Grace Eleanor Blomquist Oral History interview, 1980

Overview of the Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Blomquist, Grace Eleanor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Grace Eleanor Blomquist Oral History interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>1980 (inclusive)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1980 1980</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 sound cassette</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 compact disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>An oral history interview with Grace Eleanor Blomquist, of Swedish ancestry and a longtime faculty member in the English department at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU).</td>
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<td>Repository</td>
<td>Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Lutheran University</td>
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<td>12180 Park Avenue South</td>
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<td>Tacoma, Washington</td>
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<td>98447</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Telephone: 253-535-7586</td>
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<td>Fax: 253-535-7315</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:archives@plu.edu">archives@plu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Restrictions</td>
<td>The oral history collection is open to all users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Reference</td>
<td>Guides</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.</td>
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Biographical Note

Grace Eleanor Blomquist was born in Spring Lake, Minnesota on April 10, 1913. Grace was the oldest of eight children born to John and Emelia Blomquist. Growing up in Waubun, Minnesota, Grace was exposed to Swedish and Norwegian language through her own family and through the surrounding communities. She had participated in the Lutheran church in her town, so when she graduated from high school, she chose to attend a Lutheran college-Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Grace graduated in 1934 and began teaching English and Latin that year in a North Dakota high school. After three years of teaching there, Grace accepted an assistantship at Syracuse University and earned her master's degree. She went on to teach and to serve as Assistant Dean of Women at Pacific Lutheran University. From 1952 to 1953 Grace was the president of the American Association of University Women. Grace Blomquist traveled extensively throughout Europe, once in conjunction with a children's literature course she taught at PLU. She retired from PLU in 1975. Although Grace grew up
in a Scandinavian community, she doesn't retain many customs of her Swedish heritage. However, she would like to visit Småland, the area whence her grandparents came.

Lineage


Content Description

The interview was conducted with Grace Blomquist on May 15, 1980 in Tacoma, Washington. This interview contains information on Swedish heritage, education, and PLU history.

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 Donna Mallonee 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**


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**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.

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<th>Container(s)</th>
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<td>014/11: GRACE ELEANOR BLOMQUIST Born April 10, 1913 in Spring Lake Township.</td>
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<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>025: PARENTS John R. Blomquist and Emelia Ledin Blomquist. Father was 73-74 when he died. Mother was 62 when she died. Father owned a creamery...</td>
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<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>051: in Waubun, Minnesota. Family moved to Waubun when Grace was 3. Spring Lake Township was very near North Branch, Minnesota, which was a very Swedish community. Grace's father had come from another very Swedish community near Taylors Falls, Minnesota. His father came from...</td>
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<tr>
<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>077: Småland, Sweden. He landed at Franconia (?) just as the immigrants did in Moberg's novel. Grace's paternal grandfather came from the same area as the people in Moberg's novels. Moberg wrote &quot;The Immigrants,&quot; &quot;Unto a Good Land,&quot; and &quot;The Last Letter Home.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>118: Grace's parents were born in the U.S. Her father had to start working when a young boy. His family was poor. He worked in milk stations and creameries in Goodhue County in southern Minnesota. He came to Spring Lake where he met Grace's mother. She was one of 9 or 10...</td>
</tr>
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<td>140:</td>
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Grace Eleanor Blomquist Oral History interview, 1980
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv45830
...children. She had worked as a clerk in a department store in Stillwater, Minnesota. She visited a sister, who lived in the northwest for one year. She clerked at People's in downtown Tacoma. This was around 1910. She went back to Minnesota and got married shortly thereafter. Her parents were from Sweden. Her maternal grandfather brought his parents with him when he emigrated. He and his brothers settled in the...

45, side 1 178: Spring Lake area. Their family name was Ledin. They came to the U.S. because they wanted a better life. Her father's family was very poor. Grace's paternal grandfather came to this country in 1880 by steamboat on the St. Croix River and landed at Franconia (?).

45, side 1 222/12: He'd been a corporal in the Swedish Army. His brothers came at the same time. They all took different names. Grandfather took name Blomquist. Another was Tagnir (?), one was Youngquist, the married a Bergstrom. They chose these names when they got to America.


45, side 1 333: WAUBUN, MINN. An Indian name. Means "rising sun" in the Chippewa language. Waubun lies on the edge of the Indian reservation. There were mixed blood families in town. Many of these children were friends. Many Indians played on the basketball team. That was the only sport they had at their school. In girl's P.E. they wore black bloomers and white midies. There were several Czechoslovakian families in Waubun. Some Norwegian families. Blomquist's were the only Swedish family. The town was made up mostly those who were part Indian. There were many German farmers around.

45, side 1 400/01: CHIPPEWA INDIANS Land settlement made when railroad was being built. Waubun was founded because the railroad needed a stop there. The Indians were given a certain amount of money, which they received once or twice a year. They'd come in to town to get the money and almost always spent it at once. This was in the 1920s. During prohibition, the Indians would come to town and buy vanilla. They'd get drunk on it and drive home on their horses and wagons. There were also some very fine Indian families.

45, side 1 455: Near Waubun was White Earth, a real Indian town. There was a government school and some missions there. They weren't as primitive in the 1920s as they had been. Grace remembers seeing Indians camp near the lake where they
had a summer cottage. The women would make birch bark baskets. She saw an Indian woman go down to the lake to wash clothes.

495: AFTER HIGH SCHOOL
Grace went to school at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. She chose a Lutheran school because she went to the Lutheran Church after it was built in Waubun. This church was of the old Norwegian background. She went to the Congregational Church before Waubun got a Lutheran church. Her parents had been brought up as Lutherans. Most of the students at Concordia were of Norwegian background. The Norwegian community had been more familiar to Grace since then. She was finished at Concordia in 1934.

532:
Got a job teaching in Mohall, North Dakota. Stayed there for three years. It was a very good school. She taught English and Latin in high school. Taught in junior high some. Even helped part-time at fifth and sixth grade level one year. She had many responsibilities.

579/02:
Offered an assistantship at Syracuse University. Was there two years. Got her masters degree there.

588:
Came to the West Coast in 1939. Looking for work. Had a contact with Clara Paulson (?), a teacher at Concordia College. Clara knew that PLU needed an English teacher and an assistant Dean of Women. Grace applied for the position. Dr. Tingelstad was president then. He arranged an interview in Jamestown, North Dakota. Tingelstad had family business in Jamestown. Grace and her sister drove from Minnesota to Jamestown and met Tingelstad at the railway station.

634: STARTED WORK AT PLU IN THE FALL OF 1939
There were 12 or 14 members of the faculty then. The Akres were there. Elvin was the Dean of Men. He taught history as well. Most people taught in the academy as well as the college. The academy lasted until Dr. Eastvold came.

651: FACULTY
There weren't as many Norwegians here as one might think. Dr. Pflueger was German. Keith Reed was Presbyterian. Students weren't all Norwegian. Different than Concordia College. Mrs. Kreidler taught art. She was descendant of the Bradford's who came to Plymouth colony.

718 Lived in Harstad when she first came. She was Assistant Dean of Women. There were only four buildings on campus when she came. Old Main. The old gym located where the U.C. is now. The little brown wooden chapel. The library, which was located behind the chapel and now is Xavier Hall. Sign in front of the college said "Pacific Lutheran University" on the front and "Build for Character" on the backside. New experience to be at a school where the offices, classrooms, and dorms were in the same building. Grace had to live in the dorm and assist Mrs. Kriedler so she found out what it was like. Registrar's Office was off to the right as you entered Old Main. Only about three office workers. Two librarians plus student help. Bookstore was in a small room opposite the Registrar's office. Dorm rooms were very simple.

Two desks, two cots, two dressers. Students could paint their rooms if they wanted to. The center part of Old Main was classrooms

She tells what the boys did on Halloween in 1939

Some students sent there because parents wanted to support the school. Their children got more attention than they would in a public school. Others were problem cases who couldn't be handled in their own schools or homes. Among the high school students there were some problems.

They all knew each other. Faculty went to all the games. They'd drive to Cheney and Bellingham to watch football. She tells about the success of PLU sports. Many parties on campus. The Stuens, Pfluegers, Leraas', Akres, and Xaviers were very hospitable.

Mr. Xavier was a librarian at PLU too. Mr. Stuen was the unofficial host to the university. They would often have dinners on Sunday afternoons. Then everyone would go play golf. Employees were often not paid during hard times but they liked working at the school.

1941, no money at PLU for teachers. They were paid in gold stock. People charged food at Dahl's Grocery.

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http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv45830
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<td>She explains how PLU acquired the gold stock. Partly through Daniel Floetrig (?), a Norwegian immigrant who'd attended PLU winter short session. Dr. Tingelstad was very interested in the stock market. Rhoda Young or Milt Nesvig might know about the Kimberly Gold Mine. Floetrig's widow, Mrs. Theo Totten might know more about it. Lloyd Johnson, husband of Lucille Johnson, an English teacher at PLU knows more about it.</td>
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<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>1016/06: EARLY 1940s Men from faculty worked at the shipyards. Women from the faculty were retained for teaching. Mrs. Kreidler, who'd retired by then, worked swing shift at the shipyards. This was during WWII. The school stayed open.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>1049: Grace is still teaching classes occasionally (1980). Since she retired in 1975, she had only taught children's literature.</td>
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<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>1063: Grace was president of AAUW in Tacoma. At the time (1952-1953) there were about 400 members. (American Association of University Women).</td>
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<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>1073: 1954-55 Went to Germany for one year. Taught at American schools in Frankfurt. She was a counselor in a dorm. There were American students from different parts of Europe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45, side 1</td>
<td>1082: Member of Quota Club. A diversified service club. Each member must represent a particular field. Each field represented by only one member.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45, side 2</td>
<td>069/07: Belongs to Phi Beta. National organization for drama, speech, music, dance honorary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45, side 2</td>
<td>80 : Administrative women in education because she had held either presidential or executive positions in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45, side 2</td>
<td>89: CHURCH Member of the Trinity Reading Club. Started in the 1950s. Has taught Sunday school. Served on church council. Was member of Social Concerns Committee when the Vietnamese refugees came.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45, side 2</td>
<td>133 : 1952 Danish seminar. Traveled in Europe. 1954 spent a year teaching in Germany. 1963: Dr. Motet gave teachers summer off with pay.</td>
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162: WENT TO EUROPE IN 1963, 1979
Spent five weeks in England. 1972: Led children's literature tour to Europe. Went from Holland to Germany to Austria, to Italy, back through Germany, to Denmark, to the Netherlands, back to Holland, and home. Groups made up of PLU students, teachers, a retired person, and another faculty member. 26 all together. Went to places of interest in regard to children's literature.

236: CHANGES AT PLU IN 40 YEARS
School had become a university in the fullest sense. "Family relationship" no longer exists. It can't when there are so many people.

285/08: SCANDINAVIAN HERITAGE
Her family was not very tradition minded. Moved around, trying to make a living. Difficult to retain customs. Used to have "doppa". Porridge made out of eggs, milk, and flour. They'd dip their bread in this. Her mother made spritz cookies at Christmas. Grace was always aware that she was Swedish. Her mother would always blame things on Norwegians. Her father could read Swedish. Knew as a child that Jenny Lind and Kristina Nilsson were Swedish singers.

367: Remembers her grandfather Ledin. Her was dignified and handsome. Things in her grandparent's home reminded her of Sweden; old pictures and things. If she goes back to Europe she'd like to spend some time in Småland, where her grandparents came from. She'd rather spend time in other places really. She doesn't feel she's too deeply rooted. Still she's glad she's Swedish. Interested in ethnic groups in general.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
Lutheran universities and colleges
Education -- United States
Family -- Sweden
Swedish-Americans -- Ethnic identity
Swedish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Swedish-Americans--Social life and customs
Women in education

Personal Names:
Akre, Elvin
Blomquist, Grace Eleanor--Interviews (creator)
Bondy, Elizabeth
Franck, Mickel
Franck, Ruth
Hauge, Phillip E.

Grace Eleanor Blomquist Oral History interview, 1980
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv45830
Kreidler, Lora B.
Larson, E. Arthur
Leraas Harold
Mortvedt, Robert A.L.
Nelson, Daniel
Olson, Clifford O.
Ramstad, Anders
Reed, Keith
Reneau, George
Stuen, Ole
Young, Rhoda
Malmin, Gunnar J. (Gunnar Johannes), 1908-
Nielson, Anna Marn

Corporate Names:
Pacific Lutheran University
Trinity Lutheran Church (Parkland, Wash)
Kimberly Gold Mine (Idaho)
Concordia College (Moorhead, Minn.)
Parkland Study Club (Parkland, Wash.)
Quota Club (Tacoma, Wash.)

Family Names:
Anderson family
Blomquist family
Ledin family

Geographical Names:
Waubun (Minn.)
Småland (Sweden)
Mohall (N.D)
Spring Lake (Minn.)
Tacoma (Wash.)

Form or Genre Terms:
Oral histories

Occupations:
Teachers
Women college administrators

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
2004

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