

Interview of Bridget Jensen, by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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[SPEAKER_00]: Now, and what is your full name?
[SPEAKER_00]: Bridget Laura Jensen.
[SPEAKER_00]: I was, my maiden name was Rote.
[SPEAKER_00]: My Danish, my Grundtvigian Danish mother married a German.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I was told in Dannevang when I went to meet my husband's family, you don't need to tell them your last name because...
[SPEAKER_00]: they don't think much of the Germans, because they came from Sønderjylland.
[SPEAKER_00]: So they never knew, but that my mother, they knew her because she had grown up in Dannevang.
[SPEAKER_00]: So.
[SPEAKER_00]: What is the date and place of your birth?
[SPEAKER_00]: I was born in Houston, Texas, in 1932.
[SPEAKER_00]: spent time, grew up there.
[SPEAKER_00]: But, and my mother was always very disappointed that there was not a Danish church in Houston.
[SPEAKER_00]: So we had to go to the next, there was no, even no Norwegian church.
[SPEAKER_00]: So we went to a Swedish church, which was much too formal for her or too rigid sociologically.
[SPEAKER_00]: Which then she said really drove her back to her Grundtvigian roots, because she knew she didn't want to raise her children in that kind of a social atmosphere.
[SPEAKER_00]: So the place we chose that she had my father choose for us to live,
[SPEAKER_00]: was not, was close to different kinds of communities, both Hispanic and black.
[SPEAKER_00]: And she was just a very forward thinking, life loving woman.
[SPEAKER_00]: And all of my sisters and my brother are that way too.
[SPEAKER_01]: What was her name?
[SPEAKER_00]: Her name was Luella Nielsen.
[SPEAKER_00]: Where was she born?
[SPEAKER_00]: She was born in Dannevang.
[SPEAKER_00]: Her parents had just come to this country when she was born.
[SPEAKER_00]: What time was that?
[SPEAKER_00]: That was probably in the 1890s.
[SPEAKER_00]: They did not come to the Midwest first.
[SPEAKER_00]: They went directly there from Denmark.
[SPEAKER_01]: Have you got any idea how they knew about Dannevang?
[SPEAKER_01]: Had they any connection with someone there already?
[SPEAKER_00]: No, they had connections with people in Clinton, Iowa.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they said, there's nothing for you to do here, but we know about this new place where you can get some cheap land.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they came in through Galveston, Texas.
[SPEAKER_00]: And it was not a pleasant surprise.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they had a tough time.
[SPEAKER_00]: But they were very much, as many people in the community, were into education.

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[SPEAKER_00]: And they stressed that for her.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so she went

[SPEAKER_00]: to the university in Houston, Rice University, which also my husband and I both went there.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it's, I would say as universities in the United States go, it's one of the more prestigious.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's not Harvard or Princeton, but it's right up there.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a difficult school.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that's where she met the German father.

[SPEAKER_01]: The background of your grandparents who came from Denmark, would that have been any connection, would there have been any connection with the Grundtvigian tradition there?

[SPEAKER_00]: On Nielsen, the father's side there was, because he was maybe third son in a farming family and there wasn't much for him to do.

[SPEAKER_00]: He had gone

[SPEAKER_00]: to Copenhagen just as some kind of a laborer without much success.

[SPEAKER_00]: And married, which was probably not a very wise thing when you're poor to do.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it was economics that brought them.

[SPEAKER_00]: They just, he had a brother who had immigrated to Iowa.

[SPEAKER_01]: Clinton.

[SPEAKER_00]: Clinton.

[SPEAKER_01]: So that was the connection.

[SPEAKER_00]: That was the connection.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, and then my husband's family, the grandparents, both came from Sønderjylland, you know, they came from South Jutland, and they were, they didn't want to serve in the German Army.

[SPEAKER_00]: The old "bedstefar" never wanted to serve.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, you didn't even talk to him about.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they were very active in the political movement for the plebiscite that was going to be in the early 1920s, was it?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, 1920.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they had posters and plates and all kind of things.

[SPEAKER_00]: They had done to...

[SPEAKER_00]: support that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, and they, I don't know about Bedstemor.

[SPEAKER_00]: They were not married, she was not married when she came.

[SPEAKER_00]: She ran a rooming house in Galveston and met him there.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he had first come to Chicago and then went to Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: And you notice the Texans say

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother always said Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: Texans use their pronunciation, which is Dannevang, which is a total.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I'll be Texan and I'll call it Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: You got married.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: What was the name of your husband?

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[SPEAKER_01]: Alvin Jensen.

[SPEAKER_00]: His, on his father's side, they also had a Clinton, Iowa connection.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they were one of the early families, the Jensen's, Hans Peter Jensen.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he has, that name has been carried on in the Jensen family, Hans Peter.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we had three girls, so we don't have any Hans Peter.

[SPEAKER_00]: And on his mother's side,

[SPEAKER_00]: Peter August(?) Petersen.

[SPEAKER_00]: He gave all of his children that middle name of the little town where he finally settled before he came to this country.

[SPEAKER_00]: He left his place of birth.

[SPEAKER_00]: Anyway.

[SPEAKER_00]: You have three children?

[SPEAKER_00]: Three girls.

[SPEAKER_00]: Three daughters.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Where do they live?

[SPEAKER_00]: The oldest one, Elna Johanna, whom we wanted to call her Johanna after her grandmother.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we thought, no, in America, they'll change it, and they'll end up calling her Jo.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that's too beautiful a name.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we named her after, both of us had an aunt named Elna.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we named her Elna.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I just visited my late husband's cousin, Vern Mikkelsen, whose mother was Elna.

[SPEAKER_00]: Anyway, and... You have two more daughters.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then the middle daughter is my retarded daughter, Lisa.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the youngest one is Bridget again, because I told my husband, I have no more names, and he said, she will be junior.

[SPEAKER_00]: Sure.

[SPEAKER_01]: Good.

[SPEAKER_01]: Where have you lived as an adult?

[SPEAKER_00]: Mostly in Houston, except— Or maybe I should ask, when did you move from Dannevang to— Well, I—the family, after my mother was in the university and married a man who went on to school,

[SPEAKER_00]: She still had family back in Dannevang, sisters, a brother, and parents, but she always lived in Houston.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we had very close ties to Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: My husband grew up in Dannevang, and it was like this marriage made in heaven to find a Dane in the big city, because there weren't many.

[SPEAKER_00]: When I brought him home, I knew my mother liked this big blonde Dane.

[SPEAKER_01]: Also that he came from Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: And also that he came from Dannevang.

[SPEAKER_00]: She knew the family.

[SPEAKER_00]: Where are you living today?

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm still in Houston.

[SPEAKER_00]: We spent some time, my husband studied civil engineering.

[SPEAKER_00]: Got his bachelor's and master's degree.

[SPEAKER_00]: and then went to work for a construction company.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we did a little work in Los Alamos, New Mexico, at the National Laboratory.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he also ended up being in charge, not of the well-known chapel at the Air Force Academy, but all the rest of the Air Force Academy.

[SPEAKER_00]: But then when our retarded daughter

[SPEAKER_00]: was born, I was in Houston, he decided we needed to be close to family to have help with her.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so he wasn't yet in charge of his company, which later in his career he was, but he told his boss, I will travel, but my family will stay in one place.

[SPEAKER_00]: So he did a lot of traveling, even to the Middle East.

[SPEAKER_00]: in the latter part of his career.

[SPEAKER_00]: And yourself?

[SPEAKER_00]: I taught school for a little while before we began our family.

[SPEAKER_00]: And once we began our family, I pretty much was a homemaker, but into a lot of community.

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother encouraged this, because she was always in some

[SPEAKER_00]: political thing that was for some liberal cause.

[SPEAKER_00]: She was always a Girl Scout leader in the League of Women Voters to put out voter registration.

[SPEAKER_00]: They would interview all the candidates.

[SPEAKER_00]: She was always very active.

[SPEAKER_00]: Both of my daughters and all of her granddaughters, she really influenced the family.

[SPEAKER_00]: I look at my nieces and we have jokes, little sayings that we'll say.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she also, this is just funny, but sometimes she wouldn't tell the whole of a story.

[SPEAKER_00]: So if the telephone rang and it was a boy she knew you didn't want to talk to, she would motion to go outside and she would say, oh, she just stepped out.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so oftentimes when we think someone's not telling all of the truth, we say, is that a Mama Lou?

[SPEAKER_00]: And so we stay...

[SPEAKER_00]: We stay honest that way.

[SPEAKER_00]: Have you ever been to Denmark?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh yes, yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Let's see, five times.

[SPEAKER_00]: To see relatives?

[SPEAKER_00]: Sometimes to see relatives, but now I've made some friends that are closer to me than the relatives.

[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, my very best girlfriend is a Danish pastor.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, actually, Allerød is the tiny town, but the parish is—is it Lillerød?

[SPEAKER_00]: Anyway, it's just north of Copenhagen.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay, okay.

[SPEAKER_00]: You get on 16 from the airport.

[SPEAKER_00]: How did you get to know her?

[SPEAKER_00]: She was visiting a relative in Houston, visited our church, and asked the pastor if there were any Danes in the church.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he kind of shook his head and said, oh, yes, there's one family.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she said, oh, who?

[SPEAKER_00]: And we really got along well with that pastor.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we were always encouraging him to try or to take a stand on issues.

[SPEAKER_00]: he was a little bit, because of the way the church is financed in the United States, pastors often are afraid to speak their hearts.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, yes, and this friend helped us get a ship, a lovely ship in our church.

[SPEAKER_00]: And of course, when my husband passed away, I had another bell installed

[SPEAKER_00]: with a Grundtvigian saying on it.

[SPEAKER_00]: Which is?

[SPEAKER_00]: Which is translated to English, to the bath and to the table and to the word I call you.

[SPEAKER_00]: And to me, you don't need social pronouncements so much.

[SPEAKER_00]: The church will just stick to that

[SPEAKER_00]: and then let people go from there with their hearts.

[SPEAKER_01]: So you have a lot of background connected with the Grundtvigian tradition, in Dannevang at least.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, and I think probably my mother kept it more pure.

[SPEAKER_00]: than some of the relatives who stayed in Dannevang because in the city she was free to live her heart.

[SPEAKER_00]: As we viewed the community over the years in Dannevang, it became

[SPEAKER_00]: more and more a reflection of the South Texas society in which it was than we were living away from that.

[SPEAKER_00]: Maybe some of it had to do with her personality, but I had a

[SPEAKER_00]: a very liberal-leaning father who let her come in with these convictions and ideas, which really got passed on.

[SPEAKER_01]: Can you give some examples of how the Dannevang community was—how you got on with the Dannevang community being in the South?

[SPEAKER_00]: For June 5th celebrations, as long as they had "fastelavn", which after World War II, they dropped a lot of the community celebrations.

[SPEAKER_00]: They swear they didn't ever have ring writing.

[SPEAKER_00]: I can remember ring writing.

[SPEAKER_00]: I know they had ring writing.

[SPEAKER_00]: I said, you've forgotten this.

[SPEAKER_00]: So last time I was in Denmark, I bought all these spears and rings, and we're going to do it at the next...

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, June 5th is celebrated in a very South Texas way now.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's a large Hispanic population now, which farms the farms that were owned by, which the Danes owned, but the Hispanic Mexicans farmed them.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they wanted to have a great big barbecue cook-off.

[SPEAKER_00]: So that's what happened in Dannevang on June 5th.

[SPEAKER_00]: Not a word about Danish Constitution Day.
[SPEAKER_00]: But they adopted the stance of the community.
[SPEAKER_00]: They followed the community more, the surrounding community and the way they dealt with both the,
[SPEAKER_00]: well, they didn't call them African Americans.
[SPEAKER_00]: At that time, they called the black population colored.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they called the Hispanic population Mexicans.
[SPEAKER_00]: Whether they were from Mexico or not, they called them Mexicans.
[SPEAKER_00]: And there is still more distinction down there with these various groups than there is in the city.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, we have black,
[SPEAKER_00]: Hispanic judges, policemen, police chiefs.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, it's... Houston is a very open city.
[SPEAKER_00]: Whereas down there, it's still... Now the church has begun to reach out to the Hispanic population in Dannevang.
[SPEAKER_01]: In what way?
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, they started with...
[SPEAKER_00]: like a little summer day camp program and they would get some of the children in.
[SPEAKER_00]: And this offended some of the people and they quit going to church there.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they became Methodist or Presbyterian or whatever.
[SPEAKER_00]: And so it's really a community in transition.
[SPEAKER_01]: You told me a little story about your husband and yourself and your connection with the black population.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, when we were attending this Swedish Lutheran Church in Houston, both when we were in the university and then when we first married.
[SPEAKER_00]: The neighborhood where the church was began being
[SPEAKER_00]: populated by the black community.
[SPEAKER_00]: They built their college there, Texas Southern University, and there was still segregation.
[SPEAKER_01]: But since all— There was still racial segregation.
[SPEAKER_00]: There was still racial segregation, and this was in the 19— That means?
[SPEAKER_00]: That the black students did not go to white universities.
[SPEAKER_00]: And that, of course, you wouldn't go to a black university because the academics there was probably not as good, even though it was supposed to be separate but equal.
[SPEAKER_00]: But it was not.
[SPEAKER_00]: It was separate, but it was not equal.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, when the black university came in, many of the people who had lived there were moving to other neighborhoods.
[SPEAKER_00]: So the church was surrounded by a black population.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I remember it was my mother that encouraged the pastor to go out into the community.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he said, oh, everybody will move out.
[SPEAKER_00]: And she said, well, I won't move out.

[SPEAKER_00]: And his prediction was right, that some people did leave, just as some people have left

[SPEAKER_00]: the EL, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, because we had a vote on ordaining gay and lesbian pastors.

[SPEAKER_00]: Some of them have left.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, back to the 19... This was early 1950.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had just graduated from college.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was before we married.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was long before any of the Supreme Court rulings or long before

[SPEAKER_00]: any laws banning segregation, but we knew it was the right thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that, looking back on it, I consider that part of the heritage that both of our parents had, which was everybody's equal.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so we became the youth sponsors.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we had a group of about

[SPEAKER_00]: 20 young people of whom maybe five or six were African American.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we went to the public beach in Galveston, Texas.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had three carloads of kids.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Al and I were in charge of them.

[SPEAKER_00]: That was sort of dumb, but anyway, we were young and dumb.

[SPEAKER_00]: But he was threatened on that beach

[SPEAKER_00]: with a man with a rifle, told us to get off the beach.

[SPEAKER_00]: That was illegal and what would we think we were doing.

[SPEAKER_01]: It was illegal.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was, but we did it.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so we did get off the beach.

[SPEAKER_00]: So the next time we took them on an outing, because we thought, these kids ought to have an outing, we found some people.

[SPEAKER_00]: These were friends that my mother had who were pretty wealthy and owned two houses down on the bay, which isn't really the beach, but there are piers and places you can swim.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we decided we'd put

[SPEAKER_00]: the girls in one house and the boys in the other house, and it was off of a road.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so after we had had our campfire and all of that, the kids were bedding down, we heard gunshots out by the highway.

[SPEAKER_00]: So my husband went out there and he said, came back and told me, I must sleep in the car across the road leading into this compound, into these houses.

[SPEAKER_00]: because there's a man with a gun riding up and down the highway.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I could hear the gun all that night, and I thought, oh, I haven't been married very long.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't want to lose my husband.

[SPEAKER_00]: But the man was only shooting up in the air.

[SPEAKER_00]: And how he knew we had that group there, I don't know.

[SPEAKER_00]: But it was a frightening thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: the words to Unafraid, which we had learned as children, really came to us.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because we knew it was the right thing to do.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then when they heard that we had done that in Dannevang, they thought we were crazy.

[SPEAKER_00]: And ever since then, except for the fact that my husband

[SPEAKER_00]: was very successful in his business and has been very generous to the Dannevang community, extremely generous.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know what they really think.

[SPEAKER_00]: We're very close to that community.

[SPEAKER_00]: We support their church.

[SPEAKER_00]: We support the Danish heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: Al built them a museum, which was a considerable thing for us to do.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, he always was very humble.

[SPEAKER_00]: He didn't drive fancy cars.

[SPEAKER_00]: Very good story.

[SPEAKER_00]: Anyway.

[SPEAKER_00]: Good to hear.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think I'll move on a little to this meeting.

[SPEAKER_01]: How come you have come to Danebod for a meeting?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, Al never would take very long vacations.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the best I could ever get him to do was just a few days.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so these folk meetings, which, if you fly to Minneapolis and rent a car, you can

[SPEAKER_00]: leave on Wednesday and be back home by Sunday night.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that fit our lives.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it was just like, well, it was like we were meeting with people we were like.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we loved the songs, just loved to sing the songs.

[SPEAKER_00]: And little by little, we found the people in Dannevang weren't singing the songs anymore.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it is my daughter, Bridget, who has reintroduced those people because they had a president of their heritage society

[SPEAKER_00]: And she said, well, when are we going to sing?

[SPEAKER_00]: And he said, well, I don't sing.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she said, but Danes sing.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we sing now down there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Just a lot of the same songs we sing here.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then, so two times a year we would go out to Solvang.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think we started it, well, we waited until our children were a little older.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we didn't go when they were babies.

[SPEAKER_00]: Maybe when they were in, the oldest one was in high school, we started going.

[SPEAKER_00]: For a meeting out there?

[SPEAKER_00]: For the meetings here and out there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: So you've been for this meeting for how long time?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, I would say since, not that long.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, since the 80s.

[SPEAKER_00]: Since the 1980s.

[SPEAKER_00]: What does it give you?

[SPEAKER_00]: It's sort of like, you know how Baptists have revivals and things like that?

[SPEAKER_00]: It's sort of a Grundtvigian revival.

[SPEAKER_00]: You sing songs about peace.

[SPEAKER_00]: They're in there right now talking about the judicial system in the United States and the kinds of things we can do to improve it.

[SPEAKER_00]: They talk about the environment, which we care.

[SPEAKER_00]: If you get Bridget Jr.

[SPEAKER_00]: started, she's such an environmentalist.

[SPEAKER_00]: and growing vegetables organically.

[SPEAKER_00]: You just get with people who care about the same things you care about.

[SPEAKER_01]: And that's always... That's a feeling you don't get so often other places.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't get it hardly any other place, especially in Texas.

[SPEAKER_00]: Fortunately, Houston's better than Dallas.

[SPEAKER_00]: I wouldn't live in Dallas if you paid me to, next door to the Bushes and that sort of thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: But you really don't get it other places.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's... I would touch upon politics, which is good to...

[SPEAKER_01]: get a few comments on that.

[SPEAKER_01]: You're a liberal, obviously, and your daughter is a liberal.

[SPEAKER_01]: This group here, could you say it's a liberal group?

[SPEAKER_01]: Not everybody.

[SPEAKER_00]: You notice the last question to the man who was speaking about the Middle East and Afghanistan.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know if you heard that lecture.

[SPEAKER_00]: I wasn't there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, a lady brought up the building of this mosque near Ground Zero where the bombing occurred.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I would guess that probably 80, 85% of the people here would say, go ahead and build the mosque.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a free country.

[SPEAKER_00]: But there would be 15% that would say, no, don't do that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But they're entitled to that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think for the most part this group of people is very, very open to a society that's evolving because certainly it's a little archaic that we sing songs from the

[SPEAKER_00]: 19th century and early 20th century and we know we know it but it's in a way it's honoring the tradition it's not that i'm going to go home and tell my grandchildren they can't listen to popular music

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I know how it bothered me when I was in Denmark for St.

[SPEAKER_00]: Hans, and they weren't singing the old melody.

[SPEAKER_00]: They were singing something that the chipmunks or somebody had done for St.

[SPEAKER_00]: Hans.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my friend said, oh, Bridget, you know, that's what the young people want.

[SPEAKER_00]: Let them do it.

[SPEAKER_01]: They can't sing the old one.

[SPEAKER_00]: They don't know it, but it's beautiful.

[SPEAKER_01]: Did you say these people are open to a new society that is evolving?

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, I think they are.

[SPEAKER_01]: Could you elaborate on that?

[SPEAKER_00]: big, tremendous issue in our church was this ordination of the gay and lesbians.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we were here during that vote last year, and everybody was gathered around the computer that had the live coverage.

[SPEAKER_00]: And when the vote went so that they could be ordained, everybody just clapped.

[SPEAKER_00]: So they were pretty much for moving on in this direction.

[SPEAKER_00]: And just like I said, most of them, not all, but most of them would be open to a society that has different ethnic backgrounds.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because you have to... Well, like, I think you interviewed Dagmar.

[SPEAKER_00]: She's married to a man from India.

[SPEAKER_00]: Fascinating.

[SPEAKER_00]: Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: Fascinating fella.

[SPEAKER_00]: Just fascinating.

[SPEAKER_00]: And...

[SPEAKER_00]: And just one generation ago, it was terrible that my mother married a German.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, you know, hello!

[SPEAKER_00]: And so now we have people are adopting a lot of oriental babies, black, a white family will adopt a black child, and the world moves on.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think

[SPEAKER_00]: NFS (that is Grundtvig's first name initials; hbs) would be happy to see people exploring greater human limits.

[SPEAKER_01]: Which one?

[SPEAKER_00]: NFS Grundtvig would be happy to see people who were broadening their view of humanity.

[SPEAKER_00]: When we

[SPEAKER_00]: dedicated the Kæmpehøj for my husband's grave.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I had to ship stones all the way from Minnesota to Dannevang to build that thing, because it's on the Gulf Coastal plain.

[SPEAKER_00]: We don't have that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we were in Denmark one time, up on the northern part of Zeeland, and went into this Viking.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he said, oh, look at that.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's what I want for a gravestone.

[SPEAKER_00]: And sure enough, when he had leukemia, and when he passed away, in his last days I said, Al, you're going to get a Kæmpehøj.

[SPEAKER_00]: But that took me about a year to do, to get it all shipped down there.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we sang things like The Word,

[SPEAKER_00]: and when the world began, you know, in the beginning, and Built on a Rock the Church Does Stand, this sort of thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: We went back to our roots, and all of our family was there, and that was a very uniting time with our feet planted in those roots.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that wasn't just my girls, it was all the cousins and aunts and uncles.

[SPEAKER_00]: I had to fly in medisterpølse from Solvang, California, because no place in Texas makes it, and I don't make it.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we had to have a Danish meal.

[SPEAKER_01]: You obviously consider yourself a Grundtvigian.

[SPEAKER_00]: Do you consider yourself... Yes, I consider myself a Grundtvigian.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, I expect it so.

[SPEAKER_01]: And you're telling... Would you say... Why?

[SPEAKER_01]: In what way does it differ you from your neighbor, from your... Well, from people back home in Houston?

[SPEAKER_00]: I think I have more joy in life than they do.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because of the openness it gives you in heart and mind.

[SPEAKER_00]: And when we close ourselves up it only hurts us.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think people close themselves up out of fear.

[SPEAKER_00]: You know, I don't know what a lot of things would be like.

[SPEAKER_00]: I didn't know what it would be like to have an African American president, but I thought he was the best candidate.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I voted for him.

[SPEAKER_00]: I didn't know.

[SPEAKER_00]: You just have to go out in faith that some of these things

[SPEAKER_00]: search your heart and if it seems right, go for it.

[SPEAKER_00]: And if it seems wrong, be willing to face a little ridicule.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's a strength you have within yourself.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, it has been transfused to me.

[SPEAKER_01]: By your tradition?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Both my mother and my in-laws, my husband's parents.

[SPEAKER_00]: I didn't tell how when we took our group down to the Dannevang area, they were the only ones that housed our black young people.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they were, for several years, kind of looked down upon because they had done that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we were going down there for some kind of a convention or something.

[SPEAKER_00]: So they had them spend the night.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had to have all the young people spend the night in different homes.

[SPEAKER_00]: And other homes wouldn't take them.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think it was a little hard for Al's parents to take them because it was so against the mores of the community.

[SPEAKER_00]: But they loved us and they trusted us.

[SPEAKER_00]: And in their hearts, I think they felt that was really the right thing to do, even though the Jensens let the black young people sleep at their house.

[SPEAKER_00]: They endured some ridicule.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the time they died, everyone in the community loved them, because they were lovable.

Interview of Bridget Jensen, by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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[SPEAKER_01]: Very good, very good.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think they'll stop here.