

Interview of Marilyn Kramme by H.B. Simonsen  
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen  
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[SPEAKER\_00]: Marilyn Olga Hansen Kramme  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I was born June 16, 1934, in Marquette, Kronberg, Nebraska.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Kronberg was a little village.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And in this village was the church that sat up on the hill surrounded by this cemetery and with a gym hall.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: There was a grocery store and a blacksmith shop in this little village and several homes.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And we lived on several farms, but our last farm was a mile north of the church and a quarter east.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And we could hear the church bell every Sunday morning, very plain when it rang.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: The church was really the center of our social life.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And we'd always have different meetings, and the children would play, and the parents would listen to the lectures and all.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It was a very, I didn't realize it at the time, but a very special place because we had such a good time there.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We would sing a lot and we sang out of the World of Songbook, which has so many wonderful songs in it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: we would folk dance.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: After every silver wedding celebration or junior or Luther League celebrations, you know, meetings, we'd always dance.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It was just a way of life, and we took so many of those things for granted.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We had Danish days that were started by a pastor, Christenza Jespersen, and her husband, Harris Jespersen, came when I was about...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: 12 or 13 they came to our congregation and she started the Danish days which really brought the congregation together I mean the women you know with the food and crafts they made a lot of wooden things and and people from all over came came for these these Danish days and we had a portable dance floor it was wooden and it would when my mother told me about when they were younger  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It would go from farm to farm.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: When my parents got married in 1932, they took it to  
[SPEAKER\_00]: my grandfather's farm, where we eventually lived north of the church.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And everybody came and they had a dance for my parents.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: My parents, Edna Rasmussen and August Hansen, met at a young people's convention in Brush, Colorado.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It was part of the...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: The district where there were several churches in each district.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And they met up in Brush, Colorado.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's where my mother was from.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: She was from Brush, Colorado.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And my dad would go back and work in the sugar beet fields.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And eventually they got married.

[SPEAKER\_00]: My mother had been a teacher for five years.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And she...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: was the youngest of a large Danish family my grandparents, Fred and Christine Rasmussen came from Denmark, and uh... lived in Brush, Colorado. Would you know where in Denmark they had been living  
[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, I do have that at home.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I do have that at home.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I could give that to you.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I could give that to you.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But my father's parents, I know, came from near Magdalene (? I'm not sure about the name; hbs) by Odense.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And they were my grandparents Thorvald and Olga Jensen Hansen came from that area because I visited that in Denmark.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But growing up, we always, of course,  
[SPEAKER\_00]: celebrated Christmas in the tradition of the Danish tradition of dancing around the Christmas tree, the almond in the rice, rice pudding.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And I have carried that out in my own family.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I married my husband, Dick Kramme, in June of 1954.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: and we had four children Kathy is 53 and Kim is 51 Carrie is 49 and Craig is 48 and we always did the dancing around the tree and we still do that we have 12 grandchildren and they all  
[SPEAKER\_00]: are still doing that with us. We put the almond in the mashed potatoes so now and we always have a little prize, you know for that, and they always look forward to that. The rice pudding is not ... It's not rice pudding anymore it's the mashed potatoes ,it's the mashed potatoes, we put it into yeah. When you grew up as a little girl did you speak English in your home?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We always spoke English.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: My dad and mother would speak Danish when they didn't want us to understand anything.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So I did not grow up learning Danish at all.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But I heard it, but I just didn't pick it up like I should have.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And I went to Dane school one summer, you know, when I was six years old.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Ferrieskole?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Dane School.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: At the church.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, they had a summer session.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: For some weeks they had different classes ...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But that was it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Then they didn't have it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, then they didn't have it anymore after that.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: So that ended there.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's why you didn't do it anymore.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I didn't do that anymore.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, what was your schooling like?

[SPEAKER\_02]: Where did you go to school?

[SPEAKER\_00]: I went to Marquette High School, which is a very small school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I'm sorry to say there's no school in this little town of Marquette anymore, either grade school or high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I attended country school when I was for about five years, you know, one-room country school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then we went into Marquette when I was like seventh grade.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And there were only eight in my graduating class, so you can see it was very small.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's been closed now for quite a few years.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Then after high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: After high school.

[SPEAKER\_00]: When I was about 13, I came to Grandview College for junior camp.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And of course, I fell in love with Grandview College.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I always dreamed of going to Grandview College.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Several of my aunts, two of my aunts had gone to Grandview and met their spouses and husbands.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Some of the young people from our congregation, it was our Danish college, you know, and we came from all over.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so I came to Grandview and enjoyed it very much and met my husband.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Dick Kramme and got married.

[SPEAKER\_02]: You went there the first time as 13, you said?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, for a junior camp.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They had a junior camp in the summertime for young people to come.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And so I went two years.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I went when I was 13 and 14, I think it was.

[SPEAKER\_02]: And then you came later.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, later.

[SPEAKER\_00]: After I graduated, I came when I was 18.

[SPEAKER\_02]: What did you study?

[SPEAKER\_00]: I studied what they called a pre-professional degree, but it was teaching, a teaching degree, when we could teach on two years.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then I taught in West Des Moines for two years, and then we started our family.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then I substituted.

[SPEAKER\_00]: you know, in between all of our children.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And then about in 1973, I went as a associate and became a library associate.

[SPEAKER\_00]: So then I was a librarian in the elementary schools for 25 years.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Your husband, was he of Danish background?

[SPEAKER\_00]: My husband was of Danish background.

[SPEAKER\_00]: His father came from Denmark at 20 years old.

[SPEAKER\_00]: He came from

[SPEAKER\_00]: up north of Hjørring, Mygdal, was where he grew up.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And when we went to Denmark, we saw his grandparents' gravestone.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They were not, they were sitting, you know, to the side in front of the, kind of to the church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They were not kept anymore.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But yes, his father came, and several of his uncles, they all immigrated, they were a large family, and they'd come one by one, you know, they'd

[SPEAKER\_00]: sponsor one but I think six of them about came, the Krammes, came to the United States and his father, but he never, they never spoke Danish in the home at all. His mother was also Danish and she was completely Danish, but they never spoke never spoke Danish in the home at all

[SPEAKER\_02]: Was that a conscious choice of theirs?

[SPEAKER\_00]: It must have been, evidently, yes.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Because his father had quite an accent.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, his father had quite an accent.

[SPEAKER\_02]: And you wouldn't know why exactly?

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, I think it was because they wanted their children to speak English and probably

[SPEAKER\_00]: because their dad was quite young when he came and he did construction with bridges and later started his own business.

[SPEAKER\_02]: You've been at the Tyler Folk Meeting this summer.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, yes I was.

[SPEAKER\_02]: How come you went there?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Because I just enjoy that fellowship, the atmosphere, the singing, being with other Danish people from around.

[SPEAKER\_00]: the country.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's just very refreshing.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's not just Danish things that we hear, it's topics of interest to everyone.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But it's a way to keep our

[SPEAKER\_00]: Danish heritage alive and I think thinking about thinking about ... Especially with the singing the folk dancing and and just the fellowship that is a lot what the Happy Danes are known for.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Living each day to its fullest, you know. So the things that you experience at the Tyler meeting would you also

[SPEAKER\_02]: have that in your daily life?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, I do, because I belong to the Danish Sisterhood.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I was president for three years.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And part of that is to keep our Danish heritage alive, but also to be enriched by other friends who are of Danish descent or who have an interest in it, you know.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we do something Danish, you know, usually at each meeting.

[SPEAKER\_00]: we also belong to the Brotherhood, you know, which is a fellowship gathering too.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I'm not as active in that as I am in Sisterhood.

[SPEAKER\_02]: And you belong to the Lutheran Church?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, Lutheran Memorial Church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I have for

[SPEAKER\_00]: since we were married in 54.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I was, you know, St.

[SPEAKER\_00]: John's Lutheran in Kronberg before that.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Would you say that the members of this congregation are more or less all of some kind of Danish background, or is it more mixed?

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's more mixed now, much more.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It used to be that it was a lot of the professors from the college, you know, but of course the Grand View has changed so much.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's more...

[SPEAKER\_00]: of a city school now, before the young people came from all parts of the United States because they were affiliated with the Danish Synod and the churches, but now it's not that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But I'm so proud of what Grandview has become.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I never thought it would be as large as it is now.

[SPEAKER\_02]: It seems to be thriving.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It is thriving.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's had good leadership and reaching out to the community and of course introducing all different kinds of sports which brings young people.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Your children, you said you had four children.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Do they have any interest in your Danish traditions?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, but not... I think maybe as they get older it will be more, but our daughters do.

[SPEAKER\_00]: They enjoy...

[SPEAKER\_00]: you know, the Danish traditions that we do at Christmas time, and the singing.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Two live here in Des Moines, two children live here in Des Moines, a son and a daughter, and two daughters in Minneapolis.

[SPEAKER\_02]: So have you any impression of their families continuing these things?

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, not as much as I thought they would, because the two children are not affiliated with this church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And we do some Danish things here.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We do Fastelavn.

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, we have Fastelavn, and the children grew up with that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I remember when they were little, they always looked so forward to Fastelavn and they'd always say, now, when are we going to have Halloween at church?

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, they were younger, but we still have that tradition.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But I don't think, I don't know if they'll carry on the tradition of, you know, the dancing around the tree, and we always have codfish with mustard gravy for our meal for Christmas.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I always fix that.

[SPEAKER\_02]: For which day of Christmas?

[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, it's usually when we celebrate, because sometimes we cannot celebrate on Christmas Eve because they have in-laws to go to, so we always...

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, have a day when they can all be there.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And that is when we do the codfish with mustard gravy.

[SPEAKER\_02]: I haven't heard that over here yet.

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

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[SPEAKER\_00]: I tried to not do it because it's a job.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh, to fix, I fixed 10 pounds.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Wow.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: At one time, because it takes that much.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And plus a ham, because we have 12 grandchildren.  
[SPEAKER\_01]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And now eight of them are boys, and, you know, they eat a lot.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So we fixed 20 pounds of potatoes, mashed potatoes.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: And that's where you have the almond?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's where I have the almond now.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Oh, yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And that's where... Good to hear.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So I thought I'd get away with not having it, but my son-in-laws love that codfish.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And I get it at a store.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: That's Christmas.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: To them, it's Christmas.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And to them, it's their Christmas.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Everyone they know, they wouldn't dream of that at Christmas.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: The Danes, most of the Danes around here in Tyler, they wouldn't have that tradition, would they?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know how I got it started because we didn't have that at my home.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We always had the roast goose, you know.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But I didn't do that because that's such, you know, but I know some people still have the roast goose.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: You know, the cod and mustard is something that quite a lot of Danes have for New Year's Eve.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Actually.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: But some for Christmas, I'm sure, also.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: During the Christmas.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Well, I know when my father used to come down to visit, he'd say, Marilyn, I'll go buy the codfish if you'll make codfish and mustard gravy.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: So I've done that quite a few years.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Quite a different path.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Would you consider yourself being a Dane?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Oh, yes.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I mean, my heritage, you know, yeah, I'm proud of my Danish heritage very much.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And I think as I get older, even more so.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: We've been to Denmark twice.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I've always wanted to go, and we've gotten to go twice.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I got to worship in the little church where my Bedstemor had been baptized and confirmed, three years ago when we were there.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Because I ask this question, you are obviously an American citizen.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: So if I ask you, are you an American, you would probably say... Yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER\_00]: But my heritage is Danish.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And I think as we get older... So that's the way you sort of divide it into... Yes, yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Citizenship and heritage.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Heritage, right.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Because I had almost the same answer from...

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah, I bet so too.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Grundtvig, would you have you any sort of, would you consider yourself being a Grundtvigian?

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, I didn't even hear about Grundtvig until I was an adult.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I did not hear about him growing up.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Even at college I didn't hear much, but now it seems like it's more prevalent to talk about Grundtvig, and we got to visit his church when we were in Denmark, the memorial church.

[SPEAKER\_00]: We also got to go to Vartov, and they opened up the church so I could go inside.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know, I've just gotten to really

[SPEAKER\_00]: you know, appreciate in all of his songs.

[SPEAKER\_00]: You know, if you open up The World of Song or heritage in song, you see so many of his songs and they have so much meaning to them about life and living and living life to the fullest.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's just, there's so much of that in the songs.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And they just, I use some of them for devotions because they say just how I feel and they're very personal, you know, for your life.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, that's a good way to answer because you said that it's a kind of way of living.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes, it is a way.

[SPEAKER\_02]: But if you begin to ask where did those ideas come from, you have the answer.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, but I didn't realize that.

[SPEAKER\_00]: I didn't realize that until I was older and became an adult.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And it's been in the last 20 years or more that it really has become...

[SPEAKER\_00]: more visible.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Maybe also being in contact with the other people at Tyler.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: Yes.

[SPEAKER\_02]: About this more conscious.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And in the, even Grandview, I mean, has brought that more.

[SPEAKER\_00]: And this new president brings that into, it's a way of

[SPEAKER\_00]: I wish I had that book here, but it's a way of living life to its fullest.

[SPEAKER\_00]: It's the whole body, mind and soul.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Your body, mind and your soul.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, I think we've gotten around to quite a few good points.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know what else I can tell you.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But I grew up with those.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It was just a way of our life, and I didn't think a lot about it.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: You know how when you're a child, you just don't appreciate it until you get older.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: That's true.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: You don't appreciate things until you get older.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: No, because that's just how the world is.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: When you get older, you realize, my life was quite different from so many other people.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: And you find there's such a...  
[SPEAKER\_00]: There's so much joy in the things that, in the way you do things.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't know how to explain it, but it's a joy of living.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: It really, you know, in that song.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Obviously, in Tyler, there's a very special spirit.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Yes, it is.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Among all the people.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: It's a very good ...  
[SPEAKER\_02]: community.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I'm so glad you got to be part of that.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah, that was very good.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: But is that to find this spirit is also found in your congregation and where you ...  
Will that be found in your congregation, the same sort of down to earth?  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't think so like it used to be.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Not like it used to be.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: No.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: But out in Kronberg, you'll find it, you know, because they still have Æbleskiver Days.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: They still, you know, and I make æbleskiver for my family, you know, Christmas usually.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: I don't, should do it oftener, but when there's so many of them, it's too much.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, you have a big family out here that you have quite a job.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Yeah, 12 of them, yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Yeah.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, thanks very much.  
[SPEAKER\_00]: Okay, if you can think of anything else, Henrik.  
[SPEAKER\_02]: Well, I think it's...