

Guri Olsdatter Hytmo Oral History Interview, 1978

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Hytmo, Guri Olsdatter
Title	Guri Olsdatter Hytmo Oral History Interview
Dates	1978 (inclusive) 1978 1978
Quantity	2 file folders 1 sound cassette 1 compact disc.
Collection Number	t001
Summary	An oral history interview with Guri Olsdatter Hytmo, 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

Guri Olsdatter Hytmo was born on January 26, 1896 in Tydalen, Soer-Troendelag, Norway. She emigrated with her parents and three younger siblings when she was thirteen years old, and they lived in Everett, Washington before moving to Stanwood, Washington, where her parents bought the present homestead in 1914. Guri was confirmed in Everett the first year in the U.S. and lived in Washington for three years before going to school and working three years in Chicago and Wyoming. She received her citizenship papers in Mt. Vernon, Washington when she was about twenty-one years old and started nursing at Swedish Hospital in Seattle in 1918. She progressed from head nurse to supervisor to assistant director, and worked at Swedish for more than forty years. She didn't receive her high school diploma until she retired from nursing, finishing her degree at Skagit Valley College. She now lives with her brother on the family farm near Stanwood and visited Norway for a month in 1972.

Lineage

Full Name: Guri Hytmo. Maiden Name: Guri Olsdatter. Father: Ole (?) Hytmo. Brothers and Sisters: Anne Hytmo, Arnola (?) Hytmo, Olaf Hytmo.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Guri Hytmo on April 6, 1978 in Stanwood, Washington. It contains information on Guri's family history, nursing, life in Norway, emigration, school, work, and Norwegian heritage. The initial portion of this interview is in Norwegian.

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

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/CD	
Cassette	
1, side 1	004/01: FAMILY BACKGROUND [004 to 056 is in Norwegian.] Full name is Guri Olsdatter Hytmo born in Tydalen, Norway on January 16, 1896. [Tydalen is in Soer-Troendelag about 30-km southeast of Selbu or 60-km southeast of Trondhjem.] She was 13 years old when she came from Norway to Everett, Washington with her parents and three siblings. She lived in Washington for three years before going to school and working three years in Chicago and Wyoming.
1, side 1	023: Now she is 82 years old and lives out in the country with her brother on the home farm near Stanwood. She takes care of the house for him, and has many things she likes to do if she has the time. She has been "sykepleierske" [nurse] in Seattle her whole life--45 years--coming to the farm after retirement.
1, side 1	075/02: Her father had a small farm in Norway. Besides farming he freighted for a mine in Roeros and also freighted from Trondheim up to the little valley [Tydalen] where they lived. They had a seter in Norway where they spent two months each summer. "Jeg var seterjente". Her mother already had one brother and two sisters in Washington and her parents had planned to come to America for a long time. After the grandparents died, the family immigrated directly to Everett, Washington. She didn't want to go.
1, side 1	103: Grandfather made shoes, harnesses, and cupboards; he was a craftsman/farmer. He had come from another small valley to Tydalen and married her widowed grandmother. They had one child together, her father. Guri's family came to America because there was no future in Norway. In the beginning they lived in Everett, and her father did street grading and such. Then, they moved to Stanwood, rented for awhile, and bought the present homestead in 1914.
1, side 1	131/3:

Container(s)	Description
	<p>Guri has kept up with her Norwegian cousins. One has gathered a family history; he corresponded and visited with them about 15 years ago. He was 7 or 8 years older than Guri and they always played school as children in Norway. He, in time, became a schoolteacher.</p>
1, side 1	<p>153/4: EMIGRATION : Guri had all her friends in Norway and didn't want to leave. She received her first pair of skis and a toboggan at the age of four. In winter they had two weeks of school and two weeks off with homework. She would have stayed in Norway with friends, neighbors, or cousins. "I didn't want to go...I would have stayed there with an aunt if they'd let me. And I'm glad they didn't".</p>
1, side 1	<p>167/5: TRIP OVER She had never seen the ocean until they boarded a small passenger boat at Trondhjem headed for England. It was a rough trip; everybody was seasick and the suitcases slid across the floor continually. They took the train across England, and she remembers the sheep were all gray or black because of the train smoke. After three weeks of travel, they landed in Boston where they were detained for two days. Her one year old brother had chicken pox which the officials thought might be smallpox. They had packed food from Norway in a suitcase for the overland trips.</p>
1, side 1	<p>214/6: SETTLING IN "There were a lot of tears and I was so big...I was put in the first grade. I had to sit sideways because the seats were so small; there wasn't room for my knees, you know, under the desk...I always thought they promoted me because my feet in the aisle were such a hazard!" It was frustrating not to understand anything, but she caught on quickly. She was confirmed in Everett the first year here. When she entered nurses training eight years later, she still had an accent. She was proud to be a Norwegian, but some people made fun of the accent. To eliminate the accent and correct her English, she took speech courses and listened to recordings of her voice.</p>
1, side 1	<p>247/7: Father didn't take any English courses, and had to try for citizenship papers two, three times. She was 21 when he got his papers, and she was the only "Norwegian" left in the family. Her sister, Anne, had gotten her papers through marriage, and Arnola (?) and Olaf became citizens via their father's papers because they were minors. She received her papers at Mt Vernon shortly after.</p>
1, side 1	<p>266/8: Guri only lived on the farm one summer when working at a fish cannery; otherwise, she remained in Everett doing housework. The children attended a church school called Columbia College, which is an orphanage now. They learned about this school through her home pastor in Everett. Another person who helped Guri with her schooling was Dr. Margaret Tygen (Tigen?). Dr. Tygen was a pioneer doctor in Everett, an emigrant who had put herself through medical school. She practiced in Everett and was the family doctor</p>

Container(s)	Description
	before moving to Seattle. She and Guri corresponded, and Dr. Tygen suggested a reading list for Guri who spent one summer reading books of Russian authors.
1, side 1	<p>303/9: NORWEGIAN TRADITIONS</p> <p>Because of her work at Swedish Hospital, Guri became more familiar with Swedish customs than Norwegian. But Christmas was special because of the food--lutefisk, lefse, etc. Thanksgiving was not adopted and celebrated like Americans do. The family attended the 17th of May dinner in Seattle. She never joined any Norwegian organizations, but was a member of the Lutheran Church. She also subscribed to the "Viking" newspaper; the editor's wife was a nurse with whom Guri worked. Guri never had time for organizations because of her nursing schedule and an ailing mother. Swedish Hospital had a program for the exchange of international nursing students. Guri found it interesting and stimulating to know other people, the culture, and the nursing traditions.</p>
1, side 1	<p>388/10:</p> <p>Guri was not involved with community work. Since she was an institutional nurse, her work was right at the hospital, not out in the community as with public health nursing.</p>
1, side 1	<p>394:</p> <p>In 1972, Guri returned to Norway for a month visit. It was a teary meeting with cousins and friends because they remembered childhood events. She visited the seter and found her initials still carved in one of the barns.</p>
1, side 1	<p>412/11:</p> <p>Her parents were very interested in schooling for the children. Education was one of the reasons for emigration. They were in their late 30s, and the move was a radical and difficult change for them even with three family members here. Four years after they came, her dad sold the farm back in Norway. Guri's maternal grandparents had two boys and five girls. Guri's mother wanted to attend school, but grandfather said, "that was for the boys, not the girls. It wasn't necessary for them to go to school ". So, Mother pushed for all her children to have schooling.</p>
1, side 1	<p>442:</p> <p>Her mother was involved with church, weaving, and knitting "silkevotter" in America. Guri would buy fancy mittens from Nordstroms on approval, her mother would copy the pattern off over the weekend, and the mittens would be returned to the store on Monday. Guri's sister is married and living in Wyoming. She and her husband, Jens [was 20 something when he emigrated?] have four children, two with doctorates.</p>
1, side 1	458/12:

Container(s)	Description
	<p>Guri was impressed with Dr. Margaret Tygen. Another friend in Seattle was a graduate from the University of Oslo who took training at Swedish, and worked in public health with the Indians.</p>
1, side 1	<p>479: Changes in American life. She thinks there are waves of things, and now a general permissiveness is in the society. Discipline was strict in Norway, but she thinks it was good. Guri was employed at Swedish during the Depression and didn't want for anything; she had room, board and 75 dollars a month. Her parents had the farm and only needed 10 dollars a month for extra food and materials. During WWII, her folks had enough to eat because of the farm. They turned the farm over to her brother during the war, so he stayed out of the military. She believes the disciplined military life would have been good for him because he was raised as an only child. His siblings are much older, and he was the only --much-adored--boy. She thinks the older Norwegians were partial to boys. Schooling and work. Guri never received her high school diploma until she retired from nursing. She got into nurses training through equivalency courses in business. She took some post-graduate work and would have enrolled at the University of Washington in 1936 [dean of nursing personally recommended her], but her Mother had a stroke. From then on, Guri spent extra time at home. She was always so apologetic for not having a degree, so she finished it at Skagit Valley College. While working she attended short courses, conferences, etc., but never got credit. It just helped here with her administrative work as she progressed from head nurse to supervisor to assistant director.</p>
1, side 1	<p>572/13: On the train trip across America, Dad bought a round loaf of "bread". Cutting into it, they discovered it had a filling and was actually a fruit pie. Because of the detainment [quarantine because of chicken pox] of her family in Boston, they were the only Norwegian family on the train. There was a wave of emigrants in the early 1900s, but at that time, it was mostly southern Europeans. They came to her uncle's place, then rented the downstairs of a house close to the waterfront. Mother would buy ten cents of fish, which lasted two days. The folks never wanted to go back; Guri was pleased that they were happy here. Both parents learned the language, and her mother waited impatiently for the daily paper in order to read the continuing story.</p>
1, side 1	<p>624/14: TROLL STORIES Her parents put out food at Christmas for other beings, and also put up a "julenek"--sheaf of wheat placed on the barn for birds. Mother would wash everything and put on new bedding. Christmas was two weeks long and full of visits. The oldest, most raggedy clothes were used before Christmas so the new things would be an extra treat.</p>
1, side 1	<p>648/15: Guri learned her prayers and multiplication tables in Norwegian and that's how they "always will be". Her father always prayed in Norwegian before meals,</p>

Container(s)	Description
	and her evening prayers are still in Norwegian. She writes Norwegian, but has to type all her letters. Her penmanship is bad due to haste. Arnola's daughter, June, complained that she couldn't read her handwriting.
1, side 1	664: Guri feels the nursing in Norway is equal to the American program. Ten or 12 years ago, the Australian program was behind; she found that out through the exchange program and by reading Australian nursing journals. Sister Anne has a granddaughter, Debbie, who traveled with Guri and Arnola to Norway for one year. At college [U. of ND], she majored in Norwegian and returned to Norway and received university credit at Trondhjem for a year and a half. She has since graduated and lives in Norway: "she's lost her heart to Norway completely". She was interviewed by the second largest newspaper in Norway, and expressed her reasons to remain and teach in Norway. She likes their "miljoe"; sports, knitting, lifestyle, everything.
1, side 1	722/16: Guri's parents didn't have the means in Norway to give the kids an education, nor were there opportunities. Guri belongs to "Den Norske Bokklubben" and receives and reads Norwegian books continually. She was stimulated by the nurses exchange program to maintain an interest in other lands and languages, especially Norwegian.
1, side 1	748: Snakker litt norsk. Guri recites a portion of the multiplication tables in Norwegian and "Fader Vår."

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Emigration and immigration
 Family--Norway
 Homestead law
 Naturalization
 Norwegian heritage
 Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
 Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
 Ocean travel

Personal Names :

Hytmo, Guri--Interviews
 (creator)
 Tygen, Margaret
 Hytmo, Ole
 Olsdatter, Guri

Corporate Names :

Columbia College (Everett, Wash.)

Skagit Valley College (Mount Vernon, Wash.)
Swedish Hospital Medical Center

Family Names :

Hytmo family

Tygen family

Geographical Names :

Chicago (Ill.)

Everett (Wash.)

Mount Vernon (Wash.)

Seattle (Wash.)

Stanwood (Wash.)

Tydalen (Norway)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Farmers

Nurses

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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