

Interview of Erna Jensen by H.B. Simonsen  
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen  
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[SPEAKER\_01]: So please tell me your full name.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, my name's Erna Claire Jensen, and my name Erna came from my dad's, quote, girlfriend in Denmark.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: They lived in the same apartment house.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: They were babies together, so then I got named after her.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And anyway, I was... You were born in where?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Out in the country.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: in Dawson County, Nebraska, close to Cozad, out on the farm.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Your parents, what were their names?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: My parents were Peter Erhard and Marie Frederikke.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And my mother's parents, I've just been talking about my dad's parents, my mother's parents, my grandfather came to the United States in 1869, and he spent 10 years in Dwight, Illinois, where he did a number of things.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: He worked in the steel mills, and he  
[SPEAKER\_00]: worked for a woman who was widowed on a farm and she insisted that he go to school to learn English so that he knew English.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then he came, the weather, the weather is so wet there, Dwight, Illinois, and so he came out west and homesteaded in 1879 and  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Then he homesteaded a quarter section, 160 acres, and tree claimed 160 acres.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then, well, then he went, after he had his claims proven up, then he went back to Denmark to visit his parents.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And there's where he met my grandmother.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And she worked on the same farm as her grandfather.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: dad no as his dad did and so then she had saved enough money that she could come to the United States and so she came to the United States and came with him and she worked in Lexington Nebraska for uh  
[SPEAKER\_00]: different people as a housekeeper, maid.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then she got a job with the Leflang family, and she worked there for three years, three months, and three weeks.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then she and my grandfather had set their wedding date.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Then the woman wanted her to work another three days, but no, they had it set.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So they got married, and then first they had just a little tiny small house.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: He had lived in a sod hut, and then they had a house built.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Anyway, then at the same time, then my grandfather's sister and her husband came and they bought the quarter section that was adjacent to my grandfather's farm.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then during that time, the church was being, you know, established.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And so they belonged to the St.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: John's Lutheran Church.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And anyway, so that's where my, you know, my mom and  
[SPEAKER\_00]: her sister and their two brothers, which were deceased early, they went to church there and, you know, everything.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I had an interesting experience when I was visiting in Denmark in 1972 that there was a couple who had lived out there at Cozad and then they went back to Denmark and they had been very good friends with my mom and her family.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And she told about how my mom and my aunt would have them over for Sunday dinner after church almost every Sunday because, well, I don't know if they probably didn't go by the road yet.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They probably just cut across the fields because it would be about three-fourths of a mile over to the church from where my grandparents' buildings were.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: What else can I say?

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, you grew up on this farm.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, I grew up on the, I grew up, okay.

[SPEAKER\_00]: When my mom and dad got married, then my, by that time my two uncles, my mother's brothers had died, and so it was just my mom and my aunt.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so then my mom sold her share of the farm, of the homestead to my,

[SPEAKER\_00]: my dad's brother, my uncle, and then they bought a farm across the road.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so then that's where I grew up on this farm.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we went to school at a one-room country school, which I think the education was just superior.

[SPEAKER\_01]: They were superior.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we lived two miles from church, and so that was, you know, like, well, for Sunday school, I think my dad probably hauled us all the time.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't remember walking to Sunday school ever.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But for Bible school in the summertime, we walked.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And that was—our Bible schools were—well, we had two weeks.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we sang and sang and we had Bible study in the morning.

[SPEAKER\_00]: The pastor that we had was Howard Christensen at the time, and he really did a good job of teaching us about—we didn't know it was Grundtvigian, you know, studies for life, but that's what it was, but we didn't know that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And anyway, he had this huge group of kids coming for Bible school, and they weren't all necessarily from our church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, it was neighborhood kids, others too.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we had...

[SPEAKER\_00]: So in the morning, well, we always sang, and then we probably had some, and then we had, little kids had their classes, and the big kids had our classes.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I was a fourth grader when he came.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Up to that time, the former pastor, it was, I don't have any positive memories of his, but this was very good from Pastor Christensen.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then...

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we sang a lot out of The World of Song, you know, sang so that we all know those songs, you know, when you start singing them when you're nine years old, you know, like the German band and the Happy Plowman, you know, all those songs that we all like so well.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then...

[SPEAKER\_00]: In the afternoon we had, well we had lunch, we always had it outside usually because it was nice weather, we could have a picnic outside.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then in the afternoon we had more singing and then we had crafts and we had gymnastics.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then that, so we went from nine to three.

[SPEAKER\_00]: That was a pretty full day.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it was so popular that kids, or even through confirmation class,

[SPEAKER\_00]: and driving cars were still coming to Bible school.

[SPEAKER\_01]: That's quite something.

[SPEAKER\_01]: You didn't call it Bible school, did you?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Summer school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We called it summer school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, we called it summer school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But when my mom was a kid, they had had six weeks of summer school, and then they studied Danish.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Oh yeah, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: During that time.

[SPEAKER\_01]: But you didn't do, well, did you do that at all?

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, we didn't do that at all.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No?

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, uh-uh, no.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It was, but you know like my parents spoke Danish all of the time, and I guess the older kids

[SPEAKER\_00]: my brother and sister were speaking Danish, but then the summer I was... You mean they spoke Danish at home?

[SPEAKER\_00]: At home, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I was two, and starting to talk, my mom had a hired girl, and her job was to primarily babysit me.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I came out in, she only spoke English, so I came out in English.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then if I didn't know a word in English, well then I'd throw in the Danish word.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well they thought that was so cute and they'd laugh, oh isn't that cute and so forth.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I had this very stubborn personality.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And that's the clock.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And anyway, so then if I didn't know a word, then I would wait to use it till I figured out, I'd find another word to use.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so then, but see, you understand it so well because that's all spoken to you.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so anyway, so then when I started to school, I pretty much knew all the words.

[SPEAKER\_00]: The last word I can remember not knowing that was the word for difference.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Difference.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: That was the one.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And how I learned that one day, some man had stopped to visit my father and they were out there standing by the light pole talking.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And he used the word difference.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I thought, oh, that's the one I needed.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But I remember Mom telling about my brother went to school, and he was talking about that his dad fed "havre" to the horses.

[SPEAKER\_00]: The other boy said, well, you know, they didn't know what he was talking about.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, that's oats.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so you see there can be some hangups like that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But our summer school, that was really a great experience.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then later, well, we had different pastors that continued on in the same pattern.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Howard, go ahead.

[SPEAKER\_01]: After you went to elementary school, you went on to high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Cozad High School.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then from there I went to Kearney.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, at that time it was Nebraska State Teachers College at Kearney, Nebraska, which is about 50 miles from home.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And now it's part of the University of Nebraska system.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then after I finished there, then I- Was that two years?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Four.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh, okay.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, four years, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Then I started teaching in high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I was 21 and my students, some of them were 19.

[SPEAKER\_00]: That's a little bit young.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so, but anyway, I survived, and they're still alive, too.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know of anybody that didn't survive it.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But anyway, the first year I was teaching physics and geometry and beginning algebra and general math, I had five things.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Physics, geometry, algebra, general math.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Did I say geometry?

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, anyway, that was a pretty heavy schedule.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Oh, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then the science building, well, the science rooms were being remodeled, so I had to do all that work, order new equipment, chemistry equipment primarily.

[SPEAKER\_01]: That's quite a job for a very young teacher.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, but fortunately at Kearney, I had worked in the chemistry lab for two and a half years, so I had background from that, which was good.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But then when I went to teach at Loop—I taught at Loop City, Nebraska, of which it was two-thirds Polish Catholic.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And you walked down the street, and these people, they were fourth generation, and they were still speaking Polish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And here, you know, those of us whose dads and parents had come from Denmark, we couldn't even speak fluent Danish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So that's a difference between the nationalities.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then I taught there four years, and then I thought, oh, there's got to be an easier way of life than this.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So then I moved to my, I got a job in my hometown, Cozad, and I taught there four years.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Then I went back to... In high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: In high school, and there I taught straight math.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then after that, well then I went back to school for a year, and then I got a job at a community college down in Colorado.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then

[SPEAKER\_00]: that community college had problems.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so there were 15 of us new that year and 23 of us left.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And that was most of the staff.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then, well then I heard from Thorvald and Johanne that they, the math teacher here at Grandview had left.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And that's how... You knew Thorvald and Johanne?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh, yeah, I've known them.

[SPEAKER\_00]: He was our pastor.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Yeah?

[SPEAKER\_00]: See, it was, okay, Howard Christensen, and then Thorvald, then Charles Terrell, and then Johanne and Thorvald, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They came when I was in college.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, so, yeah, I've known them for a long time.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Oh, yeah, sure.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So they told you about the job at Grand View.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah and so then I applied for it and anyway so I got it and so then I've been here ever since and then I always lived in apartments that were close to within a mile because I had

[SPEAKER\_00]: When I was in high school, I was just a ninth grader, we got caught in a blizzard outside of Cozad, my brother and I and another boy.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And our parents didn't know where we were for several days because the telephone lines were out.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And they didn't know.

[SPEAKER\_00]: All they had been able to find out is that we had left for home.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Where were you then?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, where were we?

[SPEAKER\_00]: At first, where we got stuck was right across the road from a house that was willing to take us in.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Then we heard a tractor coming down, and they pulled us out.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we went back into town, and I stayed with a girlfriend, and my brother stayed with a friend.

[SPEAKER\_02]: But you couldn't tell.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, because the telephone lines were down.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So I always said I've got to live close to work, which I did.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then eventually, well, one was a mile north of Grandview and the other one was a mile south.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then I bought my house, which was a mile to the south.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Actually, it was 1.0 miles from the inside of my garage to where I parked north side of the science building.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That was a good deal.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Mm-hmm.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That saved a lot of time because it only took me like five minutes from the inside of my kitchen to the inside of my office.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: My office was on the back hallway of the science building, right by the loading dock door.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: What year did you start at Grandview?  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Okay, I came in 1966.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: What kind of student...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: enrollment was how big was it then do you remember that well yeah i remember that it was uh it was quite large uh it hit 1600 and then uh but then see there are two things that happened the draft went off  
[SPEAKER\_00]: so that the boys didn't have to go to school to keep from going to the Army.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And the other thing that happened was that the Des Moines Area Community College opened, and they opened up north of town.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And we all thought they were just going to be a technical school, teach electrician or auto mechanics.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But they taught full-fledged liberal arts program.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And you can imagine the cost.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: of a community college versus the cost of a private school, well, then, see, that really affected Grandview.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So our enrollment dropped down.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I really don't know how low it dropped down, maybe into the 700s.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we started going to the three-year programs.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then four-year programs when we got the nursing program first.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And that's the one that Marvin Jessen wrote the program.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: First it wasn't accepted, and then he wrote it again.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And it was accepted, and then we got accreditation from the...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: necessary people.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then, well now, well see that was 1976 was the first, when the first four-year program nursing started.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: The Danish background of Grandview College is of course dating way back to 1896 when it was started.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: How was that background to be seen when you started at Grandview?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, Dr. Ernest Nielsen was president of Grandview.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Have you heard his name mentioned?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, I have.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Okay, well, so he was very Danish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But as far as... It was just a nice, comfortable place to work, and there wasn't a lot of...

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, everybody knew it had a Danish background, but there wasn't.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, then, you know, like they had Studenter Fest in the spring and Christmas programs, but there wasn't a lot of...

[SPEAKER\_00]: There wasn't a lot of Danish.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Specific Danish?

[SPEAKER\_00]: No.

[SPEAKER\_01]: But among the faculty members, like Ernest Nielsen and yourself, how many of the faculty would be of Danish background?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, okay, there's Marvin Jessen in the science division.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And there just weren't a lot.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I've got all my old catalogs back here.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I could go grab one of those.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Is that bit be all right?

[SPEAKER\_00]: And they'd give you a good idea.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Because I can't think of very many.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so here's one from 1972, which is not long after I came.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Okay, Thorvald Hansen, Heidi Haugard, that's two, myself, Marvin Jessen, okay, one, two, three, four.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Ron Magard, that's his administration, that's five.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Wilbur Williamson, six.

[SPEAKER\_01]: But it's a small minority, actually.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Very small, right.

[SPEAKER\_01]: The rest of them would be faculty members of every background.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Of every background, right.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Maybe they would be predominantly Lutheran, or not so.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, they were not predominantly Lutheran.

[SPEAKER\_01]: They would be of ... every...

[SPEAKER\_00]: They were from all over the pattern.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Okay.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, that's fine.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But anyway, in 2001, when I retired, I was the last, at that time, I was the last person that was full-blooded Danish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then Rudy Jensen, who I'm sure he's still teaching, but he's half Danish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: You've probably met him.

[SPEAKER\_01]: No, I didn't.

[SPEAKER\_01]: No, I didn't.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But there's not, well, first of all, you have to be able to hire instructors, and first you've got to get someone who has the credentials to teach.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So among the faculty, this situation is quite obvious.

[SPEAKER\_01]: What about the student enrollment?

[SPEAKER\_01]: They were also, the Danish background was also

[SPEAKER\_01]: a minority at that point of time.

[SPEAKER\_00]: That's right.

[SPEAKER\_00]: In the 60s.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Then eventually, see we used to have a folk dancing team and then Karen Basin who, she's Swedish background, but anyway she ran that and then that was no longer popular and then we also had a very, very good gymnastics.

[SPEAKER\_00]: In the 60s.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Like in Denmark, I think.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Very what?

[SPEAKER\_01]: Like in Denmark in the 60s, you know, these kind of old-fashioned traditions.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They disappeared.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Yeah, they were not popular for a number of years.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, and seeing them, the gymnastics team got canceled.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so we'd had a wonderful gymnastics team.

[SPEAKER\_00]: In fact, the coach went from Grandview down to be coach at the University of Missouri.

[SPEAKER\_01]: What kind of gymnastics would that be?

[SPEAKER\_01]: So traditional with the jump over the fence and all that, what we call a horse.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, it was the traditional.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And the women would do this kind of gymnastics with music, and they would

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I don't remember that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't remember that they were so much with music.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I think they were the traditional things.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah, okay.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Like they have like the, well, the kinds that participate with, you know, like at the universities, the gymnastics squad.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So that went out and gradually you got these more all-American sports like baseball and

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, they already had baseball and basketball, and they always had those, and then golf.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But now they've got everything.

[SPEAKER\_00]: This is the third year for football.

[SPEAKER\_01]: I bought this Grandview reader, and there was a list of all these athletic things that

[SPEAKER\_01]: were added on during the years, and now you have the whole palette.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, now I think they've got everything now.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I think so.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I think so.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So you have to... If you're a college or university in America, you have to have a lot of sports.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, you seem to have a lot of sports.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Is that a necessity to have a...

[SPEAKER\_01]: Is it necessary to have it?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, it seems like that if you don't have it, the kids don't come.

[SPEAKER\_01]: That's the impression I was having.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And there's, you know, many of the, and then, you know, they come and then they get some scholarships and so forth, and if you, you know, we had girls basketball and boys basketball,



[SPEAKER\_00]: All the time I was there, I'm sure there's always been girls basketball, but now there's everything.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So the time you've been at Grandview, it hasn't really had much Danish or Grundtvigian background at all.

[SPEAKER\_01]: You cannot say that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I'd say that it was run like a school for life, and that was his philosophy.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But as far as, you know, the...

[SPEAKER\_01]: So you'll say the Grundtvigian heritage or the Grundtvigian tradition was present without being called Grundtvigian.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: That's the feeling I have.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And see, that's the way I grew up.

[SPEAKER\_00]: In fact, I didn't even, you know, I wasn't even familiar with his name until actually I came here.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But, you know, it was then, well, that was the way we were reared.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But we didn't know it.

[SPEAKER\_01]: No, no.

[SPEAKER\_01]: You're not aware of that?

[SPEAKER\_00]: No.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So it was in the...

[SPEAKER\_01]: It was everyday life.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It was everyday life, right.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it was, well, like when I went to confirmation class, we had, well, this Pastor Christiansen that I mentioned before, he was the pastor.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, we didn't memorize the small catechism

[SPEAKER\_00]: We didn't even talk about the small catechism.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We had a book that was called The Story of the Bible.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then, you know, I always went to Sunday school and I always went through confirmation class and stuff, but I never heard of the small catechism until I was walking across campus one day with the academic dean, Ron Taylor, who's retired now.

[SPEAKER\_00]: This is his second

[SPEAKER\_00]: Second year of retirement?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, anyway, he's not been retired very long.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I told him, I said, don't try to make a Norwegian Lutheran out of me.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we were, you know, he's talking about that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I hadn't even been aware of it because of the way, you know, it was a lifestyle, but we didn't, nobody put any name to it.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And my parents would talk about it.

[SPEAKER\_00]: quite a bit about this split between the two groups of Danish Lutherans, but you know they didn't, they didn't call it by any name, but they definitely were in favor of the Grundtvigian tradition.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So that, you know, that was a, but you know.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Were you aware of the ways and beings of the other group?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_01]: How they view things, were you aware of that?

[SPEAKER\_01]: when you were younger.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, I think I was aware of why there was the difference of the two groups.

[SPEAKER\_01]: I mean, like attitudes towards dancing.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Oh, yeah, we definitely... You were aware that you sort of had an open opinion about these things, and there was this other Danish church with congregations that were

[SPEAKER\_01]: that were having a quite different attitude.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, well, see, some of my, well, there was this family in our church that came to our church, but they weren't happy with our, you know, too much freedom, so they sent their kids to Dana College.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And there was one that was the same age as my sister.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, but she was a free spirit, but anyway.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So it was a, but you know like the things at Grandview, well it operates a nice smooth program and well right now they're very fortunate they've got a very strong leader.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Kent Henning's very strong, and even though, you know, well he's not Danish, but I keep teasing him about, well Henning's a very common name in Denmark, are you sure you're not?

[SPEAKER\_02]: Good.

[SPEAKER\_00]: He had an experience coming in there that some of us were not too much different in age from his parents when you know when he first came and then there's been a lot of retirement but it's the school has either it was going to grow or it was going to die.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And it's thriving now.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's thriving now yeah.

[SPEAKER\_01]: You've been to the Tyler Folk Meeting this summer.

[SPEAKER\_01]: What brought you there?

[SPEAKER\_00]: What brought me there?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh, well, I was working and then they'd all, Thorvald and Johanne and a whole bunch of others from Lutheran Memorial Church would talk about, oh, they had so much fun going there and what was going on.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I couldn't go because it was the same time as opening faculty meetings.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So I couldn't go, but then as soon as I retired, then I started going.

[SPEAKER\_00]: 2001.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So I've gone every year since then.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And you've obviously been enjoying it.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's not a lot different than from the way our summer school, very similar except it's for grown-ups.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's not that much different.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's very, you know, it's very good.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And the committee, well the older people turned it over to the younger people.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And you saw, you know, Ricky Bly doesn't look very old, but she's retired from teaching, but she doesn't look that old.

[SPEAKER\_01]: She surely doesn't, she doesn't.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, she doesn't.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But they just do such an excellent job of getting a variety of interesting programs.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I think that sometimes people come there from other, they've grown up in other Lutheran churches, and I think they're, you know, somewhat startled because it's so contrary to how they were reared.

[SPEAKER\_01]: You have experienced people from elsewhere having this?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, I've gotten acquainted with some people.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They've...

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, how I, like this, you know, one, two guys, I met them because one of them was on the museum board the same time I was.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So I got acquainted with them and it was, it wasn't exactly what they had expected.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, how did they like it?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, they liked it, but they liked it and everything, but it wasn't, you know, like, okay, you know, this is so different than anything I've ever experienced.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's a lot like the elder hostels, I would think, except that there's probably no devotions involved.

[SPEAKER\_00]: When you were there, you know, we had devotions once a day.

[SPEAKER\_00]: but it's all very low-key.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Absolutely.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's comfortable.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I would think that for any person, no matter what religion or non-religion, they would not be uncomfortable.

[SPEAKER\_02]: I think you're right.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Okay.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So, you say outsiders would appreciate it,

[SPEAKER\_01]: Maybe the question is that outsiders would never get the idea of going there.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, not unless, only if some of their friends say, you know, I'm going to this, you know, like, why don't you go along?

[SPEAKER\_01]: If they can persuade them, because I've heard several people telling about when they, either before they go or when they go back, tell their friends and neighbors about this meeting they've been at.

[SPEAKER\_01]: they wouldn't hardly sort of get the idea of what you're singing, you're dancing for five days.

[SPEAKER\_01]: They think it's fine, but they sort of think it's a little weird, a little strange.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Maybe, you know, it might seem that way, but, you know, for me, it's just something that's very comfortable.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Because it's, well, it's not like I said, it's not a lot different than what our summer school ran.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And I also say if you go there, you will experience it as a very comfortable and very good community spirit.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So you'll feel at home there.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Like I did from being a...

[SPEAKER\_01]: The first time there was no problem at all.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Did you fly into Omaha and then John Mark picked you up?

[SPEAKER\_01]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, I rented a car and then I went up myself because I knew John Mark was going to be, would be going back just Thursday, which he did.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So I had to have my own car.

[SPEAKER\_01]: But it was easy to

[SPEAKER\_01]: to be a part of the whole thing from day one.

[SPEAKER\_01]: So I felt.

[SPEAKER\_00]: The thing is that, you know, these people come from all over United States plus other places.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_01]: What do you appreciate most at the Fall Museum?

[SPEAKER\_00]: What do I appreciate the most?

[SPEAKER\_00]: I can't say which thing's the greatest, you know, like the food's always good, the singing's always good, wonderful, the programs are always excellent.

[SPEAKER\_00]: The devotions, you can't really compare devotions to programs, but they always have good ones there.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's interesting how some people will come to give devotions and they've not experienced this group before and they're really astonished by the group.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I mean, that's a lot of people that just come out of the woodwork.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Would that happen in, well, I don't know.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Would it happen all over?

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know.

[SPEAKER\_02]: No.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Now, like, well, our church women at Lutheran Memorial, we have a yearly retreat, and this will be our 41st.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's very similar to the fall.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We have programs and we have devotions.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, we don't do any dancing, but everything else is pretty much the same.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We sing.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Does it take place here in Des Moines?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: There's a, well, we're having it, what, the 17th and 18th of September.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we've been doing this for 41 years without a break.

[SPEAKER\_00]: and for a small congregation to have, now we usually have around 20-some people come.

[SPEAKER\_01]: It's for one day?

[SPEAKER\_00]: No, two days.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Where does it take place?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Where does it take place?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Right there, well we have it at the fellowship hall in the church.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Oh yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we eat some of our meals at the cafeteria at Grandview.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So that way we, you know, the people that are in charge don't have to fix food unless they want to.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Sometimes they come up with ideas that they want to try something and then they do.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But we have a different committee every year.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: which is important to get new ideas, to have a different committee.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's been going on now.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: This will be our 41st one, and the highest attendance we ever had was, we used to have it at Episcopal Center at Boone, Iowa, which is about an hour drive north of here.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And then that camp got sold, and then  
[SPEAKER\_00]: then we had different places and we ended up just having it at the church, which works well because everybody's getting older and it's easier to go home at night.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But we really have, you know, well when you have 20 some or more women participating,  
[SPEAKER\_01]: It's good, and it's very... I haven't heard about that before you told me just now.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Nobody's mentioned our church women's retreat?  
[SPEAKER\_01]: No.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: No, it'll be our... But you have quite a number of different activities.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, we have... Well, it just depends upon what the committee comes up with.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We have speakers.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Like last year, one of the speakers we had was somebody from the...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Wildlife Department for the state and she brought in  
[SPEAKER\_00]: live owls and showed us things with little things like that.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's the program that I remember the most from last year.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But we have all kinds of programs.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And sometimes we have somebody from the college speak.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And well, so then just all kinds of programs.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But it's good.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's very similar in pattern to...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: to the fall meeting.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: So it's kind of the same spirit that is sort of around all the activities.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: I think I'll get to my maybe final question.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Would you consider yourself being a Grundtvigian?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I think I was reared that way and not knowing it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's the way I feel about it.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Sort of when you, after you become an adult, you become more acquainted with the old man, Grundtvig, from Denmark, and sort of realize, well, I know about that.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: So is that the way you realize sort of this is the Grundtvigian heritage in one way?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, you know, we didn't have anything formal about it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: My parents didn't use his name or anything, but it was just a way of life that's different.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: And you were aware that you had things in your group that would be different from maybe other groups in your neighborhood.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, you know, like in, well, our neighborhood was, you know, all of our neighbors, well, everybody to the west of us primarily, you know, we were all of Danish descent.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And so we went to the same church and, well, my country school, it was a mixture.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: but probably half and half, maybe more than that, of Danish background.

Interview of Erna Jensen by H.B. Simonsen  
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen  
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[SPEAKER\_00]: Then when, well, my high school graduating class, there were 49 of us, and seven of us were members of our church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And there would have been more than that, but a couple boys dropped out and joined the Navy.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So I think that, well, we just, we grew up with this,

[SPEAKER\_00]: way of life and doing things and, you know, like we had, it was like we were being trained to run a decent lifestyle, but we didn't have a lot of things that were forbidden.

[SPEAKER\_00]: No.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so I think that made a difference.

[SPEAKER\_01]: And it was, as you used the word, it was low key.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Uh-huh.

[SPEAKER\_01]: down-to-earth kind of teaching, learning.

[SPEAKER\_01]: Well, I think we've been coming around quite a number of subjects, so I think I'll