

Judith Tollefson Oral History Interview, 1981

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Tollefson, Judith
Title	Judith Tollefson Oral History Interview
Dates	1981 (inclusive) 1981 1981
Quantity	3 file folders 1 photographs 1 sound cassette 1 compact discs
Collection Number	t053
Summary	An oral history interview with Judith Tollefson, 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

Judith Tollefson was born Judith Christine Edwardson on June 25, 1900 in Traena, Helgeland, Norway. Her parents were Edward and Cornelia Johanson, and Judith had five younger siblings: Christian, Alfred, Emilius, Alfa, and another brother who died in the flu epidemic. Judith's father was a fisherman and her mother a homemaker. In September 1928, Judith immigrated to America with her two children, Mary and Per. Her husband, Lars Mikkelson, had left in 1925 and had settled in Seattle, WA. Lars was a fisherman, and he was in Alaska when Judith and the children arrived. In 1931, the family bought a house in Bothell, WA, which they later lost during the Depression. At this time, Bothell had a large Scandinavian population, and all of the women helped one another while their husbands were out fishing. Social life revolved around church, and Judith became a member of Bothell First Lutheran. She learned much of her English from Sunday school papers. In Bothell, Judith also did housekeeping and worked in a restaurant to earn extra money. She and Lars also had another daughter. Lars passed away in 1962, and Judith remarried Julius Tollefson six years later. Julius is originally from Rognan, Norway. Judith's Norwegian heritage is very important to her, and she has kept this heritage alive while

living in the United States. She continues to cook traditional Norwegian dishes, has returned to Norway five times, and is a member of the Daughters of Norway, and Nordlandslaget.

Lineage

Full Name: Judith Christine Edwardson Mikkelson Tollefson. Maiden Name: Judith Christine Edwardson. Father: Edward Johanson. Mother: Cornelia Johanson. Maternal Grandfather: Johan (?). Brothers and Sisters: Christian Edwardson, Alfred Edwardson, Emilius Edwardson, Alfa Edwardson. Spouse: Lars Mikkelson, Julius Sjønning Tollefson. Children: Mary Mikkelson, Per Mikkelson, a younger daughter.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Judith Tollefson on May 7, 1981 in Tacoma, Washington. It contains information on family background, emigration, employment, marriage and family, community activities, and the importance of Norwegian heritage. The interview also contains a photograph of Judith at the time of the interview. Also see Julius Tollefson. 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 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	
53, side 1	000/02: FAMILY BACKGROUND Name was Judith Christine Tollefson, was Mikkelson at the time of immigration. Her maiden name was Edwardson. Born on June 25, 1900.
53, side 1	014: FAMILY HOME Traene, Helgeland, Norway.
53, side 1	017: PARENTS Edward Johanson and Cornelia Johnson.
53, side 1	021: PARENTS: Father was a fisherman, owned a boat, and took fishing trips to the Lofoten and Traene Islands. Mother was a housewife.
53, side 1	030: FIVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS See lineage.
53, side 1	039: MATERNAL GRANDFATHER He was a fisherman. In his retired days he took care of sea birds (sale of eggs, eating eggs).
53, side 1	075/03: FAMILY NAMES Johanson and Edwardson.
53, side 1	075/03: PATERNAL GRANDFATHER'S DEATH Drowning

Container(s)	Description
53, side 1	080: ARRIVAL IN THE U.S. She and two children in 1928. Her husband in 1925.
53, side 1	084: MET HUSBAND IN NORWAY From same area, he was a fisherman.
53, side 1	088: REASONS FOR LEAVING NORWAY Bad times, etc. Waiting for husband to send for her family in Seattle.
53, side 1	103: Husband's trip over three weeks by boat.
53, side 1	120: CHILDREN'S NAMES Mary and Per.
53, side 1	126: Story about her trip over, it took two years to arrange through authorities.
53, side 1	143: ARRIVAL Ellis Island. Both children were sick upon arrival (see counter I-249). The children were taken to the Ellis Island hospital for three days.
53, side 1	168: TRIP OVER Crossed the Atlantic on the Norwegian ship, Stavangerfjord. Left from Oslo.
53, side 1	181: ARRIVED IN SEATTLE In September 1928, she encountered language difficulties that led to the wrong route via the train to Seattle. (See counter I-256)
53, side 1	214/04: FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND REACTIONS OF NEW YORK CITY First meals and Ellis Island experiences.
53, side 1	249: ELLIS ISLAND AND CHILDREN'S REACTION They became sick.
53, side 1	256/05: ARRIVAL IN SEATTLE AND TRIP EXPERIENCES Husband was in Alaska fishing. It was about seven weeks before they met.
53, side 1	316: CHILDREN'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING ENGLISH (See counter I-407) Mrs. Swenson, her neighbor was a big help.
53, side 1	384: CHURCH Member of the Alki Congregational Church in Seattle.

Container(s)	Description
53, side 1	407: BOTHELL Bought land in Bothell ca. 1931. Attended Bothell First Lutheran. Learned English from Sunday school papers.
53, side 1	422: SEATTLE IMPRESSIONS Arrival and beginning experiences. Took the streetcar.
53, side 1	436/06: HUSBAND'S OCCUPATION He fished. How she got along.
53, side 1	470: HOUSEKEEPING AND STOREKEEPING She describes the earlier days.
53, side 1	486: CITIZENSHIP She tells how it happened in 1938.
53, side 1	518/07: DEPRESSION DAYS Lost home and later new home in Bothell ca. 1932. Picked strawberries. Husband built a home and paid off the loan.
53, side 1	570: Husband died in 1962. Daughter graduated from PLU. During WWI, her son enlisted.
53, side 2	021/08: DEPRESSION Hard. Bad fishing (halibut prices).
53, side 2	032: GARDENING (BOTHELL) "Well-to-do-then." Had some farm animals.
53, side 2	039: BUTTER Churning and selling to neighbors.
53, side 2	049: FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH (BOTHELL) Fall festival had lefse. She is active with the Ladies Aide (Norwegian women) quilting.
53, side 2	067: Helping poor neighbors.
53, side 2	069: BOTHELL Scandinavian community. Speaking English with the neighbors.
53, side 2	081: CHRISTMAS

Container(s)	Description
	Norwegian food, lefse, krumkake, fattigmand, and rullepoelse.
53, side 2	097: NEIGHBORS Quilting and helping one another (see counter II-132).
53, side 2	103: Canning fruit. Fish ball and fish cakes.
53, side 2	120: BUSY DAYS Week's work. Day's work included washing clothes before a washing machine.
53, side 2	132: NEIGHBORS Good, helpful, worked with one another in the hay field. The neighbor's husband was also a fisherman.
53, side 2	152/09: Made own entertainment.
53, side 2	162: Fish for everyone when the fishermen came home (halibut).
53, side 2	171: CHURCH Kept people together, social life of church.
53, side 2	200: REVISITED NORWAY IN 1947 Her youngest daughter went with her, her oldest daughter was married in Anchorage, and her son was in California.
53, side 2	208: EARNING MONEY FOR THE TRIP She worked at a restaurant in Kenmore near Bothell.
53, side 2	215: SEEING NORWAY AGAIN Hard times after the war.
53, side 2	232: Four and a half to five years with no word from her family due to the war. Went through the Red Cross.
53, side 2	249/10: WAR OVER Crying and waiting, who's alive.
53, side 2	260: Five trips to Norway.
53, side 2	268:

Container(s)	Description
	Married Julius Tollefson in 1968.
53, side 2	270: Talks about her Norwegian relatives visiting the U.S.
53, side 2	297: Children don't speak Norwegian. Oldest daughter has been back to Norway a couple of times.
53, side 2	299: Had one more child while in the U.S. A daughter married to Rev. Sigfila (?).
53, side 2	302: Lars Mikkelson was her first husband.
53, side 2	305: NORWEGIAN HERITAGE Very important.
53, side 2	323/11: SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS Daughter of Norway, Nordlandslaget, and St. Mark's Lutheran Church, senior citizens group.
53, side 2	349: She discusses the 17th of May.
53, side 2	366: KEEPING NORWEGIAN HERITAGE ALIVE Born in her, U.S. is home, but she could never forget Norway it's in her heart.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Depressions--1929
 Emigration and immigration
 Family--Norway
 Naturalization
 Norway--Social conditions--1945-
 Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
 Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
 Ocean travel
 Railroad travel
 World War, 1939-1945

Personal Names :

Tollefson, Judith--Interviews
 (creator)
 Mikkelson, Lars

Mikkelson, Mary
Johanson, Cornelia
Johanson, Edward
Mikkelson, Per
Tollefson, Julius

Corporate Names :

Alki Congregational Church (Seattle, Wash.)
Daughters of Norway (U.S.) Bredablick Lodge #10 (Seattle, Wash.)
Ellis Island (N.J. and N.Y.)
First Lutheran Church (Bothell, Wash.)
Nordlandslaget Fembøringen (Seattle, Wash.)
Stavangerfjord (Steamship)

Family Names :

Edwardson family
Johanson family
Mikkelson family
Tollefson family

Geographical Names :

Bothell (Wash.)
Rognan (Norway)
Seattle (Wash.)
Traena, Helgeland (Norway)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Domestics
Waitresses

Titles within the Collection :

New Land New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest

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