

Otto Calvin Loe Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Loe, Otto Calvin
Title	Otto Calvin Loe Oral History Interview
Dates	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
Quantity	2 file folders 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t154
Summary	An oral history interview with Otto Calvin Loe, 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

Otto Calvin Loe was born on September 5, 1911 in Sortland, Vesterålen, Norway; he was baptized Otto Reidar Koldevin Løe. His parents were Laura Jensen and Gustav Løe. Otto's mother died when he was twelve, and he had two brothers and sisters from his parents and two half-siblings from his father's second marriage. After his mother's death, his father went to the U.S., and Otto stayed in Norway with his grandmother. He went to school for eight years and was confirmed when he was fifteen; he also started fishing herring when he was fifteen. He fished in the winter and helped on the farm in the summer. He left Norway aboard the Stavangerfjord in August 1930 and took the train through Canada to reach Tacoma, WA, where his father met him at Union Station; Otto changed his name from Løe to Loe when he arrived in America. He helped his father at a shoe factory for no pay and started night school right away; he also started going to Sons of Norway. He then worked at a paper, the Western Viking, where he set type and did odd jobs. The company went bankrupt in 1932, and he worked for the new owner for a while before becoming a steward on a Danish sailing ship that went to Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila, and other cities in Asia. He came back to Washington to do printing, but there were no printing jobs, and he worked on a farm for six months. He met his wife, Mabel Josephine Loe, when she was visiting her brother, who was one of Otto's good friends, and they married in 1935. They had three children: Leif Otto, who was born on January 5, 1936; Barbara Irene Miller, born on November 9, 1938; and Roseanne Jeanette Rybolt, born on March 10, 1952; all were born in Tacoma. Otto began

working for the paper again, and he and another man bought the paper in 1938; Otto gave the paper to his partner in 1939 and got another job through the milkman. He worked for Miller and Miller Label Company in Tacoma for nineteen years and later started his own printing business. He gained his citizenship in 1940 and is active in Sons of Norway; he is also a member of Nordlandslaget and has taken trips to Norway in 1974, 1977, and 1979.

Lineage

Full Name: Otto Calvin Loe. Baptized Name: Otto Reidar Koldevin Løe. Father: Gustav Jaeger Løe. Mother: Laura Jensen Løe. Paternal Grandfather: Jon Anton Løe. Paternal Grandmother: Regina Jentoft-Pettersen Løe. Maternal Grandfather: Jens Hasselberg Eilertsen Jensen. Maternal Grandmother: Julianne Fredrike Ottesen. Brothers and Sisters: Hanna Løe, Hans Arne Løe, Shirley Mae Løe. Spouse: Mabel Josephine Loe. Children: Leif Otto Loe, Barbara Irene Loe Miller, Roseanne Jeanette Loe Rybolt.

Content Description

The interview was conducted with Otto Loe on March 24, 1982 in Tacoma, Washington. This interview contains information on family history, childhood, confirmation and school, Christmas traditions, emigration, voyage to America, work in the U.S., learning English, sailing, marriage, working for a printing press, citizenship, children, community involvement, visits to Norway, changes in Norway, and Norwegian heritage. The interview was conducted in English.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use.

Preferred Citation

[Collection Number, Collection Title] New Land New Lives Oral History Collection. Scandinavian Immigrant Experience Collection. Archives and Special Collections Department. Robert A.L. Mortvedt Library. Pacific Lutheran University. Tacoma, WA 98447

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

Otto Calvin Loe Oral History Interview, 1982
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv70113>

Related Materials

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

Processing Note

The interview was conducted by Morrene Nesvig 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	
154, side 1	026: Otto Calvin Loe. Born September 5, 1911 in Sortland, Vesterålen, Norway. Sortland is on an island.
154, side 1	060: PARENTS Laura and Gustav Løe. Mother's maiden name was Jensen. Father was a fisherman, farmer, and a carpenter, a little of everything.
154, side 1	082: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Two in the first marriage, Hanna and Otto. Two from the second marriage.
154, side 1	095: GRANDPARENTS Mother's parents had a slaughterhouse. Paternal grandfather was a shoemaker. They were from Sortland.
154, side 1	111: NAME

Container(s)	Description
	Was Løe, now is Loe. It comes from Trøndelagen, Trondheim. Grandfather was born in Stiklestad. Name of farm was Løe. Changed name in America because people could not pronounce it.
154, side 1	180: CHILDHOOD Nice. Mother died when he was 17. Father came to America when his wife died. Otto stayed in Norway with his grandmother.
154, side 1	207: Took up fishing when he was 15. Did herring fishing. In the wintertime he did fishing, in the summertime he worked on the farm.
154, side 1	232: FARM CHORES Haying, planting, and potatoes.
154, side 1	237: CONFIRMATION Confirmed when he was 15. Something you did when done with school. Went to school for eight years. Close to seven English miles to school. It was cold in the winter. Skied to school. Never missed a day. Dark in the winter, light in the summer.
154, side 1	308: CHRISTMAS Holiday that everybody respected. Cleaned up for Christmas Eve. Father went to get the tree. Had rice and other goodies to eat. Mother prepared food for Christmas Day on the Eve. Went to church on Christmas Day. Pickled herring and rice are traditional foods and a dried leg of lamb.
154, side 1	379: Father stayed in America. Took three years for Otto to get his visa to come. His sister had already come over.
154, side 1	394: AMERICA Had heard that the streets were lined in gold. Eight of fifteen children in his father's family came to America. More opportunity in America.
154, side 1	422: Traveled to America alone. Got papers in Norway. Took a boat from Sortland to Trondheim, train to Oslo. Took the Stavangerfjord. Ticket cost \$200.
154, side 1	450: Father had sent him a ticket. He planned on going to Alaska and fishing. Trip on the ocean was beautiful. August 1930. Rough from Oslo to Bergen.
154, side 1	490: Brought over heirlooms from Norway. He felt that this was a permanent trip. Took eight days to cross the Atlantic. Come through Canada to the West

Container(s)	Description
	Coast because it was cheaper. Conditions on the ship four in a cabin, lots of immigrants. Landed in Halifax, Canada. Herded like cattle.
154, side 1	546: TRAIN TRIP Porter on the train took advantage of people. Charged them more for food than he should. Otto could not speak any English. Talks about drinking coffee with sugar. Took seven days to get to the West Coast. Made friends. Landed in Vancouver then went to Tacoma. Met by his father at Union Station.
154, side 1	619: Father lived in Tacoma on 34th and McKinley. He had a family.
154, side 1	632: Helped his father at a shoe factory, was not paid. Started night school right away. Went to the Sons of Norway. Talks about a man who helped him get a job.
154, side 1	670: FIRST JOB Paid \$7.50 a week, six days a week. Good wages for the times. Paid for room and board.
154, side 1	678: TACOMA Could not figure out the stoplights. Tells a story about this. The Norwegian community was strong in Tacoma. Started mixing with other groups in the area after a year.
154, side 1	717: LEARNING ENGLISH Went to night school. Had difficulty learning.
154, side 1	723: Worked for Mr. Bjerkestad. He was owner, manager, and editor of the paper, "The Western Viking." Had a Swedish paper also. Describes what happened to this paper. Puget Sound Posten was another publication they had. The press was located on 13th and Tacoma Avenue.
154, side 1	767: FIRST DAY OF WORK Stood there and watched. Presses were electrical had been hand presses in Norway. Put out papers every Thursday. Two editors, Otto, one pressman, and a mailer working. Otto set type, did this and that. Churches called in news to be put in.
154, side 1	806: Times were hard in Tacoma. Otto was glad to have work. Tells of how some of his friends made it through the Depression. Got a raise to \$9.00 a week after three months. \$12.00 after a year, \$15.00, and finally \$18.00. Then the company went bankrupt in 1932.

Container(s)	Description
154, side 1	823: Someone took over the papers. Worked for the new owner for a while and the went sailing.
154, side 1	853: SCANDINAVIAN PAPER Had 3,000 subscribers. \$1.00 a year. Had 1,200 the last year.
154, side 1	874: WORK CONDITIONS Worked late at night on Wednesday night to get the paper out in time. Swedish and Norwegian papers both in Tacoma. Link between the churches, Sons of Norway, and the paper.
154, side 1	900: Was a member of the Sons of Norway for a long time. Took part in a play.
154, side 1	926: SAILING Half passenger, half cargo ship. Got the job in San Francisco. Was a Danish ship. Wanted to see the world before he got married. He was a steward. Took care of the passengers, cleaned rooms, and served food. Worked along the chef. Sailed to the Orient, Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila, etc.
154, side 1	969: Came back to do printing. No printing work so worked on a farm for six months. Put an ad in the paper, someone responded right away.
154, side 1	986: MET WIFE Her brother was a good friend of Otto's. She came to visit her brother in Tacoma. Married in 1935. Very plain wedding.
154, side 1	1005: Rented a house. Began working for the paper again. Otto and another fellow bought the paper in 1938 for \$4,000. Gave the paper to his partner.
154, side 1	1074: Got another job through the milkman. The paper went bankrupt, bought by Einar Carlson, still owned by him.
154, side 1	1092: Puget Sound Posten was discontinued.
154, side 2	031: Paper changed from Norwegian language to English. Used to be all Scandinavian. Paper had an impact on the Norwegian community.
154, side 2	085:

Container(s)	Description
	Hardest part of working for the paper was getting money for the paper. Ads kept the paper going. Some businesses would give merchandise for ads in the paper.
154, side 2	155: Did not have much contact with the other Tacoma papers. Controversy over one edition they published.
154, side 2	187: CITIZENSHIP 1940. Since he was married, he did not have to take out the first papers. Studied for the test. History and government.
154, side 2	226: Stayed with the paper until 1939. Got a job printing labels.
154, side 2	240: CHILDREN Leif, Barbara Miller, Roseanne Rybolt. Don't speak Norwegian. They are interested in the culture.
154, side 2	283: Going to the movies helped him learn English. Working on the paper was difficult to learn English because they all spoke Norwegian and Swedish.
154, side 2	288: Lived on the east side since 1953.
154, side 2	295: Not that active in church. Active in Sons of Norway. Still go once a while. Member of Nordlandslaget, goes from Trondheim up north.
154, side 2	325: TRIPS TO NORWAY 1974 was the first time, 1977 and 1979. Changes in the country. Visited relatives.
154, side 2	379: Otto worked for Miller and Miller Label Company in Tacoma. Stayed with them for 19 years.
154, side 2	395: Started his own printing business. Prints labels. Tells about a few jobs they have. Work for people from Mexico to Canada.
154, side 2	441: CHANGES IN NORWAY Houses stand where there were farms. Electricity in the area. People are the same. Lots of eating. Have cousins and an aunt left in Norway.

Container(s)	Description
154, side 2	523: Something draws them to Norway. Otto would like to go back and stay. Tells a story about the model ship that was given to him by a friend in Norway.
154, side 2	602: Norwegians have a special fascination for boats. Fishing is their life.
154, side 2	629: BEING A NORWEGIAN Proud to be a Scandinavian. Prominent people. Leif Erikson discovered America.
154, side 2	645: CHARACTERIZING NORWEGIANS Friendly, honest people, hospitable.
154, side 2	672: NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE Do not speak at home.
154, side 2	697: GRANDCHILDREN Tells about how many they have. Son, Leif went to PLU.
154, side 2	708: SPEAKING IN NORWEGIAN Wants to go back to Norway and see friends and relatives.
154, side 2	750: The play, "The Dollhouse" was based on the home place where Otto's grandfather lived. Play was by Ibsen.
154, side 2	769: Stiklestad has a place in history. There was a fight between the kings.
154, side 2	776: Otto is glad that he came to America. He likes it here, no complaints.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Christmas
 Confirmation
 Education--Norway
 Emigration and immigration
 Family--Norway
 Family--Norway
 Fishing
 Marriage service

Naturalization
Norwegian language
Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
Ocean travel
Railroad travel

Personal Names :

Loe, Otto Calvin--Interviews
(creator)
Jensen, Julianne Fredrike Ottesen
Løe, Laura Jensen
Loe, Leif Otto
Loe, Mabel Josephine
Miller, Barbara Irene (Loe)
Jensen, Jens Hasselberg Eilertsen
Løe, Gustav Jaeger
Løe, Jon Anton
Løe, Otto Reidar Koldevin
Løe, Regina Jentoft-Pettersen
Rybolt, Roseanne Jeanette (Loe)

Corporate Names :

Nordlandslaget Nordlyset (Tacoma, Wash.)
Puget Sound Posten (Tacoma, Wash.)
Sons of Norway (U.S.) Norden Lodge No. 2 (Tacoma, Wash.)
Stavangerfjord (steamship)
The Western Viking (Tacoma, Wash.)

Family Names :

Jensen family
Loe family
Løe family
Miller family
Rybolt family

Geographical Names :

Bottineau (N.D.)
Sigerfjord (Norway)
Steinkjer (Norway)
Tacoma (Wash.)
Vesterålen (Norway)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Carpenters
Farmers
Printers
Shoemakers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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