

Issaquah History Museums 2006.46.1
Oral History Interview with Camilla Berg Erickson
October 19, 2006

Narrator: Camilla Erickson
Date: October 19, 2006
Interviewed By: Maria McLeod
Place: Issaquah Valley Senior Center, Issaquah, WA

MARIA MCLEOD: This is Maria McLeod, oral historian interviewing Camilla Erickson on October 19, 2006 at the Issaquah Valley Senior Center. We'll be talking about the subject of Issaquah history. So can you state your name, including your maiden name?

CAMILLA ERICKSON: Camilla Berg B-E-R-G Erickson.

MM: And what year were you born?

CE: 1918.

MM: And where were you born?

CE: Seattle.

MM: At the time, was your family living in Issaquah?

CE: No.

MM: In Seattle?

CE: Yes.

MM: So you're from Seattle originally?

CE: Yes.

MM: And when did your family move to the Issaquah area?

CE: In 1931. And between there, when I was two, we went to Norway. I was in Norway for five years. We came to Chicago when I was seven. And when I was thirteen, we moved to Issaquah.

MM: So you have memories of Issaquah before 1931.

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CE: That's right.

MM: When you were thirteen, you moved back, to Issaquah.

CE: Right.

MM: And why did your family move to Issaquah?

CE: Well, there was two reasons ... actually, there were three reasons. I had a brother and he was sick, and they wanted to get out of Chicago. And my mother did not like the heat in Chicago, so she wanted to get out. And my dad had a brother that lived here in Issaquah.

MM: What was his brother's name?

CE: Andrew Thompson.

MM: And what were your parents' names?

CE: My dad's name was Charles, Charles [Thompson] Berg. And my mother's name was Gesine, G-E-S-I-N-E [Eliason].

MM: And where were they born?

CE: They were both born in Norway.

MM: What town in Norway, do you know?

CE: Oh, a little town called ... well, it's more like the county. Kvinesdal, K-V-I-N-E-S-D-A-L.

MM: And you said that you had a brother. Did you have other siblings, too?

CE: No.

MM: And what was your brother's name?

CE: My brother's name was Thom, T-H-O-M.

MM: And what was the age difference? Was he older or younger?

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CE: He was two years, eight months older than me. And he died, in a [sigh] car accident, I guess you could call it. He was hit by a car when he was twenty-three.

MM: Here in Washington?

CE: Yes, over by Cle Elum.

MM: *Ohmygosh*. When he was sick way back when, when you were, I think, living in Chicago, what did he have?

CE: He had rheumatic fever.

MM: And did your mother think that had something to do with where you were living at the time, so she wanted to move away?

CE: Oh ... I don't know. I think that ... summers too hot, winters too cold. And she did not like Chicago.

MM: Do you know what your father, or your parents, were doing at the time in Chicago?

CE: My dad was a carpenter and my mother was a housewife.

MM: How would you describe your parents? Are there any particular memories you have of them as individuals that sort of brings to mind what kind of people they were?

CE: They were nice people. [laughing] Oh, I don't really have any specifics.

MM: What were the things that they liked to do when they weren't working? If they ever had time when they weren't working. [laughing]

CE: They liked to visit friends. I guess that was about it.

MM: What kind of parents were they? Were they strict parents, or did they like to play with you, or what kind of parents were they?

CE: My dad was very strict.

MM: What were his rules for you?

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CE: Well, they used to kind of change. [laughing]

MM: Oh, the rules changed as you went along. [laughing] What were they?

CE: *Oh!*

MM: It was maybe different for you than for your brother, too, I'm not sure.

CE: Well, I wasn't allowed to date when I was a teenager. I don't know. Other than that, I pretty much had a normal childhood. Well, I guess it's wasn't abnormal. Lots of people weren't allowed to date back then.

MM: What about your brother? Was he allowed to date? This is what I'm always interested in, because I have brothers, too! [laughter]

CE: Yeah, he dated some. Not a lot.

MM: What languages were spoken in your home?

CE: English and Norwegian.

MM: Did you grow up knowing how to speak Norwegian?

CE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: Do you still speak Norwegian?

CE: Yes.

MM: When you said when you came to Issaquah, your father had a brother here?

CE: Yes.

MM: You told me his name but I can't remember it.

CE: Andrew Thompson.

MM: He had a brother, Andrew Thompson, but your father's last name was Berg? How did that work?

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CE: This is the way it is back in Norway. They either take their father's name and add "son" to it, or they take the name of the place where they came from. And my father came from a little place called Bikshorn, which I guess means "burg."

MM: Uh-huh.

CE: So that's how come there's two different names. They were full brothers. I mean, I've gone through [chuckles] –

MM: You've explained this more than once.

CE: Right.

MM: And so your grandfather must have been named Thom?

CE: No. It really shouldn't be Thompson, it should Tomason [sp not verified]], because my grandfather's name was Tomas [sp not verified].

MM: How did it end up Thompson?

CE: Norwegians are strange people.

MM: OK [laughing] we'll leave it at that. What was your Uncle Andrew doing here in Issaquah?

CE: He was raising chickens.

MM: He was raising chickens?

CE: In downtown Issaquah.

MM: In downtown Issaquah. So, on Front Street.

CE: No, on what is now ... Bush Street.

MM: Oh, Bush Street. So he had a chicken farm. Is that something that he had – a talent that he'd brought from Norway, or was it something he discovered here?

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CE: Well, I imagine it was something that he discovered here.

MM: Uh-huh.

CE: And my folks also had some chickens, but not to the extent that he had. And we lived on Bush Street also. We lived just a few houses away from my uncle. And we also had a cow. That's in 1931, they had chickens and cows in downtown Issaquah.

MM: And that was not uncommon? Did most families have chickens and cows?

CE: Uh-huh.

MM: But your family had a real chicken farm.

CE: No.

MM: Or, your uncle did.

CE: My uncle did.

MM: And so what was the name of his chicken farm? Like Thompson's chicken farm?

CE: Oh, I don't think he really had any specific name, it was just he raised chickens.

MM: Do you know how many chickens? Do you remember?

CE: I don't know.

MM: But when you showed when you were thirteen, what was your reaction seeing all the chickens, do you remember?

CE: No.

MM: It wasn't a big deal to see a lot of chickens?

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CE: No. I think my folks had about 800. I mean, they bought from one of the neighbors, and then they added. And they had about 800. And he had a lot more than that. So I would say maybe a couple of thousand.

MM: *Wow.* That's more than I expected. Did he have people that worked for him?

CE: Off and on.

MM: Was he married as well?

CE: Yes, he was married, and had three children. He had three daughters.

MM: Oh, so did the daughters help take care of those chickens?

CE: I don't think so.

MM: Did you have to help take care of chickens?

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: So your family essentially started a chicken farm, too. Was that your father's primary form of income?

CE: No, he was a carpenter. See, we came out here during the Depression. And that's another reason why we moved to Issaquah, because times were bad back in Chicago.

And he got a job up in Everett. He worked in a mill up there as a millwright, doing repair work and that kind of thing, I think like a maintenance man.

So he was up at Everett during the week, and would come home on weekends. And my mother and I, we would take care of the chickens.

MM: What do you have to do to take care of 800 chickens?

CE: Well, we had to feed them.

MM: Like every morning? Or once or twice a day?

CE: I think twice a day but I'm not positive.

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MM: Do you remember what you fed them?

CE: Chicken feed! [laughing] And then we used to raise what they called mango beets, which are bigger beets than the red beets. Like a sugar beet. And we'd feed them that.

And then they'd have roosts and they would sit on them. We'd have to clean the dropping boards, you know. Then we'd have to clean the floors. And I'd pick the eggs. *I hated it.*

MM: You hated it? [chuckles] You're not the first person who's told me they hated that job! What was it that you hated most?

CE: How would you like to [inaudible].

MM: The smell?

CE: The smell ... it just ... you know.

MM: And what were the eggs like? Warm? Dirty?

CE: Oh, some of them would be dirty.

MM: Did you ever fight the chickens to get the eggs?

CE: Oh, no. No, they were sitting on their nest. You'd reach underneath and picked the eggs out.

MM: You never got pecked?

CE: Oh, I imagine we got pecked. This is interesting. My uncle had twin grandsons. And one of the grandsons could go in the chicken house and gather eggs.

And the other one would go in and gather eggs ... and the chickens had fleas. And the one would get bit by fleas and fleas wouldn't bother the other one at all.

MM: And they were identical twins?

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CE: Uh-huh.

MM: That is really strange. Do you remember getting bit by fleas?

CE: Not specifically, no.

MM: So what happened after you collected the eggs? Where did you take them and where did you sell them? Or did you sell them?

CE: They had a Western Farmers down in Issaquah, down ... out where Darigold Farms is now, and we would bring them down there.

MM: By the hundreds, probably.

CE: Oh, well, I don't know whether they were hundreds. But, you know, at the time it was by the case, you know.

MM: So you collected eggs every day?

CE: Oh, yes.

MM: Did people ever come to your house to buy eggs? Or is mostly you were taking them to this central place and then they were buying them from there?

CE: I think probably mostly to this central place, because I think at that time, most everybody had a few chickens of their own.

MM: Yeah. I talked to someone who candled eggs. Did you ever have to candle eggs?

CE: No, I didn't candle eggs, but I know – I had a cousin, she candled eggs.

MM: You know who that was? Do you remember?

CE: Yeah, Mary [Lou] Lewis, Mary [E.] Knoernschild's child. Yeah, I know her, yep.

MM: Can you tell me about the community of Norwegians that made up Issaquah when you were growing up here? Like were you part of the only

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Norwegian families, or were there other families from Norway that you remember?

CE: I think that my ... my Uncle Andrew ... I think they were the only other Norwegian family that I knew of.

MM: Really?

CE: Uh-huh. There were more Swedes than Norwegians.

MM: So when you lived here, because you're the only family, or one of the only couple families from Norway, did you kind of join the Swedes? Or how was it like culturally?

CE: I don't recall that there was anything specific about being Norwegian in with Swedes. My Uncle Andrew, he was married to a Swedish lady. And she had a brother that lived here, and he had a fairly large family.

And my folks had Norwegian friends up in Snoqualmie and Puyallup and Seattle. So, I mean, we did have friends from Norway.

And, oh, I was grown at the time, I was probably eighteen, nineteen, something like that, and my parents had [friends], three other couples that used to come [over]. They would go back and forth for dinner.

And one of the men – they talked Norwegian when they got together – and one of the men sort of apologized to me and said, you know, about them talking Norwegian.

And I says, "Oh, that's all right."

He says, "Yeah, but we're talking about old times back in Norway, and it just doesn't seem right to talk about Norway in English." That they had to talk in Norwegian to talk about Norway. That was his feeling.

MM: Yeah, that's interesting. But you could understand what they were saying.

CE: Oh, yes, I could understand it.

MM: Because you had lived in Norway.

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CE: Yes.

MM: At a very formative age.

CE: We left Norway the day that I was seven. And, of course, I spoke no English at that time, because I was two when we came back here, so what little, at two, how much do you know? So basically, when I started school, I didn't know any English.

MM: Oh, so you started school in Issaquah without learning English.

CE: No, Chicago.

MM: Chicago, because you were there until you were thirteen.

CE: Yeah.

MM: What was that like, to walk in a classroom and not be able to speak English?

CE: Well, I don't remember it was that –

MM: Were there other kids who couldn't speak English very well?

CE: I don't remember.

MM: And do remember learning English at that time, what that was like?

CE: Oh, I think I just picked it up, you know. I don't remember that they made any big fuss about it like they do today.

MM: What about your brother, because he was a little bit older. Was it harder for him?

CE: I don't think so. Back in Chicago, they had classes [that] were divided, 1A and 1B. Well, we both started out together. Of course, he had had school back in Norway, so we hadn't been in the school very long when they promoted him to the upper half of the first grade.

MM: Because he was smart?

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CE: Yeah. So although he was two years and eight months older than me, he was just one year ahead of me in school.

MM: Was it expected, either spoken or not spoken, did your parents hope that when you did start dating that you would date a Norwegian? Was there any of that thing?

CE: Well ... not specifically so, I don't think. But especially my dad ... anybody that wasn't a Norwegian was a foreigner, you know. You might just as well have come from Africa.

My dad was very race-oriented, I guess. Not race, ethnic – ethnic race, not by color.

MM: Yeah, yeah, but your ethnicity and the language you spoke. Is there anything that you would say about your family, either the way they celebrated different events, or the food they cooked or the music they listened to, anything outside of their language that was from the old country? Any habits that seemed to be kind of different than people who weren't from Norway?

CE: I don't think so.

MM: Did your mom cook any special foods?

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: What did she cook?

CE: Oh, she'd make different cookies. And back in those days, of course, they didn't have refrigeration, I mean like freezers. So every year, my dad would buy a mutton. That's a sheep, you know?

MM: Oh, yes. [laughing] You saw the look on my face! The foggy expression!

CE: It's an old lamb. I mean, it's not lamb. And he would salt it. And then after it had been in the brine for a while, then he would take it out, and hang it up and dry it.

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And then another thing, I would have to go to the butcher shop and buy a pint, or a quart, I don't know what, of blood.

MM: Of blood? What did they want the blood for?

CE: They made blood dumplings.

MM: *Blood dumplings?*

CE: Oh, delicious.

MM: Really? Do you know how to make that yourself?

CE: No.

MM: Do you remember how they made it?

CE: Oh, yeah. They made it with ... let's see ... flour and ... I think there was potatoes. And then you'd form it, you know, in something this size. In the center of it, you'd put a piece of the mutton. Then you'd boil them in water, and you'd eat them hot. Then, what was left over the next day, you would slice it and you would fry them in butter.

MM: Where did the blood come in? Where did you put the blood?

CE: You put the blood in with the dough.

MM: So what color did it look like? Was it kind of pinkish? Purplish?

CE: Yeah, purplish. Sort of like your blouse.

MM: Sort of a deep red?

CE: Yeah.

MM: *Wow.* It sounds good to be fried in butter. [chuckles]

CE: Oh, it was. I liked it both ways.

MM: Because you had this salty meat in the middle ...

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CE: Yeah, just a little bit.

MM: And the fried dough on the outside.

CE: Yeah.

MM: But the blood didn't give it any peculiar taste?

CE: Well, I didn't think it was peculiar. [chuckles] I mean, I'm sure a lot of – I mean, it was just something that I grew up with, so it was just ...

MM: Well, when you think about it, there's blood in a steak, you know. There's blood in meat.

CE: Oh, sure.

MM: So we eat cooked blood, in a way, but not usually –

CE: Well, if you have raw steak, it's not even cooked!

MM: I know, I know.

CE: And that's the way I like my steak.

MM: Did you have to do any of the shopping for your parents because of their language –

CE: Oh, I did it. I did most of the shopping.

MM: Is it because you spoke English but they didn't speak it?

CE: Yes.

MM: Did they ever learn English?

CE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, my dad spoke English. Because my dad, he had made five trips back and forth from Norway to here before he settled down here.

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My dad was fifteen years older than my mother, so he was a man of the world when he came back to Norway. He was thirty-two and my mother was seventeen when they got married.

MM: *Ohmygoodness.* Do you remember what year they got married?

CE: 1914.

MM: So why was he going back and forth? Was it because his brother was here?

CE: No, I don't think so. I think it was just job opportunities.

MM: He must have been doing pretty well to afford those trips back and forth.

CE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He was an A-1 carpenter. He also spent some time in Montana. But he did not work in the mines in Montana. And I'm sorry for myself that I don't know at what time in his life he spent some time in Montana. Whether it was before he was married to my mother, or whether –

See, he was in the United States for three years me and my brother were born. We went to Norway, and he stayed there for two years. And then he came over here, and then he sent for us. So somewhere in there, he spent time in Montana.

MM: Oh, so when you were in Norway, for a while it was just you, your mom and your brother, and probably family.

CE: Oh, yes, yes.

MM: And then he sent for you, and you made the journey by yourselves.

CE: Yeah, with my mom.

MM: Do you remember the journey?

CE: Oh, a little bit. My mother was seasick the whole way. And, well, I was seven, my brother was almost ten. And we kind of run around the ship, I know. [chuckles]

MM: Do you know how long it took?

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CE: No, I don't.

MM: Quite a while.

CE: I think it took at least a week.

MM: Then when you got here, you probably landed in New York area.

CE: We went to Ellis Island. And my mother and my brother, they were not American citizens, because they had been born in Norway. I, having been born in Seattle, was an American citizen.

So when we got to Ellis Island, I didn't have to go through all the examinations, health examinations and stuff. So, I mean, if they had found something, if they would have had some disease, and if they would have been shipped back to Norway because of that. I could have stayed, I wouldn't have had to go. But, of course, they were fine.

MM: I don't think I've ever talked to anyone who's gone through Ellis Island before. I know you were only seven, but what do you remember about that experience?

CE: Well, all I remember was a big room with a lot of people. That's really all I remember.

MM: And did you have to sort of walk up to a desk and they'd check your names, kind of thing?

CE: I imagine, but I really can't say that I remember that.

MM: What was the weather like at the time? Did you come in winter?

CE: No, we came in August.

MM: That's nice.

CE: And then ... *ohgosh* ... I don't know how many years ago, we went and visited New York. And we went out to Ellis Island, and I climbed up to the top, inside, the Statue of Liberty.

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MM: As a seven-year-old, did you look out the boat and see the Statue of Liberty as you approached?

CE: I must have, but I can't say that I really remember.

MM: That's incredible. That's just incredible. Now, then did you go by train to Seattle?

CE: We went by train to Chicago.

MM: Oh, to Chicago. I keep forgetting you were in Chicago. Do you recall the train ride at all?

CE: Well, I just remember the black porter. And I remember that the palm of his hand was sort of pink. Funny little things that, you do remember.

MM: Well, you were a little girl. There probably weren't a lot of black people in Norway.

CE: I'd never seen any black people. [chuckles] Well, I'd probably seen them, but I don't ever remember having seen a black person before.

MM: I'm from the Midwest, so from that point north, there's a lot of people of color, especially African Americans, in Chicago and Michigan, you know.

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: At that time, probably quite a few. *Wow*, that's really interesting. And do you remember what you ate on the train, or did your mom pack food?

CE: I don't remember.

MM: Some of those details don't stick.

CE: I remember that before we left Norway, we were in Stavanger, where we got the boat. And my mother bought some bananas, and I started to eat them without taking the peeling off! [laughter] Well, I had probably had bananas when I was a little girl in Seattle but ...

MM: But you didn't really remember.

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CE: Huh-uh.

MM: What town were you in when you did that? You were still in Norway and you were about to get on the boat?

CE: Yeah, Stavanger.

MM: Oh. She probably wanted to buy fruit that she thought would last as well. You mentioned before that when you were a kid living here in Issaquah, you'd do most of the shopping. So I wondered, where were you buying foods, and what do you remember about the shops in Issaquah at that time? Like what meat market did you go to?

CE: We went to Fischer's Meat Market. We went in there and the butcher gave me a wiener, a hot dog. *Oh!* Nobody in Chicago had ever given me a hot dog. I thought that was pretty neat.

MM: He just gave you a cooked hot dog?

CE: No, it wasn't cooked, it was a –

MM: – boiled hot dog. You could eat it?

CE: Yeah, yeah, the way they sold them.

MM: So just for walking in the door and buying something ...?

CE: Yeah, yeah. And then there was Tony & Johnny's later. There was a grocery store there on Sunset, about where the ...

MM: Was it called R & R or Red & White?

CE: Red & White, yes, at the Red & White.

MM: What was that like?

CE: It was just a little grocery store.

MM: Not like the stores today. They were much smaller.

CE: Oh, yes! Much smaller, much smaller.

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MM: Do you remember what kind of things you could buy there?

CE: Just groceries.

MM: Bread? Did you buy bakery things there?

CE: No, there was a bakery. In fact, when I graduated from high school, I stayed home and helped my mother with the chickens and stuff. Then I went to work for a bakery that was there along ...

MM: Oh, do you remember the name of it?

CE: Jacobson's Bakery. He had the *best* bakery. *Oh!*

MM: Was he Danish?

CE: No, he was Norwegian.

MM: Oh, so yeah, there is another Norwegian in town.

CE: Yeah. And he made the best bread. Oh, he was just wonderful.

MM: Did he make pastries, too?

CE: Oh, yes.

MM: What kind?

CE: In fact, I fried doughnuts. That was one of the things I had to do. Then, of course, I waited on the customers, too. And I remember ... oh, that would be ... I graduated in 1936, so this would be 1938. Bread was selling for 10 cents a loaf. Then they raised it to 11 [cents].

Oh! It was awful. People said, "Bread went up to 11 cents a loaf? Terrible!"

MM: And during the Depression, too.

CE: Yeah.

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MM: Suddenly you had to make change with pennies. Because before, you could just take a dime.

CE: Right, right. And doughnuts were 20 cents a dozen. Now you can't even – can you buy one doughnut with 20 cents?

MM: If it's a day old or something!

CE: And then next to the bakery there was a beauty shop. And Mrs. [Mary E.] Lewis, who you have interviewed, her niece ran that beauty shop.

Then there was the Red & White store, and then there was Brady's dry goods store. And then there was Hepler's Ford agency. And then on the other side of the bakery –

MM: Are we going down Front Street now, or Sunset?

CE: Sunset. OK, Sunset. Sunset to the east, just past the bakery was the Eagles Tavern.

MM: Did you ever go to the tavern?

CE: No, I didn't.

MM: Was it something that women didn't do at that time?

CE: Well, some of them did! [laughing] I had one customer that would come to get bread after she'd been to the tavern, and some days, she didn't walk too well! [laughing]

MM: Really? Well, maybe they needed bread to absorb the alcohol. That's great. Do you remember – because you were working there at the end of the Depression and you kind of graduated at the peak of the Depression – do you remember how the Depression impacted Issaquah, or your family?

CE: Well, as far as our family, we really had no hardship. My dad worked the whole time. We had the chickens. We had a garden. My mother sewed our clothes. So really, I can't say that I suffered any hardship because of the Depression.

MM: Did you notice other people that you thought were –

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CE: No, not really.

MM: Yeah, as I interview people, I sometimes think perhaps things were a little more prosperous in this part of the country.

CE: I think so. And I really think that a lot of the people here in this area, they had a chicken, and some of them had a cow. And they had a garden, you know.

MM: So they were pretty self-sufficient.

CE: Right, right.

MM: I see what you're saying.

CE: I'm sure there were people that were really hurting, but I didn't know about them.

MM: Did your family often – I know you lived in Seattle, so maybe they knew Seattle, and you said they had friends in Seattle – so before the floating bridge – I think the floating bridge went in in the late [19]30s – how did get to Seattle?

CE: You had to go through Renton.

MM: And how long did it take?

CE: Oh ... over an hour.

MM: Do you remember what the roads were like? Were they paved roads?

CE: Yeah, they were paved.

MM: Did your family have a car?

CE: Yes.

MM: Oh, that's nice. Do you remember what kind of car you had?

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CE: Well, when we came to Chicago, my dad had a Model T. And then in about ... either 1930 or 1931, he bought a Model A. And he and a nephew drove out from Chicago, out to Issaquah, to kind of get the lay of the land, see whether he wanted to move his family.

MM: He had to cross the mountain ranges in there.

CE: Uh-huh.

MM: Did he ever talk to you about that trip? That was a real pioneering kind of trip to take back then.

CE: Well, in 1931, it was not a big deal. Then, when he brought the family out, we came by train.

MM: Do you remember the first time you saw the mountains?

CE: *Oh!* I saw so many mountains back in Norway, they didn't have any impact on me! [laughing]

MM: Did your family attend a particular church in town?

CE: No. My parents were Lutheran, and there wasn't a Lutheran church in Issaquah. So they didn't go to church. But they sent us kids to Sunday school. And they had a community Baptist church, so I went to church there.

MM: So you went without your parents to church sometimes? Or you just went to Sunday school?

CE: I just went to Sunday school.

MM: I wondered – sometimes I wonder, too – one of the questions I always have is did people from certain ethnic groups go to certain churches?

CE: Well, I would say that the Norwegians went to Lutheran churches.

MM: Uh-huh. Did you work when you were in high school at all, outside of the home?

CE: Not in high school.

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MM: And after high school, where did you work?

CE: I worked at the bakery here in Issaquah.

MM: Oh, that's right. How long did you work there? You said it was about 1938.

CE: I worked there for two years, I guess.

MM: What did you do after that?

CE: I went to business college in Seattle. And then I worked – I graduated from high school in 1936. I stayed in Issaquah three years after that. Then I went to Seattle, and in 1942, I got married.

MM: When you went to Seattle, that was during World War II, right?

CE: Right.

MM: And in what ways did you work? Did you do any work related to the war effort?

CE: No.

MM: You just went right to business school?

CE: Yes, and I worked for an insurance company, and I worked for Alpine Dairy.

MM: Oh, you worked for Alpine Dairy? Did you kind of do some books for them? Bookkeeping? Or accounting?

CE: I was on the order desk. I took orders.

MM: Where was Alpine Dairy? Right here in town, right?

CE: Yeah. Alpine Dairy was – well, where it is now, where the dairy is now. And they had a ... I guess ... I don't whether it was the main plant, but they had, on Rainier Avenue in Seattle out in [what is] called the Georgetown area.

MM: And why did you want to go to business school?

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CE: To get some education and get a better job.

MM: I mean as opposed to teaching or anything else. Was there something in particular that attracted you to business?

CE: Well, of course, if you wanted to go and be a teacher or something, you had to go to regular college. And business college, you could get a job ...

MM: Pretty quickly?

CE: Yeah.

MM: That's great. Can you tell me about attending high school in Issaquah, what that was like for you? We sort of went past that quite quickly. [laughing]

CE: Well, it was just going to school.

MM: How many kids were in your class?

CE: When I graduated, there were fifty-five.

MM: And what did you all do for fun, when you weren't in school or on your lunch breaks, and things like that?

CE: Well, I wasn't allowed to do too much of anything. I played sports in school.

MM: Oh, really? What sports did you play?

CE: Well, I wasn't very good at anything. But I played tennis and basketball.

MM: Really? Was that considered anything remarkable, that the girls had a basketball team at the time?

CE: Oh, I don't think it was –

MM: It was normal for girls to have a basketball team?

CE: Basketball for girls was different than for boys.

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MM: How so?

CE: Well, the boys, they had the run of the whole court. For girls, it was divided into thirds. And the forwards and the guards had to stay at the ends, and in the middle, called the center, they had a center guard who tossed up the ball. And then they had side center that guarded [inaudible].

MM: And what were your uniforms like?

CE: Shorts and a tee-shirt and a blouse.

MM: And who did you guys play? Did you play each other, did you play teams from different schools?

CE: We played different schools.

MM: And did people come and watch?

CE: I suppose. [chuckles] I don't really remember. I was on the second string, so I didn't get to go to too many games.

MM: You were a person on the bench, and when one of the elite players got hurt, they called you.

CE: Right, right.

MM: Do you remember your coach, who that would have been?

CE: Not really.

MM: Are there any teachers that stick out in your mind during that time period?

CE: I had a wonderful typing and shorthand teacher. She was a real ... well, I thought she was real old. But after, several years after I graduated, I saw her obituary in the paper. And when I saw how old she was when she died, I realized that when she was my teacher [laughing] she was very young! You know, when you're eighteen ...

MM: Do you remember her name?

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CE: Oh, yes. Clara T. Bean.

MM: That's a great name. Was she from Issaquah, do you know?

CE: I don't think she was from Issaquah.

MM: Did you excel at typing? Were you good at typing and shorthand?

CE: No.

MM: No.

CE: No, I didn't excel at anything! [laughing] No, I really didn't.

MM: But you went on to business school.

CE: Yeah, I went on to business school.

MM: Good.

CE: And when I was in business school, I met a girl from Lyman, Washington and a girl from Elma. And we are still friends to this day.

MM: Really?

CE: We get together for lunch at least once a month. One of the girls, I talk to five days a week.

MM: Really? Oh, that's so nice.

CE: Uh-huh. So we've been friends for a *long* time.

MM: Did they all settle in this area?

CE: Well, the one girl, the girl that was from Lyman, she lives in West Seattle. The one that was from Elma lives in Edmonds.

MM: Oh, so not far.

CE: So I'm here in the middle, so we get together and meet at Black Angus and have lunch.

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MM: That's really nice. That must have seemed, I don't know, kind of freeing to leave your father, who was strict; and then, you went to business school.

CE: Oh, yes.

MM: Did you live there at the time?

CE: I worked for my room and board. I lived with an old spinstress.

MM: So what did you do with your freedom? Did you get to have any fun? Or what did you and your girlfriends, these girlfriends you met, what would you do for fun when you were in school there? What were your hangouts?

CE: Well, we really didn't hang out that much after school. We had lunch together at the Security Market [First & Pike, Seattle], they had a restaurant there. And we'd go out to dinner and stuff.

MM: And movies?

CE: Oh, yeah, we'd go to movies.

MM: Do you remember going to the Issaquah Theater here?

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: How much did films cost, and what did you see?

CE: Oh, 10 cents.

MM: And what did you see at the time?

CE: I don't remember.

MM: That's OK if you don't remember. And did you go swimming, or to Lake Sammamish, or to the park?

CE: Well, I went to the park, but I didn't learn how to swim till I was fifty-five years old. I went after they built the new swimming pool here.

MM: Really? How come you didn't learn to swim till later?

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CE: I don't know.

MM: Your family wasn't into swimming, they didn't take you swimming?

CE: No, no.

MM: *Wow*, fifty-five, you learned to swim. So they put a pool in here in Issaquah?

CE: The pool was in before I learned how. We went to Hawaii, my husband and I, we went to Hawaii, and I thought, *gee*, I could have had a lot more fun if I had known how to swim.

So when we came back, I went to the pool and I learned how to swim. I was not a good swimmer. I was never very good at *any* sports, you know.

MM: But that's really remarkable, that you learned to swim. Do you swim now at all?

CE: No, I've given it up, it's too much effort.

MM: Yeah. Then you have to go there, and change your clothes and get dried off. I always feel the same way.

CE: Then after we'd swim, we'd – well, I've been going to McDonald's for breakfast ever since they opened, at least twice a week on an average. Of course, I miss once in a while.

I don't know whether you'd be interested to know that my husband was born in Issaquah?

MM: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about who you married and where he was from. And your husband's name?

CE: My husband's name was Tauno, T-A-U-N-O Erickson. He's Finnish.

MM: Oh, so he was Finnish, too. So that's another Finnish – or, no, you're Norwegian. He was Finnish.

MM: Was he considered a foreigner, to your father?

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CE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MM: Did you have a hard time getting them to get along?

CE: My dad? Of course, I don't think anybody would have been good enough for his darling daughter. But they got to be very good friends [my father and my husband]. And my dad thought the world of my husband.

MM: And what did your husband do?

CE: He was a chicken farmer up on the Plateau. You know, what is Rock Meadow Farm?

MM: Uh-huh.

CE: He and his family, they owned Rock Meadow Farm.

MM: Oh, so you had chickens in your married life, too.

CE: Oh, yeah. *I was never, ever going to marry a chicken farmer. No way!*

MM: How did that happen, that you married one?

CE: I don't know how it happened that I married one! [laughter] *Oh!* I always said that before I got married, that I would *never* marry a chicken farmer. I didn't want *anything* to do with chickens!

Of course, after I married my husband, I didn't work with the chickens. I stayed home and raised the kids. We have four children.

MM: When were your children born?

CE: 1942, [19]47 ... let's see ...[19]49 ... and [19]52.

MM: Was your husband in World War II?

CE: Oh, yes. He was gone for over three years. And our oldest boy was born when Tauno was in the service. And Carl was over three years old before his dad ever saw him.

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So my heart just *bleeds* for these “Oh, we’ve been over six months and the baby was born ...” [said sarcastically] I mean, it just ...

MM: Did you send V letters or whatever it was called?

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: Were they called V letters?

CE: Uh-huh.

MM: Back and forth?

CE: Yeah, they were all censored, you know, blacked out stuff.

MM: So you would get a letter from him with black lines on it?

CE: Oh, yeah. And they would be photographs of letters, too, you know.

MM: Oh, so they kept the originals?

CE: Oh, yeah. And you never [got] to talk to them on the phone or anything, you know. It was just an entirely different situation than war is today.

Yes, war is terrible today. War was terrible then. But war today and war then [snaps her fingers].

MM: How did you manage it without being able to talk to him at all? And you were raising a child. You had a baby. Were you sad? You must have been.

CE: Well, I lived with my folks. And I worked.

MM: What did you do?

CE: I worked in a place called Commercial Importing Company. They imported coffee and spices and that kind of stuff.

MM: Were you ever worried that the military men were going to come to your house and tell you that your husband had died?

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CE: I didn't really dwell on that. His mother – his mother didn't think that he would *ever* come home. So, I mean, she had a rough time. I guess I was basically working, had my child and life going on.

MM: Did it ever feel kind of good to be independent? You know how sometimes you get used to being independent without having a husband around? Did you ever feel that way?

CE: No, not really.

MM: What was it like when he came home? Did you meet him somewhere?

CE: He had a sister – well, he had two sisters over in Seattle. One of the sisters and her husband, they went to Fort Lewis and picked him up. And then they brought him out to Issaquah.

MM: And do you remember that day?

CE: Oh, yeah! My little boy, he was a little older than three. My folks had a double-story house, and we had a bedroom downstairs, and there was a bedroom upstairs.

Carl stood there and looked up at his dad and he says, "I like you, and you can stay. But you can sleep upstairs." [laughter] I mean, where a kid three years old even would think a thing like that!

MM: How did your husband respond? That's cute. How did your husband respond?

CE: Oh, he laughed.

MM: Oh, I love that moment. All right, let's see ... we still have some time on that tape. So your oldest boy is named Carl. What's the name of your other children?

CE: Esther is next. Then Andrea. And then Alan, A-L-A-N.

MM: And so when you had Carl, what hospital did you go to?

CE: They were all born in Maynard Hospital in Seattle.

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MM: It's in Seattle?

CE: Yes. It's no longer there.

MM: And I always wonder what it was like in those days as compared to today. Do they give you drugs?

CE: [Sigh]

MM: I do want to hear the story. [chuckles]

CE: Well ... I ... for one thing, they closed the elevator door in front of the husband's face. They didn't get to go any further.

Now ... with all four of my children, my water broke. We went to the hospital. And upstairs, they gave me ether. And I don't – I think people think I'm lying, but I never had a single labor pain. They knocked me out.

Of course, now, natural childbirth is that thing that you "injured your child" [if you had your child in any other way] ... I have four of the most *wonderful, brilliant* children [laughing] you could want! So ...

MM: Were you happy that they gave you ether, in the end?

CE: Well, I don't know whether that was pretty much the norm back then – because I know a lot of my friends, they had what they called a "spinal."

MM: Right.

CE: But my doctor, he gave me –

MM: So you don't have any memory of giving birth.

CE: *Heaven's no!*

MM: But you wake up – I always wonder how the body does that. You must just go on kind of remote.

CE: Yeah, I don't know either. I mean, I never really thought about it and we were just ... I have a granddaughter that's expecting. We were talking about childbirth and stuff.

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But how I was – if I was out completely, how did the baby come out? And somebody says, “Oh, they took forceps and pulled it out.”

Now, whether that’s what they did, I don’t know. I don’t know.

MM: Yeah. Because usually, the mothers are required to push a little.

CE: Yes.

MM: But I have heard that doctors sometimes push up here –

CE: Yeah, hands up here and push down.

MM: Yeah.

CE: Anyway, they all came out. [laughing]

MM: Well, that’s good. So, tell me again what Tauno did for a living. Oh, he had a chicken farm.

CE: Yes.

MM: And that was his only work, then?

CE: No, when they sold the farm in 1965, because of taxes – and it makes me sick, it just makes me *absolutely sick* what they got for the farm back then and what property is selling for right now.

MM: Oh, I know.

CE: If we had gotten what they would have gotten today, I would be Mrs. Gotrocks and I’m not! [laughter]

MM: Do you remember how much they paid – how much they sold the farm for in [19]65?

CE: No, I don’t know.

MM: That’s prime real estate now.

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CE: Oh, yes, very much so.

MM: In addition to selling eggs, I didn't ask you, but you must have sold chickens as well?

CE: Oh, when they had the chicken farm, they started out selling pullets, which are young chickens – layers. Then they built big houses and they raised fryers, you know.

MM: The ones that get fat.

CE: Right. So that's what they did for several years. Well, after they sold the farm, my husband went to work as a carpenter for ten years.

MM: Oh, really? So sort of taking after what your father had done, too.

CE: Right, right.

MM: Did your father help him out with that at all?

CE: No.

MM: But it was something your husband knew how to do? He was a carpenter?

CE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, you know, around the house.

MM: Yeah, most men in that era did some carpentry anyway.

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: But there's a difference between doing plain carpentry and learning how to do real carpentry.

CE: My dad was what they called a "finishing" carpenter. He did all the finishing work. He didn't build the houses, he did the finishing.

MM: The cabinetry.

CE: The cabinetry and the trims, the doors, and the baseboards. He did all of that.

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MM: He probably did beautiful work.

CE: Oh, yes, he did.

MM: Was your home beautiful? Did he do the carpentry in your home?

CE: Yes. Not in my house that I'm living in now, but in the house [sound of something falling on the floor]

MM: Oops. Sorry. [End of Side A]

CE: ... 525 Southeast Bush.

MM: 525 Southeast Bush Street, the house you grew up in?

CE: Yes.

MM: And it still has your father's original carpentry?

CE: Uh-huh.

MM: Do you know who lives there now?

CE: Oh, yeah. I own it now.

MM: Oh, you own it. Do you rent it?

CE: Yes.

MM: Oh, that's nice you kept it in the family.

CE: Yeah.

MM: And where do you live now?

CE: I live down on East Lake Sammamish. Are you familiar with –

MM: We'll be going there later today, actually.

CE: You know where the 7-Eleven store is?

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MM: Uh-huh.

CE: Where Eagle Ridge is?

MM: Uh-huh.

CE: Well, I'm right next to Eagle Ridge.

MM: Oh, that's nice.

CE: And then we have some property on the lake, too.

MM: Tell me about raising kids in Issaquah, and what that was like. The advantages of raising children in a small town, and how you felt about sending your kids to school in Issaquah, and things like that.

CE: It was fine.

MM: Did you ever worry about your children when they were in town? I mean, you lived really close to town, more or less.

CE: Yeah, because the house that I grew up in, we lived across the street in a house. My youngest son lives in that house now. He works for the City of Issaquah for Park and Recreation.

MM: Oh, Alan.

CE: Alan Erickson. Do you know Alan?

MM: Well, I remember reading about that somewhere, that your son works for Parks and Rec. And how long has he worked for them?

CE: Thirty or thirty-five years.

MM: Really? So he's been part of putting in some of the parks that are here.

CE: When he went to work for the parks, there was Kerry Anderson, who was the boss. And there was Eric Hansen, who was in charge of something. And then there was Alan, who was in charge of maintenance. So he was one of the three original ones that started the Park Department.

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MM: I imagine you know a lot of the history of the Park Department.

CE: Well, he doesn't talk too much about that.

MM: *Wow*, that's really great. What was it, do you think, that inspired him to do that kind of work?

CE: It was there. [chuckles] He started out by mowing lawns in the parks, when he was in high school. And then when he went to college, he majored in parks and recreation. And then when he came back, when he graduated, then there was an opening and he's been with them ever since.

MM: Do you know why he decided to come back to Issaquah rather than find work somewhere else?

CE: I guess he liked it. [chuckles] And my oldest son came back to Issaquah, too. He lives up on Cougar Mountain.

MM: Oh, really? So you have two sons here, you have Carl and Alan [who] are here?

CE: Yes.

MM: And then you said Esther and Andrea?

CE: Esther lives in Bellingham, and she works for the university up there. And Andrea lives in Ferndale, and she's a dental hygienist. And then I have three granddaughters that also went to the Issaquah schools.

MM: What are their names?

CE: Julie, Karen and Joanne. Karen and Joanne are twins. And Joanne is expecting her first child in November, so I'm going to be a great-grandma.

MM: Oh, that's nice.

CE: So I think that's – what? How many generations?

MM: Yeah, that's at least – so there's ... let's see ... your parents, yourself, your children, and then your children's children. And then now you're going to

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have great-grandchildren. So it's *five* generations of families in Issaquah. That's amazing.

What else can you tell me about living in Issaquah that's particular to Issaquah? Was your family into fishing? Into the salmon? Did they participate in any of the Labor Day parades?

CE: Not my parents. They didn't participate in any of the parades, but my husband and I and our kids, we participated.

In fact, there was a 4th of July – no, there were Labor Day parades then. And all the different fraternal organizations would have floats and stuff. That's when parades were *fun*, when you made the parade, you know.

And I was on two floats. I was on a Grange float, and my husband and I were on a VFW float. He was Uncle Sam and I was the Statue of Liberty.
[laughing]

MM: Really? That's kind of amazing, given that you went to Ellis Island.

CE: Yeah, yeah!

MM: Even though you were a citizen. You've climbed the steps of the Statue of Liberty.

CE: Yeah.

MM: And you represent the Statue of Liberty on a float!

CE: Yeah, right.

MM: So that's a remarkable detail. And you said you were on the VFW float. What was the other float you mentioned, the Grange one?

CE: The Grange.

MM: What was that float like?

CE: Well, in the Grange, they have [what they] called the "Graces." They're Ceres, Flora and Pomona. And I was one of the Graces. We sat there in front with our long formals on.

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MM: The Graces?

CE: That's what they call them.

MM: What does that mean? These women who were ... sort of the "saints" of the Grange? [laughing]

CE: I really don't know.

MM: Well, that's OK. I don't know. I don't know either! But you were one of the Graces.

CE: Yeah. And that picture had been in the Seattle paper [on Labor Day, the Monday before] I started business college in Seattle. So I went in as a "celebrity"! [laughter] Not really, but ...

MM: That's great you made it in the paper. And what were those parades like back then? You said everybody made their floats. What else was there?

CE: Oh, they were fun!

MM: Were there horses in them?

CE: Oh, yes, there were horses.

MM: And bands? Was there music?

CE: There was music. I'm not sure whether bands came from any of the other schools around, but we had the Issaquah band. And Fischer's Meat Market, they would always have a funny float, you know.

MM: Like a what?

CE: Oh, I don't know. They'd depict different –

MM: Like different animals?

CE: No, not animals. Just [chuckles] crazy things they'd come up with.

MM: Really? Were the butchers on the float, or anything like that?

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CE: No. I don't even remember what was on the floats, but I know we always looked forward to seeing what they came up with, you know?

MM: Yeah. And did you participate in Salmon Days, or any of those things?

CE: Well, Salmon Days came way after, and I've never participated in Salmon Days.

MM: Do you remember ... what was it called? Issaquah Roundup, or Rodeo?

CE: Rodeo. They quit the rodeo the year that we came to Issaquah. And the rodeo was on the 4th of July, and we arrived in Issaquah in the summer.

MM: August, you said.

CE: Yeah.

MM: No, no, that was Chicago.

CE: That was Chicago. But we also came to Issaquah in a summer month. *After* the rodeo.

MM: Oh, so you never got to see the rodeo?

CE: No. They had just paved the sidewalks on – well, when we came, Bush Street at that time ... well, I'm not even sure that it had a name. When it first got a name, it was Hill Street.

And my husband, he was on the Issaquah Council. He was a councilman for – well, he filled out somebody's term, and then he ran a full term of his own

And I don't know what the year was, but it was just before they started developing Issaquah. Rowley, who was a big developer –

MM: George Rowley?

CE: Yeah, George Rowley, he was developing Mountain Park at that time.

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MM: Right. So your husband was on the Council probably ... in the late [19]40s maybe?

CE: Oh, no, it would be after that.

MM: The [19]50s?

CE: Yeah.

MM: After the floating bridge had gone in?

CE: Oh, yeah.

MM: After the floating bridge. So do you remember the issues that the Council was facing at the time?

CE: Well, I know they went around and around with Rowley, who tried to get in some things that would not have been to the good of Issaquah, you know.

MM: Uh-huh. So development was becoming an issue at that time.

CE: Oh, yes. Development was a very big issue at that time.

MM: Do you remember when U.S. 10 went in? Or when I-90 – well, I-90 came much later.

CE: Well, I suppose I did, but I don't really have any great –

MM: Do you remember how the town began to change. Did it all of a sudden seem like more people were coming to Issaquah?

CE: Oh, yes. I can't remember for sure now, when we came here in 1931, whether it was – entering Issaquah – whether it was 868 or 600-and-something.

And I know that I was *so angry* that they didn't go down and add four more to it, because [chuckles] because my family moved in! And I thought they should go and change the sign! [laughter]

MM: The population sign. Yes, somebody else told me that sign stood for quite some time. I think they said it was 800-and-something on the sign. But

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obviously, the population had grown quite a bit before they ever went down and changed it. What do you miss about old Issaquah?

CE: Nothing really.

MM: So how do you feel about the changes, the development of the town and things like that? And what's new about Issaquah?

CE: Too many people. [chuckles]

MM: Too many people. Creates some traffic congestion.

CE: A lot of traffic. *A lot of traffic.*

MM: Is there anything else that you remember that you'd like to talk about that we didn't talk about?

CE: No, not really.

MM: I think you did a great job. And I really appreciate you having come down, and all the things that you remember.

CE: Well, I think that it's rather unique, the generations that have been here. Of course, I realize that there are other generations here in Issaquah that have been here further back. I mean, I don't really consider myself a pioneer of Issaquah, but there are pioneers.

MM: But you are five generations.

CE: Yeah. Now, we own some property on Lake Sammamish right down below where we live, so that would be down below. We have found arrowheads on the beach. The Indians used to come in and camp there.

MM: *Wow.* So those were the original settlers.

CE: Right, right. I know one time my sister-in-law, she had twin boys, and we were having a picnic down there. They were being, you know, underfoot. She said, "Go on down to the beach and look for arrowheads!"

And one of the little kids came up and he had one. He says, "Is this what you mean, Mommy?" And he'd found an arrowhead.

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MM: That's great. Did he keep it or did you give it –

CE: Oh, he kept it. I think we had about five arrowheads that we had framed. And I think my youngest son got the arrowheads.

MM: Someday, those might be part of the museum exhibit.

CE: Oh, you never know. Along with his animals that he got in Africa.

MM: Oh, really? He went to Africa?

CE: Yeah, he and my youngest daughter were hunters.

MM: *Ohmygoodness.* Well, thank you so much.

CE: Oh, you're quite welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH CAMILLA ERICKSON