

Interview of Edwin Pedersen by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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Input filename
Edwin Pedersen_hbs.srt

[SPEAKER_01]: I'll just start with asking what is your full name?
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: My name is Edwin Petersen.
[SPEAKER_01]: Smidt Petersen.
[SPEAKER_01]: S-M-I-D-T for my grandfather.
[SPEAKER_01]: And where were you born?
[SPEAKER_01]: Actually, I was born in Bone Lake.
[SPEAKER_01]: It's a township just east of here because my parents lived there on a farm when they first married.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah?
[SPEAKER_01]: But by the time I was... Then my grandfather on the farm here died next February, and so my parents moved back to town and helped farm.
[SPEAKER_01]: And I come from a long line of Petersens.
[SPEAKER_01]: Søren Petersen, den gamle smed, he was called, was a blacksmith.
[SPEAKER_01]: The first blacksmith in Luck.
[SPEAKER_01]: He came in 1871 and had a blacksmith shop just well within a stone, two stone throws from here.
[SPEAKER_01]: So I lived that close to here.
[SPEAKER_01]: And this is the last little bit of farm.
[SPEAKER_01]: The rest is sold.
[SPEAKER_01]: The lot the house is on was part of the old farm.
[SPEAKER_01]: And his son, Andrew, or Anders.
[SPEAKER_01]: I don't know.
[SPEAKER_01]: farmed here.
[SPEAKER_01]: Really?
[SPEAKER_01]: Oh yeah, there's still farms out there.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_01]: The fields.
[SPEAKER_01]: The fields, yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: So he probably helped in the blacksmith shop when he was a younger person.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then finally, my great-grandfather retired and moved down on the farm.
[SPEAKER_01]: And we have a picture of showing the whole family, him, his son, and wife.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then my father is a little boy.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then the old farm buildings.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know if this fits in or not, but just in the last month, our daughter purchased the farmhouse, which just has two and a half acres.
[SPEAKER_00]: So that will be the seventh generation.
[SPEAKER_00]: in that place.
[SPEAKER_01]: That's quite something.
[SPEAKER_01]: That is something.
[SPEAKER_01]: Seven generations.
[SPEAKER_01]: The two little boys that will live there will be using the rooms I used to have.

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[SPEAKER_01]: And, well, I went to school then here in Luck.
[SPEAKER_01]: May I just hear your parents, their names?
[SPEAKER_01]: My father's name was Einar.
[SPEAKER_01]: Einar?
[SPEAKER_01]: Einar Petersen.
[SPEAKER_01]: Einar?
[SPEAKER_01]: Einar, yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: With an N?
[SPEAKER_00]: E-I-N.
[SPEAKER_00]: E-I...
[SPEAKER_01]: And A-R.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, Einar.
[SPEAKER_01]: Einar Petersen.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: And where was he born?
[SPEAKER_01]: Where was he born?
[SPEAKER_01]: He was born on the farm.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: And my... His father was born in Denmark.
[SPEAKER_01]: He was about two years old when he came.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: So... Are you aware where he came from?
[SPEAKER_01]: Where in Denmark he came from?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, they came from Egtved.
[SPEAKER_01]: Egtved is a small town in central Jutland.
[SPEAKER_01]: And he was a blacksmith there, but decided to come to this country with his wife and two children.
[SPEAKER_01]: The daughter married
[SPEAKER_01]: when she was maybe 18 or 20 here, but then died within a couple of years.
[SPEAKER_01]: So we don't have any relatives from her.
[SPEAKER_01]: But my grandfather, they had many children, some who died, but there were eight who grew to adulthood.
[SPEAKER_01]: So we have quite a few cousins.
[SPEAKER_01]: That was your granddad who was born in Denmark.
[SPEAKER_01]: Your grandmother?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, my granddad was born.
[SPEAKER_01]: And my grandmother on my father's side was also born in Denmark.
[SPEAKER_01]: And that was a Hansen family.
[SPEAKER_01]: Niels Hansen.
[SPEAKER_01]: And he was quite a cabinet maker and I don't know if he was trained as a cabinet maker, but anyway he designed the first church in West Denmark.
[SPEAKER_01]: Do you know where he came from in Denmark?
[SPEAKER_01]: Not for sure I don't.
[SPEAKER_01]: I should.
[SPEAKER_01]: If I looked it up, I don't.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, I don't.

[SPEAKER_01]: Never mind.

[SPEAKER_01]: Your grandparents on your mother's side... His wife, Maren, her family we can trace all the way back to the 1400s.

[SPEAKER_01]: And back then, the man did something...

[SPEAKER_01]: for the king or the ruler that was very important.

[SPEAKER_01]: And so he said, from then on, that family will not have to pay taxes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Wow.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was a big deal.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think that's been forgotten.

[SPEAKER_01]: Probably.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have to pay taxes.

[SPEAKER_01]: You sure do.

[SPEAKER_01]: On your mother's side. Have you any idea where where the family came from in Denmark on your mother's side? On my mother's side my grandfather and grandmother both were born within a mile of each other in Farvrå (? I'm not sure about the place name) Denmark it's a it's a

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, it's hardly a town, but it's next to Christiansfeld.

[SPEAKER_01]: When Jess was about 10 years old, then the Germans took that part of Denmark.

[SPEAKER_01]: So he actually became a German citizen, which he couldn't stand that.

[SPEAKER_01]: The family name was Schmidt, and he took off the C-H so that it would just be Smidt.

[SPEAKER_01]: And he never wrote much about the German occupation.

[SPEAKER_01]: But during that time, the church became German, schools, and from other writing, I understand that the children fought against this idea that they were German and did everything they could do.

[SPEAKER_01]: And there were five brothers, two of them,

[SPEAKER_01]: came to this country quite early, and a third one came when my grandfather did.

[SPEAKER_01]: And they came because they did not want to serve in the German army.

[SPEAKER_01]: Because about that time the Germans decreed that all the

[SPEAKER_01]: of 20 years old had to serve in their army.

[SPEAKER_01]: My grandfather was excused because, as it says, he was too small and weak.

[SPEAKER_01]: He lived to be 87 and made church furniture until almost the last year that he lived.

[SPEAKER_01]: So he might have been small and weak, but he certainly could.

[SPEAKER_01]: He was strong enough.

[SPEAKER_01]: He could carve.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: And my grandmother, let's see, her maiden name was Raben.

[SPEAKER_01]: Raben.

[SPEAKER_01]: Raben.

[SPEAKER_01]: Raben.

[SPEAKER_01]: And what more to say about that?

[SPEAKER_01]: My grandfather went to a folk school, Vinding High School.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then about that year he decided to come to this country.

[SPEAKER_02]: After being at the school?

[SPEAKER_01]: After being at the folk school.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I have his notebooks yet from that school.

[SPEAKER_01]: And they really had quite a thorough education in mathematics.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I have one book where he's supposed to write short stories and things to be corrected.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I'm fortunate that I can read Danish.

[SPEAKER_01]: You do?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: So I've done a lot.

[SPEAKER_01]: And the work I'm doing now is to write a biography of him.

[SPEAKER_01]: And most of the work of the writing is done.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's a matter of fitting the pictures of his carving

[SPEAKER_01]: and family and make a booklet out of it.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I have a nephew who's very good at that kind of thing, so it'll get happened.

[SPEAKER_01]: It'll be published in a short time.

[SPEAKER_01]: That sounds very good.

[SPEAKER_01]: I have difficulty getting going on stuff.

[SPEAKER_01]: I've often wondered what people do when they're retired.

[SPEAKER_01]: I found out they don't do anything.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think what I hear is the pensioners are so busy all the time.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think we have, yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: He has been very busy.

[SPEAKER_00]: But health issues.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: I had a quadruple bypass.

[SPEAKER_01]: And since then, I don't know if...

[SPEAKER_01]: Are you under ether, or if that does something to you or slows you up?

[SPEAKER_01]: I think it does.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's a little book, and you can see it over at church.

[SPEAKER_00]: I know they've got the Den Gamle Smed.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was written by a pastor, Helveg..

[SPEAKER_01]: Helveg.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that's about his grandfather.

[SPEAKER_01]: Who was here.

[SPEAKER_01]: He was here as a young boy when his father was the president of the seminary.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then he came back again as a young man, as a young minister.

[SPEAKER_01]: And he thought a great deal of den gamle smed.

[SPEAKER_01]: So he wrote a biography in Danish, and I translated that several years ago and had it printed.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I've written a history of Luck called A Little Bit of Luck, and I've written a history of the church, quite a thorough history of the church.

[SPEAKER_01]: I did a lot of writing.

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[SPEAKER_01]: I can't get at it again.
[SPEAKER_01]: You cannot... No.
[SPEAKER_01]: I hope to.
[SPEAKER_01]: Well, this is before.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: It was done before that.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: So...
[SPEAKER_01]: What was your schooling like?
[SPEAKER_01]: Where did you go to school?
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay, I went to Luck High School and graduated in 1942.
[SPEAKER_01]: But before that, you went to primary school?
[SPEAKER_01]: Over here, too.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, that was the same school.
[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: And back then, our church had a summer school, ferieskole, about six weeks, where we learned...
[SPEAKER_01]: Well, of course, the Bible, but also a great deal of Danish.
[SPEAKER_01]: Learned Danish.
[SPEAKER_01]: So I... Danish language.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: From that... My parents always spoke Danish.
[SPEAKER_01]: And when I started to go to school, I couldn't speak English.
[SPEAKER_01]: So... But I learned fast.
[SPEAKER_01]: Now, from...
[SPEAKER_01]: What else did they teach you at ferieskolen.
[SPEAKER_01]: school?
[SPEAKER_01]: Well, they always sang.
[SPEAKER_01]: We sang songs.
[SPEAKER_01]: My goodness, we sang.
[SPEAKER_01]: We sang to begin with in the morning and at noon and afternoon and then before we went home at night.
[SPEAKER_00]: Gymnastics.
[SPEAKER_00]: There were songs in Danish.
[SPEAKER_01]: Danish in song.
[SPEAKER_01]: Tordenskjold.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: And we boys wanted to sing that every time until the end of the minute.
[SPEAKER_01]: The teacher said we could sing it once a day.
[SPEAKER_01]: That was all.
[SPEAKER_01]: And we wouldn't just sing it, we almost hollered it.
[SPEAKER_01]: And I can still notice many of the verses in Danish.
[SPEAKER_01]: You can?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Give us a taste.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's about the 11th verse, I think.

[SPEAKER_01]: But do you speak Danish a little bit still?

[SPEAKER_01]: No.

[SPEAKER_01]: I can, when I've been in Denmark about a week, it comes back.

[SPEAKER_01]: But it's hard to get the words to come in the right order.

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay, you speak in a... I can understand.

[SPEAKER_01]: Good, good.

[SPEAKER_01]: Your schooling, you went to high school here?

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, high school here.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then that was during the war, and so I had a couple of deferments and then decided I was tired of farming or wanted to get in, and so I volunteered for the draft.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then I spent two and a half years sailing in the Pacific, convoying ships between the islands.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was dangerous.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was a dangerous job.

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, yes, it was.

[SPEAKER_01]: I read about that.

[SPEAKER_01]: We had, I think we had just one submarine contact that I know of.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, we went from one island to the other

[SPEAKER_01]: the convoying ships.

[SPEAKER_01]: And came back, and then I went to Grand View for two years, and then went to Macalester College and graduated from Macalester in 1950.

[SPEAKER_01]: That same year, and we were married then that fall.

[SPEAKER_01]: Where did you meet your wife?

[SPEAKER_01]: What?

[SPEAKER_01]: Where did you meet your wife?

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: We grew up within a mile of each other, but we met in Minneapolis.

[SPEAKER_01]: You hadn't known each other?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, he was seven years older.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: So we didn't, you know, I was a little kid and he was too old.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: When I was in the Navy, she was probably in the eighth grade.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: So, yes, I knew the family, but... Yeah, yeah, but...

[SPEAKER_01]: And I knew the family, too, from way back.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I knew there was such a person around, but I didn't think much about her.

[SPEAKER_01]: And we met... There was a young people's home in Minneapolis where young people from the different churches, Askov, Tyler...

[SPEAKER_01]: with the ... (? the word is hard to hear; hbs) could go when they went to work in cities.

[SPEAKER_01]: It was a very nice place, and so we both wound up there and got to know each other.

[SPEAKER_02]: That's a place where you could stay?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: Boarding house.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah?
[SPEAKER_01]: Where you could have your meal?
[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, yeah.
[SPEAKER_00]: It was a big old house.
[SPEAKER_00]: It had many, many bedrooms.
[SPEAKER_00]: Who organized that house?
[SPEAKER_01]: The Young... Well, it's Young People's Society.
[SPEAKER_01]: An offspring of the church.
[SPEAKER_01]: The churches owned it.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_00]: But there was a matron.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, but it was organized by the church, you can say.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: Good that we've got that point.
[SPEAKER_01]: And that... I'm going to pick up the... Oh, hi.
[SPEAKER_01]: I'm going to pick up the...
[SPEAKER_01]: They finally sold it.
[SPEAKER_01]: And it's too bad they did, I think.
[SPEAKER_01]: But it got to be maybe not used the way it should have been.
[SPEAKER_01]: So they sold it.
[SPEAKER_01]: Was that your daughter?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: The artistic one.
[SPEAKER_01]: OK.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: So.
[SPEAKER_01]: Now we are celebrating this month, our 60th anniversary.
[SPEAKER_02]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: From 1950 to 2010.
[SPEAKER_01]: So that's quite a few years.
[SPEAKER_01]: You've gotten along pretty good.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, it sounds like it.
[SPEAKER_01]: You have a good...
[SPEAKER_01]: marriage together.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, we have.
[SPEAKER_01]: We've had a good marriage.
[SPEAKER_01]: You sense that.
[SPEAKER_01]: When you graduated from Macalester, you graduated, what happened after that?
[SPEAKER_01]: And you got married the same year?
[SPEAKER_01]: The first year I didn't get a job teaching, so I worked for a feed company in Minneapolis.

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[SPEAKER_01]: The next year I had a job down in southern Minnesota, and then I moved up here
[SPEAKER_01]: In 1952 I started teaching in Frederick and graduated in 1985, or retired in 1985.
[SPEAKER_01]: So I've been, how many years?
[SPEAKER_01]: 25 years.
[SPEAKER_01]: So I've been retired just about as many years as I've talked.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, that's a strange thought.
[SPEAKER_01]: That's a kind of strange thought, isn't it?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: But you were up there.
[SPEAKER_01]: That was not in the Danish community.
[SPEAKER_01]: No.
[SPEAKER_01]: If anything, it was Swedish.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: But you lived up there?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_01]: So you went to a church up there and so on?
[SPEAKER_01]: No, we went to church here.
[SPEAKER_01]: So you went down here on Sunday?
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Otherwise you were up there.
[SPEAKER_01]: So you had contact with the community here.
[SPEAKER_01]: And our kids went to Sunday school and were confirmed here.
[SPEAKER_01]: Oh yes, your children, how many kids do you have?
[SPEAKER_01]: We have four.
[SPEAKER_01]: Two girls and two boys.
[SPEAKER_01]: And where do they live?
[SPEAKER_01]: Two of them live within a mile of us.
[SPEAKER_01]: Ann, just out on the end, and Paul, just south of here a little bit, about a mile.
[SPEAKER_01]: And one, close to Menominee, Wisconsin.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then a boy down in Illinois.
[SPEAKER_01]: Paul, the youngest, is a forester.
[SPEAKER_01]: Have they married within the Danish community or are they sort of?
[SPEAKER_01]: No, they're not.
[SPEAKER_01]: No.
[SPEAKER_01]: David was... David was married to a girl from Danish that he met in a camp in Tyler, but it didn't last.
[SPEAKER_01]: But there are two boys from that marriage, and they live in the cities.
[SPEAKER_01]: What kind of traditions...
[SPEAKER_01]: Did you have in West Denmark during the years, now that you were living up in Frederik, you had still knowledge of what was happening here?
[SPEAKER_01]: To go back, we had, as I said, a ferieskole.
[SPEAKER_01]: When I was that age, it was about six weeks of it from the next Monday after public school until 4th of July.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then I guess we talked about what we did then.
[SPEAKER_01]: A lot of singing.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I think that's the biggest part of
[SPEAKER_01]: of West Denmark, it's been a singing congregation.
[SPEAKER_01]: By habit, at least until recent years, when there was a speaker, we always sang a song first and finished up with a song.
[SPEAKER_01]: And then they had coffee and lunch.
[SPEAKER_01]: It was always bring for lunch.
[SPEAKER_01]: And during those years, a great number of people from all over
[SPEAKER_01]: from Denmark would come and give a speech, lecture.
[SPEAKER_01]: Foredrag.
[SPEAKER_01]: Foredrag, yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Foredrag.
[SPEAKER_01]: And from different congregations that come from the college in Des Moines.
[SPEAKER_01]: So that was a part.
[SPEAKER_01]: And that we don't have now.
[SPEAKER_01]: Although we still have
[SPEAKER_01]: A 4th of July celebration and... Oh, you mean, we're talking about the Danish tradition.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: The 5th of June.
[SPEAKER_01]: Is that it?
[SPEAKER_01]: We used to have the 5th of June.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_01]: I can remember when I was young, there was always Femte Juni.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: But that's been, that's lost.
[SPEAKER_01]: But we have the Fourth of July celebration.
[SPEAKER_01]: Not too many churches have that.
[SPEAKER_01]: I don't think it's not a church thing.
[SPEAKER_01]: But our church does celebrate the Fourth of July.
[SPEAKER_01]: And it comes and something new that's not a part of the old tradition is our summer camp.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Do you want more coffee?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, please.
[SPEAKER_01]: Help yourself.
[SPEAKER_01]: That's fine.
[SPEAKER_01]: Would you care for more?
[SPEAKER_01]: No, thanks.
[SPEAKER_01]: Well, yeah, just a little bit.
[SPEAKER_01]: Just to wet my whistle.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah?
[SPEAKER_01]: It's good.
[SPEAKER_01]: Let's see, where were we?
[SPEAKER_01]: You said you have summer camps.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have three-day family camp when we have, well, everything that they have at a folk meeting or folk school.

[SPEAKER_01]: A lot of singing, gymnastics.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, not so much gymnastics anymore, but folk dancing for the kids and for adults too.

[SPEAKER_01]: Always a lecture and always a lot of coffee to visit with.

[SPEAKER_01]: A craft.

[SPEAKER_01]: Like what?

[SPEAKER_01]: weaving to sewing, painting, all kinds of carving.

[SPEAKER_01]: Who comes to this camp?

[SPEAKER_01]: Last summer we had 170 registered.

[SPEAKER_01]: Now that doesn't mean they all come at the same time, but from one thing to another.

[SPEAKER_01]: But during the three days, you had 170.

[SPEAKER_01]: During the three days, 170 people registered.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have a noon meal, an evening meal, noon meal.

[SPEAKER_01]: Where does it take place?

[SPEAKER_01]: It takes place in our church, and we have the...

[SPEAKER_01]: The Parish Hall.

[SPEAKER_02]: You can house so many people.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: But they don't, they stay in different homes or in the... Motel?

[SPEAKER_01]: Motel.

[SPEAKER_01]: But they're partly from the town.

[SPEAKER_01]: There would be quite a number from here, from the town.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, not really.

[SPEAKER_01]: Mostly, we don't have so many.

[SPEAKER_01]: I would guess

[SPEAKER_01]: Maybe a third of the ones who register are from the congregation.

[SPEAKER_01]: And the others are from Minneapolis, and a lot of people from Minneapolis come up.

[SPEAKER_01]: So it would be all kinds of people who come.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's not necessarily people with a Danish background.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, no.

[SPEAKER_01]: Most, by the time they leave, they are.

[SPEAKER_01]: Fine.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, they aren't necessarily Danish.

[SPEAKER_01]: But many of them are.

[SPEAKER_01]: The ones from Minneapolis are Danish.

[SPEAKER_01]: So they're trying to, the organizers, they try to reach out sort of very broad.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: And you get people who are just interested in this kind of thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: And as I said, a lot of singing and visiting.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think that's very interesting because you would kind of expect it would be a community thing that is sort of people who have been there already, but this is reaching out much broader.

[SPEAKER_01]: From all over.

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: So these traditions you have been telling me about.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have fastelavn.

[SPEAKER_01]: And of course Christmas you have.

[SPEAKER_01]: And Christmas.

[SPEAKER_01]: You have Danish traditions around Christmas.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Dancing around the Christmas tree and stuff.

[SPEAKER_01]: And the kids put on a program and then get a bag of candy.

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, we have Høstfest.

[SPEAKER_01]: Or Harvest Fest. And that comes up in the first Sunday in August.

[SPEAKER_01]: I don't know, in October.

[SPEAKER_01]: So it's coming.

[SPEAKER_01]: Is that something that grows out of the Danish tradition?

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, it's from the Danish tradition.

[SPEAKER_01]: It used to be called Høstfest.

[SPEAKER_01]: But with the Swedes and Norwegians around, wouldn't they have something equivalent?

[SPEAKER_01]: I don't know if they do or not.

[SPEAKER_01]: There may be other churches that have some kind of a...

[SPEAKER_01]: A harvest festival.

[SPEAKER_01]: When you mention the word Høstfest, that's because you've been having it way back?

[SPEAKER_00]: Way back.

[SPEAKER_01]: Way back it came.

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay, fine.

[SPEAKER_01]: As far back as I can remember, and even before that.

[SPEAKER_01]: What kind of fest is it?

[SPEAKER_01]: What kind of celebration is it?

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, there's a decoration of garden things

[SPEAKER_01]: And then a meal.

[SPEAKER_01]: A meal together.

[SPEAKER_01]: And singing and that kind of thing.

[SPEAKER_01]: And a lecture of some kind.

[SPEAKER_01]: Maybe folk dancing at the end.

[SPEAKER_01]: It used to be.

[SPEAKER_01]: And we used to have a social dance after mostly Fourth of July.

[SPEAKER_01]: But we don't have that anymore.

[SPEAKER_01]: Let's see.

[SPEAKER_01]: There's one of

[SPEAKER_01]: Maybe you would have a little, at the end of the fest or celebration, you would have a little glass of wine or beer.

[SPEAKER_01]: No.

[SPEAKER_01]: You didn't?

[SPEAKER_01]: No.

[SPEAKER_01]: You wouldn't?

[SPEAKER_02]: No.

[SPEAKER_01]: That doesn't belong to the... They could have wine at weddings.

[SPEAKER_00]: If they had a wedding celebration, they could have wine.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: But that's all.

[SPEAKER_01]: Because, you know, in Tyler, once in a while,

[SPEAKER_01]: will end the day, end the evening, with a small glass of beer or glass of wine.

[SPEAKER_00]: But you go downtown for that, don't you?

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh yes, oh yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: But not on the premises?

[SPEAKER_01]: No, but you know it takes place.

[SPEAKER_01]: We've been part of it.

[SPEAKER_01]: I guess you have, and it's very amusing.

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, fun.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, it's fun.

[SPEAKER_01]: But because

[SPEAKER_01]: they're very open with it, about it.

[SPEAKER_01]: There's no secret to anyone.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I think it's kind of an idea that that's no problem.

[SPEAKER_01]: We don't sit to get drunk or anything.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's just that we are in a good mood and having a good time together.

[SPEAKER_00]: That would not happen with the Holy Deans.

[SPEAKER_01]: No, that's what I'm... No.

[SPEAKER_01]: No.

[SPEAKER_01]: So that would... But you haven't had that tradition here that you can, after some kind of celebration, you would sit down like, oh, that's fine.

[SPEAKER_01]: And for many, many years, we've had æbleskiver at supper.

[SPEAKER_01]: At some kind of celebration.

[SPEAKER_00]: It started out as...

[SPEAKER_01]: we put on a play, and then have æbleskiver.

[SPEAKER_01]: And it's mostly just a congregation.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's gotten to be now, so invite everybody.

[SPEAKER_01]: And of course, it's kind of a money-making thing.

[SPEAKER_01]: All these traditions that you have been talking about, they come from, obviously, from a tradition that dates back to Denmark, goes back to Denmark.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: Now æbleskiver wasn't, that's not new, it's maybe 50 years old, the tradition of æbleskiver here.

[SPEAKER_01]: Because I don't remember that when I was just a boy that we had it.

[SPEAKER_01]: Let's see, what else?

[SPEAKER_01]: As I say, when I was a boy, there was Femte Juni, and Forth of July, and Børnefest.

[SPEAKER_01]: What was that?

[SPEAKER_01]: Børnefest was the last day of, no, the Sunday after ferieskole, the Vacation Bible School.

[SPEAKER_01]: Børnefest.

[SPEAKER_01]: And we got an ice cream cone and there used to be a pop stand.

[SPEAKER_01]: A lot of those things are gone.

[SPEAKER_01]: And the school isn't used much anymore, just during our family camp.

[SPEAKER_01]: The school over there?

[SPEAKER_01]: No, it's a school in the woods over here.

[SPEAKER_01]: It's another separate building down behind the gym hall.

[SPEAKER_01]: Would there be any, apart from the church, which is a new church because the old one burned, would there be buildings left from the time you... Before that.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: The...

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, Parish Hall.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: Do you have that still?

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: From the... And that's used much.

[SPEAKER_01]: That dates back to... It was built in 1915 by the young people for gymnastics and put on plays and lectures.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's your forsamlingshus. Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: Is that downtown?

[SPEAKER_01]: It's over there.

[SPEAKER_01]: By the church?

[SPEAKER_00]: It was there when you were here last.

[SPEAKER_01]: So we'll see it.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was there when you were there.

[SPEAKER_00]: You didn't see it?

[SPEAKER_01]: I don't recall it.

[SPEAKER_00]: You told them the Dane school was there.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, the Dane school.

[SPEAKER_01]: Down behind.

[SPEAKER_01]: This...

[SPEAKER_01]: All these traditions, they come out of, you can say, a specific Danish movement, tradition, that is in Denmark called Grundtvigian.

[SPEAKER_01]: Do you identify with that?

[SPEAKER_01]: You obviously live with the tradition, but are you sort of aware of more

[SPEAKER_01]: specific ideas in the tradition.

[SPEAKER_01]: Almost the introduction to what I've written there says that.

[SPEAKER_01]: You can read that for just a minute.

[SPEAKER_01]: So actually, what I'm asking, you have written down.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think we've got to that point because that's where I reach to when I've been talking to other people.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I would, of course, try to ask them about these questions.

[SPEAKER_01]: But as you have written it down,

[SPEAKER_01]: it will be fine unless you have unless you have things to add to this. Well there is because as I say

[SPEAKER_01]: in which Denmark errs of a movement, a philosophy of life, a lifestyle that is only now becoming appreciated by many non-Danes throughout the world.

[SPEAKER_01]: From Java to Germany, from Russia to your country, people all over the world are studying what happened to Denmark.

[SPEAKER_01]: What others are now discovering, we have had, but are now losing it because, one, we think is no longer relevant or are too busy.

[SPEAKER_01]: We are ashamed of it.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have forgotten or really never knew what the true essence of Grundtvigian philosophy is.

[SPEAKER_01]: Though we lived it, we never really put it into words.

[SPEAKER_01]: It seems that at a time when we're losing it, others are finding it, as witnessed by the books, the international conferences, and the expansion of folk schools in this and other countries, not Danish.

[SPEAKER_01]: Our annual family camp is our attempt for a couple of days each summer to capture the essence of the folk school with singing, lectures, folk dancing, skits, crafts, and just plain visiting and enjoying each other's company.

[SPEAKER_01]: Very good.

[SPEAKER_01]: We have, as I say, we never taught...

[SPEAKER_01]: that it was the Grundtvigian.

[SPEAKER_01]: We just did it.

[SPEAKER_00]: But when you do talk about this Grundtvigian philosophy, I always worry that outsiders will think it's a cult of some kind.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know if that's the right word.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think you're right.

[SPEAKER_01]: I think you're right.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because they don't know.

[SPEAKER_01]: It is so difficult to explain unless you

[SPEAKER_01]: explain that the things you do

[SPEAKER_01]: like folk dancing, and still they would say, well, okay, they wouldn't quite understand what it's all about.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's so foreign to some people.

[SPEAKER_01]: I heard that several times down at Tyler when I spoke with people about this issue.

[SPEAKER_01]: They said that, well, when I go back home, or before I go to Tyler, I tell my neighbors that I'm going to Tyler, and they'll ask, what is that?

[SPEAKER_01]: And I'll explain, and they'll look at me and say,

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, we don't quite get it, but okay, if it's good for you, then that's good.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's right.

[SPEAKER_01]: And when you talk about our... We talked about going to our camps, the summer camps down in Tyler or something.

[SPEAKER_01]: They couldn't figure out that we'd do that, just to go and sing there, sing a bunch of songs and stuff.

[SPEAKER_01]: That didn't seem like a vacation.

[SPEAKER_01]: So that's where it is.

[SPEAKER_01]: You live it and you who belong to the group, so to speak, you know what it's all about and you enjoy it.

[SPEAKER_01]: And it really gives you something.

[SPEAKER_00]: But for outsiders, it's... We have members in our church that will not take part.

[SPEAKER_00]: They will not come to our family camp.

[SPEAKER_01]: Why not?

[SPEAKER_00]: They just won't.

[SPEAKER_00]: We cannot

[SPEAKER_01]: Is that because they think it's something foreign, strange?

[SPEAKER_00]: No, they just don't want anything to do with it.

[SPEAKER_01]: Maybe they stick to the church activity only.

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh, exactly.

[SPEAKER_01]: This is sort of a cultural thing, which they don't want to mix it.

[SPEAKER_00]: But then again, Catholics...

[SPEAKER_01]: eight or ten Catholics who come.

[SPEAKER_00]: That come to our family camp.

[SPEAKER_01]: And bring their kids.

[SPEAKER_00]: They love it.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: So... I don't know.

[SPEAKER_01]: But when you have Catholics present, like this is present or recent years, isn't it?

[SPEAKER_01]: Do they get into asking, what is the ideas behind this whole thing?

[SPEAKER_01]: Or do you have that kind of...

[SPEAKER_01]: questions.

[SPEAKER_01]: What is it?

[SPEAKER_01]: I don't know.

[SPEAKER_01]: How did this... Somebody asked one family why they came to this.

[SPEAKER_01]: We like the people.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: The spirit.

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, they just like the people in West Denmark.

[SPEAKER_01]: So they come and still they go to church in the Catholic church.

[SPEAKER_01]: But they enjoy what we do

[SPEAKER_01]: from our suppers.

[SPEAKER_00]: They come to all our fellowship things, these people.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's fine.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's good.

[SPEAKER_01]: And there must be

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, goodness, there must be eight, ten of them.

[SPEAKER_01]: And then, of course, there are some who are atheists.

[SPEAKER_01]: All of a sudden, who come because they enjoy the singing and what have you.

Interview of Edwin Pedersen by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
Danish American Archive and Library – Digital Archive

[SPEAKER_00]: And we accept all of them.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Good.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Because we have quite a few who are non-believers.
[SPEAKER_02]: Mm-hmm.
[SPEAKER_01]: But they still come to church.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, they come to the fellowship.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, but they like the choir.
[SPEAKER_01]: And they come for the choir.
[SPEAKER_01]: Well, they probably also come for the sermon.
[SPEAKER_01]: Probably not.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I don't know.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know.
[SPEAKER_01]: I don't know.
[SPEAKER_01]: So it's quite an open-minded congregation.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes, it is.
[SPEAKER_01]: It's an open-minded and it's... I don't know if there's another congregation like ours.
[SPEAKER_01]: In that way?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: has that many Catholics who take part in everything but the church service and non-atheists or non-believers.
[SPEAKER_01]: That's true.
[SPEAKER_01]: That would be quite unusual.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_01]: And we have a couple of men who live together, gay, and accepted them.
[SPEAKER_00]: ELCA had this big vote about a year ago.
[SPEAKER_00]: You heard about that?
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, I heard that, yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: And some churches, of course, are
[SPEAKER_00]: splitting away from the synod because of that.
[SPEAKER_00]: In fact, our neighboring church has done that.
[SPEAKER_01]: Specifically because of that question?
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_01]: Okay.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, the church that's originally split is leaving again.
[SPEAKER_00]: And there's one neighboring town up north of here.
[SPEAKER_00]: They have also had a big split.
[SPEAKER_00]: Because of that.
[SPEAKER_01]: Is that, can you say it's...
[SPEAKER_01]: It's the Holy Danes, the old Luck community.
[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: The congregation.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: That's the one that has left the ELCA.

[SPEAKER_01]: And they're way beyond that even.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, there's a North Luck community and there's a Luck.

[SPEAKER_00]: See, there's one right here in the village and then there's one a couple miles.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it was that North Luck one that split.

[SPEAKER_00]: But that used to be... That used to be in our church, yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: And in town, I don't think it's come up too much.

[SPEAKER_01]: There are probably people who have left the church because of it, but they also have members who are, well... They accept it, but they don't.

[SPEAKER_00]: I heard one member here in...

[SPEAKER_00]: in the Luck Church said, I will never give another dollar to this church because of that.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_01]: But for your congregation, it's fully accepted?

[SPEAKER_00]: Our pastor, we have two pastors, husband and wife, and she was a delegate at the meeting and voted for it.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: She was a delegate of the congregation.

[SPEAKER_01]: Was she voting on her own behalf?

[SPEAKER_00]: No, for the area, for the district, she was a delegate.

[SPEAKER_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER_00]: She wasn't voting for us.

[SPEAKER_01]: She had that mandate with her to vote this way or what?

[SPEAKER_00]: It was just, I think that was her own feeling.

[SPEAKER_01]: Okay, yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]: I imagine.

[SPEAKER_00]: She's...

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, they told me about this issue and the vote that took place last year.

[SPEAKER_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_01]: And that was when the Tyler meeting was...

[SPEAKER_01]: was taking place.

[SPEAKER_01]: So they told me how excited they were about the result.

[SPEAKER_01]: And when the result came and it was a yes to accept, they were really enthusiastic about it.

[SPEAKER_01]: So that says a lot about the Tyler group.

[SPEAKER_01]: And I don't think we were enthusiastic.

[SPEAKER_01]: Most people just accepted it.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's fine.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's fine.

[SPEAKER_01]: That was the mood at Tyler, at least.

[SPEAKER_01]: But of course, you're in a group, in a camp.

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[SPEAKER_01]: There's a certain mood there.

[SPEAKER_01]: Well, I'm really...

[SPEAKER_01]: glad we're getting around so many of these topics that are difficult to explain, but I think you've explained it very well in the way you said that we don't talk Grundtvigianism, we live it.

[SPEAKER_01]: So, I think we're about having it, aren't we?

[SPEAKER_01]: Yeah, I think so.

[SPEAKER_01]: So, unless you have more to add?

[SPEAKER_01]: Can we make both a museum and a

[SPEAKER_01]: Oh.