

Oral Interview with Audun Toven (A) conducted by Kerstin Ringdahl (K)

The interview took place on October 6, 2011 in professor Toven's home in Parkland, WA.

K: Okay, where were you born?

A: I was born on a farm in Norway actually about the middle of Norway the larger area is called Nettet and then you get down to the school district which was called Eidsøra and on Eidsøra there is a farm called Toven. That's where I was born.

K: How, um, what was it like to grow up there?

A: Well, I certainly didn't know much about any other place to grow up so I would have to say even then that I was quite happy on the farm. We were six or seven siblings so we had plenty to do and I happened to be in the middle so I had people both older and younger than me and it was kind of funny, my mother had figured out that there should be an order in this. The oldest one was a boy and then there was a girl and then there was a boy and I then I came and I shouldn't have come I should have been a girl.

K: Uh oh, you messed up the order.

A: Yeah, (laughs) it was okay. It just meant that I had to help her a lot in the kitchen.

K: What were your parents like?

A: Well, hard to tell again. Do I have anything to compare them with? No. Not back in those days, that's for sure I didn't. I'd probably, later on would have complained, that my father was a somewhat stern gentleman. He was into politics for about 40 years of his life and he was away from the farm most of the time when I grew up because my older brother took over the farm, and he was in Oslo or other places too, to take care of business. My mother, um, I think was a loving gentle woman loving all in all. I never ever heard her complain about anything.

K: Are your siblings still . . . do you have much contact with your siblings still?

A: Yes, I have thanks to Skype.

K: Great

A: I have of course had contact with them all along, but two years ago I decided to try and improve on that by giving two of my brothers and one of my sisters Skype outfits or whatever, microphone and everything for Christmas and it has been absolutely amazing what a difference it has made the last two years. Particularly my younger brother and also my younger sister have been in constant touch and it's been great.

K: When you were a child how were you? Did you ever get in trouble and in your childhood were you pretty nice?

A: Of course, I didn't get in trouble. I was always nice. I, yes, I must have gotten in trouble because I was spanked by my father which is something that you don't hear about very often now.

K: Nmmnn

A: And I suppose you don't have to talk to me very long before you figure out that I am a typical Norwegian and typical Norwegians tends to be a little stall as they call it—stubborn.

K: Right

A: And sometimes we will have a hard time yielding to people when they ask you to do something.

K: Mhmm:

A: And on this occasion it was school and I, we had I would say about 5 kilometers to walk to school so 10 kilometers total back and forth and obviously we had to walk in all kinds of weather whether it was snowing or raining or whatever. And we had very little money and very little clothes on the farm.

K: Mhmm

A: And at this point when I was in elementary school, um, we usually, I mean I took over a coat from my older brother that kind of thing you know so I don't know why.

A: We can backtrack a little

K: I want to make sure we can listen to it here.

A: I used to get the clothes from my older brother and sisters or whatever and on this particular morning it was terrible weather, raining and blowing outside and my mother and father, I don't really remember, I think it was my father brought out an old coat that would probably drag after me and said this is it. This is it. And then I said I didn't want to go to school like that they would make fun of me. They didn't listen to that ear so finally I got a little spanking. I don't remember how old I was at that point. No I won't even guess, but I was naughty at that point.

K: You were. What did you look like when you were a child?

A: I don't know because I don't have many pictures of myself but I do know that my father used to call me "rugen" which would indicate that I was a little overweight maybe and I've seen pictures of myself I wouldn't say that I was much overweight, but maybe a little. But I thought it was more an endearing term that my father used for me. I had short blond hair, cut very short all of the time and that was about it.

K: mmmm. So you think your childhood, was that a happy childhood, you think?

A: I would definitely have to say it was, yes. Well as you know I have nothing to compare it to, obviously, but when I think back absolutely, no doubt I had a good childhood.

K: What's your best memory of childhood?

A: Oh, you got me there.

K: Oh, you have many memories probably.

A: Well, I don't have many memories from childhood really. This one I just told you about going to school is one that's really sticks in my mind. I don't know any others that I was very naughty or I would interpret it that way, but a couple of things I do remember it had to do with getting around a little in our community. We didn't have a car and we didn't really have any time to fool around or go any place so my family never ever travelled really, but I happened to have an uncle and

my uncle was one of those entrepreneurs who really wanted to try out things and he was one of the first to buy a car. And he bought a tiny little Volkswagen, not a Volkswagen either, a tiny little station wagon. I don't remember what it was and, he took me around a little and I know among other things that he drove me all the way to Oslo. His daughter was going to go to school down there I think to become a nurse and I was lucky enough to sit in the back of this little car with no windows or anything and I didn't get to look out of course, but what a treat that was. And the other thing I remember about the same uncle actually is that he had a son about almost exactly my age and he used to invite me home quite often. Which again was a treat and of course his son would come to the farm too, but I don't remember much about that. But my cousin there had all kinds of toys that I of course never had on the farm.

K: Uh huh, so was he your best friend that you had or did you have other good friends when you grew up?

A: Um, he probably was one of my best friends, but I didn't see him that often. But there was a slug of guys and girls too in my neighborhood that particular group of people who grew up together were the same age just about more than usual of them. So I--I had some friends to play with or whatever I don't remember mostly afterwards outside of school, but I don't really think that I had one particular friend that was stand out, there were several people that I used to deal with on a fairly regular basis.

K: How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?

A: One more time

K: How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?

A: Well a perfect day when I was young. I don't know what that would entail. I would suppose that it would be a Sunday with a good Sunday breakfast probably going to church and this--this is going to be a lot of food for that matter, but coming home from church for a good dinner, maybe a snack in the afternoon too or in the evening. And the reason I say that that was probably a perfect day was that most other days involved walking to school, which I didn't mind it wasn't that, but it was far. And also working on the farm because we were as I said six of us and

we were all every day on the farm, and weeding isn't all that much fun for kids usually and we never did any of that stuff on Sundays. Sunday was totally off.

K: What did you think your life would be when you would be older as a child?

A: I am quite sure I never really reflected on that but I think, together with my parents and maybe my siblings, I probably had the idea that I would go on to school at some point to continue studying or whatever. I don't know if that was conscious in my mind but I think that that was probably part of it because it was pretty easy for me to go through school, very easy in fact.

K: So when you had finished school in your hometown, did you go onto school in Oslo or somewhere else?

A: No that is far off before I get to Oslo actually. I did go to school in my home community and I only remember two teachers so I think the one teacher took the three first grades and the other teacher got the four next I don't know maybe we had three teachers but I only remember two. And one thing I remember from that particular time is that I have always been the unlucky one. So when I was ten years old I was run over by a bicycle and broke my leg. It was kind of scary, and it was painful. So I was in the probably in one of the three first grades in that because the teacher in that section came to the farm and gave me lessons for at least three months, which was kind of unusual I guess, but maybe not. And then after that I was ten when I broke my leg. When I was fourteen I was run down by a bicyclist and ended up in the hospital for about three months with my left leg in a cast. In a what do you call them?

K: It was a cast?

A: It was a cast back

K: (cell phone rings) I'm going to pause it.

A: They have traction

K: Oh ok.

A: So there the next two years went away, with me doing nothing, because to come up with better transport to the school whatever, I don't know we just didn't have

imagination to see that as possible, so it got to be about 1.5 years before I went back to school and from there on to try to catch up with my peers in school also my, I had two cousins about the same age. I tried to speed up my education like I took what is called the realskole it usually takes three years in Norway I did that in one year at that point was three years anyway. I did that in one year by staying away from home. I stayed in a little a little room in a house down in Sunnmøre, Sovde and then moved on in to Nordfjordeid in Sogn og Fjordane and took my high school for two years. So by this time I was just about up to speed so that I could start studying in Oslo about the same time as my peers, my cousins or whatever.

K: Did you enjoy school?

A: Yes I really did, it was a joy and as I said, very easy for my fortunately

K: So what kind of student were you? What did you do for fun?

A: (*chuckles*) Well listening to other people in the family and stories that go around about it, I think I was a very good student. And I say that because one thing I heard from my younger brother was that the teacher had told him that he was ruining this reputation that Audun had, to do well in school and that kind of thing.

K: Are you still friends with anyone from that time?

A: I really have not seen them. When I was, oh what should I say, I immediately moved away from my home community, and very few of my peers and relatives, well some of the relatives went on to become well educated people and I saw them as long as I was in Norway. But otherwise the people that I went to school with had disappeared into a factory or something. I basically wasn't at home in my home community after I was 16 years old that was about it. I disappear then, it was difficult to keep up so. I met them on occasion, not that I keep good contact with them

K: Are there any teachers that had a specific influence on your life?

A: Oh there must be, Well..... I'm sure that Gunnulf Hals who was my teacher in the first second and third class, probably had a big influence on me. It's hard to

remember. Otherwise I have been going to school for most of my life and I've met all sorts of wonderful people. But who should I pick out.....

K: You don't have to, but if there's someone you think about

A: I understand, there's someone Holsvik who was my rector or principal at what we would call junior high school, he had a great influence on me to get me going and studying hard and whatever. And from university I don't really know....

K: So when you left your home to go to Oslo, what school did you attend then?

A: When I first left the farm to go and study I went to a place called Levanger, which is up in Trøndelag Then I spent three years up there educating myself as a teacher and I was ready to I believe it took three years because we have a special class to study English along with the regular two year teacher education. Then the summers between there I went to Oslo and worked different jobs, so first Levanger, then Oslo, then USA.

K: So when did you start to play music

A: I had always been interested in music, so I don't know. I probably had one of those inklings when I was very small I suspect. Then from there on I just couldn't leave instruments alone. I saw an organ, or a piano, or a banjo or a fiddle or whatever I just had to try it. So little by little I taught myself enough, played enough of enough instruments so at teacher's training college when we went up to a cabin I would be able to play a little accordion for them and they would like that. So I would say it started it very, early, but I would say that by the time I got to teacher's training college is when I really got interested in music. I had a funny a kind of funny thing to go in there. When I came to larerskolen . Do you understand that?

K: Ya ya

A: Of course I started to do this as cheaply as possible, so I went and talked to the custodian. First person I talked to when I went to that place and I wondered if he could put me up someplace at a reasonable rate or whatever. And he took me up to the attic and showed me that there was a little room that was actually paneled more or less up there in the attic and that I could stay there for a reasonable amount of

money. So that is where I stayed during my four years, well three years and this happened to be three or probably four stories above the gymnasium and I thought it was kind of fun at nights sometimes when they had dancing or whatever to go and listen to the bass because the bass came through all the floors and up through mine.

K: So how long did you stay in Oslo?

A: Well I came there in six-let's see here, '59 and was there when I started studying there and I left for the US in '64.

K: So how come you left the US?

A: How come I left to the US?

K: Yes

A: Well you will discover that from now on anything happening to me it just happened. I have never really been much of a planner. It just happened and I had a couple of reasons for wanting to come here and go abroad. I had studied in '64 I had taken what we call a grundfag what we call a basic education for a year in English and I had taken about a year and a half of history. So I had those two degrees, not degrees I guess, but subjects. And my plan then, and on top of that I had my teacher's training college so I was ready to go out and teach, but I did not feel comfortable going out and teaching English, which would be one of my subjects because I studied English. So that was one reason I wanted to go to a country where I could learn to speak English quite a bit. And the second I guess was that I wanted to see a little of the world.

A: But I think learning English was still the main purpose of studying abroad.

K: Now did you belong to a band, a musical group that you said you traveled around with?

A: Yes, I belonged to a musical group both in Norway and here you could say. I'll explain that. What really got me going on folk dancing folk music and singing was the larerskolen ,teachers training college. Because there were quite a few people there, probably from the same background as I had and studying singing and dancing and that kind of thing. So when I came to Oslo I was basically kidnapped by something called Norges Ungdomslag. Which is, was, they still may be I don't

know, an organization that was in charge of folk dancing, folk dance teaching, folk singing, whatever around the country and there were organizations or part of them around the country. Well my folk dancing and folk singing started in college. So when I got to Oslo I was basically kidnapped by the Norges Ungdomslag organization. They, I guess thought I was a good dancer and they wanted to use me to teach dancing. I taught quite a bit of dancing around the country and then I was given a certificate as a dance teacher. So this is what I did during the four years that I was there and I also started picking up Hardanger fiddle and played that for a couple of years. And then in '64 the Ungdomslag would send out two people like myself who wanted to go the US to travel around for a year and put on a folklore program. And of course this was "mitt I blikken" bulls eye for me, exactly what I wanted to do. So I was picked out along with three other people who wanted to go on this tour. The only problem was I was picked out as a dancer, and Søren Nomeland they guy you can still see picture of and postcards and you know, he was going to be the fiddler. He was quite a well known fiddler, and this was the arrangement until maybe a month, maybe six weeks before we were to leave Norway and then he decided he couldn't do it. This was a crisis for Norges Ungdomslag and a crisis for an organization over here called National School Assemblies. What to do about this thing? So it came down to me playing the Hardanger fiddle and dancing also or no tour at all. And since I had done a little fiddle playing we decided that the four of us, we had picked up another player from Valdres, yes I could play well enough to pull this off. So that's what happened. Then to get here Asbjorn and I and the two guys had to work on the boat. So we were actually crew from Oslo to Copenhagen to New York.

K: What kind of work did you do on the boat?

A: Well it was disgusting work to me. I grew up on a farm and having eaten every piece of food on my plate because what we did was basically scrape steak, fish you name it into the mouth of the sharks or whatever they are. There was hardly anything that was kept. I think butter was kept and something like lingon berries were kept and maybe a couple other things. And that's what we did for 12 days. And we had to hang out with the crew, the girls couldn't come and see us and we couldn't go see them but on one occasion during the crossing the captain or whoever...

A: had decided that they wanted to see us. So we put on one performance on baggage deck. Which was fun but very difficult. I had never danced on a boat before. It is so difficult, because you dance on the floor and the floor is right there. You dance on a ship and well it isn't its about 6 inches down.

K: You get sea sick I'm sure. So where did you land when you came to the US?

A: We actually landed in New York, and I have never ever felt so small in my life as when we approached Manhattan and saw the skyline and everything, wow it was really kind of scary.

K: So where did you stay in New York?

A: Let me say first....It was just such an amazing sight that I guess didn't know what to think. I had befriended a student from the US at summer school. I don't know how that happened, he was from Brooklyn. So he took us through town to Brooklyn to the Sons of Norway headquarters there. So that must have been where we stayed the first night, I don't remember that. But what I do remember is that I certainly miss that Houge out at the Sons of Norway Hall there. Met us and when he greeted us, he said something back to me, something like "do you want to go and wash up?" And I was totally taken aback because wash up to me at that point meant was wash dishes, vaske opp. So I said my goodness the first thing you're going to do kitchen and vaske opp it was many years later that I discovered what he really meant. But I assume he had made some arrangements for us to stay there a day or two before we flew to California.

K: So did you then travel from place to place to play music?

A: During that year? Yeah, the National School Assemblies in Hollywood had put together an itinerary, but then they got somebody else to take over that itinerary and outsourced it to some outfit in Texas, that is called, was called anyway, the Southern School Assemblies. So we ended up working for them and we spent about a week in California and the one thing I remember from that more than anything else is that I had oranges straight off the tree. That is just a treat. And I

was shocked by the American women in Disneyland who had as glorious colors as they could despite who their little? And the funny thing is we discovered popcorn and bought a huge bag of popcorn which we kept on eating for the next week. We got to endure it I had no idea what it was probably didn't get any better but we kept doing it. They let us have a car, we rented a car from them and we drove that to a city in Texas where we had to put on a performance for them again. And if it's any indication of how little English I know, well I knew, I remember that after the performance there I wanted to apologize for our performance up there or whatever because it was very slippery on the stage. So I told them, sorry it's very icy up here, on stage. And after that it was off on the road for let's say 498 performances

A: In a schoolyear.

K: Wow, that's a lot. So, anything that stands out from that time? Anything special?

A: Yeah, lots of things really because you had to remember that this was actually in the fall of '64 and it was still very much segregated in the south so we saw plenty of black entrances to the house so we or whatever and that particular year there was an election campaign between Johnson and Goldwater, so that was exciting enough. And the mayor started moving up in Jackson and all kind of things going on, so that was pretty exciting and the other thing was that we had black audiences, totally black audiences. And they impressed us with two things everyone singing, sometimes we came a little late and they were singing or whatever. And the other thing was that on a few occasions we had little black kids walking up the gym floor and they wanted to shake hands with us because they had probably not ever done that before so that is something that I will not ever forget.

K: Do you want to take a break and have some orange juice?

A: Sounds good.

K: Okay

A: My mouth is very dry.

K: Right

A: Javel

K(in Swedish) So you have travelled around now you are in Texas with your group

A: Yes

K: And what happened in “64 in America

A: What do we know from Texas? Well, um the schedule they had made for us was really kind of silly because they had put a schedule together to please the schools and send us out driving like crazy and being stopped by the trains and everything else because we had close to three performances per day and quite a bit of travel in between and you could start doing that you have to get ready and whatever, but it was okay. We were well received. My gosh I can't believe the reception we got from blacks and white and whoever. It was heartwarming. We had some contact with Americans, but I would have to say a lot less than I would have wanted. But there wasn't much chance for it because at nights we almost always had to drive to the new town or whatever and figure out where to have performance the next day at eight or nine so we had to plan ahead that way and that meant we couldn't really stay with any teacher if they invited us home it wouldn't work. And that got us into trouble. We got arrested in Louisiana. We had looked at our itinerary again and found that Monday morning we had a school that was located in an enclosed military area you know like military row, that kind and we decided we have to go and find this one too, so on Sunday afternoon we drove out and eventually got over to this gate where there was a guard. So I happened to be driving at the time and I pulled over and we had a little discussion. What do you think? Should we go on or is this not a good idea? We decided to go on and the guy just saluted us or whatever he did and just set us up and after a little while we ended up at the at the, what do you call it? The strip, the air strip where there were some planes. And Asbjorn the other guy said oh . . .

A: he was so excited he just jumped out the car and over to the fence and started taking pictures. Well he managed we found out later, he managed to get one picture, before 2 jeeps and 8 soldiers came and jumped out and stopped us and said “Hey there! What are you doing?” And we told them we were entertainers and that kind of thing, bad or so into their headquarters and wires going straight to the Pentagon I'm sure (chuckles) I sat there and knew enough English so I could kind

of tell what was going on. And this guy in charge this Sunday afternoon my goodness he was so excited, recent promotion obviously. So long story short we got out of there after what must have been 6 hours anyway. It was kind of scary because we didn't know what would happen. The problem was the man in charge and the fact that he didn't have enough on his shoulders to ask to call the principal of the next school. When a higher officer came in this afternoon and did that there was no problem. They had threatened to destroy the one picture we had from Vicksburg we had a bunch of them we pleaded and managed to keep that. It was an okay outcome but was scary while it was going on. The next day a higher officer came and apologized up and down and brought Asbjørn some pictures of the airport. All taken care of

K: So how did you end up at UW?

A: Good question. Again, our visa expired in about May of 1965. And we were aware of that and we were in Denver and went to the immigration people and told them, "Our trip is not finished but our Visa's are expiring." So they told all of us, stay and do what you do and get out of here as soon as you have an opportunity to do that. I had told them I wanted to study here and they said fine, just when you are accepted let us know and that will be ok. Well, I was in Boulder Colorado had nothing to do and was absolutely broke. And our host there let me use their old car and I delivered telephone books for a day and a half in Boulder. Then I discovered a drive away car, cars that need to be transported from one place to the next, cheaply, so I drove a car from Denver to Pasco, and it was going to go on to Seattle actually, the first leg was Pasco, I don't know what they did there. Because the professor Rosenbaum at University of Washington was putting on Peer Gynt on Green Lake Stage and when he discovered that I played the Hardanger fiddle a little he was excited and wanted me to come here. And the reason for this contact was that Asbjørn the other guy decided to go out on a Greyhound trip and for a while ended up staying in Seattle with a guy I ended up staying two years with. And uh, the word came back here, well they found out I was playing anyway. So I played as part of the Peer Gynt performance on Green Lake, that's what brought me here. And I arrived in Seattle with something like \$15.37, two bunader and \$15.37.

K: Did you wear you bunad when you played?

A: Oh yes, yes.....

A: I just wore out about two of those during the, during the year

K: So when did you decide to enroll in University of Washington at the graduate school?

A: Well I didn't really have much of a choice if I were to accomplish what I had set out to do that year because when, when Dr. Aarestad, Sverre Aarestad told me he needed someone to teach I obviously was very interested and I applied for the job whatever I did and I wanted to teach I mean to learn English, that was my main purpose, but in order to take English classes I mean my job was basically to teach Scandinavian studies, right?

K: Right.

A: So I had this combined job thing here. And I then had to enroll in English as well as Scandinavian studies.

K: So who were your friends then at the University of Washington?

A: My friends?

K: Yeah

A: Nobody, I had met them and Sverre Aarestad who was the Norwegian teacher at the U basically there were two teachers here then so I had Aarestad in Norwegian and Walter Johnson in Swedish. And both of them I befriended obviously, but otherwise I didn't know a soul here. One of the things that happened almost immediately when I got off the plane was that a gal by the name of Randi Otterkrantz. I'm not quite sure that was her name, had played Scandinavian music on the radio for awhile, KBLE. And when got off the plane she practically dragged me right into the studio to see her and said I had to help her so that's the beginning of my career as a DJ. She and I played Scandinavian music, but she left for Sweden shortly after along with her husband so then I had to do it alone.

K: So how many years did you do the Scandinavian hour?

A: Yeah, I really wondered that to tell you the truth. I did it for awhile after I came to PLU, obviously, but I think Olav may have figured out a little of that but I must

have done it for ten, twelve years anyway, I would guess. And then they gave me the opportunity to do it at KPLU- FM so I did it there probably equally, I don't know if I did it that long, but I did it a number of years before they shut it down and started the new format for jazz.

K: Right. So how did you come to PLU?

A: Ja, that's, it was easy back in those days. It again had to do something with folk dancing. Folk dancing has been a driving force behind me I guess. For a number of years Rhoda Young here at PLU had, not PLU exactly here, had been leading, directing a group called the Mayfest Dancers and by this time I think she had probably done it for fifteen years or maybe more, but right around '66 she took ill and got some severe illness where she couldn't even associate with people. So I was down here in 1966 that was I think a 25 year anniversary of Mayfest, I'm quite sure it was. We had brought down fiddlers or whatever from the University of Washington and also some Scandia folks and we joined the Mayfest dancers for that particular year. So Rhoda Young then saw me.

A: So if anybody is responsible for bringing me to PLU it is Rhoda Young. I have a suspicion that she just walked into President Mortvedt's office and said "Hey, I need somebody to take over my job". I wouldn't doubt it. That's how it happened

K: So did you then start to teach Norwegian too?

A: Yes I did. I was again lucky umm.... Oh I know what happened. Gunnar Malmin who was a music teacher here for a long time and had more or less been eased out of the music position in about 1966 and was not very happy about it so he decided to go to Canada. He got a job in Canada teaching music and maybe Latin, and all of a sudden there was an opening at PLU for somebody to teach Latin and Norwegian. I couldn't do Latin but I could do Norwegian so I just walked into that job again.

K: How many students did you have early on? (interested in Norwegian)

A: Yes, actually. That's kind of interesting. The second year class I had in Norwegian was probably the largest second year class I had for many, many years at PLU. And what was the reason for that? I was probably floored myself, I walked into Ramstad hall third floor to meet my second year Norwegian class and

the room was practically full. And I walked in there of course and started talking in Norwegian and I didn't get much response I tell you. But eventually I found out by talking English to them that they had had some kind of, I thought it was Svare but maybe not. They had a Norwegian pastor teaching Norwegian. They said that all they had to do, they had their class in a lounge and all they had to do was sort of poke their head in and say here, and go back to work. That's what they told me. They sure didn't know much Norwegian. So in the beginning I think the enrollments were quite good actually for a number of years I also got Mayfest rolling very well.

K: Yes that was very active at one time.

A: We even got a bunch of boys in there and everything and it just kind of went hand in hand to a certain extent.

K: How was PLU when you came?

A: How was it? A very different place from what it is today. I would have to say. I felt PLU was just a wonderful place to work. And not least because everybody here worked for PLU, there was not that much competition between the different disciplines and different courses. Much more further later on, faculty staff everybody was excited about working for the university. So I found it to be a very friendly place and so they treated me well and had a good time from the beginning. I was very nervous at the beginning but I got over it.

K: Who were your friends at PLU? In the beginning.

A: Well let's see. I, early on I developed a friendship with Jonathan Nesvig. I don't know when I met him but I knew his father and I knew him so he was probably the one I was hanging out with the most from early on. And then Norm Nesting and I spent some time together, nothing like Jonathan

A: I don't know if you knew him. Well I don't know if you remember him.

K: Yeah I remember him

A: Ah, let's see and then little by little I did develop some friendships with people in Norwegian classes and also certainly in Mayfest, which was a great group. I can't just believe how much fun and what a nice group that was.

K: Do you still hear from some of the Mayfest dancers?

A: Have I still heard from them?

K: Well do you still hear from them now? Do you have any contact with them?

A: Yes as a matter of fact I do

K: Good

A: Not long ago I got a letter from Eastern Washington from Kjersti.....what's her name? Great dancer, well I have been in touch with quite a few of them, which has been a joy.

K: Well it's a real shame that ended

A: What?

K: It's too bad that ended.

A: That was so sad.

K: Very, just the students weren't interested anymore they change all, everything changes.

A: Well I've been particularly sad about that because when Brit was up here two weeks ago she decided or we decided to start a little clip or what do you call it or scrapbook because I thought I had some material about it from way back and you know you just have to find some. Then it was particularly nice to find pictures and dolls from previous Mayfest dancers and people I had been in touch with for a time and it was great.

K: Yeah, so how did things change for you when Janet came and Scandinavian studies started?

A: Hmmm . Well I'm sure it's changed for the better in many ways. Janet was a very powerful teacher in many ways and a very powerful colleague, and very

supportive and whatever. Supportive colleague so I think she had a background that I didn't really have in academics and I think that we maybe complemented each other to some extent. I am really sad when I hear what is happening now. They can't get along and all that.

K: Oh yeah, terrible

A: Yeah it's awful because we just had a great time together

K: Yeah, I remember that was the going thing and everyone knew that you had different strengths you complemented one another really well.

A: Thank you for that I think it was true.

K: Absolutely

A: It was a joy I was very sad that she left obviously and I did.... her plans and attitudes and interests were obviously different from mine. I would have been delighted if she would have decided to stay at PLU then we would have thirty majors by now.

K: Probably, probably between the two of you.

A: I don't doubt that

K: I am sure. Between the two of you, you would have.

A: Well I think we could have really developed it, but you know I certainly understand she had other plans and she followed through her aspirations and finding a good job and she's happy so that is the really important part about it.

K: Is there anybody else that you worked together with or taught with? Did you do any of the Core II classes?

A: Well, I was lucky enough at this time we started rumbling about the Scandinavian major and the Scandinavian Cultural Center or whatever and having a number of people who was very much interested in the same things I was interested in. And I saw them quite frequently when I came, Ken Christopherson and I became friends on the ski slopes

K: Yeah, that's right, you used to go skiing all the time, didn't you?

A: It was nice in many ways, Paul Reigstad was a super friend and colleague.

K: Yep, yep

A: You must have known him?

K: Yes, I remember him

A: Let's see who else? There were some other people here too. I mean we have Chuck Anderson,

K: and Chuck Nelson.

A: Absolutely, Chuck Nelson.

K: Chuck Nelson, he has always been a great supporter

A: Yeah he was a strong and friend and supporter for a long time. There are probably more of them in here too but I can't think of them off hand.

K: When did you start going to Norway in the summer times to start teaching in the Oslo Summer School?

A: well I can't give you a date but it was fairly early on. I went there a couple of times during the school year before I started Summer. But I had already before I came to the US before I came to PLU had, I had taught some at summer school I think I actually was up there in the early 60s and thought the American gals were really funny in there culottes or whatever they are called. Oh, they were so funny I couldn't believe it. So if I start counting from the back which is the easiest way to do it now. I was there the last time in 2009 then I probably go into the middle of the 80s anyway, might even have done it maybe a few times before that. I figure that at one point I must have done it about 20 times if you spread it out there.

K: So when you had a chance to be there in Norway in the summer time did you then have a chance to get closer to your family?

A: Oh absolutely. It was very, very different if I hadn't been there in summer.

K: So did you spend time on the farm part of the time?

A: I did um, I always spent time on a circle more or less. I don't know if I did it the first time but very shortly after I started going there I made a trip around to see....(Don't move your microphone so much). Since my relatives are spread out they are in Sunnmøre, Romsdal. Not too much, but I made probably about a week's trip to see them all every time I was over there. And then later on my younger brother started having what we call søskentreff, sibling meetings which was also a very good way of keeping up.

K: How did you and Kjetil become friends?

A: Well we should ask him to do that but we wont. Kjetil came to the US before I did. He had actually met Penny in Norway and Penny then proceeded to work at CLU or CLC as it was called then and he went over here and I think before he got back to Norway he had married her. And then they came back and he started studying and she started working as a head resident that kind of a deal.

K: Was that at UW?

A: Yes, that was UW. So I think around 1967-8-9 somewhere in there is where I met them for the first time. I could kind of figure that out if I knew exactly how old Anne is because she was a baby at Hansie hall at UW. I think that was maybe not the first time I met the Flatins but it was very early in that relationship.

K: and you've been friends ever since?

A: yes

K: So did you spend a lot of time together when you were in Norway over the summers?

A: yes we really did.

A: I spent a lot of time at their home and had numerable meals and stayed overnights and that kind of thing and Kjetil and I started playing tennis and at not least golf. Golf mainly we spent at least a week every summer going someplace to play golf.

K: Oh great.

A: This really this is how it really developed a friendship. If I have been over there twenty years I have at least been over there with him and probably spent some time with him twenty years. There are many reasons for this, but we just have a very very similar background in terms of family, religion, everything else, so we have a lot in common.

K: When did you start the Pilgrimsvandringen?

A: I didn't start it as much as Kjetil started it in.... Well let's see I think he has done six by now, this is what he tells me, but Kjetil has retired three times. I'll tell you right now he said three. He left for Norway in 1977 to become director of the International Summer School. The same time we decided to take a sabbatical together. Then a few years he moved up to become the head honcho of the Studentsamfunnet(?). I don't know the translation for that but it pretty much means that he is running the university everything at the University except academic affairs. The teaching, I mean. So then were am I going here?

K: Pilgrimsvandringen.

A: Pilgrimsvandringen is where I am going at. Well, then he decided to leave the job so then asked to be in charge of Nordmanns-Forbundet. the Norse Federation of whatever they call it and he tried then to introduce some programs into that Organization. One was he copied the Danes what they call a summer program for kids to learn Norwegian. Danes had done it before. He decided to... well then he ran some of those trips to Nidaros because during this time the Norwegians were basically clearing the land making the path and that kind of thing and he decided to try it out to see if people would do that, which was not that successful but he has had quite a few people. I think he has had six people now. I joined him on either or the second or the third and then I joined him on the last one he did with the Andersons, but otherwise he has basically been running it.

K: So you became quite good friends with everyone, especially from the last one. That sounds like it was a very close group at that time.

A: Which group?

K: The last pilgrimsvandring.

A: Yes, yes indeed. Very special group but um if you have someone who brings their very, very, very best friends and not everybody would be able to do it, but MaryAnn was able to do it. They all got very close in that pilgrimage.

K: Now have you been a member of all these organizations like Sons of Norway and Nordmans-Førbundet, Nordlandslaget or all of those throughout?

A: I have been a member of some of them, but not a very active one I would have to say. But the reason for that is somewhat in a way that I have tried to be active in the Center off and on and if it hadn't been for the Center I would probably have joined some sort of a thing, but I'm not really much of a joiner, so who knows what would happen.

K: I agree I'm not either.

A: But I have been a member of Sons of Norway since.. .

A: I came here so I'm a gold member or something. I am more or less I am not a member of the Daughters or any of the others but I am uh.. they consider me a member just about and the same with Nordlandslaget I've been active there. I found several boxes of talks I've given over the years. I can't believe it.

K: Did you save those?

A: No. I threw them all out

K: Oh! You should have given them to me. I would have put them in the immigrant collection under the Audun Toven Collection.

A: I don't know what would be of interest.

K: Absolutely

A: Well if I find them I might give them to you, they might still be around here.

K: yeah give them to me for sure.

A: I was just sort of a little shy. There were that many of them. They had been there for years.

K: The Audun Toven Collection in the Immigrant Experience Collection.

A: Well, I see what I can come up with

K: You know one thing I forgot to ask you about... Do you remember much about the Second World War when you were a child?

A: Not much but I do remember certain things. I was born in 36, I was actually 4 years old when the war started. We grew up on the farm which was lucky because we had basically all the necessities, no sugar no many other things but we didn't need it. And we had our meat and fish and everything so we didn't have that big of a problem. But I do remember that in 1940 there were bombings around Toven at that point they even shot some holes in our barn. And relatives from close by communities came and stayed in our cellar for a while. What I do remember most distinctly is that we ran into these shiny German soldiers on horses on the roads. They would stop us and ask questions and everything which was always scary. It's not like they would do anything but.... So, not very many memories. In 1942 the Nazis came and cleared out a room in our home because my father had been mayor of the community so a Nazi guy came over and just cleared out everything and hauled it off I do remember that in 42-43. And I do remember from 1945 distinctly where I was and everything when the...

K: Where were you?

A: I was up on the farm along with my older brother harrowing, this was in May just about ready to start the seeding or whatever, Toven is located in a pretty steep incline/decline whatever it is. So this was high up from the farm. I think all of a sudden we saw the flag go up on the main farm. So we knew what had happened.

K: Tell me about your feelings when you were given the medal from the king.

A: Oh my goodness. I was this totally, totally overwhelmed, totally, totally surprised. I had never ever thought anything like that could happen obviously. I certainly felt inadequate for the honor. And started thinking who in the world could have supported this crazy idea. But then I guess after awhile in Tacoma I had to accept it and I think I went wild....

A: I went wild. I remember that.

K: What do you mean went wild?

A: I just think I . . . I just sort of have a feeling that I was running around crazy hugging everybody.

K: Well you should have.

A: It was nuts. You weren't there were you?

K: Yeah I was there.

A: Were you?

K: Yeah I was. It was down in the City Club, wasn't it?

A: Did I give you a hug? I can't believe it.

K: Yeah you probably did.

A: Well anyway it's just something that is just so out of reality that I . . .

K: And of course now there's Svare Toven endowed professorship.

A: Yeah, that's different.

K: Yeah, I know

A: In many ways

K: Yeah, very different but it is also

A: Meant that now I sound like a guy with his nose up in the air here

K: (laughs)

A: I had to admit I had thought about that idea before, because the important thing here was to get money

K: Right

A: There are so few people around here who have any kind of connections to the Svares.

K: Exactly

A: And I even told, I think I told Steve Olson this that it was a very, very long shot. And of course it is a great honor. It's not that, but it's more something I'm happy to be a part of, to possibly having a chair someday and that is worth it.

K: I just hope they decide pretty soon who is going to get it.

A: Yeah

K: Haven't decided anything yet.

A: Oh you mean the professorship?

K: Yeah

A: Yeah I hope so too. I was hoping it had been moving along but

K: Yeah I wonder what is holding it up.

A: I just, I guess I am confident that Claudia will get it.

K: I am too but you never know. That's the thing is that you never know.

A: No

K: I agree with you on that.

A: I even told her that the other day. It would be I just can't fathom anyone else getting it.

K: No, I can't either. Absolutely not

A: But what I hope we can do is to get a real chair for her

K: Exactly, exactly

A: Because that would give her a lot more clout around the guys

K: Yeah she needs it.

A: Yeah

K: She needs it for sure.

A: And I know it is going to happen. I am very confident that it is going to happen.
Very confident

K: Good, good.

A: That's it is going to happen so that is good.

K: Have you heard . . .

A: I do hope that she gets it sooner rather than later

K: Yeah, me too. How, have you met the king and queen?

A: Before you mean?

K: Anytime.

A: Yes, I have actually met both of them before they were here in 1975. I was lucky enough to sail one way out to Blake Island with the family and I had met them on that occasion. Actually, I had met them at the Westin Hotel in '75 it must have been. But it was very different anyway.

K: Is it true now that when you have the medal you can have an audience with the king if you want to when you are in Norway?

A: No, that's not true.

K: Someone told me that at Anderson's can get an audience any time because he has the medal.

A: No

K: I didn't think so either it didn't sound right somehow.

A: It's a onetime thank you for the honor, that's it and some people speculate that you have to hand it back in or whatever, no.

K: No

A: You don't have to do that either. You get to keep it.

K: So is that medal going to go to Brit or Trygge or either one?

A: You'll think ahead of me I can tell you that. Well I don't know. I will have to deal with that later, but it's a good question. I guess since I have two they can fight over it.

K: They can fight over it, right

A: I don't think they will but I would suggest that each of them having one piece

K: How has being a parent changed you?

A: A whole lot really I would think. I was ready. I guess probably the fact that I got married maybe changed me more than anything. And I had big expectations to that that were not necessarily fulfilled and to be a parent is really.... I mean that's where the tension comes. I am saying going from a long bachelorhood and then to be married is maybe even more of a journey or whatever. Is more of a change to being married and having a kid.

K: Yeah, I'm sure.

A: That's the way I feel about it.

K: So what are your dreams for your children?

A: Hmm, Let's see. Well, obviously I think as a parent will hope that they behave and that they get reasonable jobs that can support themselves and.

K: Put the microphone closer

A: And most of all that they are happy. I think that's probably what I think of.

K: Who is most like you, Brit or Trygge?

A: Who is most like me?

K: Yeah

A: I think most people would probably say Brit and I would not protest. I think we have maybe more in common. But the good part about it all is that Iral and I are still, as we were quite different. Our backgrounds were very different and these two have managed to grab a little from both sides.

K: That's good

A: Yep.

K: That's good.

A: We talk about Trygge always and I can't believe that this guy fell so far from the "semer". So far from the road on the hill or something. He really did, but he has some of Toven qualities I think but he has quite a bit of

A: the Mobroten more aggressive more imaginative whatever, which is good.

K: And they both want you down there with them, don't they?

A: They sure do.

K: And I think that's where you belong too, to be with them

A: Ya, I suppose. You can pretty much tell it's impossible to be here now so

K: Yeah, it's too hard.

A: I was arguing with them earlier basically like yeah I can stay up in Washington, but this has been going the wrong way. Not much to argue about anymore.

K: Do you want to talk at all about your illness?

A: About my what?

K: About your cancer?

A: No, I don't know what to say about it.

K: Do you have any regrets about anything?

A: No, I can't say I have that. It's a big shocker and of course anytime I go to the doctor from the very beginning and they said two types of cancer I said why am I hit by this stuff. Well first of all and maybe I asked them why do people get cancer. Well, you smoke, you drink, you eat too much red meat. Down the line you go. I suppose I have but I am not really sure I am in that category. And then to have two types of cancer presented in six months.

K: Oh you have two types.

A: Yeah, it was just no rhyme or reason. I was basically diagnosed with prostate cancer in '05 in Fall of must be and not more than eight months later I will say '06 because I was operated in April for colon cancer.

K: Oh I didn't know that.

A: Yep, and for that to happen after, that close or whatever I think it's really unique

K: Yep, yep

A: Whatever But um.

K: Are you frightened at all about things? Or are you just accepting things?

A: Am I what?

K: Are you frightened at all about things? Or are you kind of just accepting things.

A: No, no I wouldn't say that. It's no fun.

K: No, I'm sure not.

A: I've been very surprised about this that it has been going so fast. I guess. Changing from day to day just about I've never ever expected that to happen .

K: Well, when I was here last time you were sitting up and felt fine, just fine and stuff.

A: Yeah, that's the bad part about it.

K: And pain is not fun at all. What have you learned from your life? I'm asking all of these philosophical questions

A: Well one thing you learn from , well one thing I have learned from life is never take anything for granted. That's pretty obvious now when I have this kind of conclusion to my life.

K: That's true

A: Um, otherwise I don't know.

K: You've lived a good life.

A: I have. I think so too. I was going to say there's not much I regret really in doing. I've done some crazy maybe financial moves or whatever where I could have done better, but

K: Well, we all have

A: But otherwise I think I've lived a reasonable life.

K: How do you want to be remembered?

A: Ha, wow. That's a heavy one. I have to think about that one.

K: Think all you want, we have lots of time. You've been a good parent.

A: That can be discussed too probably, but

K: I remember when Brit was little and you would take her around with you

K: All the time and doting on her and . . .

A: Oh yeah, that's true.

K: And you've been a good friend and mentor to many people, students.

A: Yeah, that's I think I have treated students well.

K: Yep.

A: Otherwise I don't know I guess I think I will leave to the PLU crowd to decide what I will be remembered for I don't have any wishes. Unless they dig up some dirt, which they may.

K: I don't think so.

A: That remains to be seen twenty years from now.

K: When I go through your papers. Maybe some of the stuff, maybe Ill find some stuff but I don't think so.

A: Maybe so, we'll see.

K: Is there anything else that you want to talk about that you think we've sort of missed?

A: No, I think you have covered my life.

K: What was your favorite class that you taught?

A: Oh, I don't really think I can pick out one class. But one class, in general if you look at the classes I taught many times. The one that I taught as a critical conversation course and I called it Small is Beautiful was one that I really really enjoyed.

K: Good.

A: And I don't know if you remember what we did, but we basically followed along the construction and reconstruction of the EU and the European Union becoming an item and

K: I might have taken that class, I'm not sure.

A: Yeah, you might have. I really enjoyed getting them out of the US and into a little country in Europe, where they could see how things worked. So as a category that was one thing I really enjoyed.

K: Yeah.

A: When I went through stuff here now I came upon I think I mentioned yesterday.

K: A little closer with the mic, mic!

A: I, uh,

K: Yeah, good.

A: I mentioned Kjellaug Bjellas(?) who I think probably grew up in a very poor circumstance somewhere I don't remember much of that and now she works somewhere in the State Department and didn't really say in the article what she was doing, but that's a pretty good job, sounds to me. But her class a third year Norwegian class that I taught probably just about a year or so before I retired was pretty amazing because we had very, very good students. Maybe eight, maybe nine, something like that and they really took an interest in the topic, which was

was the new immigrants in Norway. We read books, packets, and we read a lot by immigrants and for immigrants and then everybody got online and did their whatever Facebook and with those groups over there and had a grand time and in class it was just a wonderful discussion in Norwegian all along and it was marvelous and just great. That is one single class that I really enjoyed.

K: And remember when you retired and all the students got together for the party for you and we showed all of those photographs.

A: Oh yeah, I do remember.

K: That was fun. Been some good students. Remember Kari Bloom and when Halldis Moren Vesaas came?

A: Oh that's one thing I should have mentioned long ago.

K: Go ahead, do it now.

A: Because that's not a class, but I actually told many people when they ask about my experiences at PLU that the one class, no, one event that I can so distinctly remember was Kari's translation of the Halldis Moren Vesaas' poems.

K: Wasn't that wonderful?

A: I don't really remember that we ever copied that. I mean in terms of the feelings in the room there and everything. It was just electrifying.

K: I have photographs of it, but I'm not sure that there is a video of it. I should check that out and see.

A: Have you ever talked to Kari again?

K: No, you know I saw her several years ago. Do you know that Laurie Lovrak is back in town again? She retired from the Air Force so Laurie and I went to see her and she has not really done anything with her life that she could have because she is very intelligent. But she is working as a legal assistant for a law firm in Seattle so she is just doesn't and she struggles with her weight and with her depression so she has some problems with that but she's, I have lost contact with her and I have tried several times to reach her, but I haven't been able to. But she was an outstanding person.

A: Absolutely. But what happened in that room I don't know, but

K: It was electrifying.

A: Absolutely It was unforgettable I almost forgot about it.

K: And we had her over for dinner because Kari lived with me then.

A: Oh, okay.

K: So we had Halldis Moren Vesaas over for dinner at my apartment.

A: Oh, wow

K: It was really exciting.

A: No kidding. Those are moments to remember.

K: Yeah, absolutely. And also remember, talk a little bit about when Estelle and Pat Kelley were here and all of the Mayfest Dancers and all the things she did.

A: Yeah, they were certainly an important part of getting things rolling here in the Center and everything else and they were just wonderful friends and they still helped by giving money to us and everything else. It was very unique to have a mother- daughter combination living down there in Spanaway in the dual apartment they had and sort of thing when you think of where they could have been and where they are most of the time. They have of course have contributed so greatly to our collections in the Scandinavian Center and many other ways that I don't know of entirely. So yeah, and Estelle I think still keeps doing it I mean.

K: She's on the Board of Regents now.

A: Yeah she is, which is good. That's great.

K: Very good person. Are there other students you think about that kind of stand out?

A: Well, let's see. There were many of those, probably, but. You mentioned Board of Regents, I heard the other day that Gary Severson's sister is on the Board of Regents.

K: Oh really, what's her name?

A: Let's see

K: Is her last name Severson too?

A: Yeah, no she married now Berg that's her last name, but I see a bunch of those people in my eye but I can't remember

K: Is her name Gayle?

A: Gayle Severson, yeah, that's it.

K: Oh okay,

A: Absolutely, you are good.

K: Was she a Scandinavian Studies major too?

A: hmm?

K: Was she a Scandinavian Studies major too?

A: I don't think she got a major, but she took some courses.

K: Oh okay, okay.

A: And then there is good old Nelsen from Sasquatchuan, kind of a great guy. Practically running that part of Canada now.

K: Oh really?

A: Yeah, let's see, what's his first name? Nelson anyway. Wonderful family, married a gal called Lee and she's a doctor and they have two kids or whatever. All kinds of those people back in there that I remember and whatever.

K: Remember Julie Peterson?

A: who?

K: She and Becky Hustad, I think it was were transcribing all the oral histories one summer.

A: Oh really?

K: Yeah, did you ever come over to the Scandinavian house when we had that?

A: Umm

K: You might have

A: I might have.

K: I think you were probably married and had small children so you probably didn't come as much.

A: Yeah

K: Because we had a lot of events then around that.

A: I've had a wonderful ride, that's for sure.

K: Yes, you've been very lucky.

A: Yeah.

K: You have, up until now.

A: Absolutely

K: Well it's nice you know. I mean we are all going to die sooner or later, but it is nice not to have any regrets.

A: That's true, that's very true. Ya, ya, ya, ya, ya.

K: So do you still Skype everyday with your siblings?

A: Do I what?

K: Do you still Skype?

A: Not every day, but it sure has been a blessing for the last couple of years.

K: Yeah, that's wonderful

A: It's amazing. I mean I talk to my brothers and maybe cost seven times that much at Christmas for a phone call.

K: Who?

A: Two years ago when I decided to get them this Skype equipment. We talked for hours.

K: Great, that's wonderful

A: It's so amazing to have now too because well I, I use my youngest sister as my private doctor for at least for a couple of years now.

K: Oh, is she a doctor?

A: No, she's a nurse.

K: Oh okay, well.

A: I will argue that nurses know just as much.

K: Oh I think so, I think so.

A: I had you know Judy Scott? She was here yesterday, or the day before yesterday or whatever. She is up in arms at those doctors up at Madigan.

K: Oh, really?

A: They just don't, they just don't respect nurses and give them the place that they should have.

K: Oh, I know.

A: She's quitting the job she has now and moving to another one because basically she can't stand the doctors. So. . .

K: Do you go to Group Health?

A: Yeah

K: And they've taken good care of you?

A: I have no complaints.

K: I agree. I like Group Health a lot.

A: I really have run into so many good people over there.

K: Yeah, that's good.

A: So, but I can see the conflicts. Sometimes they have all these names with letters after their metals.

K: No, exactly.

A: I don't know what it means.

K: Did you read today that Tomas Tranströmer won the Nobel Prize in literature? Swedish Author.

A: One more time.

K: Tomas Tranströmer won the Nobel Prize in literature.

A: Who did?

K: Tomas Tranströmer.

A: He did? Good for you, congratulations.

K: I know it. We needed a Swede to win or a Scandinavian, so I was really happy with him winning.

A: Great, absolutely, good news. I hope I can read something by him now.

K: Do you have problems with your eyes?

A: Maybe tough.

K: Do you have problems with your eyes?

A: Yeah, they don't work as well as I would like them to for sure, but they have improved you know I had this double vision thing.

K: Yeah, that's hard.

A: It's going down anyway and improving. I hope that's. Wow I wonder who is the candidate for the Peace Prize then?

K: Don't know yet, should be coming any day now. I think.

A: Friday I guess is when they say. All right, good news.

K: Anything else you can think of that we should include?

A: No, I think you've covered the ground here.

K: How will you give permission for us to use this interview so other people can read it?

A: What do you want to use it for?

K: Well I kind of, number one transcribe it, and I will send a copy to your children for sure and to you.

A: Okay, no I have no problem with that, you can use it for anything you want.

K: I want to make sure.

A: I don't think I said anything that would upset Iral.

K: No, no you didn't, you didn't at all.

A: I don't think I did.

K: Because you will be part of the oral history collection in the immigrant collection for PLU and stuff. And I think people want to. I'll stop it.