Biographical Note

Else Goodwin was born on July 12, 1913 in Copenhagen, Denmark to Laurits Theodor Larsen Hammerbak and Valborg Kristine Christiansen. Else had two siblings, Preen and Ida, and the family lived in downtown Copenhagen. When Else was seventeen years old, her parents’ friends, Emil Andersen and his wife, came to visit from New York. They invited Else to go back with them, which her mother thought was a great opportunity. In New York, Else lived with a doctor and his family, and she worked for the Andersens, cleaning and helping with their children. Originally, Else was only going to stay in America for six months, but she got two six-month extensions on her visa and did not return home until November 1931. On the voyage home, Else met Theodore Beck, a widower from Jutland, Denmark. Theodore had a young son and was returning to Denmark so that his sister could help him raise the boy. Else gave Theodore her home address, and he soon came to Copenhagen to convince her to marry him. After they were married, they returned to America at the end of May 1932. They settled on the West Coast, where Theodore was a dairyman for Hollywood Dairy in Seattle, WA. Else worked as a housekeeper to make extra money during the Depression, but after she had her daughters, Elin and Marilyn, in 1934 and 1937, respectively, she remained at home until Marilyn was old enough to go to school. When WWII started, Else went back to work as a waitress at a local restaurant. In 1947, Else and her daughters took a trip to Denmark, which the girls loved despite the
fact that they had never learned Danish. Else’s husband did not want them to learn Danish, believing that without knowledge of the Danish language, they would learn English more properly. When Marilyn graduated from high school, Else divorced Theodore and later married Crawford Goodwin. Crawford was born in Spokane, Washington and had a real estate business in Seattle. Through the years, Else has been very involved in Scandinavian organizations. She has been Treasurer of Danish Sisterhood, on the board of the Danish Home, on the board of the Nordic Heritage Museum, a member of a folkdance group called "Dannelag," a member of a singing group, and a member of the Danish drama club "Harmonien." Else has also been active in Seattle's Danish church and served all offices in the PTA while her girls were in school.

Lineage


Content Description

This interview was conducted with Else Goodwin on January 10, 1983 in Seattle, Washington. It contains information on family background, emigration, returning to Denmark, marriage, re-emigration, employment, and community involvement. The interview also includes photographs of Else's summerhouse in Copenhagen, Else's parents, Else riding a pony in 1915, Else leaving Copenhagen on July 14, 1930, and Else 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

Processing Note

Else Goodwin Oral History Interview, 1983
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv79005
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**


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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.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Container(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
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</table>
| 216, side 1  | 017: PERSONAL BACKGROUND  
Name - Else Margrethe Goodwin. Born in Copenhagen, Denmark on July 12, 1913. |
| 216, side 1  | 023: PARENTS  
Her father was Laurits Theodor Hammerbak and her mother was Valborg Kristine Christiansen. Father born in a small town north of Slagelse. |
| 216, side 1  | 066: GRANDPARENTS  
Paternal grandfather thatched roofs. His name was Jens Peter Larsen. Paternal grandparents had been married before. Had children from first marriages and from their own marriage. Some of their children were Nielsens and some were Larsens. The boys had a strong family feeling. Wanted to be known as brothers. Took the name Hammerbak, which was also the name of their mother's family home. Grandmother's name was Nielsen before her second marriage. Maternal lived in Copenhagen. Else's mother was the first in the family to be born in Copenhagen. Grandparents were from Jutland near Hjoerring. Grandmother's name was Kristine. Remembers grandparents. Grandmother died when Else was 12 years old. Grandfather was a streetcar operator. Horse drawn streetcars when he first came to Copenhagen. Both maternal and paternal grandparents had big families. Else's father grew up in a "husmans hus." Had a big yard for growing vegetables. Had chickens. |
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| 216, side 1 | 325: PARENTS  
Father got beer from breweries in kegs. Kegs were sent to another place where they were tapped and bottled. Father had a wagon and a small horse. Would take cases of beer around to different stores. Had this job until Else was five years old. Breweries started to do this themselves. In 1918, her father and two of his brothers worked in a peat bog north of Copenhagen. Got another job as a prison guard in Copenhagen. Worked in the main police yard in Copenhagen during WWII. He had to open the door to the prison when the Germans came. |
| 216, side 1 | 438: GERMAN OCCUPATION  
Else went home to Denmark in 1947. Her father had many stories to tell her. Tells about when he had to let the Germans into the prison. Germans took over the main police yard. Danes had to take care of their court cases in the old courthouse. Tells how the Danes saved a lot of men from the Germans. |
| 216, side 1 | 505: CHILDHOOD HOME  
Shortage of apartments in Copenhagen. Father's brother owned an old tenement. They rented two small apartments from him, each with two small rooms and a little kitchen. They lived there for about three years (after father quit working in the peat bog). Family hit by the Spanish flu. Mother had just had third child. Later, they got a nice apartment in Oesterbro, a nicer part of Copenhagen. Parents bought a store where they mangled clothes. That's where they lived until Else left for America. |
| 216, side 1 | 577: BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
One brother and sister. Brother is Preben. Worked in the grocery business for years. Chain stores started taking over the grocery business. He started working for Procter and Gamble. Ran their warehouse in Copenhagen. He's retired now. Has a wife and three kids. Sister is Ida. Five years younger than Else. Married twice. Doesn't have kids. Helped her second husband raise his kids. They have visited Else in the United States. |
| 216, side 1 | 621: SCHOOL  
Went to school in Copenhagen. Everybody went to the same type of school up to the fifth grade. After that, they could choose to continue with grade school, or they could go to a middle school and take college prep courses. Else went to middle school. Studied some English. Languages and math were emphasized in the middle school. |
| 216, side 1 | 669: REASONS FOR EMIGRATION  
Some people from America came to visit. Else's father's oldest sister lived in Oakland, California. It was Ester Saalby (?) that came to visit. Else showed her Copenhagen. They still see each other from time to time. |
707: CHURCH
Went to Sunday school. Was involved in a youth group after being confirmed. Parents went to church once in a while. Weren't really strong church-goers. They worked hard, raising children and running their business. Maybe they didn't have the strength to get to church every Sunday.

735: CHRISTMAS
Had a big Christmas Eve. Else has many good memories. Stores would close at 4:00pm on Christmas Eve. Church service was at 5:00pm. Could hear all the church bells. It would often start snowing at that time. Came home to a big dinner. Roast goose stuffed with prunes and apples. Brown potatoes (candied potatoes), white boiled potatoes, and red cabbage. After dinner, father would light the candles on the tree in the living room. Then the rest of the family would go in to see what awaited them. Else tells about the "nisse" who would decorate the tree the day before. They'd dance around the tree and sing. Then they'd open their presents. Presents were wrapped in brown paper. Mother did a lot of baking. Else helped. Mother would make a thin, crisp cookie round with an almond in the middle. Had syrup and ginger in them. Different than pepparkakor. Called onekager (?). Made Julekager and klejner. Lots of cookies at Christmas. People would often visit each other on Christmas.

876: GRANDPARENTS
Tells about paternal grandmother's first marriage and reason for second marriage. First husband came home from war in Germany. He was ill. Knew he would die. Told his wife to marry Jens Peter Larsen. (See also I-066).

911: DANISH TRADITIONS COMPARED TO AMERICAN TRADITIONS
Sometimes we celebrate similar customs, but we celebrate them at different times of the year. American children go around to houses to get goodies at Halloween. Danish children do this for Lent. Else explains how the kids would knock on doors with branches decorated with candy and ribbons. Danes have a custom similar to the Mexican's pinata. Americans have a witch on Halloween. Danes have a witch on Midsummer.

970: SUMMER HOUSES FOR THE URBAN POPULATION
State set aside plots of land for people in the city to lease. Small lots. People would build little summer houses and have a garden. Else's dad had a vegetable garden, berries, fruit trees, and rabbits on their lots. Her mother had a section of flowers. These "colonies" could be found all over Denmark. There was a small store at the center of the colony. Each colony would have a big Midsummer party.

1063: GOING TO AMERICA
(See Also I-669) A girlfriend from Oakland, California came to Denmark to visit when Else was sixteen. The nest year, two of Else's parents friends from New
York came to visit. Emil Andersen and his wife. Emil invited Else to go back to America with them.

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| 216, side 2  | **073: PARENT’S FEELINGS ABOUT ELSE LEAVING**  
After father bought the ticket, he became concerned about his daughter going so far away. Else was supposed to stay in the US for only six months. |
| 216, side 2  | **123: GETTING READY TO LEAVE**  
Didn’t have much time. The Andersens went to England to visit Mrs. Andersen’s family. Else and her cousin, Einar, met the Andersens in London. Didn’t feel bad about leaving. Her mother thought it was a great opportunity. |
| 216, side 2  | **109: TRIP TO AMERICA**  
Took a train to Esbjerg, Denmark. Took a boat from Esbjerg to Southampton. Got on board the Leviathan. A very big ship. Had been a German ship. The Americans bought it after WWI. Else came to America in August 1930. Speaks briefly about being in London on the way to America and on the way back to Denmark fifteen months later. Met her first husband on the way from America. Remembers a group of entertainers on the ship. They had been touring Europe. Beautiful music. |
| 216, side 2  | **309: NEW YORK**  
Remembers driving down 5th Avenue. The Empire State Building wasn’t finished yet. Remembers all the traffic, crowds of people on the streets. Tall buildings. Status of Liberty. |
| 216, side 2  | **380: LEARNING ENGLISH**  
Knew the grammar and knew how to pronounce the words. Just had to learn the meanings. She was staying with a doctor and his family. They had a lot of magazines, McCall’s, etc. Else would read these. Would ask what different words meant. Could travel to New York City by herself after 2-3 months. She would get off the subway at different stations, just to see where she was. Wasn’t afraid of getting lost. Tells about New York City and a Danish girl she met. |
| 216, side 2  | **452: WORK**  
The Andersen’s had a boy and a girl. Else helped with the children, helped around the house and cleaned Mr. Andersen’s office. Didn’t help with the cooking. Mrs. Andersen was English. Cooked differently than Danes and Americans. |
| 216, side 2  | **474: IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA**  
Else was invited to stay in New York for a longer period of time. Got two six-month extensions on her visa. Even started going to business college. Eventually got homesick. Christmas approaching. Was celebrated differently in the US. No Christmas Eve. Remembers how the children would rip open their presents on Christmas morning (in the US). Everything was disorganized. |
Turkey dinners in the US. Fifty years ago were nothing in comparison to a roast goose. Wild turkeys were dry. Tells about having a roast beef dinner with yorkshire pudding. First time she had rootbeer, thought it tastes like something used to kill mosquitoes.

216, side 2

571: RETURNING TO DENMARK
Went home in November 1931. Took the same boat, the Leviathan. This was during the depression. 115 passengers and about 600 crew on the boat. Else traveled with a group of students from different European countries who had been in the US for about three weeks. A German boy in the group said one day "here I stand surrounded by my enemies." This surprised Else. Met her first husband, Theodore Beck on the boat. He was a widower. Had a small boy. Couldn't raise his son alone. Was going to get help from his sister in Denmark. They stayed at the same hotel in London. Took a boat from Harwich, England to Esbjerg, Denmark. He went to his family on Jutland. Else went on to Copenhagen.

216, side 2

675: MARRIAGE
Else had given her address in Copenhagen to Theodore. He came to Copenhagen and convinced her that she was in love. They couldn't get married over night. He had to get papers to prove he was a widower. Took time to get a marriage license too. After they got married, he had to get papers proving that he could support her so that they could return to America. He was a dairyman. He worked for Hollywood Dairy in Seattle, Washington. He was born in Sørring, Denmark near Denmark's highest mountain, which stands at about 500 feet. Their wedding was typically Danish. Invited family and close friends. Poul Bogsinius (?), the minister who confirmed her performed the wedding ceremony. He has written a number of books and was also very active with underground work with the Jews during WWII. Else had a pink gown. Didn't have a white gown for two reasons: it was her husband's second wedding and she could use the pink gown more than once. After the ceremony, she and Theodore took a ride out to Langelinje in Copenhagen where the little mermaid statue is. When they came home, all of the guests had arrived for dinner. Her mother had written a song for them. Dinner started with soup. Then they had fish, probably shrimp. The third course was meat dish, probably pork. Describes a side dish served with dinner called flikkeporre(?). Leeks were boiled and served with butter that had been stirred. Had some kind of ice cream for dessert. Had a white wine glass with fish, red wine with meat, and a madeira glass with dessert. Many of the guests had speeches for the bride and groom. Telegrams arrived. Dinner lasted three and half hours. After dinner went in living room and had wedding cake, coffee, and liquor. After the dining room was cleared, everybody danced. Fifteen to twenty people came to lunch the next day. About twelve guests came to dinner the day after the wedding. Her mother had help with the cooking. Weddings lasted for three days. On the day of the wedding people would come over and give "well-wishes". They were served cookies and a glass of wine. People not invited to the party feel free to drop in. Else and her husband stayed in a hotel while so much was going on at home. Later went to Jutland to visit Theodore's family.
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| 216, side 2    | **941: RETURNING TO AMERICA**
Before leaving at the end of May 1932, they traveled back and forth between Copenhagen and Jutland, visiting each other’s families. They went back to America on the Leviathan. A lady who had been on the boat when they came to Denmark, was also returning to America on the same boat. She told everyone they were newlyweds and that they had met on the boat. They had more parties. |
| 216, side 2    | **956: TRIP TO THE WEST COAST**
Husband had driven to the East Coast and left his car in New York. They drove to the West Coast. Went to Washington D.C., drove through the south, through Texas and Arizona, and up the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington. Got to Seattle at the end of June. |
| 216, side 2    | **980: THE DEPRESSION**
Their son, Theodore turned six while they were in Denmark. He started school when they came back to the US. It was sometimes difficult for Else to be like other children’s mothers since she was only nineteen years old at the time. Her husband expected her a lot of her. He loved canned fruit so he would bring home boxes of fruit for her to can. They had financial difficulties. Husband had a hard time finding work. They got along. Things were cheap. He had had a home but he sold it. They got some money from that every month. It paid their rent. Else had $10 a week for housekeeping. They would take little trips in their car for entertainment. Things got better in 1933 when Roosevelt came into office. The NRA started. Helped dairymen who had been working 28 days before they would get four days off. Changed so that they worked 12 days then got four days off. More workers were needed so Theodore got a job. |
| 216, side 2    | **1079: CHILDREN**
Had a daughter, Elin when 21 years old. Had another girl, Marilyn, three years later. Else stayed home and took care of the kids until Marilyn started kindergarten.                                                                                           |
| 216, side 2    | **1090: WORK**
People needed when WWII started. A friend of Else’s had a restaurant. Needed help. Else worked part-time, later full-time. She describes her job. Worked there until 1947.                                                                                                             |
| 216, side 2    | **1132: TRIPS BACK TO DENMARK**
Else and her two girls went home to see the family in Denmark in 1947. Continues on tape 217, side 1.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 217, side 1    | **005: CHANGES IN DENMARK**
Not many changes in Copenhagen. She had been gone for fifteen years. Only change was that her parents had moved to a suburb of Copenhagen. They had
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| 217, side 1 | 046: WWII  
Her family wasn't directly involved. Many Danish policemen were sent to German concentration camps. Not many of them died while in Germany, but Else's father told her in 1947 that many died after returning to Denmark. Her brother had been a soldier before the war but he was married and had children by the time the war started so he wasn't involved. Else's sister second husband had been involved in the underground during the war. He had been captured and was on his way to Germany when the war got over. Mother's sister's husband was killed by a German. |
| 217, side 1 | 129: DAUGHTERS' IMPRESSIONS OF DENMARK  
They loved Denmark. They had never learned Danish. Her first husband didn't want them to learn it. Many immigrants never learned English properly. They would get confused with both the English and Danish languages. Her first husband wanted to learn English well so that he wouldn't have that problem. He never lost his accent. People could hear that Else had an accent but many didn't realize that she had been born and raised in Denmark. |
| 217, side 1 | 211: DANISH FOODS  
Else learned to coo in America. Her mother did the cooking in Denmark. Else learned to cook Danish foods by reading Danish cookbooks. Her girls can cook some Danish food. |
| 217, side 1 | 245: DANISH LANGUAGE  
Both of her daughters understand Danish. Marilyn can speak quite a lot of Danish. Elin is a quiet person. Doesn't speak Danish. |
| 217, side 1 | 263: CHILDREN  
(See also II-1079, II-1132, III-129, 211, 245) Elin lives in Lake Hills. Has a husband and a daughter who is 24 years old and is an aeronautical engineer. Elin's married name is Justice. Marilyn lives in Berkeley, California. Husband was educated as a minister. He is now a professor of psychology at Dominica College at San Rafael. He would like to teach religion but this college is Catholic and he is Presbyterian. Marilyn takes care of the house and all of the activities that go on there. She graduated from Stanford University. She has her master's degree in Library Science, but it's too hard to work and have a family. They have three children. The eldest is at Stanford now. The second is 16 years old. The third is a 12 year old girl. Her first husband's son has his own business in Seattle. Has a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. He's married and has two daughters. |
| 217, side 1 | 429: CHURCH  
Was active in the Danish church near Garfield High School in Seattle. Her children went to Sunday school there and sang in the choir. They were |
confirmed there. They have a new church now, across from Woodland Park and near the Norse Home. Else was Ladies Aid president at the church for many years. She has been on the church council.

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<td>474: SECOND MARRIAGE</td>
<td>Else got divorced about the time Marilyn graduated from high school. Else has been married to Crawford for about 27 years. She had known him for 13 years before they got married. He had his office in the same building as the first coffee shop she worked in. They got married on Christmas Eve. Crawford Goodwin was in commercial real estate. Had been a stockbroker before that. Closed his real estate office last summer (1982) on his 86th birthday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>564: WORK</td>
<td>(See also II-1090) Didn't work when they were first married. Later started working for an insurance company. Worked in the company's lunchroom until she had to retire at age 65. Else got another job at the &quot;Vaersaagod&quot; restaurant. She knew the owner there.</td>
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<td>655: TRIP TO DENMARK</td>
<td>(See also II-571, II-1132, III-005) Else and her second husband went to Denmark for their honeymoon. They traveled in other parts of Europe as well. Rented a car in Brussels, Belgium. Drove down through western France and up through eastern France. Saw the battlegrounds where Crawford had been during WWI. Crawford was born in Spokane, Washington. Moved to Seattle, Washington with his family when about four years old. His father was an active real estate man in Seattle. Elsie tells more about their trip in Europe. Traveled through Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. They spent three months in Denmark. Went to England and Scotland before returning to the US. Shipped their car to New York and drove to the West Coast.</td>
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<td>713: CHANGES IN DENMARK</td>
<td>(See also III-005) Much different. She grew up in the middle of Copenhagen. Many new buildings in Copenhagen. In this trip to Denmark, she spent a good deal of time on the outskirts of Copenhagen. This was new to her so she couldn't really judge as to whether it was different or not. Farms have changed a lot. Farming has become mechanized. No longer have maids and farm hands living on the farms. Farming has also become specialized. One farmer will raise pigs, another farmer will raise something else. 763 SUMMERTIME FOR CHILDREN: School system provided funds for children to spend time in the country during the summer. Else spent time with relatives who lived in the country.</td>
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<td>799: SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS</td>
<td>Treasurer of Danish Sisterhood, on the board of the Danish Home, on the board of the Nordic Heritage Museum. Belongs to a women's club at her church, the circle that works for the home (Danish?), Dannelag, a folkdance group, a singing group. Belongs to the Danish drama club, &quot;Harmonien.&quot;</td>
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<td>Became active in this club when she first came to Seattle. Became more active in Danish organizations after she married Crawford.</td>
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| 217, side 1 | 848: OTHER ORGANIZATIONS  
Very active in the PTA while her children were growing up. Has served all offices in the PTA. |
| 217, side 1 | 858: DANISH SISTERHOOD  
(See also III-799) Has served all office in this organization. Has even been district president. In the fall of 1983, will go to the national convention as a representative. |
| 217, side 1 | 869:  
Speaks in Danish. |

## Names and Subjects

**Subject Terms :**
Christmas  
Danish-Americans-- Interviews  
Danish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Social life and customs  
Denmark -- Social conditions -- 1945-  
Denmark -- History -- German occupation, 1940-1945  
Education -- Denmark  
Emigration and immigration  
Marriage service  
Ocean travel

**Personal Names :**
Andersen, Emil  
Beck, Theodore  
Christiansen, Valborg Kristine  
Goodwin, Crawford  
Jespersen, Ida (Hammerbak)  
Willats, Marilyn (Beck)  
Goodwin, Else--Interviews  
(creator)  
Hammerbak, Laurits Theodor Larsen  
Hammerbak, Preben  
Justice, Elin Ida (Beck)

**Corporate Names :**
Danish Dramatic Club (Seattle, Wash.)  
Danish Sisterhood of America, Lodge 40 (Seattle, Wash.)  
Leviathan (Steamship)  
Nordic Heritage Museum

**Family Names :**
Beck family
Christiansen family
Goodwin family
Hammerbak family
Larsen family
Nielsen family

**Geographical Names:**
Copenhagen (Denmark)
Jutland (Denmark)
New York (N.Y.)
Seattle (Wash.)

**Form or Genre Terms:**
Oral histories

**Occupations:**
Domestics
Real Estate Agents
Waitresses

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
2004