

# Hans Marius Peterson Oral History Interview, 1982

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Peterson, Hans Marius
<b>Title</b>	Hans Marius Peterson Oral History Interview
<b>Dates</b>	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
<b>Quantity</b>	3 file folders 14 photographs 1 sound cassette
<b>Collection Number</b>	t151
<b>Summary</b>	An oral history interview with Hans Marius Peterson, a Norwegian immigrant.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections</a> Archives and Special Collections Pacific Lutheran University 12180 Park Avenue South Tacoma, Washington 98447 Telephone: 253-535-7586 Fax: 253-535-7315 <a href="mailto:archives@plu.edu">archives@plu.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	The oral history collection is open to all users.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Biographical Note

Hans Peterson was born on March 22, 1899 in Mørsvikbotn, Norway to Pedder Pederson and Jakobine Karlsen. There were eight children in the family, including Hans. Pedder was a farmer and fisherman, and he died young of blood poisoning, leaving Jakobine to work and care for the family. They lived in a poorly built home but managed. When Hans was fifteen, he went to Lofoten, where he was a cook on a fishing boat. He took this job to earn money for his confirmation suit. He remained in the Lofoten fishing industry for five years, and also fished for herring in Stavanger for two winters. In an effort to make a better living, Hans immigrated to North Dakota in April 1923. He met his brother in Stanley, ND and worked on his cousin's farm for the winter. The next winter, he drove a school bus, which helped him with his English. Hans then decided to go to Alaska with his cousin, Andrew Olafson, and they fished for herring for a short while. After this, Hans worked in a reduction plant, which made fish oil and other products, and then worked at a fox farm for twenty-seven months. He also worked in a cannery and did carpentry work in Petersburg. In 1928, Hans decided to move to Seattle, WA, where his brother was. He worked in a sawmill in Ballard for a while and then went to Vancouver, British Columbia. In

Vancouver, he married Selma Reinvik, who had been his neighbor in Norway. They moved to Gig Harbor, WA in 1930 and had three children: Harold, Raymond, and Joanne. At first, Hans did farming and later he made a living by selling milk to Bremerton. His creamery eventually went broke, but he still owned 95 acres when he retired. In 1946, Selma, Hans' first wife passed away and he remarried five years later to Nellie Cleveland. Hans attends church in Rosedale, WA once in awhile and also goes to the lodge occasionally. He has visited Norway three times and receives a Norwegian newspaper once a week in Washington. Hans is very proud of his Norwegian heritage and considers Scandinavians "some of the most civilized people in the world."

### Lineage

Full Name: Hans Peterson. Father: Pedder Pederson. Mother: Jakobine Karlsen. Paternal Grandfather: Peder Olsen. Paternal Grandmother: (?) Barbo. Maternal Grandfather: (?) Karlsen. Maternal Grandmother: Karen Jakobsen. Brothers and Sisters: Ingvald Peterson, Konrad Peterson, Erling Peterson, Julie Peterson, Inga Peterson, Petra Peterson, Magnus Peterson. Spouse: Selma Reinvik Peterson. Nellie Cleveland Peterson. Children: Harold Peterson, Raymond Peterson, Joanne Peterson.

## Content Description

The interview was conducted with Hans Peterson on March 16, 1982 in Gig Harbor, Washington. It contains information on family background, work, emigration, marriage and family, community involvement, and Norwegian heritage. The interview also provides photographs of Hans' home in Norway, fishing in the Lofoten Islands, Hans at age seventeen, Hans at a fox farm in Petersburg, AK, Hans doing construction work in Petersburg, Hans watching traps in Alaska, Hans' farm in Rosedale, WA, Hans picking berries in Rosedale, and Hans 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

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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.

Container(s)	Description
<a href="#">Cassette</a>	
161, side 1	005: Hans Marius Peterson. Born in Nørfold, which is now Sørfold. Name of the town is Mørviksbotn. Soerfold is the county. Thirteen Norwegian miles from Bodø. Born on March 22, 1899.
161, side 1	024: PARENTS: Pedder Pederson and Jakobine Karlsen. Mother was from the same area. Grandfather was from Gudbrandsdalen, Norway.
161, side 1	030: GRANDPARENTS: Paternal grandfather's name was Peder Olsen. Took his father's first name to get his last name.
161, side 1	039:

Container(s)	Description
	Father was a farmer and fisherman. He died young of blood poisoning. Mother was left with ten children to care for. Grandmother, who was 93, lived with them.
161, side 1	049: GRANDPARENTS: Paternal grandmother's name was Barbro. Peder Olsen was from Gudbrandsdalen. Came on the first steamship that carried mail to the northern part of Norway in 1840, and he stayed here. He did like fishing. He made money cutting wood. They had a little farm and a small flourmill.
161, side 1	071: Grandfather gave one place to Hans' father and uncle and moved to another bay to cut wood. Explains how grandfather caught fish by using the waterwheel at the mill.
161, side 1	085: MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS: Karlson. Karen Jakobsen lived with them for a while.
161, side 1	094: MOTHER WAS LEFT WITH THE CHILDREN: Started work in early years. Hands did fishing in the bay. They had a small farm with cows, sheep and goats.
161, side 1	113: Did hunting for ptarmigan. Sold these birds to the storekeeper. Had sold some to his brother who had a small store before the Depression.
161, side 1	125: These birds are a delicacy. There were shipped to Oslo. Hans brought 1700 to Oslo once and doubled his money.
161, side 1	131: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Ingvald lived on a farm, fished in the Lofoten Islands for 35 winters. Konrad lived in Tacoma, did fishing and carpentry. Had 13 children. Erling had a store in Norway, went bankrupt in 1918. Had lignonberries in his store, which cost him more than he made on them. Sold fish.
161, side 1	168: Julie came to America when she was 18. She died soon after she came over of double pneumonia. Inga lives in Norway in a nursing home. Petra lives in Norway. Magnus lives at the home place in Norway. He was in America for one year. He missed Norway so he went home to Norway in 1931.
161, side 1	199: CHILDHOOD HOME

Container(s)	Description
	<p>Poorly built for the cold country. Managed to stay warm. Bedroom downstairs, kitchen, and bedrooms upstairs. Used wood heat. Had a sod roof, good insulation. Gives some detail of this type of roof. Most of the old place has been torn down now.</p>
161, side 1	<p>230: CHRISTMAS  Lots of good eating. Not much going on where he lived. Church was not close, four Norwegian miles. Church was hard to go to in the winter because they had to cross the bay to go to church.</p>
161, side 1	<p>244: SCHOOL  Crossed a river to get to school. Dressed good and always made it to school. Now there is a schoolhouse that is easier to get to.</p>
161, side 1	<p>263:  Had religion at school. Learned verses by heart. Learned history and many other things from memory.</p>
161, side 1	<p>278: CHRISTMAS FOOD  Especially good food, lefse, different meats and breads.</p>
161, side 1	<p>295:  "Now they have Christmas in Norway every day, compared to olden days, people in Norway are kind of rich now."</p>
161, side 1	<p>298:  Did not have presents at Christmas, but had lots of cards.</p>
161, side 1	<p>301:  Did not believe in trolls and julenisse.</p>
161, side 1	<p>322:  After school, Hans went to Lofoten at age 15. His mother did not have enough money to buy him a confirmation suit, so he made the money himself.</p>
161, side 1	<p>329:  Was a cook for eleven men. Up at 5am to start the coffee for the fishermen. Earned 75 krone for the winter.</p>
161, side 1	<p>348: BUYING HIS CONFIRMATION SUIT  Went shopping on the dock where clothes were sold to fishermen. He paid half price for his suit, 18 krone.</p>
161, side 1	<p>377:</p>

Container(s)	Description
	Did herring fishing up in Stavanger for two winters. Worked for five years in Lofoten doing fishing.
161, side 1	390: One winter he cut timber. Made 5 krone a day. Cut cord wood.
161, side 1	414: Cut wood in the area where his father owned land. Made lots of money. Mother was given 300 krone.
161, side 1	423: In 1919 he bought a herring boat, there was no herring. He had to borrow \$20,000 from the bank.
161, side 1	437: REASONS FOR COMING TO THE U.S. Hard to make a living in Norway. Had one brother in North Dakota. He could not marry the girl he wanted to marry because she would not marry him. Hans eventually married this girl's sister when she came to the U.S. Her name is Selma Reinvik.
161, side 1	463: MOTHER'S FEELING ABOUT HIM LEAVING NORWAY His mother did not think much of Hans leaving. She died two years later. She had a tough life. Her first husband died in the river right in front of her. Hans gives more detail about this.
161, side 1	494: Came over in April 1923 on the Bergensfjord.
161, side 1	502: BOAT TRIP OVER Had some seasickness. Came alone. Took ten days. Went to Ellis Island.
161, side 1	518: FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA Went to a little town in North Dakota, lots of mud in the streets. Hamlet, North Dakota close to his brothers.
161, side 1	532: TRAIN TRIP No problems with the language. Ordered coffee once and they put sugar in it, which he was not used to, so he dumped it out.
161, side 1	572: Brother met Hans in Stanley, North Dakota. Hans worked on his cousin's farm for the winter.
161, side 1	581: Next winter he drove a school bus. Describes the old bus. He stayed at school all day. This helped him learn the language. He learned to read quickly, it

Container(s)	Description
	was harder to talk. Also worked for a guy from Norway who had been in North Dakota for 13 years.
161, side 1	624: Decided to go to Alaska with his cousin. They did some herring fishing with a fellow from Norway. This did not last long.
161, side 1	643: Worked in a reduction plant. Made fish oil and other products. Made about 80 cents a hour. Has done well here in America. Has land he cane sell, cannot do this in Norway usually they just pass the land down.
161, side 2	010: Talks about his cousin, Andrew Olafson. Hans stayed at a fox farm for 27 months taking care of foxes. Made about \$100 a month. Nicest job he ever had lots of freedom.
161, side 2	022: Lots of eagles around. Hunted eagles. Brother came and stayed with Hans for a year. Shot 68 eagles one spring. State and company gave him \$1 per eagle. Hunted deer in the winter. Brother hunted with him.
161, side 2	039: Worked for a cannery in Petersburg, Alaska. Hans did carpentry work here. Also watched so that no one stole any fish.
161, side 2	064: Lots of black bears in Alaska. Tells about his experience with bears. Worked for two years in the canneries.
161, side 2	070: In 1928 he came to Seattle and worked in a sawmill in Ballard. His brother was also here. Then Hans went to Canada.
161, side 2	078: MEETING SPOUSE Met his wife in Canada. She was one of his neighbors in Norway. They were married in Vancouver, B.C. His wife knew somebody in Vancouver who helped them out.
161, side 2	105: WEDDING Not big. 4-5 people came. It was in a church with a Norwegian preacher.
161, side 2	111: Hans helped his brother build a house in Seattle. In 1930 they moved to Gig Harbor, Washington. Did farming and had cows.

Container(s)	Description
161, side 2	120: DEPRESSION Did work around his property, building and farming. Bought property in 1940, 65 acres at \$14 an acre.
161, side 2	128: Made a living selling milk to Bremerton. Wife helped. She was used to milking n Norway. Had berries, which they sold for 6 cents a pound. All prices went down during the Depression. Did not even pay to pick the loganberries.
161, side 2	150: Milked for ten years. Had 18-20 cows, nine cans of milk. Hans has cleared much of this land himself. Worked about 14 hours a day.
161, side 2	165: Creamery went broke. Hans' family lost lots of money. People quit milking their cows. Hans had 95 acres when he retired. Has sold this little by little.
161, side 2	196: CHILDREN Joanne Lewis works in the Social Security Office in Tacoma, she went to the University of Washington. Married twice and has two children. Had been to Formosa and Iran with her husband's job in the Navy. Harold has Chalet, an import business around Gig Harbor. He went to the University of Oslo. He married a teacher, Beverly Brower. Raymond is the oldest son. Was in the Navy and went to vocational school in Tacoma.
161, side 2	248: CHURCH Goes once and a while. Goes to lodge once and a while. Does not like to go at night. Goes to church in Rosedale, Washington most of the time.
161, side 2	268: First wife passed away in 1946. Alone for five years. Married Nellie Cleveland. She had been working as a practical nurse in Seattle.
161, side 2	283: TRIPS BACK TO NORWAY In 1951 he stayed for five months. He went alone. Had taken three trips by plane.
161, side 2	296: CHANGES People have quit farming. Kids play all summer long, different from when he grew up. Kids get too much money and they dress nice.
161, side 2	324: He has worked with Swedes, Danes and Finns. They are the same kind of people as Norwegians. Standard of living is higher in Norway than in the U.S.
161, side 2	345: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE NORWEGIAN



Container(s)	Description
	Proud. Norwegians and Scandinavians are some of the most civilized people in the world. Better educated. Good school system in Norway today.
161, side 2	364: Speaks Norwegian still. Reads about his land in Norwegian. Gets the Norwegian newspaper once a week.
161, side 2	388: Children do not speak Norwegian except Harold who learned Norwegian when he studied there. His daughter understands some.
161, side 2	400: Still cooks fish and potatoes like his grandfather. Had good food on the farm, lots of meat. Learned to eat fish in Norway. Bought fish tips in Tacoma. Had lots of salmon. Did canning. No shortage of fish.
161, side 2	435: Hired a few people in the summer to help with the hay.

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Christmas  
 Education--Norway  
 Emigration and immigration  
 Family--Norway  
 Fishing  
 Marriage service  
 Norway--Social conditions--1945-  
 Norwegian language  
 Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity  
 Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews  
 Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs  
 Ocean travel  
 Railroad travel

### Personal Names :

Peterson, Hans--Interviews  
 (creator)  
 Olafson, Andrew  
 Peterson, Joanne  
 Karlsen, Jakobine  
 Pederson, Pedder  
 Peterson, Harold  
 Peterson, Nellie Cleveland  
 Peterson, Raymond  
 Peterson, Selma Reinvik

**Corporate Names :**

Bergensfjord (Steamship)

Ellis Island Immigration Station (N.J. and N.Y.)

**Family Names :**

Cleveland family

Karlsen family

Olsen family

Pederson family

Peterson family

Reinvik family

**Geographical Names :**

Alaska

Gig Harbor (Wash.)

Lofoten (Norway)

Mørviksbotn (Norway)

Seattle (Wash.)

Stanley (N.D.)

Stavanger (Norway)

Vancouver (B.C. Canada)

**Form or Genre Terms :**

Oral histories

**Occupations :**

Cannery workers

Carpenters

Hunters

Sawmill workers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler  
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