

Interview of Dagmar Muthamia by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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Input filename
Dagmar Muthamia all_hbs.srt

[SPEAKER_00]: And what's your full name?
[SPEAKER_00]: Dagmar Marie Telfer Muthamia. (mpk)
[SPEAKER_00]: And the names of your parents?
[SPEAKER_00]: My mother was Asta Marie Ingeborg Rodholm Telfer.
[SPEAKER_00]: My father was Robert Griffith Telfer.
[SPEAKER_00]: And the Danish background, how was that in your family?
[SPEAKER_00]: My mother was 100% Danish.
[SPEAKER_00]: Her father immigrated from Denmark.
[SPEAKER_00]: And her mother was born in the United States, but her father and mother both were immigrants from Denmark.
[SPEAKER_00]: Where did they come from?
[SPEAKER_00]: My mother's father, Soren Peter Damsgaard Peterson Radholm, he was born in Mørke, in Randers Amt.
[SPEAKER_00]: north of Aarhus, and then his family moved to Aarhus where he grew up.
[SPEAKER_00]: My grandmother's father came from Bulvig (? not sure about the name; hbs), near Ringkøbing, near the Nisssum fjord.
[SPEAKER_00]: And his name is Kjølhedede.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he was married to Karoline.
[SPEAKER_00]: His name is Kjølhedede.
[SPEAKER_00]: See, I can't say it properly.
[SPEAKER_00]: K-J-
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, that's it.
[SPEAKER_00]: And the farm is still there.
[SPEAKER_00]: I've been there.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he married Karoline Amalie Brandt, and she was from Fyn.
[SPEAKER_00]: She was born in Avnslev and grew up in Ullerslev.
[SPEAKER_01]: And they decided to emigrate.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, Peter Kjølhedede...
[SPEAKER_00]: attended the Askov Folk School and prepared to become a minister.
[SPEAKER_00]: In America?
[SPEAKER_00]: In America.
[SPEAKER_01]: How come?
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, he was an illegitimate child, and his grandfather died, and the farm, the Kjølhedede farm, went to the Poulsens, I think, another family.
[SPEAKER_00]: So his mother married and had more children, leaving him...
[SPEAKER_00]: and another half-brother to be raised by their grandmother, but they had to begin working on farms.
[SPEAKER_00]: And so he did, for many years, work on the farms.
[SPEAKER_00]: But he got this opportunity to go to Askov, which I'm sure that means he had other education before he got to Askov, and to prepare to be a minister.
[SPEAKER_00]: And then he
[SPEAKER_00]: was I think the Indre Mission actually financed those trips for people from Askov.

[SPEAKER_00]: In the meantime, Karoline Amalie Brandt, her family were mill makers in Fyn.
[SPEAKER_00]: And so her grandfather and her father were both, first they helped make mills and then they were millers, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: So she was actually born in a mill, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: And she became a housekeeper and worked in quite a few different places.
[SPEAKER_00]: And she ended up becoming the house mother of the Hvide Hus in Askov Folk School.
[SPEAKER_00]: So that's where they met.
[SPEAKER_00]: So he went and he sent for her quite quickly.
[SPEAKER_00]: Around what time was that?
[SPEAKER_00]: Gosh, without my notes, I can't remember the exact dates.
[SPEAKER_00]: No, okay.
[SPEAKER_00]: Late 1870s, early 1880s.
[SPEAKER_00]: Quite early, actually.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: Because Peter was present at the meeting where there's a split in the church, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, his notes are in one of the books that's published about that split.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they were married, I think, in Muskegon, Michigan.
[SPEAKER_00]: And my grandmother, Momo, was born in Muskegon.
[SPEAKER_00]: He served in Illinois.
[SPEAKER_00]: The church name is escaping me at the moment.
[SPEAKER_00]: He served in a lot of places.
[SPEAKER_00]: Here in Minnesota in Albert Lea, I think it's called, L-E-A, I'm not sure how to pronounce that.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he served in Lookingglass, Nebraska.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he served in Newell, Iowa for a long time.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he was part of the ministers who helped to start Grand View.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he sent my grandmother there in 1898, which was like the second or third year of Grand View.
[SPEAKER_00]: And then that's my...
[SPEAKER_00]: That's my grandmother's family, and they're already here in the United States.
[SPEAKER_00]: Then my grandfather, his father was also an illegitimate child, but his mother was related to the owner of the Rodholm farm, which is also in Randers, near Mørke.
[SPEAKER_00]: His father and his mother were... His mother did not marry his... Which one am I talking about?
[SPEAKER_00]: So my grandfather's father was one who's illegitimate, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: So he married, had my grandfather.
[SPEAKER_00]: They had a couple of children who died, but they ended up with four living children.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I think my grandfather was the only one born in Mørke.
[SPEAKER_00]: and they had a little farm, and I think they lost the farm.
[SPEAKER_00]: It's still there, it's in Bale, B-A-L-E, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: And then they moved to Aarhus, and I think my great-grandfather then worked in the brewery.
[SPEAKER_00]: I think there was only one in Aarhus at the time.

[SPEAKER_00]: They lived near the cathedral, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And they did receive good education, so I think the owner of the farm probably provided them the funds for that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But when my grandfather was ready to go to university, there was some problem with why he couldn't go to university.

[SPEAKER_00]: Money, whatever.

[SPEAKER_00]: So his father went back and contacted his natural father, who had a small business somewhere in Randers.

[SPEAKER_00]: But he had had a son by his wife who had immigrated to upstate New York.

[SPEAKER_00]: So he wrote to this son in upstate New York and said, will you please pay for a passage for my grandson, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: So I actually have a tape with my grandfather talking about this, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: So my grandfather immigrated to New York arriving I think January 4, 1892.

[SPEAKER_00]: We have the letter.

[SPEAKER_00]: We have lots of documentation on this family.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he went to upstate New York.

[SPEAKER_00]: He worked on a farm for a while.

[SPEAKER_00]: He hated it.

[SPEAKER_00]: He got sick.

[SPEAKER_00]: He went back to Denmark.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I'm not quite sure how it happened, but within a year or two, he came back to the United States to Des Moines, Iowa, where he became a seminary student.

[SPEAKER_00]: at Grandview, which is where he met my grandmother.

[SPEAKER_00]: They married in Newell, married by Peter Kjølhed.

[SPEAKER_00]: And after the wedding, in the morning, my grandmother played the piano for some service in the afternoon.

[SPEAKER_00]: In the meantime, my grandfather's sister had come from Aarhus, and she was at the wedding.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so the three of them got on a train and went to Fredsville, Iowa.

[SPEAKER_00]: where Bedstefar S.D.

[SPEAKER_00]: Rodholm became a minister, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And then within a year or two, they brought the parents over from the United States, the Rodholm parents, the man who worked in the brewery, and he became the bell ringer of the church in Aarhus.

[SPEAKER_00]: I didn't, Friendsville.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then they brought the other two siblings over.

[SPEAKER_00]: No, they brought one of the two other ones.

[SPEAKER_00]: The daughter Marie came on her own.

[SPEAKER_00]: She was already there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Then they brought Anna.

[SPEAKER_00]: She came.

[SPEAKER_00]: There was one daughter, Petra, who stayed in Denmark and never came.

[SPEAKER_00]: So the daughter who came and was at the wedding is Joy Ibsen's grandmother, who is here today.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's how we're related.

[SPEAKER_00]: But the reason that I brought our whole family up for your studies
[SPEAKER_00]: is because my grandfather was very, very much a Grundtvigian.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he was in the church from, was this 1901, to whenever he retired in the 40s.
[SPEAKER_00]: He translated 150 Danish hymns, many of which we've been singing, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: And many of them Grundtvigian.
[SPEAKER_00]: I think in spirit they were all Grundtvigian, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: But he was...
[SPEAKER_00]: He was not an otherworldly person.
[SPEAKER_00]: He was very much of the tradition of, this is the beautiful life that God has given us, and we will worship it.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, we will appreciate it, and we will love it, and we love God because of that.
[SPEAKER_00]: I know Grundtvig wrote otherworldly hymns, but Bedstefar did not translate those, as far as I can tell.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he was president of Grandview for a few years, and he was president of the, was he president?
[SPEAKER_00]: I'm not sure, I can't remember that.
[SPEAKER_00]: He was president of Grandview for a few years.
[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, when my mother was born, she was born at Grandview.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they ended up with, I think Momo had 11 births and raised eight children.
[SPEAKER_00]: They lived in Askov, Minnesota,
[SPEAKER_00]: from 1919 to 1926.
[SPEAKER_00]: And they were briefly in Tyler like for one year.
[SPEAKER_01]: What is the date and place of your birth?
[SPEAKER_00]: August 20, 1941 in Berkeley, California.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah?
[SPEAKER_01]: And what was your schooling like?
[SPEAKER_01]: Where did you go to school?
[SPEAKER_00]: I went to public schools in California for primary through secondary.
[SPEAKER_00]: I went to Stanford University in California for my bachelor's degree in history, and then I trained to become a teacher at San Francisco State.
[SPEAKER_00]: After many years, I went back to school and got a master's of business administration from California State University at Dominguez Hills.
[SPEAKER_00]: And along the way, I'm a lifelong learner.
[SPEAKER_00]: So I have courses many places and two certificates, one in occupational safety and one in teaching English as a second language for fun.
[SPEAKER_00]: And also I have 14 units of electronics for fun.
[SPEAKER_00]: So if that's Grundtvigian lifelong learning, I've got it.
[SPEAKER_01]: I think it would be good just to get the link also with your parents because now you talked about your grandparents.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_00]: What was the name of your parents?
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my mother, Asta Marie, she didn't like Ingeborg, so she was Asta Marie Rodholm.

[SPEAKER_00]: So she had her primary schooling in Askov, and then they moved back to Grandview, and Grandview offered an amazing opportunity for the staff members because their children could go

[SPEAKER_00]: to school at that time, high school and two years of college.

[SPEAKER_00]: So mother did that.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then she was trying to figure out what to do with her life.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she had a sister, Dagmar, the one I'm named after, who fell in love with somebody who lived in California, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: But it was Danish American, because there were communities, Danish American communities in California.

[SPEAKER_00]: So she left, and somehow mother, between wanting to have an adventure and go to Alaska or somewhere to finish her education, and my grandmother wanting her to take care of her sister Dagmar, she followed Aunt Dagmar to California in 1934.

[SPEAKER_00]: Where to?

[SPEAKER_00]: To Berkeley, California.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, no, they, yeah, they went to Oakland, California.

[SPEAKER_00]: And...

[SPEAKER_00]: and they were also in San Francisco and Alameda.

[SPEAKER_00]: Mother attended the Danish church in Oakland, which I'm not sure it had a permanent minister at that time, because in the meantime, her older sister had married Enok Mortensen, and he had the church in Salinas.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think he might have come up at that time to preach in the Oakland church too.

[SPEAKER_00]: I know that's where I was baptized by Enok.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I know a few, well, I also know that Joy Ibsen's father also became the minister in Oakland, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: Excuse me, I think that the time is running.

[SPEAKER_01]: So dinner, yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: We'd go on just after, couldn't we?

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh sure, that would be fine.

[SPEAKER_01]: So we'll just stop for now.

[SPEAKER_01]: Could you tell me a little about your childhood?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, as I mentioned before, I was born in Berkeley, California.

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother had finished college at the University of California, Berkeley and became a social worker.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then my father independently was a social worker.

[SPEAKER_00]: They met, married, and I was born there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Then we briefly lived in Salinas with Uncle Enok Mortensen when I was a baby.

[SPEAKER_00]: World War II then started.

[SPEAKER_00]: I was born in August of 1941.

[SPEAKER_00]: Pearl Harbor was bombed in December.

[SPEAKER_00]: My father took a job with the Red Cross in Phoenix.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then he joined the military.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my mother ended up moving with me to Des Moines.

[SPEAKER_00]: to live in an apartment behind where her retired parents were, the Rodholm parents.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then that's where my brother was born.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we had a few years of living with our, or with me, with the grandparents.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then after the war, we moved back to California and

[SPEAKER_00]: back to the Bay Area and then Sacramento and then back to Southern California.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I already mentioned my education.

[SPEAKER_00]: And mother always kept the Danish traditions in the house, the Danish stories.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she was, being a preacher's daughter, she always said she had enough of the church

[SPEAKER_00]: life.

[SPEAKER_00]: So she took us to church often enough to make sure that we knew we were Danish Lutherans.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we would drive across from, I remember it in Southern California, we'd drive across the Los Angeles area from where we lived to go to the Danish church in Los Angeles.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my grandmother visited us often after my grandfather died and

[SPEAKER_00]: She would usually come for a month at a time, so I had a lot of time to spend with her.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know if it's part of being Danish or part of being American of that age that you do things with your hands.

[SPEAKER_00]: You have to do needlework and stuff.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I learned a lot of that from her, which was really quite a heritage to have.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then many of our family members, too.

[SPEAKER_00]: This is post-World War II, and people began to have enough money to take trips.

[SPEAKER_00]: But it was before the time people would just go and stay in a resort or a hotel.

[SPEAKER_00]: So our families would always come and stay with us.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then we would come and visit our families.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: One of the major trips was in 1949 when I was eight, and that was here, to Tyler, Minnesota, where we had a family reunion in this building.

[SPEAKER_00]: I remember quite a lot of that, actually.

[SPEAKER_01]: some Danish traditions and things your mother brought.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, and my father was quite happy with that.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, he enjoyed it.

[SPEAKER_00]: His background was quite different.

[SPEAKER_00]: His background was he had an Irish Catholic mother, although she was born in California, but her family came from Ireland.

[SPEAKER_00]: And his father's family came from Scotland, and they were Scotch, Presbyterian.

[SPEAKER_00]: She was uneducated, a Milner.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was, my grandfather was a doctor.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it was a match made in .

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, he had a very bad childhood in some ways because of the difficulties between his parents.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think

[SPEAKER_00]: He loved my mother's, the closeness of the family and the sense of community.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's the other thing I think I've picked out of what I know is that there's a really true sense of community.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that's part of the Grundtvigian tradition, but it depends on how you look at it because

[SPEAKER_00]: If you take that too far, you get closed communities with everybody talking about everyone else.

[SPEAKER_00]: It makes it become uncomfortable.

[SPEAKER_00]: But if you take it in, I think, what would be the best way, you have people relating to each other and also leaving breadth and freedom, which I think is what we've come to now.

[SPEAKER_00]: But a lot of that has to do with many more influences like urbanization and this sort of thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think that the tradition that most families really carry on are Christmas traditions, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I never believed in Santa Claus, but I absolutely believed in the Julenisse ...

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah?

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because my mother had convinced me she never lied, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And we always put the rice out for the Julenisse.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the rice was always gone.

[SPEAKER_00]: And whatever questions I asked, I knew Mother wouldn't lie.

[SPEAKER_00]: So somebody had to get the rice.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think I must have been 11 or 12 before my brother actually saw her throw the rice away.

[SPEAKER_00]: But she had Julenisse stories, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's a dilemma of many parents in Denmark to tell the truth.

[SPEAKER_01]: Are there other traditions, sort of specific traditions that you remember in your home when you were younger?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, another Christmas one is we always had, well, I called it a mandelgave.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: Always, right.

[SPEAKER_00]: And now, I have married an African.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay, is that when you eat rice pudding?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my mother didn't like the rice pudding, so she made her American.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's the way people transition.

[SPEAKER_00]: My mother was a fussy eater, and so she liked rice pudding.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we had the almond in the mashed potatoes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I've now passed that on to my African family, and they have the almond in the mashed potatoes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay, very interesting.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's very interesting.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my son, who's half African and half white American, so he's this really tall black guy, mostly tall because I'm so tall because the Kjølhedes were so tall, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: When he meets Danish people, they only believe him when he knows about putting on this and getting a gift.
[SPEAKER_00]: And now he married a Latvian, so now we're having a very interesting time.
[SPEAKER_00]: comparison of Danish tradition with Latvian tradition.
[SPEAKER_00]: But other things are more subtle.
[SPEAKER_00]: Like what?
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, it's hard for me to separate what might actually be Danish from what might just be something else.
[SPEAKER_00]: But I think
[SPEAKER_00]: A value for learning is definitely something my mother definitely had, and my father had that too, but I think I got it more from my mother.
[SPEAKER_01]: What kind of learning?
[SPEAKER_01]: Because it's not every kind of learning that's from this tradition.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, no, not necessarily, but I think for me it's, see, the way it translates to me is
[SPEAKER_00]: For me, it's every kind of learning.
[SPEAKER_00]: Almost everything can get me in.
[SPEAKER_00]: Everything except sports.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't have time for that.
[SPEAKER_00]: Intellectual things, ideas, concepts, philosophies.
[SPEAKER_00]: We talked about a lot of things about religion.
[SPEAKER_00]: In your home.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, things like the virgin birth, for instance.
[SPEAKER_00]: And my mother would tell me that she had questioned her father a great deal about that.
[SPEAKER_00]: And he had a way of answering her that was kind of like, all life and all birth is a miracle, period.
[SPEAKER_00]: Good answer.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, it was.
[SPEAKER_01]: We'll cut that out.
[SPEAKER_01]: We'll cut you out.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I think everyone in my family, on my mother's side, have been people who volunteer, get involved in things that are for the common good.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I must say, almost everybody in the family is politically liberal.
[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, the only cousins, Rodholm cousins I have who are not liberal were the ones whose, my uncle died when they were quite young and they were raised by their Catholic mother who was not a Rodholm and further away, right?
[SPEAKER_00]: And so I mean, you know, people, I think that tolerance for people was there.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, that was with my grandparents, it was with my uncle.
[SPEAKER_00]: So I can't know that I can tie that to Grundtvig or not.
[SPEAKER_00]: For one thing, I don't think I officially knew technically who he was or anything until much, much later in my life.
[SPEAKER_00]: It's then that I discovered that I love this philosophy.
[SPEAKER_00]: I love what I learn about it.
[SPEAKER_00]: I love what I learn about Denmark, even though that's not all good.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've been there several times, I think three times now.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's just wonderful.

[SPEAKER_00]: I feel like there is a heritage there.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think because Americans become, and I can see it happening, I'm already half.

[SPEAKER_00]: My son is a quarter Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: Many people belong to ten different backgrounds.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it's hard to

[SPEAKER_00]: to have a heritage if you have so many different backgrounds, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: Then you have to choose one, sort of.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, but it's fun, like, for children.

[SPEAKER_00]: Like, I mean, we were taught when we finished a meal, we said, tak for mad, and, you know, we said, farvel, when people leave.

[SPEAKER_00]: And you make certain foods, and...

[SPEAKER_00]: I think those are the things that I could put my hands around, but I haven't really given it a great deal of thought to think more about it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I have thought about, like, I grew up in, who were my heroes, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, number one hero was Eleanor Roosevelt, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: So I don't know if that has anything to do with me.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Paul Robson was number two.

[SPEAKER_00]: Then Walter Ruther was number three.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I don't know if you know who Paul Robson or Walter Ruther are, but

[SPEAKER_00]: Paul Robeson was a black American who, do you know him?

[SPEAKER_00]: No.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was an outstanding sports person and intellect.

[SPEAKER_00]: And yet he suffered, of course, the discrimination of this is in the 20s and so on.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he left the United States for Russia.

[SPEAKER_00]: But he had this beautiful, absolutely gorgeous singing voice.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he sang this beautiful song about America.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it just makes you cry.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my mother actually saw him sing that.

[SPEAKER_00]: So those were sort of stories that she would tell me.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Walter Ruther was the leader of the United Auto Workers.

[SPEAKER_00]: And of course unions are very important.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think some of the people that mother, I have the yearbooks, my mother's yearbooks from Grandview.

[SPEAKER_00]: I know at least one of the persons that she liked a lot who wrote there, became a labor organizer.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think that with the Danish tradition, it brings a lot of literacy and a lot of, you know, people don't suffer from not being encouraged

[SPEAKER_00]: It's just expected that you will study, that you will do well.

[SPEAKER_00]: But it's not forced upon you.

[SPEAKER_00]: My parents never did force us to do well in school.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was just a given that you would do that and that you would read.

[SPEAKER_00]: They would talk about books, and Mother read books to us because as a child, her mother always read books to her.

[SPEAKER_00]: In the evening, she'd call all the kids into one room.

[SPEAKER_00]: I never thought about that until my mother was very, very old.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she was telling me, she was remembering that.

[SPEAKER_00]: And she said, oh, but you don't know any of the stories that mother read.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because they were Danish, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: You got married.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, I got married.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, when I left school, I took a...

[SPEAKER_00]: I was going to be a teacher, but I didn't really want to settle down and be a teacher.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I looked for opportunities to go overseas.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I was accepted in a program that was called Teachers for East Africa.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it was the American Agency for International Development and the British government were combined in this group.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I went with that, and I was assigned to teach in Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I taught in a girls' secondary school.

[SPEAKER_00]: How old were you?

[SPEAKER_00]: What time was that when you got there?

[SPEAKER_00]: It was 1964, August.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I turned 23 a few days after I arrived in Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: So for two and a half years I taught up in a very small town on the slopes of Mount Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: in a girls' school that was founded by British missionaries.

[SPEAKER_00]: The other teachers were British missionaries.

[SPEAKER_00]: I had one African teacher live with me.

[SPEAKER_00]: But then my husband met me right away.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was the principal of an intermediate school close by.

[SPEAKER_00]: We started going to dances and things.

[SPEAKER_00]: At the end of my contract, I came back to the United States, but we had already decided to marry.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I owed money to the Kenyan government for my taxes.

[SPEAKER_00]: I had to come home.

[SPEAKER_00]: I had to come home to prepare my parents too.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I did and then I went back to Kenya and we got married.

[SPEAKER_00]: And in the meantime his brother and his brother's wife had died in an automobile accident leaving five orphaned children.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we married with five children and then we had one of our own.

[SPEAKER_00]: I ended up teaching in the International School in Nairobi, and I actually met some of my Danish-American relatives in Kenya.

[SPEAKER_00]: My Uncle Enok's sister, Lydia Mortensen, married Sven Godtfredsen.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think they might have been in Dagmar, Montana at one time.

[SPEAKER_00]: And their son, Gene, became...

[SPEAKER_00]: He was an astronomer for the Harvard PhD, but he ended up teaching science teachers in Kenya, and I met him there.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we have that link.

[SPEAKER_00]: It goes around the whole world.

[SPEAKER_00]: So anyway, because it just seemed better for our family, we decided to move back here to the United States.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we did that in 1977.

[SPEAKER_00]: Mm-hmm.

[SPEAKER_00]: And three of my adopted children have come to the United States.

[SPEAKER_00]: The two oldest ones did not.

[SPEAKER_00]: OK.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was quite a change for your husband.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, yes, it was.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, first off, for me, I became an immigrant myself into my own country.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because I had never been an adult living on my own before I left.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I did experience some of what it is like, a little bit of what it's like to be an immigrant.

[SPEAKER_00]: But my husband was definitely an immigrant.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he grew up with no shoes and herding goats and no electricity.

[SPEAKER_00]: We'd even lived for six years with no electricity.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it's very different, very different.

[SPEAKER_00]: I remember the first time my young son saw a toilet that flushed.

[SPEAKER_00]: He couldn't believe it.

[SPEAKER_00]: He had to keep going back.

[SPEAKER_00]: And there was, for him being the youngest, the transition was not a problem.

[SPEAKER_00]: The two older children who, two of the three older children, they had, I think it was difficult for them.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then the oldest girl, she had her own path.

[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, if you want to see a circle again, my oldest adopted daughter, 100% a Kenyan, met and married the grandson of Enok Mortensen.

[SPEAKER_00]: Right.

[SPEAKER_00]: It just, I just, I love it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I love the way, but actually in Africa, everybody's all related like that too.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think about, I think I belong to a tribe and down was definitely a date, a tribal name, right? (? the meaning of this sentence is not clear; hbs)

[SPEAKER_01]: What would you move and live?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, wait, we moved to Southern California because we came, you know, with no money, no job.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had to go right where my parents were.

[SPEAKER_00]: I wanted to live in Northern California, but

[SPEAKER_00]: didn't work out.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I, for one reason or another, I did not get back into education and I ended up doing human resources.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I've been a human resources person.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've done lots of different things in human resources.

[SPEAKER_00]: Like what?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, different positions, just being like a manager or director or

[SPEAKER_00]: Just for different types of companies, mostly manufacturing, injection molded plastics, steel drums.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I've mostly worked in smaller companies, that is with less than a thousand employees.

[SPEAKER_02]: So it's... I'm sorry.

[SPEAKER_02]: I'll wait.

[SPEAKER_00]: You can do that.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's okay.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a...

[SPEAKER_00]: you do everything.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's really a full thing of hiring and getting benefits and knowing what the laws are and counseling people.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I got involved in quality.

[SPEAKER_00]: I did a lot of that.

[SPEAKER_00]: We worked, we used to, the plastics company, we manufactured for other big companies like Hewlett Packard and Mitsubishi and Sony.

[SPEAKER_00]: We'd interact with them.

[SPEAKER_00]: I had a lot of fun doing that.

[SPEAKER_00]: I was responsible for plants and

[SPEAKER_00]: Southern California, Northern California, Portland, Oregon, Salt Lake City, Utah, and North of Atlanta, Georgia.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then I left that and for seven years I was a consultant with an employers association where mainly I taught about various things to our members and I answered their questions and helped them with their problems.

[SPEAKER_00]: And for the last three years I've been a human resources generalist for the Boeing company in Long Beach.

[SPEAKER_00]: Whole new thing, now I'm worrying about airplanes, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, your children have talked about, you had three adopted children.

[SPEAKER_00]: I have three adopted children who are 100% Kenyan, and then one child who's mine, my birth child, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: Have they any tradition of what you was brought up with, the Grundtvigian Danish tradition, have they adopted any part of that?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my son definitely.

[SPEAKER_00]: My natural child definitely has.

[SPEAKER_00]: My husband and I had him baptized as a Presbyterian because where we lived in Kenya, there was a Presbyterian church and a Catholic church.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's it.

[SPEAKER_00]: We had no Lutherans at all.

[SPEAKER_00]: And my husband is a Presbyterian.

[SPEAKER_00]: But when we came back to the United States, my son became involved with a Boy Scout troop that was a Lutheran church.

[SPEAKER_00]: And he was learning.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was interacting with

[SPEAKER_00]: my mother and his aunts and cousins and, you know, learning about the different parts of his American family.

[SPEAKER_00]: And so he actually was confirmed as a Lutheran of just his own accord.

[SPEAKER_00]: He just, that's what he wanted to do, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And so he's, but he, now he's married to a Latvian Lutheran and her family also has, her grandfather was also a minister.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the,

[SPEAKER_00]: They're more recent immigrants and their ties are even tighter.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've taken them out to Yorba Linda, to the church out there.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's okay, but they're going to end up in the Latvian church more often.

[SPEAKER_00]: The Latvian tradition is, I don't think, quite as open.

[SPEAKER_00]: But her family is.

[SPEAKER_00]: Her father was a famous Latvian poet.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's really interesting stuff.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the people I've met in her family are also, I feel they're like-minded.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I don't know about the rest of the Latvians, but in her family.

[SPEAKER_01]: Like-minded to what you?

[SPEAKER_00]: What I feel I am, yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: But my other children are kind of, it's kind of different.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm not quite sure.

[SPEAKER_00]: where they are in terms of, because first of all, if you're in a mixed race family, you also have issues that way.

[SPEAKER_00]: So my daughter first married, the younger one, she first married a Jamaican and has a child by the Jamaican who now is getting her PhD in Oregon in chemistry.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then she divorced him and she married a Nigerian engineer.

[SPEAKER_00]: and they have a 13-year-old son.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the older daughter married Mortensen's grandson.

[SPEAKER_00]: And they don't, she doesn't have any children.

[SPEAKER_00]: She sings opera and does various things.

[SPEAKER_00]: Very, very.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, very, very.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then my older son married a woman whose father is Armenian.

[SPEAKER_00]: and I think he's an immigrant from Palestine.

[SPEAKER_00]: They had two children and lived in, she's from Chicago, and then they divorced but now, I don't know, they're back together.

[SPEAKER_01]: After this long

[SPEAKER_01]: years in Africa.

[SPEAKER_01]: You went to California and started a career and family life.

[SPEAKER_01]: How did you get, how was your contact with this Grundtvigian group that we are around today?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, it's through my family.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, it's through, you know, starting, my mother was still alive, as were all of her sisters, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: The six Rodholm sisters.

[SPEAKER_01]: So that was in the family.

[SPEAKER_00]: That was in the family, right.

[SPEAKER_00]: But then you visit them, and then you meet somebody else, right, and then you become friends with them.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think, and we've had family reunions and things, but I can't remember, I don't remember the train of whatever happened that from one thing to another.

[SPEAKER_00]: One of my, well, Uncle Enok.

[SPEAKER_00]: I retired to Solvang.

[SPEAKER_00]: I lived close to Solvang.

[SPEAKER_00]: My Aunt Nanna encouraged me to come to the Farstrup Mortensen Lecture Series.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I didn't do that all the time, but I did it.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I met a lot of people there, right?

[SPEAKER_01]: So that gradually became stronger, the ties?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: And more thought out, because I hadn't thought about that so much, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And I still haven't thought through all of it, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: But then I ended up taking Danish lessons at the Danish church in Yorba Linda.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the time I do that, our family, I personally was very close friends with Olaf Lund, who was the son of the minister who was in the church when we occasionally went.

[SPEAKER_00]: And who lived then, who had retired to Solvang.

[SPEAKER_00]: So the ties they keep kind of,

[SPEAKER_00]: coming right from one bit to one bit to one bit yeah and that's the way it works it's the way it works and actually when you look back it might look different but but it's this kind of right small steps and then well then Grandview um

[SPEAKER_00]: Grandview decided to dedicate a room to my grandfather, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And then the whole family, we had a reunion around that, which was another way for me now to look at Grandview and to look at the tradition that comes through that institution, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And then my aunt got started in this project to write this, to translate these letters, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: Because my mother was, she could not have done editing and even my aunt was a little bit,

[SPEAKER_00]: It was a big project for her.

[SPEAKER_00]: So the fact that I was more fluent with word processing, and besides I loved it, I jumped at the chance to get to do that.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was a great project, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And that brought me closer to a lot of people.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then traveling, and we stayed with some of my aunt's friends in Skive.

[SPEAKER_00]: Then they came to visit.

[SPEAKER_00]: My aunt calls me from Minnesota and says, you have to come.

[SPEAKER_00]: We're going to take them.

[SPEAKER_00]: They're coming.

[SPEAKER_00]: These friends are coming.

[SPEAKER_00]: we have to drive them down to the museum in Elk Horn, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And I would do it.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then, because I met all these different people, and the Danish Immigrant Museum needs representation from different parts of the country.

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, am I interrupting?

[SPEAKER_00]: Did Ricky come on too?

[SPEAKER_01]: That's okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: We'll cut you out.

[SPEAKER_02]: Oh, dear.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think we're coming to the end, but I have one more question at least.

[SPEAKER_01]: Would you consider yourself a Grundtvigian?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that involves what?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, first of all, I think I absolutely admire him for, number one, doing all the translation of those ancient texts.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it's only recently I came to realize that that bespoke of reestablishing Danish nationalism.

[SPEAKER_00]: And of course now I've been studying Danish for about six, seven, eight years, but not with any professional teachers.

[SPEAKER_00]: So my Danish is absolutely horrible, but I have learned so much about Denmark.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I've been on the board of the museum, so I have learned so much about Denmark.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think that the admiration there for scholarship, the folk school thing, lifelong learning, is something I totally believe in.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that's just absolutely fantastic.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that anchoring your religion in the beauty of the world we have, and in the preservation of that beauty being our modern extension of it,

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that's part of the Grundtvigian thing, and I think that's just the most important thing we have, right?

[SPEAKER_00]: And I also, I've tried to understand the split in the church.

[SPEAKER_00]: Thorvald Hansen, who writes a lot, he wrote one book on the seminaries, and in it he gives me the first real clue.

[SPEAKER_00]: He thought it was primarily a personality difference.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I've come to that conclusion because these guys were not that different.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've read too many of my great-grandfather's letters to think that he was different in terms of dancing and playing cards and all that stuff about being pious versus not.

[SPEAKER_00]: Sorry, I kind of got lost in that point.

[SPEAKER_00]: But what I come to realize is I think what he was trying to emphasize was a sense of community is very important.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Christian first, man first, then Christian.

[SPEAKER_00]: And Hans Clausen, who's here today, who's an immigrant from the 50s, right, and also goes to Yorba Linda Church.

[SPEAKER_00]: So he says that over and over again.

[SPEAKER_00]: I just have to stop.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think it's, yeah, it's human first and Christian.

[SPEAKER_00]: But part of that means that what exists in Christianity is the community of Christians.

[SPEAKER_00]: But that's not... It's fine.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's fine.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's fine.

[SPEAKER_00]: That isn't necessarily a closed community.

[SPEAKER_00]: And maybe I extrapolate from that because maybe Grundtvig didn't go that far.

[SPEAKER_00]: But...

[SPEAKER_00]: Although, well, I don't know because now I've learned that he was partly reacting to the rationalists who were being too much, let's study the Bible and see what's real and what isn't.

[SPEAKER_00]: So I might deviate from him there because, I mean, I think the God that we have belongs to all of us.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know if he was really there or not.

[SPEAKER_00]: And then I think he was in Parliament, and I believe he might have been a socialist, or a budding on that.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was a liberal, I think.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I could be wrong.

[SPEAKER_01]: The socialists were not there.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, so I know that's wrong.

[SPEAKER_01]: A little later.

[SPEAKER_01]: He couldn't have been, because there was... Right, but I think he was for the people, right.

[SPEAKER_00]: don't you think?

[SPEAKER_00]: Right?

[SPEAKER_00]: You want the farmers to get educated?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, sure.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, so I don't think he was, well, you can be an intellectual elite in a way, too.

[SPEAKER_00]: But anyway, that's kind of where I'm at.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I can give you my email address, and as I said, I have a lot of

[SPEAKER_00]: stuff, you know, dates.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because I do have done a lot of research in family history, so I can nail down dates and stuff.

[SPEAKER_00]: But probably the only thing I can think of that you wouldn't have come across before that might be of interest, I don't know if you'd want to read these letters, if they might... It depends on where you're from.

[SPEAKER_01]: It is more your story, based on your own family tradition.

[SPEAKER_01]: But I think we've come very well across the