

Gunnar Trandum Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Trandum, Gunnar
Title	Gunnar Trandum Oral History Interview
Dates	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
Quantity	3 file folders 3 photographs 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t214
Summary	An oral history interview with Gunnar Trandum, a Norwegian immigrant.
Repository	Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections Archives and Special Collections Pacific Lutheran University 12180 Park Avenue South Tacoma, Washington 98447 Telephone: 253-535-7586 Fax: 253-535-7315 archives@plu.edu
Access Restrictions	The oral history collection is open to all users.
Additional Reference Guides	
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Gunnar H. Trandum was born on September 30, 1905 in Kapp, Oppland, Norway, which is 100 miles north of Oslo and 100 miles from the Swedish border. His parents were Henrik (Hveem) Trandum and Paula Hagen. Henrik worked for Nestle's in Kapp, and Paula was a seamstress. America fever hit hard in Kapp, and when Paula's uncle Evin was unable to use his ticket to America, he sold it to Henrik. Not having enough money for Paula and Gunnar to have tickets as well, Henrik had to earn enough money for them once he was in America. The family was reunited in Duluth, Minnesota on April 1, 1907, and Gunnar's brother Osvold was born soon after. In 1908, Henrik obtained a carpentry job for Northern Pacific Railroad, and the family moved to Tacoma, Washington. They bought a house in Parkland, and Gunnar's brothers Melvin and Henry were born in 1909 and 1912, respectively. In 1921, Henrik invested in the Olympia Veneer Company, and the family moved to Olympia, where Henrik worked for the co-operative plywood plant. Gunnar attended high school in Olympia, then went on to earn a BA from Central Washington University, an MA from Western Washington University, and had two years at the University of Washington in education. By the time he finished college, the Depression had hit the country, and Gunnar was fortunate enough to find a teaching job at a two-room school in Shelton. The primary teacher there was Irma van de Ver, whom Gunnar married three years later. They had four children: Beverly, Shirley, Paula, and Gunnar. In addition to teaching in Shelton, Gunnar later

was a principal in Mt. Vernon for five years, a superintendent in eastern Washington for one year, and had another administrative job for five years in Friday Harbor. Following this job, they moved back to Olympia, where Gunnar received the Fullbright scholarship, enabling him to teach in Oslo for a year. This was the first time Gunnar and Irma visited Norway, and while they were there, Irma took a liking to the troll woodcarvings, inspiring Gunnar to teach himself how to carve upon their return home. He did the carving for the Troll Club at PLU. Gunnar was also active in the Sons of Norway in Olympia, teaching Norwegian as a project and serving four terms as president. He also attends church and sings in the choir.

Lineage

Full Name: Gunnar H. Tranum. Father: Henrik (Hveem) Tranum. Mother: Paula Hagen. Paternal Grandfather: Gulbran Tranum. Paternal Grandmother: Karen Matilde Grinvold. Maternal Grandfather: Ole Hagen. Maternal Grandmother: Maria (Maia ?) Rustad. Brothers and Sisters: Osvald Tranum, Melvin Tranum, Henry Tranum. Spouse: Irma van de Ver. Children: Beverly Mae Tranum, Shirley Joanne Tranum, Paula Jean Tranum, Gunnar Dean Tranum.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Gunnar Tranum on November 23, 1982 in Olympia, Washington. It contains information about family background, emigration, schooling, work, marriage, Norwegian heritage, and community activities. The interview also includes a photograph of Gunnar and his parents (approximately 1907) and two snapshots of Gunnar at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

The Oral History collection project was started during an experimental course on Scandinavian Women in the Pacific Northwest. Students in the course were encouraged to interview women and learn about their experiences as immigrants to the United States. The project was continued and expanded with support from the president's office and by grants from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, from the Joel E. Ferris Foundation and the Norwegian Emigration Fund of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project was directed by Dr. Janet E. Rasmussen. The collection was transferred to the Archives and Special Collections Department.

Acquisition Information

Related Materials

To search and view Pacific Lutheran University's digitized images, visit our [Digital Assets Website](#)

Processing Note

The interview was conducted by Inger Nygaard Carr using a cassette recorder. A research copy was also prepared from the original. To further preserve the content of the interview, it is now being transferred to compact disc. We deliberately did not transcribe the entire interview because we want the researchers to listen to the interviewee's own voice. The transcription index highlights important aspects of the interview and the tape counter numbers noted on the Partial Interview Transcription are meant as approximate finding guides and refer to the location of a subject on the cassette/CD. The recording quality is good

The collection was transcribed by Mary Sue Gee, Julie Peterson and Becky Husby.

Bibliography

Rasmussen, Janet Elaine. *New Land New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest* Tacoma, Washington University of Washington Press 1993

Detailed Description of the Collection

The partial interview transcription highlights important aspects of the interview. Numbers may be used as guides to important subjects. Two numbers separated by a slash indicate that the first number is for cassette and the second for CD.

Container(s)	Description
Cassette	
241, side 1	004: FAMILY BACKGROUND Gunnar H. Tranum was born on September 30, 1905 in Kapp, (Oestre Toten), Oppland, Norway. Kapp is about 100 miles north of Oslo and 100 miles from the Swedish border. It's located on Mosjoen, Norway's largest lake with Lillehammer at the north end and Eidsvold at the south. This area was settled fairly early. It's open agricultural land, which reminds him of Palouse region in WA, and it is one of the few places in Norway where they have large farms. His ancestral farm was 4,000 acres; they now use large machinery to farm.
241, side 1	075: Father worked for Nestle's in Kapp, a small village close to Gjoevik (population of 25,000). Nestle's is a Swiss company; this plant produced condensed milk. Both of his parents, Henrik Tranum and Paula Hagen, came from this area and both went to Hoff Kirke. His parents were baptized, confirmed, and married there; he was baptized there. The Hoff Kirke was built in 1101 AD, and on the walls are portraits (paintings) of the priests who have served there since 1400 until today. Gunnar found the picture of the pastor who had baptized him.
241, side 1	134:

Container(s)	Description
	<p>His relatives helped him trace his ancestry back to 1580. Gunnar found out about a name change, from Hveem to Tranum, when he spoke with an uncle who had the name of Hveem. His grandfather was the 11th child in the Hveem family, but his father died without announcing this child's coming. When the will was probated, his grandfather was left out. The oldest son was an engineer; the next son was sickly and had died young; so, the farm was given to the oldest daughter.</p>
241, side 1	<p>165: A smaller farm, Tranum, nearby was given to him, but this eventually was annexed back to the larger farm. His grandfather purchased the Knokleberg farm, and this became the family home.</p>
241, side 1	<p>212: GRANDPARENTS His paternal grandparents were Gulbran (Hveem) Tranum and Karen Matilde Grinvold. His maternal grandparents were Ole Hagen and Maia Rustad. They went by the name Rustad-Hagen because Rustad was an important family.</p>
241, side 1	<p>255: BROTHERS Gunnar had three brothers. Gunnar was the oldest and the only one born in Norway. He came to America with his mother at the age of 18 months. (The information from 255 to 285 is quoted directly from the tape as Gunnar reads from the emigration chapter in his book.) "Emigration of the Tranum family from Toten, Norway to USA on September 30, 1905. Henrik and Paula Tranum of Kapp welcomed their first born son who they named Gunnar. I say they welcomed, but that is not exactly right as my father was not at hand. Henrik returned from the front lines. He was called out to defend his country because Norway had just declared itself independent of Sweden. The battle did not come about, and Henrik - in the Norwegian National Guard Calvary - was soon able to come home and welcome his week old son." (Gunnar continues to read from this book until 448 on the tape.)</p>
241, side 1	<p>285: EMIGRATION Henrik went to work for Nestles; Paula cared for the home and Gunnar, besides working as a seamstress. America fever hit hard. Paula's uncle, Hans Gustav (?), was already in Duluth, Minnesota. Her uncle Evin bought a ticket, but his girlfriend Julia didn't like the idea of America. Evin sold his ticket to Henrik. The Tranum and Hagen families were critical of Henrik and Paula's decision to emigrate because they were doing very well in Norway. Henrik and his sister, Oline who was 18 years old, left for the US. There was not enough money for more than Henrik's ticket, so he sent for Paula and Gunnar after earning money in America. Paula and Gunnar left on the train from Lena with all their possessions. After a transfer stop in Oslo, they continued to Bergen where they boarded a British vessel to cross the sea to Newcastle, England. They traveled by rail to Liverpool, British liner to Montreal, train to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and then to Duluth, Minnesota. The family was united around April 1, 1907.</p>
241, side 1	<p>398:</p>

Container(s)	Description
	<p>After one hard winter in Duluth, Henrik was recruited as a carpenter by the Northern Pacific RR to Tacoma, Washington. In 1908 the family moved permanently to Washington, residing in Parkland - a little Norwegian settlement. "Norwegian was the language of the street, and the family had no difficulty in adjusting to the new world."The second son, Osvald, was born in Duluth; Melvin and Henry were Washingtonians.In 1921 Henrik invested in the Olympia Veneer Company - a co-operative plywood plant. The family moved to Olympia in 1922, and Henrik worked for this company until he retired in 1947. After retirement Henrik and Paula returned to Norway; they didn't want to go back until "they had made it big", because they did not want to hear any "I told you so's." They had actually arranged to return in the late 1930's but the outbreak of World War II prevented that visit. By 1947, Henrik arrived just in time to bury his mother. They remained six months in Norway.</p>
241, side 1	<p>434: Gunnar received citizenship in 1921. After a career as a teacher, principal, and superintendent, he received a Fulbright appointment in 1961 as an exchange teacher in Oslo for one year. He and his wife have returned four times since then.</p>
241, side 1	<p>448: SETTLING IN Parkland and PLU in the early 1900's. They moved into a house north of the campus, probably around 117th Street now. Back then there weren't any streets - just wagon ruts. Soon, Henrik purchased a five acre piece of land about one mile east of the old Parkland School and built a house. This land was open range - no fences- so the cows just ranged. All the land below campus was prairie. He caught his first trout in Clover Creek, which flowed beneath the PLU bluff. While they lived in the Parkland area, his father worked for the smelter.</p>
241, side 1	<p>472: Gunnar contracted polio on his fifth birthday while they still lived in the house close to campus. Dr. Running came in his car (one of the few around) to examine and care for him.</p>
241, side 1	<p>500: Gunnar attended parochial school in Brookdale (the Parkland Lutheran School). The Lutheran Church was at 121st and Park, and Bjug Harstad was his pastor. He remembers the Harstad's quite well having attended school with Lydia and Adolph. The Tranums moved to North Tacoma, and so "we were spared that (the split in the churches)". A new church was built on the campus where Mortvedt Library now stands.</p>
241, side 1	<p>524: Most of the people for whom the PLU buildings were named were known by Gunnar. School was shut down for lack of money the first year he would have</p>

Container(s)	Description
	attended. But his four children, two sons-in-law, and two grandchildren have attended PLU.
241, side 1	<p>552:</p> <p>Gunnar didn't speak English until he entered school. With polio at five, he still couldn't walk the two miles to school at age 7. So, he began school when he was 8. Eventually he and the other kids learned English, brought it home and taught his mother. She spoke better English than the Father even though he worked daily with English speaking people. Gunnar stopped speaking Norwegian because "it wasn't popular to be speaking a foreign language". Later at the University of Washington when he needed a foreign language credit, he took Norwegian which came back very easily - "the easiest credit I ever earned". Now he teaches Norwegian as a hobby.</p>
241, side 1	<p>581: SCHOOL AND WORK</p> <p>In 1917 his family moved to the North End of Tacoma, where Gunnar attended Stadium High School for one year. Then they moved to Olympia. The co-operative began in 192?; the first plant was in Aberdeen. Then it expanded and became the U.S. Plywood Corporation. He attended high school in Olympia, received a BA at Central Washington University, a MA at Western Washington University, and had two years at the University of Washington in education. He was principal in Mt. Vernon for 10 years and a superintendent in Eastern Washington for a year before taking a similar position at Friday Harbor that lasted five years. They moved back to Olympia where he received the Fulbright, and that was the end of his career.</p>
241, side 1	<p>628: MEETING SPOUSE</p> <p>It was the Depression when he finished college. Luckily he got a teaching job in Shelton at a two-room school. His "faculty" was the primary teacher - Irma van de Ver. They married three years later and have four children: Beverly, Joanne, Paula, and Dean. Beverly is married to Dr. Richard Knutzen (?), a Lutheran pastor in California. Joanne is a nurse working in Anchorage, AK; she has worked with the Indian and Eskimo people prior to this job. Paula married Dr. Lee Hill, an alumnus of PLU (as is Richard). He is a professor of math at University of Oregon. Dean graduated from PLU and is now a comptroller.</p>
241, side 1	<p>694: ACTIVITIES</p> <p>While in Norway, his wife liked the troll woodcarvings. Back home he sat down with a jackknife and taught himself how to carve. He did the carving for the Troll Club at PLU. He also teaches Norwegian as a project for the Sons of Norway in which he's been active for the last 11-12 years since moving to Olympia. He was recently elected to his fourth term as president.</p>
241, side 1	<p>722:</p> <p>Gunnar belongs to church and sings in the choir.</p>
241, side 1	<p>727: RETURN TRIPS TO NORWAY</p>

Container(s)	Description
	<p>The first time they returned, when he was on the Fulbright, things seemed strange. His Norwegian was good; people said he had no American accent. His wife reads and understands Norwegian moderately well, but does not speak it. His first visit to a relative was to Tante Marta, mother's kid sister who used to baby-sit him. After a big breakfast, her sister Olga took them around to relatives. "Finally after the fifth place, I had coffee running out of my mouth", and then Tante Olga said "we got to get home now and get something to eat - some hot food. All this stuff we've been having just makes you sick!"</p>
241, side 2	<p>018: NORWEGIAN HERITAGE</p> <p>Gunnar found 55 relatives on that first trip. They seemed to know him quite well. There didn't seem to be much dialect around his area; the language is rather blended and standardized, even with the two official languages. In order to compete for the Fulbright to Norway, he had to pass a proficiency test in Norwegian. To do this, he had a half hour conversation with Dr. Seth Eastvold at PLU. Dr. Eastvold told him that "you talk better Norwegian than I do". He spoke English in his boyhood home after he began school, except when he was angry with his brothers. Then he reverted back to Norwegian because he could speak faster.</p>
241, side 2	<p>124: Snakker litt norsk.</p>
241, side 2	<p>148: NORWEGIAN FOOD IN THE HOME</p> <p>His mother made lefse and lots of cookies. He had to help bake since there were no girls. They had risengrynsgrøet, fruktsuppe, and lutefisk. The latter was not a traditional food around his Norwegian home; roast pork is more traditional for Christmas or company fare. Sometimes they ate two layers of grøet: - risengrynsgrøet on the bottom and roemmegrøet on top. He and his wife bake fattigmann, krumkake, berlinerkranse, lefse, and lots of cookies.</p>
241, side 2	<p>248:</p> <p>On their first trip to Norway, Gunnar and Irma spent Christmas with an uncle. At 5 pm on Christmas Eve, everything closes down. (This is true at Easter time also.) They went to church early in the morning; the walks were lit with candles, and it was very festive in the snow. The church bells started ringing. The 13th day of Christmas was "julebuk" - like Halloween in America. Gunnar was always amazed at how light it was at night, and how people were up and active at 11 pm. Then, in summer it was bright daylight late at night. He tells about taking extra vitamins and a special Norwegian concoction "tran" [cod-liver oil] for health purposes, because there is not enough light.</p>
241, side 2	<p>365: CHURCH IN NORWAY</p> <p>There are offices located in the school for the doctor, dentist, and pastor. The pastor teaches confirmation classes right at the school. Church is very important and meaningful to the Norwegians for certain occasions, but they don't attend services every Sunday. "Working churches" are new things that are patterned after American congregational life. These churches are</p>

Container(s)	Description
	Lutheran state churches, but they have activities for young people and more extracurricular activities. Of course, there is no problem with having prayers in the classroom in Norway.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Education--United States
 Emigration and immigration
 Family--Norway
 Fulbright Scholars
 Genealogy--Norwegian-Americans
 Naturalization
 Norway--Economic conditions
 Norway--Social conditions--1945-
 Norwegian language
 Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
 Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
 Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
 Wood carving

Personal Names :

Eastvold, Seth. C.
 Harstad, Bjug
 Trandum, Beverly
 Trandum, Gunnar (Jr.)
 Trandum, Gunnar--Interviews
 (creator)
 Van de Ver, Irma
 Hagen, Paula
 Running, Joseph
 Trandum, Henrik
 Trandum, Paula
 Trandum, Shirley

Corporate Names :

Olympia Veneer Company (Olympia, Wash.)
 Pacific Lutheran University
 Sons of Norway (U.S.) Hovedstad Lodge No. 94 (Olympia, Wash.)

Family Names :

Grinvold family
 Hagen family
 Hveem family
 Rustad family
 Trandum family
 Van de Ver family

Geographical Names :

Friday Harbor (Wash.)
 Mt. Vernon (Wash.)

Olympia (Wash.)
Oppland fylke (Norway)
Oslo (Norway)
Parkland (Wash.)
Shelton (Wash.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Teachers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
Â 2004