish house, and it was sitting right on the side of the river that runs through Ribe. It actually runs through town in three different places, and this was one of the arms. And the building that we now lived in was actually part of an old water mill. It had been the place where they stored the grain, and I think they even had horses in there. It had been converted into what it was now.

[49:22] On the other side of the river was the mill building itself. The water wheel from the mill was still there and running. So right outside my bedroom window, I had all this rushing water, and it was absolutely wonderful. But all three of us, all three kids shared the bedroom, the only bedroom there was, and my parents actually slept in the living room on the pullout couch, at least for the moment. Then they built rooms for the kids upstairs, and then everything downstairs became living quarters. And then there was a little garden outside going down to the river itself. Eventually I acquired myself a boat that I had sitting there. I spent lots of time on the river. Even if I couldn't swim, I was still… [Laughter]

[50:16] Ribe is the oldest town in Scandinavia. At that point in its history it dated back to about the 900s. The first church in what is now Denmark was built in Ribe in the 900s by a missionary that came up to Denmark to christen it. The first church he built was just south of what is now the Germany. So Ribe was the second church he built, but the first church in what is now Denmark.

Affa: [50:50] Is Ribe in Schleswig-Holstein?

Povl: [50:53] It is just outside of Schleswig.

Affa: [50:57] Okay.

Povl: [50:58] It's only outside, because where Ribe is was owned by the king, and he had all the privileges of Ribe because of its importance. So it was therefore kept outside of Schleswig. But Schleswig proper was only like four kilometers out of Ribe. When Denmark lost Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, the border to Germany was just out of Ribe, four kilometers out of Germany. But Ribe was never German.

[51:25] In Ribe itself, people speak a dialect which is different from just four kilometers out of Ribe. So you know exactly where the people are from- one side or the other side. The people from south of the old border speak what's called the [Danish word 51:42] dialect, whereas in Ribe they have their own, which is more western Jutland dialect. You certainly know that in school, whether they

come from one side or the other side.

[51:57] Where the first church was built, three hundred years later they built real cathedral on the spot- a very, very big church, in the 1200s. It's of course still sitting there. And because it has the oldest cathedral or church in Scandinavia, it also has the oldest school, which is the school that got built with the cathedral, where they would educate the priests. It was called the Cathedral School or Latin School. We will get back to that later.

[52:32] Since we moved there, they actually started digging up for a new post office, and they found a Viking settlement just two houses from where I grew up. So they have now actually moved the history of Ribe back to the 700s. There was a Viking settlement and a trading post for Vikings. And of course the reason Ribe, was both that it was a trading post, but it's also sitting on that river that leads out to the North Sea where they could sail down to Holland and France, etcetera. But that was not known at the time, that Ribe was actually a Viking settlement as well. So now there's a Viking museum, and a Viking village outside of Ribe, and things like that.

[52:22] Ribe was, because of its age, a relatively conservative town of about 8,000 people. Lots of history. My parents were warned that it would take a long time to get accepted. But as a kid, I had no such problems. I fit right in from the start. I continued school in Ribe. As I mentioned, I was now in sixth grade- 6B, not 6A. I went to my first school day in Ribe and immediately fell in love with Hanna. [Laughter]

Affa: [54:02] What?

Povl: [54:03] Hanna. That was her name. The girl that I fell in love with. [Laughter] She was a teacher's daughter. There was another Hanna also in the class, and she was the one I got to kiss a few years later. There were two Hannas. Life in Ribe was really good. Again, there was the river to fish in, and you could bike six kilometers out to the North Sea and fish there for flat fish.

[54:29] I joined the Boy Scouts there very quickly. I was twelve then, and I spent the next four years being a member of that. I joined their pipe and drum band, and eventually became the leader of that pipe and drum band. I took a trip with them to Ireland. It was an exchange trip with the Boy Scouts of Northern Ireland. It was my first real trip to a country that was somewhat exotic compared with Denmark.

[55:09] There was an yearly tulip fest which is actually still going on. Ribe, like Holland was surrounded by the tulip fields. Ribe sits in marshlands, so it's very much like Holland, actually, very flat. There were tulips and daffodils growing there for bulb production. Every year when the cut the heads off the tulips or the daffodils, there would be the tulip fest, the two-day fest with floats that were decorated with the tulip heads or the daffodils. Most of the fields are gone now, but there are still a few left, so they still have the yearly tulip fest, which is happening in May this year.

[55:50] Of course, it was also the time that you started having girlfriends. I went through quite a few. [Laughter] Starting with Hanna. I also took a job as an errand boy for a grocery store. After school I would go and bring out eggs, coffee or whatever on a special bike that was built for carrying goods around and delivering groceries. It was still old-fashioned grocery stores at that point.

[56:23] After the seventh grade, there is another sort of the pupils. So just two years later, they do it again. Now you either continue to eighth grade, which was just eighth grade or you go on to what was back then called first real. I'm not quite sure why they use that word, but the best thing I can say it's the same word as "real." So that's the "real school." The eighth is for if you're not so good, again. So the words change, but it's still the same idea. You get sorted. Eighth is the non-bookish now. Those who came from the A side of course moved straight into eighth.

[57:17] But again, I moved into the real and continued being bookish. Normally that takes three years, so that's first, second, and third real. After second and after third, you then get not so much sorted, but you can now make a decision whether to essentially leave that system, which is the public school system, and then get moved to… In Danish it's called gymnasium, which has nothing to do with a gymnasium, but that's just the word they use.

[57:54] That's actually not… That's the official word. In Ribe, that school was not called gymnasium. The official name of the school was the Ribe Gymnasium, but everybody called it the Cathedral School or the Latin School, because this is the original school from the 1200s that is still going on, but inside of the gymnasium system. It's not a thing you get selected for. It's a thing you apply for, but usually with your teachers' recommendation and support.

Gordon: [58:28] How old are you at this point?

Povl: [58:30] Now you are fifteen.

Gordon: [58:31] Fifteen. Okay.

Povl: [58:33] My sister had chosen that route, and she graduated in 1965, which is what we're now talking about. Of course, I couldn't have my sister be better than me. So I talked to my teachers, and I said, "Do you think there's any hope…?" I had already set my eyes on it, because one of the things you do in second real is if you think you're going to the Latin School, you take Latin that year. Not because Latin is a required subject to have, but the discipline of learning Latin is one that shows whether you have the discipline to continue being studious.

Affa: [59:15] So if you go this way, you go to university.

Povl: [59:18] Exactly.

Affa: [59:18] But if you go the other way, you do not go to university?

Povl: [59:21] Well, you can catch up now, but back then you couldn't, really. That was the only way. That's what I'm going to get to now. I tried and I got in. The school had three directions at that time. I don't think they have changed that much. There's the natural sciences, which you choose as your specialty, modern languages, or antique languages.

[59:44] When you take the natural sciences, which is what I took, then your most important subjects are math, physics, and chemistry. Then you decide on two languages. I picked French and English. Then you also do Danish literature and history, and even old Greek history, which was just one hour a week. So you do get an all-around education, but you already start specializing at this point. For

instance, if you take modern languages, then you have a little bit of math, no physics, no chemistry. But then you major in English, German, French, and Russian, you could actually also take.

[1:00:26] This school, compared with American standards, was quite small. The year I graduated, in '68, there were 73, or something like that. And the classroom that I was in, which was one of two natural sciences classrooms, there were only thirteen of us. So you really had a one-to-one with the teacher, and you could not hide. [Laughter]

Gordon: [1:00:54] It was a public school?

Povl: [1:00:56] It was still part of the public school system.

Gordon: [1:00:59] They weren't priests, or…

Povl: [1:01:01] No. The teachers all had to have… They were essentially professors, almost. They had to have a high university degree- a master's in two subjects, at least.

Gordon: [1:01:13] Oh, okay.

Povl: [1:01:14] In order to teach there. My physics and chemistry teacher, those were the two subjects that he had. But he also had math. So he essentially was a master's in all of his three subjects. I only had him in physics and chemistry, and then I had another math teacher. This essentially was alluded to- it was college preparation. That was the whole purpose of this. You go there because you are now getting ready for college and university.

[1:01:56] Then there was no other way to get college or university educations. There were systems in Denmark where you can essentially go all the way back and catch up and then get into… You don't have to go back to that school now to later catch up. There still used to be a way to do it. That hasn't changed.

[1:02:17] I mentioned my physics and chemistry teacher. At this point, at the same time I moved to this school, I fell in love with his daughter. [Laughter] Which was actually not an advantage. It didn't help me much in terms of getting better grades or anything. I was not quite up to the standard that he expected. I was a bit of a lazy student.

[1:02:46] He did essentially not like anybody dating any of his three daughters, so the fact that I dated his was not all that popular with him. But that was a thing that then lasted. That relationship lasted the next five years, through all of my time at that school and beyond it. So I got to see him a lot. [Laughter] Not just at school.

[1:03:12] While I went to gymnasium, I took a part-time job in the afternoon and early evenings, which was at the local public library. I only mention that because that becomes important later on here. I did give up Boy Scouts at this point, because there was really not time to do it all anymore. Going to this school was essentially a full-time job. Two of my teachers would show up at the library and fret a bit about the fact that I was actually working there when I should be sitting, studying. So that was the way it was.

[1:03:51] I was also the editor for one year of the school magazine, which also gets a little bit important later. I'm not boasting, but just it gets a little bit important. I got through the school, and I did graduate in 1968. Not with particularly impressive grades, but average. It was a great relief to get through, but I still have extremely fond memories of that school. Every time I'm back home, I take a walk and go down there.

[1:04:32] One thing that I did learn graduating was that one thing the school had not prepared us for was career-choosing. We were essentially pretty much… They did a token effort to sort of let us know about what was available, but really nothing. We were on our own. Of course, for that reason, many of the ones that graduated ended up as teachers, because it was the only profession they knew about other than their parents' professions.

Affa: [1:05:05] So you didn't get to go to the university and see what was offered there?

Povl: [1:05:10] Yes, we did, actually. And I did go up… My choice at that point was journalism. And I did make a trip out to Aarhus University where the journalism school was. So that was one of my choices, because I really liked Danish, and I was good at writing. That was where I got good grades, was in writing. So I thought that would be kind of fun, and also I had been the editor of the magazine, and I enjoyed that part. So that was one of my first choices.

[1:05:46] But then because of my work in the library, I thought, well, this is kind of cozy [laughter], being the librarian. It's somewhat intellectual. You are part of the town, in need, when you the head librarian of the local public library, so it wasn't bad at all. So I thought of that, and I applied to the library school to get in there.

[1:06:10] At the library school they had two directions. There is the public librarian you can become, which is your standard librarian, but then you can also become a special librarian, which means you work in a university library, at an academic library. That was more like an apprentice education, where you actually spend most of the time on the job in a special library, and then they send you to Copenhagen for some of the theoretical stuff.

[1:06:40] The advantage of that one is, of course, you're on the job for the four years the education took. You got paid. The journalism education was the same. It actually was essentially an apprentice at a newspaper, and then you spend some time at the university. But again, you get paid. And I did send out letters to a lot of newspapers, and one of them actually responded and called me in for an interview just a few days after I graduated, and they did offer me a job in [inaudible 1:07:12], which was not too far away. They offered me the apprenticeship to start essentially after the summer was over.

[1:07:23] But then I also heard from the library school. They also accepted me. Then the place where they were looking for an apprentice for special librarians, they also accepted me. I now had three choices. Two you got paid, and the third you did not get paid, and you had to make your own way through school. So I asked my girlfriend Henrietta, the teacher's daughter, what she'd rather be married to, a journalist or a librarian. [Laughter] She said, "librarian." So that was what I picked. I picked the one where it was the special librarian, because that one paid, and the other one did not pay.

[1:08:10] That was actually a good choice, because in the long run it was the more interesting path to take, because it's a little more difficult to deal with academic subjects and things like that. Of course, that decision would radically change my life. I made that decision just based on what my girlfriend that I did not end up marrying anyway, decided for me. Her argument was that journalists work in the night, so I would be away in the night instead of being home with her. [Laughter]

[1:08:45] It was actually good, because the newspaper where I had the apprenticeship offer would have immediately sent me away from the headquarters to run the local bureau in one of the small towns where I would be totally alone. I know with those local journalists, it's not exactly very interesting. I think they would take me because one thing I haven't mentioned was my dad taught me, very early on, darkroom work and photography in general. So I was very skilled at developing, and stuff like that.

[1:09:19] So they not only had a journalist, but they had somebody who… And I had actually freelanced during my time at the gymnasium for the local newspaper. They would send me out to take photos, and then I would go and develop them and deliver them, and I would get paid. So I already had a track record of working for a newspaper as a photographer. So I think they saw an advantage: Here's a guy who could do it for free, or as part of the apprenticeship.

[1:09:46] So I took the special librarian apprenticeship position in Sønderborg, which is down on the German border. It was an engineering school, so it was essentially an engineering library that I would be apprenticing in, which was for this one, all machinery and electronics and electric, and things like that. They immediately shipped me off to school in Copenhagen, because part of this education was you did get to spend a year at the library school which is a dedicated college to just librarianship in Copenhagen, while I then apprenticed at a bigger library in Copenhagen.

[1:10:32] So I was apprenticing at the main technical university in Copenhagen for the first year while I went to the library school two days a week. That was actually a big shock for me to actually go straight from little Ribe and the gymnasium to having to live in Copenhagen. I did that as I said, for one year, and then I moved back to Sønderborg. Then I got to continue essentially apprenticing for three years, but in all reality, I was running the library. I was the head librarian of this little engineering library. Then I would be sent to Copenhagen a couple of times a year to get a little more theory, and come back.

[1:11:14] But I was paid, and I had a good life. I bought a car. I started traveling, and things like that. As I said, I essentially worked as a real librarian, and I volunteered because I knew how to make a magazine. The Special Librarians Association had just started a magazine, and they were looking for people to volunteer. I know how to cut and paste and put the things together so it could go into the offset press. So I volunteered, and before I knew it, they all said, "You're the editor." [Laughter]

[1:11:54] I had basically said, "I'm not very good at writing about this, because I don't know so much about librarianship yet. It actually turned out I was quite good, so I already moved into journalism, actually, through the back door. And I did write. The magazine became very successful, and actually made a very big difference to the Special Librarians Association. We'll get to that later.

[1:12:21] During these years, I told you that I went to Ireland. That was in 1966 with the Boy Scouts. I went back in 1967, 1968, and 1969 with my girlfriend that I had talked about. So Ireland sort of

became my other home, which I really got to like. As I said, I thought Ireland was very exotic.

Affa: [1:12:46] What part of Ireland?

Povl: [1:12:48] Northern Ireland the first year, only. The next three years I would tour the rest of Ireland. The second trip was not with Boy Scouts. It was with a guy from school that was in the same class as me. The next two trips were with the girlfriend. The first time I was quartered with a family on the coast of Northern Ireland. I always came back to see them. That becomes significant a little bit later.

[1:13:21] After I broke up with my girlfriend, or she broke up with me, whichever way you want to have it, I actually went… I had a car at that point, a little old used car. One Easter I didn't want to go home to visit my parents and spend five days at Easter because it was always so boring, so I got into my car and just started driving, and just drove south. And I ended up in France. That was after going through Germany, of course.

[1:13:50] That was when I really realized there is a different world out there. It's not just different, but people talk differently; they look different; they smell different. The food, in particular, is very different. That was sort of the "a-ha" moment of my life- being in Strasbourg and eating snails with all the garlic and tossed in oil. It just exploded in your mouth, and my life was never the same again.

Gordon: [1:14:17] Oh, is that right?

Povl: [1:14:18] So after that… We're now in 1970, I think. I actually then traded in that car and got myself a different car, one that had a roof you could take down. I went back to France that summer with a new girlfriend and got all the way down the Mediterranean before I got tired and drove back home.

[1:14:44] In terms of girlfriends, I actually then started pursuing the daughter of the family I had been quartered with in Ireland. I convinced her in 1972 to go with me on another road trip. We made it all the way to Morocco from Denmark, and then back again. That was even more exotic. That was actually a little bit too exotic.

[1:15:14] Once you step off the ferry in Morocco… Spain was exotic already, but stepping off the ferry and then driving into Morocco was just something… Camels in the street, and people in exotic clothes. Everything looks different. Actually, we didn't last all that long before we got sick and went back to Spain and then back home. We were on the road for four weeks. Quite a trip.

[1:15:43] So I continued pursuing her. The next year in 1973, she eloped from Ireland, and we got married in Denmark. That was essentially the year of many mistakes, this one being one of them. [Laughter]

Gordon: [1:15:59] Uh oh. [Laughter]

Povl: [1:16:00] I was now of course fully educated as a special librarian. I took a job at the university library in Odense, which is not that very from Assens, where I was born. So that was the other mistake. It turned out to be an absolutely terrible place to work, which I sort of had a suspicion of,

but my attitude was, "Well, I'm just taking this as a job, and I'm not going to care too much about whether I like it or not." But that didn't work. I actually like my work too much to just stand back and not get involved in it.

[1:16:35] My third mistake was that I also bought a house, which was between Odense and Assens. It was an old, very romantic, a thatched roof, and all of that, but in need of a lot of repair. And so that lasted about a year. I was still the editor of the librarian's magazine I talked about, so I got to see all the mail. One day we got a job advertisement with the Danish News Agency in Copenhagen. They were looking for a librarian to run their archives service. I applied. It's called Ritzaus Bureau.

Affa: [1:17:15] Called what?

Povl: [1:17:16] Ritzaus Bureau, which is the official Danish News Agency that serves all the newspapers and the radio and TV with up-to-date news. It's a wire service, essentially. And that sounded really good and interesting to me, also because they mentioned in their advertisement that this was part of computerizing their archives service. I was at this point getting interested in computers. I had done a little bit as part of my education, where we had to write a few basic programs, and things like that.

[1:17:50] So I sort of had an idea of what you do with computers. Being part of computerizing, and learning more about it was very attractive. Then actually living in Copenhagen was of course also attractive. I was going back and forth between Copenhagen and where I lived because of the editorial work, so I went to Copenhagen at least once a month during that period. I had more friends in Copenhagen than anywhere else, even if I didn't live there.

[1:18:18] So I applied for the job, and I got it, so we left the old house on Funen and moved to Copenhagen. The job was actually very nice, very interesting, because as I said, it was the main news service. Whenever there was breaking news, we would always be the first to know about it. They would come running to me to retrieve information to back up the stories, and things like that. So I'd be working with journalists in developing the stories.

[1:18:51] And I was quite popular because I totally changed the way the archive was organized, and it was a lot easier to find stuff once I got it all changed around a little bit. My predecessor had been a journalist, and not a librarian, so he of course approached it very differently.

[1:19:11] But the computerization, nothing was happening there, and nothing was happening there, and that kind of disappointed me. But it was still a very cozy job in the center of Copenhagen, on one of the old streets. And I had my own office, and I had people working for me. I was only twenty-five, or something like that. And I was respected for what I was doing.

[1:19:32] My wife at that point, she had actually gone to the university in Odense, where I worked as a librarian. Now she had transferred to the University of Copenhagen, so that was it. I liked the job at Ritzaus. It was prestigious, and it paid a lot better than being a librarian. So life in Copenhagen was very good, because I had good friends, especially in the library world, and people I was making the magazine with, and things like that.

[1:20:16] But then it happened again. As editor of the magazine, another thing came in the mail, and

that was a letter from the head librarian at the Danish Nuclear Research Establishment called Risø. The letter was just essentially one that they wanted published, to say that they wanted the UN specialized agencies in Vienna- the International Atomic Energy Agency was looking for a librarian, preferably Danish. I just couldn't resist it. I applied for it.

[1:20:43] I went to see the head librarian at Risø, who I didn't know personally, but she knew about me from my work at the magazine, of course. And she then sent a letter off the Vienna, saying, "I can recommend this Danish librarian." And it took forever, and it took forever, and I didn't hear anything from them. I finally gathered enough courage to call them in Vienna, which all had to be conducted in English, which I was not used to. They said, "Okay, you'll hear from us soon."

[1:21:19] As I said, this was a UN agency. The way it works there is that they hire according to quotas- like each country has a quota which is linked to how much it pays, essentially, to the organization. Which means the big countries like America and the Soviet Union at that time would have the big quotas, plus they would have the influence to get their own people hired. Denmark at this organization had a quota of three professionals, and that was it. I was actually told during that conversation that the Danish quota was already full. There were three Danes.

[1:22:01] What I would later find out was that the Americans had already earmarked this position, that an American should get this one. Of course, the Americans and France and whatever, they all got what they wanted, because they were the big countries. But luckily the American who got offered the job turned it down, and then I was number two on the list and I got the offer, which I promptly accepted.

[1:22:28] At that point, the magazine that we had started was folding because our association merged with the Public Librarian's Association. There would now of course only be one magazine that would cover the new merged association. The magazine that we had been running had actually had a big influence on that whole merger happening, of the two library associations. And I was part of the negotiating team between representing the special librarians…

[1:23:00] And that has had a big, big influence since what has happened in the library world in Denmark, because there is now only one library association with a lot more power than the two had separately. And now they have things like professorships and doctorships in librarianship, and things like that, which they didn't back then.

[1:23:21] So anyway, as I said, I had the support from Risø. I also got support from the Danish Foreign Ministry, which was necessary. You couldn't get in unless your own state department of foreign ministry supported your candidature. I then made it, and became the fourth Dane working for this agency at the ripe age of twenty-six. I think I was told I was the youngest professional in the system. I had essentially just graduated, and I went straight to work as a professional.

[1:24:01] There were two different kinds of people that worked for the UN. There were people there as representatives for their country, and then there were people who worked there as an employee. Of course, I was an employee of the UN, even if I came there recommended by the Danish government. But my employer was the UN. It was not the Danish government. So that's the way it worked.

[1:24:26] So in early 1976, we drove off to Vienna, which was a place that was a very nice place to work. At that time, the organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the one that is responsible for all the non-proliferation of nuclear arms and inspection. Then there is the peaceful side of it, where they promote medical applications and nuclear medical… and do a lot of research and support in developing countries in all of those areas. So it was an interesting place to work.

[1:25:06] At that time it was in an old hotel, one of the biggest and fanciest Viennese hotels until World War Two. I think it was actually the Russian headquarters after World War Two, but it had now been converted to the headquarters of the Atomic Energy Agency. So it was sitting smack in the middle of Vienna next to the opera. So it was a very nice place to work.

[1:25:30] The job description, again like last time, had computers in it, which had me all excited. I knew more or less what it was about, because the computer system they had in the information libraries department there had actually been debated in Denmark at a symposium that was reported on in the magazine that I was editor of. So I was somewhat knowledgeable about what this could entail. But it turned out that it was really just being a librarian. But I was the second in command of the library, so it was still not bad at all. I was the deputy librarian.

[1:26:12] The UN was of course a place with a lot of power plays and intrigues, and stuff like that, especially between the east and the west. We're still talking the Soviet Union. A lot of their spies had been planted as employees, because they could use the presence of being in Vienna as essentially a place to spy from. Not against the UN, but it gave them a haven where they could pretend that they were working for the UN, but in essence, they… And we generally knew who the spies were. They were the ones that didn't really do much. [Laughter] They were gone a lot from their office. So we knew that. There were a lot of intrigues between Americans and Russians, and things like that.

[1:27:00] I got somewhat involved in one of them. I came out on top, thanks to the Americans who were supporting me. But the Russians were suspicious of me, and actually blocked my promotion several times. The head librarian was the main target of the intrigue, and she got removed, sent out on a side track, and then I became the acting head librarian of this library within the first year of me being there, which lasted until the new one arrived, and then I moved back into the second position.

[1:27:43] The next one that arrived, I had great luck working with, because she was an American information scientist, and was all about computers. We did a lot of work on computerized information services, which becomes relevant later. We also computerized the library itself- the catalog and acquisitions processes, and things like that. So we started working on that.

[1:28:11] Vienna was host to several UN organizations, not just this one. There were other ones, three or four of them. And the Austrian government was at this time finishing up building headquarters for all of the organizations that they should move into on the other side of the Danube. There would be just one library for all of the organizations.

[1:28:38] My new boss then put me in charge of planning the new library, the computer systems in that new library, and all the premises, the furniture, everything. Essentially that whole move to the new library was put on my shoulders, and computerizing it. That was actually fun. The computer system would run on enormous IBM mainframes, so quite, quite different from what we're doing now. I really had no training in any of this- neither programming nor designing, but I managed it.

[1:29:25] Right before the big move to the new headquarters, the head librarian quit [laughter], and moved back to America, I think for personal reasons. So I then became acting head, and that was during the move now as well. So I had to get all new systems going. The staff of the different libraries merged into one. And I had to get the computer systems running. So it was extremely busy, and this was also the time my marriage to the Irish girl broke up. So there's probably a link between those two.

[1:30:04] The move happened, and it was successful. The new computer system worked from day one over there. The new head librarian arrived in the middle of the move, which didn't work so good, because he of course wanted immediately to start changing everything that I had planned, to show who was in charge now.

[1:30:26] One thing that happened during my time as acting head was that I managed to get my job description rewritten to being that of systems analyst for the library. This new head was also very much into computers, and was totally accepted. So after the move, I was now just systems analyst, without any other responsibilities other than the computer system, and that was actually quite a dream job for me.

[1:30:55] When you work for the UN, the standard was you would get a two-year contract first, which I had been given. If you didn't totally screw up, you would get another two-year contract, and then you're out, and you would make room for the next person to move in, because they wanted to change the staff over. If you make it past the four years, you are on what is considered a career contract, which means you then stay until you retire, if you want to, which is at sixty.

[1:31:31] I made it past the four years. I got my extension. And the Russians finally gave up, and I got my promotion as well. [Laughter] I was now systems analyst. Life was good. And I was a bachelor, and that was not bad at all, either. I had moved up to an apartment outside of Vienna proper, in a little town called Klosterneuburg. It sits on the Danube. I had an apartment that overlooked the Danube. So everything was pretty good.

[1:32:03] I started a running club ay the UN. I got into running at that time, which I had done before. But I actually started a club after I got back into running. There was a big park right outside of the new headquarters where we could go out and run. I started that club, and still forty years later, it is still active. Lots people from all over the world have been running in this club.

[1:32:29] So, everything was really good, and then lightning struck. I also had started bicycling, and I arranged a bicycle ride for myself and colleagues from the UN, to go out along the Danube on a nice Sunday. And being a good conscientious bachelor, I had packed food for two people. [Laughter] You never know what… So this day, a young American girl showed up, and of course since she was young, single and pretty, I pursued her, and I had my meal for two with her during the picnic.

[1:33:18] She had been in Vienna for a year at that point, studying at a fashion school, and was just about to return to the U.S. to start work. She was twenty-three, or something like that. I was probably thirty. So we were together a fairly short time, which included a joint trip up to Denmark. She went back and got a job with Nike, which was at that point a very young company. So she was one of the first clothes designers in the company. We are now talking 1981.

[1:33:57] I of course stayed behind in Vienna. I tried to talk her into staying in Vienna, but was unsuccessful, because she was quite ambitious. She didn't just want to be a housewife in Vienna. So she went back, and I stayed in Vienna and went through another couple of girlfriends. The next year, 1982, I said, "I'll pay your ticket if you come and visit me- if you take your summer vacation and come over. I'll pay your ticket." She said, "I only get one week, so why don't you come visit me instead?" Because I got like four weeks. I actually got seven weeks in a year, something like that.

[1:34:43] So I did that. I came over to visit. She was in Portland, Oregon, of course, which is where Nike was. And I came over, and it turned out that during the four weeks I was there, Nike didn't even give her… Wouldn't even let her take a week. So she was at work every day, and I was at home. We did get to spend the weekends together, and of course the evenings, etcetera, etcetera.

[1:35:09] I spent my days, of course, thinking maybe I do want to live here, and what can I do if I do that? And during that one month, her family took a boat trip in the San Juan Islands- a three-day boat trip, and we of course went along. I looked around I said, "This is good." [Laughter] So I started thinking of what I could do. I realized I probably wouldn't get a work permit, like a green card, so I would have to start something on my own.

[1:35:51] I started thinking of a concept for a business which was called Information Brokerage, which was essentially like advanced librarianship, based on computer information retrieval, you would advise and help out companies that are in need of information. At that time, you could remotely access several databases, especially in the U.S., belonging to [inaudible 1:36:13] and others where they stored information. And not all companies knew how to do that. So the idea was to then start selling information to companies that needed information, and offering up my services that way.

[1:36:28] So I came back to Vienna. A good friend, a colleague from the UN picked me up at the airport. I mentioned this idea to him. He said, "Oh, can I join you?" And from there on we then started talking about it, about doing it jointly, both owning the company, and things like that. My next move was then going to the U.S. consulate in Vienna to see what my options were in terms of permits and all of that. I mentioned to them what it was I wanted to do, that I wanted to start a business.

[1:37:07] The guy I talked to told me about things like treaty trade or treaty investor, and all these things that were possible. He said that if I did it, then I would be given one year to get the business rolling, and to make some investment, and I should have one employee, and everything would be just fine, and I would get one year to do it all. I thought, "This is good."

[1:37:35] So I got a visa, and then I went back to the UN the same day, and quit. [Laughter] That was August 3, 1982. The next three months, I still stayed in Vienna and worked of course, and got things ready with my friend on the business plan. I got rid of all my possessions that I didn't want to ship over. When you work for the UN, they have what they call repatriation, which means they pay for freight of all your goods back to your country. The difference in price between shipping it to the U.S. and shipping it to Denmark was not very big, so at least I got my things packed up and shipped and paid for by the UN.

[1:38:20] At that point, we were beginning to be aware of personal computers. In our business plan, we had identified some two or three different personal computers that we should buy to use in the business, to essentially do the information retrieval with, plus to do all the administrative work with.

[1:38:47] Other than that, those three months were nerve-wracking, because essentially I didn't know whether the U.S. government would even let me in. I didn't know whether the relationship with this girl I had met would really work. Of course, the business could fail. So it was actually not a very nice time. I finally took off in November of 1982. My parents came to see me off in Copenhagen when I flew out.

[1:39:20] And it went wrong right away. The first one I said- would the U.S. government even let me in? So I arrived there, and they asked these questions, "Why are you here?" I truthfully said, "I'm here to start a business." And he said, "You're what?" [Laughter] "Could you please go into that room over there?"

[1:39:42] So I went into that room, and another immigration officer asked me the same question, and I said, "I'm here to start a business." And she didn't say anything. Then she gave me the stamp. Six months. Then I said, "Oh, but they told me I would be getting a year." She said, "No, we only give six months, and then you can re-apply." And that was it. I was in the country.

[1:40:10] But that's not the end of the story, of course. On the business side, of course, I started all the movements right away. My girlfriend came and picked me up at the airport, and we went skiing straight from the airport in [inaudible 1:40:31]. Then back to Portland, where I then started on the business. I started the incorporation. I actually got a social security number, even if I didn't have a green card, so that helped a bit with buying a car, and all these things, to get going.

[1:40:46] As far as computers are concerned, that becomes somewhat important. Our first choice for the computer was DEC Rainbow, which was one of those personal computers. I went out to see DEC in Portland, and I said, "I would like to buy a DEC Rainbow." They said, "We don't have any." So I had to go to my number two choice on the list, which was an IBM PC. And they had just started, and IBM had just opened a store in Portland. So I went over there, and I said, "I would like to buy an IBM PC." No problem. I bought it. Six thousand dollars for this clunker. With software, though.

[1:41:21] And I bought the company incorporation. It was called Instant Information Inc., with a logo and an "I" that was cubed. And I got going. The business went pretty slow. The problem was that the bigger corporations that were in Portland all did it themselves. Like Intel, for instance. They were there. They of course had their own people that knew how to do information, too.

[1:41:52] And the smaller businesses, they didn't know they could do this, or they didn't want to pay for it, or they didn't know that it was actually important for them to gather information for their business. What did work well was trademark searches, where people wanted to do a trademark and wanted to check out whether it was available, and things like that. So I did make some on this.

[1:42:12] But anyway, the one thing I learned right away with that PC was, I bought communication software, which I was then going to use to communicate with these databases. All of these databases, you pay for the time that you're connected, plus you pay for what you retrieve of actual

information. Because you pay for the time you're connected, the software I had just turned the PC into a terminal. So you spend a lot of time just sitting there, typing, and that wasn't good enough.

[1:42:45] So I thought of the idea of doing a software where you prepare everything in advance, and connect, and just hit a button, and everything would go up, and then you hit another button, and everything would go down, and you're out of there. But that didn't exist. This was the only thing you could get.

[1:43:00] Then I started together with my partner. He stayed behind, because he was still going to end up his contract with the UN before he came over. But we wrote a program that would do what I wanted, which was prepare it all and connect, and do what you have to do, and then get out of there. And it worked. So in my spare time, I wrote an article to a professional magazine that was all about information retrieval and things like that. And they published it, about this software that I had written.

[1:43:34] And lo and behold, people wanted to buy it. So the emphasis of the company had shifted. This software started actually started taking money in. And of course, the customers were exactly those corporations that did their own information retrieval. They also wanted to save money on their connect time. So it started slowly taking off, but in a totally different direction than what was originally envisioned.

[1:44:07] Then a different kind of lightning struck again, and that was my six months were running out. I sent in my application for renewal and my permit to stay. A few months later another letter showed up saying, "You're denied, and you came into this country under false pretenses. You're taking jobs away from American citizens." And there was a third reason, which I've forgotten. That was all of course nonsense, because I had in Vienna told them. And I told them twice in the airport why I was coming.

[1:44:43] So, a disaster. I essentially had to get out of the country. I didn't even have the thing in passport anymore, because I had sent that in. so I went to see a lawyer to see what I could do. He said, "You can go back to Denmark, and you can apply for a green card, and a couple years later they might approve it or not approve it." I said, "That's not possible. I'm trying to start a business." And then he asked, "So, why are you really here?" I said, "Because of this American woman." And he said, "Why don't you just get married?" [Laughter]

[1:45:29] So, I had actually already asked her at that point, a couple months before. Her answer had been, "Well, maybe." And at this point, her father, who I had become quite friendly with, who still lives in Seattle, he heard about it, and he essentially made it a shotgun wedding. But the gun was to her head, not my head. Once he approved it and promoted it, she fell in line. She listened to her dad.

[1:46:04] So we arranged a very hasty wedding in August of 1983, taking place at the campus of the University of Washington. Both of my wife's parents graduated from there, and she graduated from there as well. So it was out there with the Greek columns. And then I went back to work. We took a honeymoon of one weekend, the weekend we got married, and that was it.

[1:46:36] At this point, it was actually my father-in-law's doing… He was using his computer to do something called electronic mail. What I saw was the same thing as I had seen with my computer,

and that was it just turned your computer into a dumb terminal. He had to sit there and not only form the message, but all the headers, and stuff like that, of an email message. But he had to sit there and type, and I said, "This can be easier." Especially [inaudible 1:47:10] the experience I had with the other software.

[1:47:12] The service was provided by Western Union, the old telegraph and telephone company. It was essentially a development of Telex, except now it was used in computers. Just like email does today, it was storing and forwarding the emails, so you connected to send a message and you connected to it to get a message.

[1:47:29] So I wrote a letter to Western Union saying, "We have a software that will format the messages and make it very easy for your customers to send and receive messages from a personal computer." And I got a non-committal letter saying, "This is interesting, but we can't recommend anybody's product." That was from the marketing department. But then I got a phone call from somebody from the sales department that said, "This sounds interesting. Could you send me a copy of the software, and I'll take a look at it."

[1:47:57] Then of course, I didn't have the software. [Laughter] It didn't exist. So I got very busy, and I got it done burning the midnight oil and working seven days a week on this software, which was all written in Basic, which was the only language you really had available. I got the rudimentary version of this email software, which was, essentially you prepared the message locally on your computer, and you put in… The email addresses were actually like a phone number back then. It was a ten-digit number. You could the number in an address book, so very much like what you know today from [inaudible 1:48:38] products, and things like that.

[1:48:40] And I sent it in, and I got an invitation to come see them. I went out there to New Jersey, which is where Western Union was located. Then they actually ordered the first box of fifty copies, or something like that. They were one hundred dollars each. So suddenly this is real money now. [Laughter] It essentially took off from there. We started making sales.

[1:49:12] I say "we," now, because I actually had another person, an American, join me. And I had a young programmer join me who was just essentially interested in what I was doing, and not really looking for… at least not initially looking for any money. He was just very excited about getting a chance to work on something like this here.

[1:49:38] So we were selling it, and we actually rented real offices. Until then it had been out of the bedroom where I lived with my now-wife. But now we had real offices, and we were selling software through Western Union. They took the orders and promoted the software, and we shipped it. So that was essentially the beginning of email.

[1:50:05] There were a couple of competing services- ITT, RCA. There was also Telex again, that had developed it- what was now electronic mail. At some point, ITT came to us and said, "We would like to have the same as Western Union." It didn't take much to actually change it. Just the formatting of the message was slightly different. So now the ITT people could go in on the Western Union account and say, "We have the same software. Just switch your service to our service. You can keep using the same software, too."

[1:50:36] Back then, of course, you paid for the messages- every message you sent and received you paid for, just like a phone call. So it was a real business back then. The uses were of course businesses, not like it is today, where everybody is using it. It was big corporations. We had a lot of the big corporations using it, and the U.S. military, and things like that- using our software. Then… After we now had this software with these two companies up and running, an investor bought both companies, and merged them into one company, called Easy Link, still.

Affa: [1:51:30] Called what?

Povl: [1:51:31] Easy Link. That was the name of the Western Union service. So he bought the two companies and merged them into one company. Now we're suddenly dealing with not two companies anymore, but just one company. Then things really took off, because the investor that had bought the two companies to merge them was going to milk them for everything he could in terms of making money on it. So we developed a new software for the combined service, and we became truly the official software for this new company. Now business was really taking off.

[1:52:07] In the meantime, we built a house all by ourselves- a lake house outside of Portland, mainly with our own hands. And we had a child, a son, so we are now in 1988. In 1991, we had a second son. The first one was Nikolaj. The second one was Sebastian. My wife migrated from Nike to Columbia Sportswear, and eventually quit and started freelancing instead so that she could stay home and take care of the boys while still working, actually. That all worked very good.

[1:52:51] Now the investor finally cashed out on the new company he had created, and sold it to AT&T, which now became our boss. We worked directly for Bell Labs now, which is the development center for everything AT&T did. AT&T was going to do exactly the same as the first investor, and that was just milk it for everything they could, and then kill it, because they had their own email service, called AT&T mail.

[1:53:23] That was not particularly good news for us, really. That email service that they had was very much similar to what you see today in terms of the way emails are formatted, and all of that, although it was still pay-for service. It was not internet-based quite yet. It was slowly beginning to get there.

[1:53:48] The other competition that we had to our email software was fax, which was now becoming very popular. It was getting cheaper and easier and faster, because it was a lot easier to make a phone call and put in a piece of paper in, rather than running a computer. We still sort of faced up to that challenge, and then developed software that allowed you to use a PC to send and receive fax. We also modified the software for AT&T so that it would interface. So you would go to AT&T service and send to a fax machine as if it was an email. Because it's of course almost the same thing- a fax and an email.

[1:54:32] We developed this software that would allow you to send and receive faxes from a PC. That became the leading technology for sending and receiving faxes from computers. And that was what saved the company, and that is what it still does today. It still exists, now renamed Fax Technology for Internet and things like that. That was good, because once email became free, of course that totally killed the ability to make money on email. So we survived.

[1:55:11] In 1996, the company that I had started merged with a fax marketing company. I was not really needed anymore, because the other company would provide the president and CEO, and I was already very much interested in not having to drive to work every day on the freeways in Portland. And [I was interested in] moving to the San Juan Islands, of course.

[1:55:45] So I got out of it as part of the merger deal in 1996, and then proceeded to make plans to move to the San Juan Islands, which we did in 1999. Other than the fact that I like the San Juan Islands, I also wanted our two sons to grow up in a small community like what I had been used to, and it has worked really well for them. Lopez has been a great place. The school may not be as fancy as some of the schools they would have gone to in Portland, but it was a school where everybody looked after each other, and everybody knows each other, and it has been good.

[1:56:33] Nikolaj, the oldest one, went to the University of Washington, like his mother and grandparents. He graduated in journalism, but also got to go to Denmark for a year on a scholarship from the Scandinavian Department at the University of Washington. As a result of staying in Denmark for a year, he got to keep his Danish citizenship, which he was born with. He was actually in Denmark when he turned twenty-one, so it was a no-brainer for the Danish government to approve his application.

[1:57:10] The other son, we sent to school in Denmark for a year as well. He went to… It's called the European Film College, in Denmark. He also, as a result of that, eventually got his… It was a new government now that didn't quite get as quickly to the applications. But he eventually got to keep his citizenship. Not only did he keep his citizenship, but he met a very nice girl at the film school, which of course makes me very happy. He has since moved to Denmark and lives there now with this girlfriend that he met when he was there. Because of what he studied, he is in video and TV production, as is his girlfriend.

Affa: [1:57:57] So he's working with that in Denmark?

Povl: [1:57:58] Yeah.

Affa: [1:57:59] The Danes are very far ahead with television and movies, and everything right onw.

Povl: [1:58:07] I think so. Yeah. The program that she makes, you see on Danish TV. He has been involved in a couple programs as well. She works full-time. He doesn't. He works from project to project. But he is actually now interning in a company that is training him in the hope of them retaining him. It is actually an American company that does a lot of video production and news coverage, and things like that. It's called *Vice*. He is enjoying that tremendously, so I hope that they'll keep him. He went to Evergreen State College and not UW.

[1:58:56] The overall plan of retiring from my company was that I wanted both them and us to spend more time in Europe. That has somewhat gone into effect. We are over there more. Now of course, with a son there, that has also helped. A few years ago, we bought an old stone house in France, that of course also draws us over there. The trip to Denmark has become more of a side trip to being in France. That actually works pretty good.

Affa: [1:59:34] So what is your older son doing?

Povl: [1:59:36] Oh, sorry. Yes. This was in my notes. He is a journalist at the *Seattle Times*.

Affa: [1:59:43] Oh, really?

Gordon: [1:59:43] Oh, really?

Povl: [1:59:43] Or actually, editor. He runs the opinion page.

Gordon: [1:59:49] Oh, wow.

Povl: [1:59:50] And he does some writing as well. He actually wrote a long article on Father's Day which was all about me, and most embarrassing. [Laughter]

Gordon: [2:00:00] Oh.

Povl: [2:00:01] So, yeah, we spend time now in Burgundy. My wife travels quite a lot to Europe already. Burgundy is almost like a colony of Denmark. The original Burgundians were a tribe from Denmark from the island of Burgundaholmr, which is now called Bornholm.

Gordon: [2:00:24] Oh, is that right?

Povl: [2:00:26] But that was about 1600 years ago. [Laughter] In the 400s is when they moved down there.

Gordon: [2:00:34] I just want to warn you, we have fifteen minutes left on this.

Povl: [2:00:41] I'm done.

Gordon: [2:00:41] Huh?

Povl: [2:00:42] I'm done.

Gordon: [2:00:43] Oh, you're done? There's still fifteen minutes.

Povl: [2:00:43] Unless you had questions.

Affa: [2:00:47] Is your wife still working as a designer?

Povl: [2:00:49] Yes. Well, this is now getting really up-to-date, but yes, she is still a freelance designer. Some of her main customers are in Europe, so she spends a lot of time over there-Switzerland, in particular. This is probably for off-camera. [Laughter]

Gordon: [2:01:09] Did you teach your kids Danish as they grew up?

Povl: [2:01:12] No. I tried with the first one, and the first word that he ever said in Danish was *agurk*, which means "cucumber." [Laughter] But once they started day care and school and all that it

became… And then with my wife not speaking it, it was not practical. But then the oldest son, as I said, he went to the Scandinavian Department aside from the Journalism School, and took Danish classes, so he speaks it. Now with the younger son living in Denmark, he speaks it. He's learning it.

Affa: [2:01:48] So it's interesting that your son is in photography, like you.

Povl: [2:01:52] Yes. And journalism. [Laughter]

Affa: [2:01:54] Yeah. But like his grandparents, and like you.

Povl: [2:01:59] Right. Right. And of course, the older son is very much into computers as well. He is not only doing the print version; he is also doing the online version. And he is directly involved in the design of the online version.

Gordon: [2:02:13] It changed a lot recently.

Povl: [2:02:14] It just changed. Yeah. He was very much involved in that.

Affa: [2:02:18] So are you involved in computers now? Your company?

Povl: [2:02:21] Oh, sorry. Yes. After we moved here, and after I quit in 1996, for the next ten years, I didn't do any computer work other than normal, what everybody else does with computers, like email and [inaudible 2:02:37] and stock trading, things like that. Then I offered our community center… They said they were looking for volunteers like in general. I said, "Well, if you're looking for volunteers to do a webpage, let me know." They said, "I think the director wants her son to do that."

[2:02:57] That's what they ended up doing. Then they realized that the website wasn't getting maintained. Everything that was there was like a year old, and things like that. So they then called me back, and said, "Could you please do a website for us?" So I did that, and then I really got carried away, because the kind of programming I have been doing is very much database kinds of programming, and real programming, not the way you design web pages where you use something else to design it. I do it by writing a program.

[2:03:31] So I got carried away, and turned their website into also being the management system for the whole community center, where they do all the reservations and [inaudible 2:03:40] and all of that kind of stuff. So I started really programming again in the language that we used back in my business when we programmed, which was the C language. So I built websites, and I do it from the bottom up, without using anybody else's technology.

Gordon: [2:04:00] You know what we would like to do, the museum? All of these interviews that we have, we can't put all of them online, but access to some of them. This is a dream I have.

Povl: [2:04:11] Yeah. Okay.

Gordon: [2:04:12] We're going to post some on You Tube, but it's not the same.

Povl: [2:04:17] Right. I did other ones, and I did the same thing for the artist [inaudible 2:04:23] on Lopez, and the studio tour here on Lopez, which is also all interactive. What you see is a website, but then behind it is the whole management about the studio tour and all the activities.

Gordon: [2:04:35] Maybe I'll turn this off now.

END OF RECORDING.

Transcription by Alison DeRiemer.