

Interview of Carol Ekberg by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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Carol Ekberg, Danebod FM_hbs.srt

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: What is your full name?
[SPEAKER_00]: Carol June Olsen Ekberg.
[SPEAKER_00]: Born July 12th, 1937, which makes me 73.
[SPEAKER_00]: Wow.
[SPEAKER_00]: My father in Denmark was known as Albert Carl.
[SPEAKER_00]: And for whatever reason, when he came to America, when he immigrated, when he was 28, he became known as Carl Albert.
[SPEAKER_00]: His name also Carl in Denmark was with a K. In America, it became with a C.
[SPEAKER_00]: My mother was Thura Faberg Madsen Olsen.
[SPEAKER_00]: My father immigrated from Denmark in 1913.
[SPEAKER_00]: He was 28 years old.
[SPEAKER_00]: He left the family farm in Silkeborg.
[SPEAKER_00]: He was one of eight children.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I was foolish enough or not clever enough to ask him more questions that I wished I had.
[SPEAKER_00]: But I know that he came
[SPEAKER_00]: probably basically because the farm was not large enough to support his brothers and sisters, so he chose to strike out.
[SPEAKER_00]: He left with another man friend from Denmark also, Chris Mouston, and they first started, I know they landed in New York at Ellis Island, and I know they went through Chicago, and then they ended up in Lake Benton, Arco, Tyler area, but his first farming, which is what he knew to do,
[SPEAKER_00]: was in Arco, which is about 10 miles north here from Tyler.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he said he farmed on what they called the island, but it technically was not an island because you could drive out to it, but it was surrounded by water mostly.
[SPEAKER_01]: Do you know more of the place he came from?
[SPEAKER_01]: It's a farm, and I have been there.
[SPEAKER_00]: but I couldn't begin to tell you.
[SPEAKER_00]: And the home where he grew up in is long gone, but the farm place is still there and still in relatives, but somewhat distant relatives, cousins down the road.
[SPEAKER_00]: A side thing, when I built my home here in Tyler, when I moved here, I made a fireplace of rocks and the rocks were all sentimental to me, like from the school where I went and from different farms where I lived.
[SPEAKER_00]: So my cousin in Denmark sent a rock
[SPEAKER_00]: from the farm where my father grew up, and that is sawed in half on the fireplace.
[SPEAKER_00]: That's the only rock that cost anything, and that only cost because I paid the postage, which was \$50.
[SPEAKER_00]: So I don't really know, other than that he grew up in Silkeborg, and he mentioned Skandeborg a lot.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I know one of his nieces lives in Aarhus, but I think, I don't know how she even ended up in Aarhus.

[SPEAKER_00]: You know, if it was from,

[SPEAKER_00]: living near the farm or what, I don't know.

[SPEAKER_01]: Do you have any idea how he came to, why he came to Tyler area?

[SPEAKER_00]: I think because it was a Danish community, which he knew, as did his friend Chris.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was comfortable here.

[SPEAKER_00]: They spoke his language.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, he still continued to speak, to learn English, which by the time I came along, he was proficient in English.

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother and he spoke Danish at home.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we were not, unfortunately, we were not taught Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: They spoke English to us, but if they had a secret or something, then they spoke Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: So in hindsight, I wished I had learned more Danish.

[SPEAKER_01]: The daily language would be English in your home.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, yes, yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: But for some, some words were always Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I know when I went to country school, the teacher was asking about what we'd had for breakfast and how many had had bacon.

[SPEAKER_00]: And all the kids raised their hands except me.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I thought, poor me, I didn't have this well-balanced breakfast that they had.

[SPEAKER_00]: I did have bacon, but it was called flæsk.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I didn't know that I was eating what they were eating.

[SPEAKER_00]: So some words, you know, didn't translate over and they used them, but yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then he came to Tyler.

[SPEAKER_01]: Right.

[SPEAKER_01]: And he met your mother?

[SPEAKER_00]: No, well, he met my mother, but

[SPEAKER_00]: She also was going with him and another man.

[SPEAKER_00]: She married the other man, Hans, and my father then married a lady named Christine.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Christine died when my father's children, my half-brother and sister, were about two and three years old.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my mother's husband died when her children were like six and two.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then since they'd known each other previously, they redated and married each other, and then they had my brother and I.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it was a yours, mine, and ours family.

[SPEAKER_01]: What was her background?

[SPEAKER_00]: Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: Her father was born in Denmark, near the town of Faaborg. On Fyn.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that's the name he took them for his last name.

[SPEAKER_00]: Her mother was born in Iowa, and they lived in Iowa.

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother was born in Iowa also.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then they moved on up to Tyler, so.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: What was your schooling like?

[SPEAKER_01]: Where did you go to school?

[SPEAKER_00]: I went to country school out in Marshville, which is about six miles from Tyler.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then when I was to start fourth grade, my father and mother bought a farm near Tyler.

[SPEAKER_00]: Up until then, they had rented.

[SPEAKER_00]: They bought a small farm.

[SPEAKER_00]: But to my father, it was a big farm compared to Danish farms.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was 55 acres, which to him was quite large.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay, so that was very close to the Tyler School.

[SPEAKER_00]: So then I finished my grade school, high school at Tyler, and then I went to college at Mankato, which is about 120 miles from here, in Minnesota, to become a teacher, which I then taught school in Pipestone, and Lake Benton, and Iowa, and then married, had children, lived in Colorado, and then ended up in Germany for 10 years, where I also taught school to American children.

[SPEAKER_01]: Your husband, what was his name?

[SPEAKER_00]: He was from Elkton, Ekborg.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he graduated from high school in Elkton, South Dakota, which is about 13 miles from Tyler.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we met when I was teaching school in Pipestone.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then we ended up in Omaha, Nebraska.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I taught in Council Bluffs, Iowa, which is right across the river.

[SPEAKER_00]: Twin City type thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then we moved to Colorado Springs.

[SPEAKER_00]: where we lived for eight years, and then we moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where we lived for 10 years, and then we moved to Germany, where we lived for 10 years and my husband died while we were in Germany, which is why I ended up coming back to Tyler.

[SPEAKER_01]: So.

[SPEAKER_01]: So you came directly back to, settled here in Tyler?

[SPEAKER_00]: Sort of.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had a home in Pueblo, Colorado that I sold first, went to that house and painted and sold.

[SPEAKER_00]: But before that, my husband and I had bought the farm from my mother.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we had bought a, separated a lot so that the lot was strictly ours where the farm ended up being my brother's and mine.

[SPEAKER_00]: So the lot where I built our house was part of my father's farm, but was just belonging to me.

[SPEAKER_01]: Your husband, was he of Danish background?

[SPEAKER_00]: No, poor guy.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was Swedish.

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh.

[SPEAKER_00]: Which I always gave him grief about, but yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Do you have children?

[SPEAKER_00]: I have two daughters.

[SPEAKER_00]: Olga.

[SPEAKER_00]: Olga.

[SPEAKER_00]: was born in 64.

[SPEAKER_00]: What's that make her?

[SPEAKER_00]: And Oralee we adopted and she is now 42.

[SPEAKER_01]: And they live where?

[SPEAKER_00]: They live in Colorado.

[SPEAKER_00]: Olga is a mathematical engineer who works for the Highway Department, Department of Transportation.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Oralee is an OB-GYN doctor and has a practice in Brighton, Colorado.

[SPEAKER_00]: Actually, she lives in Brighton.

[SPEAKER_00]: The practice is in Denver, Colorado.

[SPEAKER_00]: And there are two grandchildren, both from Orly, Skye and Aiden.

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: You're here at Tyler, the Tyler Folk meeting.

[SPEAKER_00]: Mm-hmm.

[SPEAKER_01]: How come?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, for one thing, I was asked to be a storyteller, which I did on, whatever, Thursday.

[SPEAKER_00]: But also a friend was coming from Livermore, California,

[SPEAKER_00]: And she was a high school classmate of mine, and she wanted to go, and she just likes to go with someone, and I enjoy it.

[SPEAKER_00]: This is the third time I've come, so I'm not a, so far haven't been a steady regular every year attendee, but I just, I do enjoy it.

[SPEAKER_00]: My family tells me if something says made in Denmark, even if it's a piece of manure, I would buy it.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I have very, very strong,

[SPEAKER_00]: feelings toward being Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm very proud of it.

[SPEAKER_00]: My home reflects it, other than that I don't speak the language too well, but I just really like my Danish heritage.

[SPEAKER_01]: Would you say you are Dane?

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Absolutely.

[SPEAKER_01]: But you're an American citizen?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: How can you explain that?

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, it is an interesting... In what way are you a Dane?

[SPEAKER_00]: My blood, my love, but I also love America.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it's a kind of a dichotomy there.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm just very proud to have my Danish heritage, but I certainly am also proud to be an American.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think my daughter is also very proud of her Danish heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: But my adopted daughter, even though it was kind of foisted on her and, you know, she grew up knowing that we were Danish, she is not Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: So she is, um, German and Filipino and Hawaiian.

[SPEAKER_00]: So her, her loyalties to the Danish things are, she appreciates them and she knows I'm going to like them if she gets something, but it's not her taste.

[SPEAKER_00]: So, um,

[SPEAKER_00]: I do think of myself as Danish, but American.

[SPEAKER_00]: I sell things on eBay.

[SPEAKER_00]: My trader name, my username is Danishborn, which is a lie because I wasn't born in Denmark.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I get comments from different buyers who say, were you really born in Denmark?

[SPEAKER_00]: No.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I get comments from other people who are Danish, who are just wondering about my background.

[SPEAKER_01]: What do you...

[SPEAKER_01]: like about this folk meeting, since you've come here?

[SPEAKER_00]: The camaraderie.

[SPEAKER_00]: The people just all seem to be very friendly.

[SPEAKER_00]: And many of them can connect to my family if they're from here at all.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, who was your mother?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, I knew her.

[SPEAKER_00]: Or your whatever.

[SPEAKER_00]: And was your sister so-and-so?

[SPEAKER_00]: And so there's a connection there.

[SPEAKER_00]: I love the singing.

[SPEAKER_00]: And when they sing the Danish songs, that doesn't help me much.

[SPEAKER_00]: So then I just sit and listen.

[SPEAKER_00]: because I can't even, I'm going to slaughter that if I sing it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I pick and choose the lectures I attend.

[SPEAKER_00]: I thought last night's was really good.

[SPEAKER_00]: The one I'm missing today didn't, I wasn't going to go to it even before we set this up.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I pick and choose what I like.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think it's reinforcing my love of being Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's bringing out a lot of,

[SPEAKER_01]: Are there values in this tradition that goes for the present and also the future, you think?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, sure.

[SPEAKER_00]: Sure.

[SPEAKER_01]: What could that be?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I learn more about it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I go home and I want to not trace my family history because I really have a very good

[SPEAKER_00]: family tree from my uncle Thorp in Denmark who sent it going back to the 1500s I think and it's more than a family tree of just names and when they were born there's a booklet that goes with them that tells what so-and-so did and how he died and one was drunk and got killed on

the you know it's they didn't gloss it over they it tells exactly how they lived but I go home then and I'm more interested in reading again more about Denmark and

[SPEAKER_00]: You know, it kind of renews my interest and my love of it.

[SPEAKER_00]: If we're ever traveling anywhere and there's a Scandinavian store, my kids know I'm going to want to stop there, you know, just to look at it and whatever.

[SPEAKER_01]: This group has been making traditions out of the Grundtvigian Church in America.

[SPEAKER_01]: Right.

[SPEAKER_01]: How do you see that and how does that fit in with your life?

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know that that really affects me so much, but I do believe the happy Danes.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I know that I'm one of those.

[SPEAKER_00]: You know, very fun, humorous, positive.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I get that from it, but I don't know that I ever sit and study it and analyze it and think, would this be Grundtvigian and would this not?

[SPEAKER_00]: I know that when I was confirmed here at Danebod, one of our lessons, and to this day I don't know why we had to do that, not our lessons, our assignment, we had to write all the hymns that were written by Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I don't know, write down the names, not the whole song, just the names.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it was kind of a, not a contest for a prize, but it was who could get the most.

[SPEAKER_00]: And at that time, nor today, do I understand how that helped me in any way.

[SPEAKER_00]: how that helped me in my confirmation and my path toward God.

[SPEAKER_00]: To me, it was just a useless assignment.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I was baptized at the church, confirmed at the church, and married at the church.

[SPEAKER_01]: Do you feel that you have incorporated some Grundtvigian ideas into your daily life?

[SPEAKER_00]: Sure, sure.

[SPEAKER_00]: My belief in God.

[SPEAKER_00]: my outlook, positive.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Very good.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think that's about it.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay, that was easy.

[SPEAKER_00]: Thanks very much.

[SPEAKER_00]: You're welcome.

[SPEAKER_00]: Thanks very much.