

Community Archive Center Oral History Project Transcript
Sulja Warnick, Interview date: 4/6/2023

dindria barrow: 00:00:10 Hello, this is dindria barrow from the Community Archive Center, and it is April 6th, 2023. We are in the digital media lab of the Tacoma Public Library Main Branch, and I am here with Sulja Warnick. Hello Sulja.

Sulja Warnick: 00:00:27 Hello, dindria.

dindria barrow: 00:00:28 It's so good to have you.

Sulja Warnick: 00:00:29 Oh, me too. <laugh>. Nice to see you again.

dindria barrow: 00:00:33 Um, we're gonna just launch right into the questions because I have so many things to ask you. Can you start with name some of the places, people, or things you call home?

Sulja Warnick: 00:00:45 Uh, yeah, I can say that, the country, that Korea, that I went to school, elementary, all the way to the college. Uh, that's, I lived in very small town near the river. And, uh, it's very natural, nature environment. And whole summer, I can swim in the river and, and a lot of food is abundant next to the river. And when I get hungry and hot and I can just grab a watermelon in the watermelon patch and get a, you know, so it's just really, um, wonderful, uh, time that in, countryside of river. And that's, that's in my memory all the time when I think about Korea. Yes. But I can call my home is now KWA: Korean Women's Association in here because I volunteered 47 years in that organization and visioning and dreaming and, helping and feeling that I feel purpose of life and, and fighting with inequity and injustice. And I can definitely say KWA is my home too.

dindria barrow: 00:02:27 I love that you say it could be a location, it could be an organization, and it's the people that you can call home.

Sulja Warnick : 00:02:34 Sure. Yes.

dindria barrow: 00:02:36 Um, what other places have you lived beside Tacoma?

Sulja Warnick : 00:02:41 Uh, actually I was born in Japan, during the World War II. Um, so, I might, that's, I lived there for six years and then after World War II was over, I moved back to Korea, which is my father's hometown.

dindria barrow: 00:03:08 All right. Yeah. And there's a whole context to the history of why you were born in Japan as opposed to Korea and being able to go back to Korea, right?

Sulja Warnick : 00:03:19 Yes.

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- dindria barrow: 00:03:20 Why did your family come to Tacoma?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:03:26 Why did I, to come to Tacoma? Yeah. I met, the Jewish American, uh, when I was in college. He was a teacher at the International,
- Sulja Warnick : 00:03:43 Um, uh, no, USIS, United State Information Center. And he was teaching English conversation, and I met, him at the time, Fred Warnick, who's a Tacoma boy. <laugh>. Oh, right.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:04:01 Uh, he was just a graduate, Stanford and ROTC, he came to Korea as a first Lieutenant. Oh. And, uh, he was just also teaching in SISs. All right. So we met that time, but then he discharged to, uh, army and went back to state. And, uh, I went to graduated college and then went to the graduate school in Seoul. And we, we end up happening to meet again. Second time in Seoul. He came to Seoul back as a one of the trading company in Seoul called Cornell Brothers, one of the first, one of the early trading company as a manager. And we met again, and there we hit <laugh>
- dindria barrow: 00:04:54 <laugh>. We hit it off, we hit it off <laugh>,
- Sulja Warnick : 00:04:58 And then married. And then, yeah. My mother was very, um, adamant about, me, to getting, uh, married to an American or foreign nurse. She called, she called <laugh>.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:05:11 So, but, uh, it took a lot of time to convince my mother. And my mother was, uh, my husband just went to the University and learn the Korean language and try to convince my mother. And he just said, he's not gonna go to the, America, just, I'm gonna live here in Korea forever. So my mother accepted that offer and we got married and we lived in Korea for 10 years. So I had the two girls, uh, who were born in Korea. And then my mother passed away, and then next year my husband said, how about, lets go back to the States now, you know? So, um, you know, just, uh, yeah, two, my two children education in, in Korea, and also whatever. I thought maybe this will be better opportunity. So we came to Tacoma because Tacoma was, his hometown. And I think they had three generation, you know, Puget Sound, Lumber Company, whatever, in tides, uh, the tides right there, there, yes. So that's how I came to Tacoma.
- dindria barrow: 00:06:39 All right. How many languages do you speak Sulja, and where and when did you learn them?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:06:45 Oh, I learned the languages maybe I can say four or five different languages, not just because of that I just was crazy

learning a foreign language, but I had to, my situation was just, just, I had to learn different languages because when I was first born in Japan, that was, uh, Korea was occupied the by Japan, and, and if you speak, Korean, it was, my mother said, you don't speak Korean. You speak just Japanese only. So, um, that's why I spoke Japanese until six. And then after six, I went to Korea. I had to learn Korean and, uh, so, and then in the middle school, you have to learn English too. You know, there's required. And then, and then when I was high school, I, they, I have to learn about maybe at least 5,000 Chinese characters, uh, to go college. And, all the Korean newspaper at that time, uh, was in like Chinese and Korean. So you, you have to almost, you know, learn, you have

- dindria barrow: 00:08:12 To be at least Bilingual.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:08:12 And then I came back to America and I belong to the here Jewish Temple Bethel. And, just all half of, uh, services in, Hebrew and English. So I wanna be singing in Hebrew songs. So I, so I had to learn Hebrew a little bit, <laugh>, but I, not nothing, I mean, I mastered any language particularly, but, um, but I can just survive and get by.
- dindria barrow: 00:08:45 Yes. I love that as part of your story, because you,are a teacher. Yeah. And so, we'll get the teaching part, but, um, the next question is, who are you, and where do you come from? And you've answered some of that question. But describe your family, your family's history, and how you grew up or your childhood.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:09:11 Okay. My family, my father's side,
- Sulja Warnick : 00:09:17 My father was, uh, one of the royal family, actually member, because in 14th century, through 19th century, before Japanese occupation of Korea, Korea was ruled by, king's last name Lee/Yi. So my name, my father's name was Yi Sam Dal. And he was, uh, one of the, um, son of the, uh, King Se Jong, uh, that one of third king of the Yi dynasty. [Note from Sulja Warnick: In Korea, often see Yi. In US, often see Lee. Both are variations of same family name, which in Korean language, is pronounced straight "E" or "Ee." But since when using anglicized alphabet, it's thought to be too short, so: Yi, Lee, Li, Rhee; all are used. And all are the same name!] Um, so he [father] was a well learned man, and he was a oral storyteller. He knew every Chinese classic stories, and, uh, winter times when we lived in near the riverside. And, and he or he, just, every night in winter, they don't have a lot of farmers work to do. So, they whole neighborhood, the seniors come and hearing my father's story. And sometimes that I'm not allowed to sit in with that group,

because, but I want so much that like stories. So, I hide in the kitchen and hearing all his stories. So that's a very fond memory of, you know, my father. And

Sulja Warnick : 00:10:48 So he, but after the 1910 Japan occupy the Korea. I mean, he was desperate, you know, because of, he lost the, you know, he thought he'd lost the country because of the, the last king of Yi/Lee dynasty. And, uh, so he was just back and forth. Korea, and then Japan and Manchuria, we have temporary government office in, in the Manchuria in, so he was kind of errand boy, underground movement. So that's how he went back and forth in, in Japan. That's how we, he met my mother. Oh. My mother family was, my grandfather was very skilled, man, I guess the, so Japanese government kind of took him to Japan. Mm. So my mother was, went to Japan, two years old, and when she came back, she was 31. So she, she pretty much was a Korean blood family, but it was almost like a Japanese woman, you know? So she had like a, everybody called her nickname, like a "jjoke ba-ree". "Jjoke ba-ree" means like a Oreo cookie. [Note from Sulja Warnick: Jjoke ba-ree. It's a strong "j" sound, almost "ch", could spell as "jjoke". Next word is ba-ree, or ba-lee, (ba-ree is probably better): "ba" rhymes with saw. Jjoke-ba-ree: It is a kind of nickname, a little on the negative side Koreans in Korea would use for Koreans who act like Japanese. It's a Japanese word, for the wooden shoes that Japanese would wear in olden times.] You know, it's, so, she, she was, that's why I guess she really didn't want me to be married to <laugh> the American, you know?

dindria barrow: 00:12:23 Right. <laugh>.

Sulja Warnick : 00:12:24 So, anyhow, um, but my father ran the bookstore. The business was bookstore. So we had the bookstore for three generation. My father did it, and my brother did it, and then brother son did it. So he just three generation book bookstore, uh, business. And I was very lucky because at that time, Korea was right after war was one of the poor country. And library, you don't, you don't get to the live book is very hard. But since we have bookstore, yes. I had the abundant, you know, books and, and I had the, you know, every chance to get any books I want, you know? So that's how I, I felt very lucky. And I was almost very bookworm, you know, really, I love to hear the story, read the story of particularly European, the literature, American literature and all that. That's why I decide to major English lit literature in college. My mother said, you gotta be a pharmacy <laugh>, <laugh> pharmacist.

Sulja Warnick : 00:13:43 But I don't know why, what idea she, she got pharmacy. But anyhow, it's way farther what I like to do. So, anyhow,

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- dindria barrow: 00:13:52 But you followed your heart.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:13:53 Yes, followed my heart. Yeah.
- dindria barrow: 00:13:56 What are, and I know we're gonna get into Tacoma Public Schools and the Korean Women's Association, and your honors and achievements, but what are the highlights for you in your adult life?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:14:10 Adult life? I mean, I always, uh, like to be educator, even I was college English lit. I thought I wanna be a college English lit professor, but it was too much. Anyhow, so I came here and I was looking for the job, but nobody, gave me a job because even though I was a certified high school English teacher in Korea, here you have the Washington State teachers, a certification I don't have. And, you know, I do have accent when, when I speak English too and whatever, and I couldn't get a job very easily. But, so I actually volunteered to the Oakland Elementary School, as a volunteer. Um, and then three months later, the principal said, you're pretty good. You wanna be paraprofessional job. Right. So, yeah, <laugh>, and then I got that job for, and then, and then I, after my principal said that, why don't you get a certification?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:15:23 Yeah. You know, you do love teaching. And I, so I got all my credit from Korea, and then went to a Seattle Pacific University, and I got, they said, I have to get a lot of US history and all the history, Washington state history but I have so much education classes, but I didn't have all that. Right. So I, I had to take all that classes for 18 unit, I think, at that time. So it took about a year and a half to finish that.. Then after that, I studied, I became a certified teacher right away. In Tacoma school at the Baker Middle School,. It was very, I mean, I just loved it because that's what I wanted it to do. And then, and then after a couple years, I taught US history, believe it or not, after all those history of, of course, because I took a lot of classes.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:16:25 So us I taught US history, and then I also, I taught, ESL. And then, 1995, I asked the school district if, we can offer some Korean language as a second language. And because, you know, it's just, it's world become global. And, Korea is the largest trading partner with, you know, Korea in Washington state is so, anyhow, so they took it as Korean language, as a foreign language, second language. So then there is nobody to can teach this. Why don't you teach? <laugh> I taught Korean language too. Right. Anyhow, so I, I loved everything, but then I, I also very proud of that. Anybody who learned Korean, for, a year, I decide to take those student, real Korean experience, not just

only language and culture. Right. So I made the sister city in Gunsan, Korea, and then made a kind of a sister school

Sulja Warnick : 00:17:43 with Baker. And I took 25 to 30 student every other year, all the way to Korea. That was my, that, that was you know, some of Tacoma, students, they never been out of Tacoma, even <laugh>. So all the way to Korea, that was a lot of treat for them. They really liked it, and I really loved it too. The kids to go there for two weeks and then actually speaking the language they learned, and then just try to learn, um, the cultures and food. And so I did every other year. And, and it was, that was very, I felt good. And anyhow, I just joined a lot of, different groups of, community. I really believe in the community too. You know, when I first came here, I did have a big cultural shock.

Sulja Warnick : 00:18:48 I mean, everything was the way, not my expectation met.. And then, and when I lived in Korea, I lived pretty well and without, uh, much difficulties because, Fred, my husband was American, trading company employee. So he had maybe pretty well paid maybe 20, 30 people's salary. Yeah. Share. We, lived the 10 years in Korea with the two housemates, <laugh>, and just very well, you know. So, here I came, <laugh>, here I came, my husband's family was very well rooted family. But, when I first came, they didn't took me into their home. They, they just got me a little tiny motel, and you live here until you buy a house. And, and I had two kid and little, tiny room with the rusted stove, and where am I getting into <laugh>?

Sulja Warnick : 00:20:06 I was just, yes. Yeah. I was so shocked. Because with that, I had the very bad depression. I almost, you know, just, I just, that's what made me to believe that, you know, you have to help others. And, so that's how I got involved with the court, with the KWA. So, '76. So, because I wanna help them. Right. And, and because they're, at that time, there are a lot of Korean women who came to this country to marry the soldier, you know? Right. The Fort Lewis McChord, that's why we had so many Korean women, the seventies came here. I mean I hear so many, uh, Korean women, domestic violence victims, and they in the Fort Lewis. And so, you know, KWA was started in '72, as a social club, actually. Right. Social club, just doesn't only women got together with the they, just get once a month and then get the Korean food ready and sing Korean songs. And, so that they kind of share their home sickness and whatever. Yeah. Um, so I joined that there, '76 myself.

dindria barrow: 00:21:52 And then, um, and then it became part of the mission of the KWA to address the domestic violence...

- Sulja Warnick : 00:22:00 No, that when we were social club, we were, even '76 when I joined that I was, I was called to the Fort Louis and McChord Air Force base almost every other day. Because it's there was a, you know, domestic violence victims are crying for help. And, so the officers are looking for somebody who can translate. These wives cannot explain very well why they were beaten, why, what's happening with them. So they called our social club to come help them. So they're a lot of members we had, but I was school teacher already. And, then so they kind of, asked me to go. To translate or interpret. So I went there one day, there was one woman, 20, maybe five-ish, and with one kid with a completely half of the face was bruised completely, you know, black eye and bruised.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:23:11 And she was trying to explain why she was got beaten up like that. And, and she was saying it's something like, uh, every time I don't know how to use the, washing machine or, uh, dishwasher and my husband get frustrated and beating me up. Mm-hmm. So I just couldn't interpret that. I just brought her home. You, you can't live like that. You know, I said to her and then brought home and stayed my house for three days, and then another member, three days, whatever. But she still wanna go back to the husband. And, and then she came out again, and we, oh gosh, it was vicious. And it was a lot of things like that happened in seventies. Hmm. And I, the social club was helping that. But it was all limited that we, you know, it was, it's a huge need out there, because it was, there were a lot of women there.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:24:12 I don't know numbers exactly, but many. So, um, we studied the over Korean ESL class and how to write the resume and drive license classes and all by ourselves members, you know, and it's not easy, you know, I, I have to do after school hours only too. And I have two children too. So it's, um, it was very hard. So '79, I become a president of the Korean Women's Association. And, I said, we can't just do ourself like this because these women who married the American GI, there are also US citizens. Some of them are, they government has to take care of 'em. And I, I get to know a little bit of a system is going on here. So I just, uh, um, just registered as a 501(c)3 as a nonprofit. Yes. And at the, at the state.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:25:21 And then I joined the Pierce County, uh, board, The Respected Elders Program, whatever they were called at that time, and then, because I wanna know. Yes. What's available out there? Resources. So I, I then, when I see that in county, there were a lot of a program can help KWA. So, first thing I requested was that senior meal site. Senior meal site. And, uh, and also that Pierce College to offer ESL classes to our Korean women, you know? Yes. So we had, um, those classes was, you know, going

after we became a nonprofit. And so at the meal site, these women, we had, every time you go meal site, maybe 30, 40 people, you know, at American meal site, we had 200 at the time. Oh my goodness. Oh, just these Korean men's and women's, they just come not just for food, they come for the socialize.

- Sulja Warnick : 00:26:35 You know. So it just, so then county gave more money because we have more number, number to feed, and when, when, um, I'm going too long anyhow. This is all KWA story. Yes. Yeah. So, um, so when we had the meal site, that there about 200 seniors there. And, there are, you know, sometimes the seniors, you know, just right there, we find that they're sick. Some of them are sick, and then some of them are high blood pressures. And, and some, some of the seniors' toes get rotten because we cannot cut the toenails and all these things. We see it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So then we went to the county again, can you send the nurse to check it out? This, uh, health of these people? So then that it turn into an in-home care service. We applied for in-home care service at that time there, that just then, then in-home care, just service started. And then it just, we hired the whole, you know, many, um, Asian women, actually a lot of Koreans and Vietnamese and Cambodians. And so we, just, studied to do that in-home care business. And, then anyhow, um,
- dindria barrow: 00:28:09 So you had these three things going on. You had the education classes. Yes. You had the meal sites. Yes. Which is kind of like a culture or
- Sulja Warnick : 00:28:17 Culture. Social group. Nutrition program.
- dindria barrow: 00:28:20 Nutrition program as well. And then the In-home Care.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:28:23 Yeah. In home care. That's it. That's the thing. All kinds of classes first. All kinds of classes. Right. And then it also, not only that we had
- Sulja Warnick : 00:28:39 The library we made, we, you know, that that's a, very, one of first Korean language library in a US actually, um, because of these Korean womens at that time, they didn't know how to read English. So, but they have to get information. What's going on in the world, what's going on in, you know? So I thought since, since I'm book Lover <laugh>, so, so I thought we can ask a Korean newspaper called one of the biggest newspaper agency in Korea, Dong-a Newspaper. [Note from Sulja Warnick: It's name of a Korean daily newspaper: Dong-a Ilbo; Dong means east, -a means Asia. Ilbo means newspaper.] We, I, we ask them to collect some books, collect some books that, these womens can read and get information what's going on in the community,

society, whatever, in Korean, because they don't know how to read the English book. So we got, luckily, this newspaper, Korea, Dong-a, they collected 4,000 books. And then they also said, we are gonna give you every year, magazines, every month's magazines, to provide it. So gosh, we got 4,000 and we collected here ourself one thousand. So 5,000 books <laugh>.

dindria barrow: 00:30:02 So, so you had a, a library right there.

Sulja Warnick : Yeah. I think at that time, the library, director of library was, uh, Kevin Haggerty. So I came to Kevin Haggerty, can you put these books to, uh, maybe Fern Hill library? And then so that, because that's a lot of Koreans live there in Fern Hill that near the Baker is my, my next school, Baker. So, but Kevin was saying, uh, we were discussing quite a bit of the, how we do it. But anyhow, we just moved in the Lakewood Community Center. They had a big space there. So we decide to do ourselves. People feel more comfortable to come to our office than going to the library. So that's another reason. So we, we just, oh gosh, that was hardest work for months and months. The 5,000 books. I, myself and one other Korean lady who were librarian in Korea, we did the, the Dewey decimals and put it in all the tags.

dindria barrow: 00:31:12 Two people,

Sulja Warnick : 00:31:14 Two people, only two

Sulja Warnick : 00:31:17 It was months and months, took months to do that. But then. Then end of the '80, we opened the whole thing done, classified, and then opened the, and Korean Consulate General, and all the big shots came and congratulate. And I cried at the opening remark and so overwhelmed and happy. And so anyhow, so that library was functioned for about 25 years. Then lots of Koreans came, Korean book stores all over here, there, Federal Way, <laugh>, so, and churches, Korean churches all over. And so we just decided to give one of the church. So we gave all the books to one of church in Federal Way, and they were running it. But anyhow, and we had also Korean language school for second generations Koreans. We don't want them lose their Korean language. So we had the Korean language class, and I was a principal many times. And, you know, all the way from Olympia, Yakima, they come to Korean language school, Korean, second generation Koreans, because no places that Korean language teaching, you know? So it's, that's, that's first early time. Our business was,

dindria barrow: 00:32:49 And, um, that just kept growing.

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- Sulja Warnick : 00:32:52 That kept growing. And it just, uh, expanding to different programs. Yes. Like a
- dindria barrow: 00:33:00 Go ahead and list them, because I know that it is expanded to, uh, being a 51 years and having 1600 employees and 80 million dollar budget, five senior living residences, 300 housing units, programs, Yeah.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:33:19 Yes, yes, yes. So I think, uh, you know, we didn't have any agenda. We didn't have any, you know, big plan, whatever community need out there, then we go find the resources. You know, that's, we did, we just didn't have any plan. The program, or, you know, and so one day, some of the senior members, um, meal site, maybe I call them trios, three people, they were always come, uh, earliest and sitting the front line, everything. So I loved them, you know? Yeah. I always greeted them. They greeted me and thanked me all the time. They didn't show up for a couple weeks. So I wasn't sure what happened with them. So I just can check around with the, you know, meal site people that they didn't know. So actually, I got the address and I went to see them,
- Sulja Warnick : 00:34:27 But there, I just, I just couldn't believe that my eyes, these four senior members living in a six feet, maybe, maybe nine and eight, maybe feet room. Four of them living together in South Tacoma Way 88. I had some people say they're Korean slums out there. I didn't even know that. But I, actually, I went to visit them. I, when I saw that this, I don't know how five people sleep in that room. Right. And then outside when I saw the, uh, kitchen, there was no kitchen. There's a portable stove, one outside, and, you know, just like. So I really didn't, I couldn't really believe it. And then I came back and I talked to the board and what I saw, and we didn't really have to think about how we gonna housing those seniors like that, living like that, and what can we do?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:35:33 But anyhow, so, uh, we've been checking around. I said, we have to check around and, and then someone told me, you go to the HUD, HUD right. In Seattle office, they might be able to help you. So I did, went to HUD. And, then I found out there is such a, we didn't know there have been senior housing, low income housing project or funding, federal funding all along, but we didn't know until then. Right. So I just said, you know, we have a lot of Asian seniors, in a very, very bad situation in the housing, and we can, how can we help them and how can we, then they said, you know, you can come for the workshop. We have a funding workshop for next week. You know, so then I took off school one day and I went to that workshop.

- Sulja Warnick : 00:36:43 And they said there's so many, I didn't know so many funding for the housing too, actually. So, but are we eligible? You know? But, luckily that I had someone I knew that Bob Santos, who was a Clinton representative, who I was a board member together for the Governor's Commission on Asian American Affairs. He was there in upstairs. And he knew me and I says, Bob can you help us? We need senior homes, not just Korean seniors, all. He was Filipino. Now Filipino seniors, Cambodian seniors. We need the home for them. So that's how he said all I asking you is that if we just, uh, write and something, uh, not return right. And, or get more point, then you can just help us to write, ask us to like write again.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:37:54 And then he said, oh, he called to the project manager of HUD write up in his office. And he told me, this is the Korean Women's Association, one of founding member, and she is interested in doing this. So anyhow, wow. It just really, that, you know, that's luck, actually. I, that's met him there. Anyhow, so, uh, I came back to the board and board think I was crazy. <laugh> You must be crazy. You are nuts they were thinking. So I said, you know, you see how much we need this project, and all we need to do is maybe put some effort to try at least. Try. Let's try. So we applied 25 unit, uh, and, and that's, uh, we have a headquarters office at, at that time, 96 on the B Street. When we bought at the house, um, house, it just, we all 14 board members putting in the \$10,000, \$1,000 each, the 14,000 we put as down payment.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:39:16 We just bought a house that time. And luckily that house had about acre land. Yes. So we were going to build, build right there for 25 units. Oh my gosh. And so they said they will cost us about 2.2 million. So, so we applied 2.2 million and everybody, so six months later, hey, we got it. I was so happy. I, I just, I promised everybody I will dance on the table. Forget that <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: And did you?
- Sulja Warnick : I did <laugh>. Anyhow, it was so, so excited and so happy. And so, but it was too good to be happy. The whole neighborhood people were, came to see us and said, no way, Jose, you're gonna build the low income housing in this area. No way. You're gonna build on my dead body. That was the lady that owns a lot of land there, Barbara.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:40:26 It's just not gonna build it.. But we did, but we, I said, I, I didn't know what to do. But, so I went to, um, city at that time, the was a Filipino guy, the city manager. Um, we got the federal funding, 2.2 million. These neighborhood people is just so adamant to,

you know, that we are gonna build this, low income housing. So what can city do? Otherwise you're gonna lose the federal 2.2 million grant. Right. If we don't build it. So then, oh, Ray Corpuz, his name was, Ray Corpuz said, okay, then why not we just do some public hearing and figure out, you know, so we did the maybe three, four public hearings. And then, and then I, and then Ray Corpuz said, you know, that B Street, there was no storm drainage. See, every summer you have a lot of rain. It gets flooded there. So we put, you tell the neighbor people put a storm drain. It's a big one, and then they might be happy. No. So we negotiated that, and then they, they said, no. So the floor are too high for this neighborhood, so just cut down as a two second floor only. And so we adjusted and we built, it took three years.

- dindria barrow: 00:42:01 Three years. So were the hearings over three years, or were they
- Sulja Warnick : 00:42:06 Building was done in three years after we got even money. Okay. Then we gonna be renting out. And then you have to, you have to rent it out. Just first come to first come to first serve. So we did, we set the date, and then we announced that people were parking the night before to get in our building.
- dindria barrow: 00:42:33 Oh my goodness. That's how much it was needed.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:42:35 Needed. We actually had about 180 people waiting list. This the 1 25 building we built. Yes. The 180 people were wait, was put application.
- dindria barrow: 00:42:49 And this was in,
- Sulja Warnick : 00:42:51 In '95, 1995.
- dindria barrow: 00:42:55 My goodness. And that seems like it's still a need now. Yeah. In 2023.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:42:59 Sure. So, so then we, I took, we took that to the city and then, hey, you know, how much, need out here, because we always went for resource for the need base.
- dindria barrow: 00:43:15 Yes. You were always focused on the community.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:43:17 Focused on community need. And then not just, so we definitely went to city and county. And then, and then anyhow, when city was doing Hope Six project in Salishan and then city came to us and said, we'll give you the land in Salishan. Yeah. If you gonna build another senior home.
- dindria barrow: 00:43:42 Okay.

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- Sulja Warnick : 00:43:43 Oh. I said, of course we have 180 people waiting. Yes. So what be how much bigger land you're gonna give it to us. Anyhow, so they gave us that Salishan land. And then at the time, we just decide to do 52 unit. So then we got the free land. Yes. And then we applied the "202", uh, low income senior housing HUD grant again. And then, Hey, there you go. That was \$7 million project.
- dindria barrow: 00:44:14 Wow. So now is this the senior housing that's right next to the family investment center?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:44:20 No, the, the Salishan, Dr. Tambara, that, uh, house, whatever, he, uh, the Salishan on 43rd. Yeah. They're beautiful. We call international place. Because first one was mostly Korean seniors, because they heard this information quicker. So, so they're all mostly, so then this government grant, we cannot just, you know, just only serve Koreans now anymore. So we know that. So we went to that one international. So we have all different ethnic group lives in Salishan after that, after that. And then the Federal Way, we have big Korean population in Federal Way too. Yes. Federal Way. The, the transit, you know, the transit bus station, transit. They came to us. They gonna give us land, build another senior home there in the bus terminal. Because the bus terminal is right there. Stores around and perfect for the seniors.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:45:28 And so of course, then we did that 62 unit, and uh, that's \$17 million project.. That that was very, uh, what can I say? Um, environmentally friendly building. We had the top, uh, roof of garden. Oh, roof garden. Like rooftop garden. Yeah. And then, so we got the, after we built that 62 unit, we got, we got a national best low income housing in the, in the market. So we got a award, big award for that. And then in the first floor, we also putting in our KWA service office too. So the first floor, that money was, we have to come up with it. So we rented and used the tax shelter money.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:46:36 We used that money to build our office first floor. And then second, third, there was, low income housing money, and then that after that, and then we, and we still have about five, 600 waiting list. So, that's why we did that. And then we, then after that we bought this Olympic Hotel on Pacific 9th. Because that one, we have domestic violence shelter, 19 unit too. I cannot say where it is located. But anyhow, so, the Pacific, the Olympic Hotel was, you know, over a hundred years old is kind of really, getting run down. And, but we have 19 unit of a domestic violence shelter. It's not enough. They can only stay. This domestic violence victims are very deep in our heart. That's how we started the beginning.

- Sulja Warnick : 00:47:44 So, that shelter was, um, so we decided that we gotta figure out something else that these victims of domestic violence cannot survive, um, because of they don't have economic power. And then they only can stay shelter for three months, and most will be six months. Then where do they gonna go? Then they go to be beating husband back to again. So it's kind of vicious circle. It's not solving problem that way. So that's why we thought maybe we can buy this Olympic Hotel. Yes. Old rundown building. But we use this building for the domestic violence victims, kind of a halfway home, so that they can maybe we can give them some training to be self-sufficient economically so that they can be really solved. We can solve the real problem. So we bought that and but that, that one we got a state funding 1 million half and plus shelter money.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:49:12 Not the shelter money. I'm sorry, tax shelter money tax. The tax shelter money because of that, it cannot be low income. It's medium income. So it's, um, just domestic violence shelter victim, they don't have even low income. So it's not the way we planned. But still some victims are there. You know, that and that we did. And then now we are building 88 unit on South Tacoma Way here. Not South Tacoma Way. I'm sorry. Tacoma Avenue 15th. Okay. We have 88 unit just opened the groundbreaking last 31st, I think. Okay. So that going on to 88 unit, that will be, we will have there even veterans, homeless veterans too. But 15 unit will be homeless veterans. And then we have all the low income people that building too. So that's, that's, I really, I was a committee chair for the housing development for 30 years. So that I feel very accomplished. You know, really saved a lot of homeless people, really difficult people.
- dindria barrow: 00:50:46 So you've taught me so much just now about like how to use the system funding opportunities that are out there to solve this, this question of having no home.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:50:57 Yeah. That's why definitely you can, if you just, I think you, you, you see need, then there is always some resources you can, I, I do believe if you have a will you have a way to do it.
- dindria barrow: 00:51:19 Yeah. <laugh>. Um, I tell you what, um, you are a very good storyteller because you have gone over all of my questions so far. And I want to just ask finally, um, more putting it back on, um, the focus on you as an individual. Can you tell us about your children and who are they?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:51:44 Who are they? Oh gosh. I mean, everybody, everybody laughing at me. Oh, you're bragging. Your daughters.
- dindria barrow: 00:51:53 No, just say she asked the question. So I had to respond.

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- Sulja Warnick : 00:51:57 I'm very happy to, uh, brag about my two girls. And, um, I really believe the education is a key to success. I always believe it. You know, I have a school district calendar here, I guess, you know.
- dindria barrow: 00:52:14 Oh, fabulous.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:52:16 My, uh, belief is that teaching belief here. You know, you can,
- dindria barrow: 00:52:22 I'll read it for you. Yeah. You got a shot of that, John? I do. Alright. My belief is that teaching breeds learning, learning breeds understanding, understanding breeds good citizenship, which leads to wonderful communities in the neighborhood and in the city and in the state, country, and indeed the world.
<laugh>
- Sulja Warnick : 00:52:44 Anyhow, my parents taught me that the education is a key to success and important thing to do. And, uh, so they, um, so my two daughter in a sense is a teachers too, because of I'm teacher and my daughter rabbi, um, she is she is the first woman Asian woman rabbi in the history of US. And she is also not just small congregation. She is a senior rabbi at the Central Synagogue in New York one of the biggest temple in New York. And she, she has 7,500 congregant. Oh. And about two, 2000, 200 waiting list to get into that temple.
- Dindria barrow: 00:53:44 Oh my Goodness
- Sulja Warnick : 00:53:45 And her sermon is, uh, broadcasted by JBS for hundred different countries. So anyhow, she is really I can say she's very humble, but yet, very, uh, effective leader. So very proud of her. And my second daughter is, um, she taught at Pacific University. Uh, in Colburn, she's a violist. She's a viola professor. Oh. [Note from Sulja Warnick: Name of school is called the Colburn School, located in Los Angeles, where she used to teach a lot, and still does, viola students Grades 4-12, but now a lot less, due to taking on a new job August of 2022 at Crossroads School.]
- Sulja Warnick : 00:54:24 And, she, um, but now she became a just couple, just like couple months ago. She just became a dean of a, a music school, Crossroads. [Note from Sulja Warnick: New job is at Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences, a private K-12 school in Santa Monica, California, where she is Director of Instrumental Music. She teaches a little, but mostly involved as Director of these programs & staff.] So I just went, came back last, uh, just couple days ago. She, because she moved to the, the Brentwood because of her school is close to there, you know, that where she lived before in Grenada Hills, but it's too far away, so... Oh, yeah. Anyhow, I went there two weeks to do a lot of labor work

for the unpacking and packing and putting away things for her <laugh>. And it was a lot of work. But anyhow, um, both of them are doing very, uh, sense, has a lot of sense of community to do a lot of volunteer things. My two daughters and my musician daughter, she always the concert and, and raise money to send the Cambodia to the women who are uneducated. And I'm very proud of that.

- dindria barrow: 00:55:38 Know, I know where they got it from.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:55:40 So, <laugh>, thank you.
- dindria barrow: 00:55:44 Um, thank you for telling us about your children. Um, now we are leading into the last question. Yeah. All right. So what are your dreams, Sulja, how does your past lead to your dreams or just, you know, the things that you've accomplished? What do you hope to do in your future?
- Sulja Warnick : 00:56:07 Uh, you know, I'm 80 already. <laugh>, I don't know, I'm just, but I'm still trying to keep up my energy level. But, um, um, so I do a lot of muscle exercise in LA Fitness Center, <laugh>, but, I do like to see still that the experience that I have for 47 years of the nonprofit. I mean, it's just with the share, whatever I can do, whatever I can do. Any other organizations or, well, also I'd like to see the KWA, uh, is now on only offering 15 counties in Washington state. Right. We have offices in 15 counties, but I wanna cover all counties. How it, 39 counties. How many counties? All counties. <laugh>.. So they have offices to serve people. Oh, that would be whatever that boondock place is.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:57:23 Yes. So and also, not only that I do like to see other than just, um, serve that not just Washington State. Actually the, the one we learn how to do it can share to the other states, where the ethnic communities are densely populated, underserved, the population, kind of voiceless. Population underserved, you know, just like a KWA mission is, we are multicultural, multilingual, uh, human service, you know, regardless ethnic background. And we try to help them through the, you know, education and, and, and, and support and advocacy. So we can do that too for this underserved vulnerable population areas. So, you know, so actually they did a requested the, some years ago, Texas, Killeen city. They have a lot of ethnic people because Killeen has the biggest also army base there. Oh, okay. So all these people came, so they, they actually asked me to come to how KWA started and how they can help. So I went there for three days and did workshop for them. But, you know, I wanna follow that up. And then also I went to the New York Queen. They were as they were interesting to do such a service like we are doing, so we can actually franchise in many different areas of

needed area. That would be, I, like to see happening, you know, if I can help. Yes. And, um, and then, you know, just, I don't have much, um,

- Sulja Warnick : 00:59:27 You know, I'm not converted to Judaism. I'm not converted to any, and I'm between my rabbi and my younger sister who lives in here is a minister, a Christian minister and then I think I'm a lost soul, so, so I gotta find my soul too.
- dindria barrow: 00:59:48 Yeah. Find your soul and your purpose. Right. In the community.
- Sulja Warnick : 00:59:54 I don't know, but anyhow, I brought up as a, my father mother was Buddhist, so my rabbi daughter say my Buddhist mother <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: 01:00:05 So I got, there you go. See, that's fine that is not lost,
- Sulja Warnick : 01:00:07 That's so, I dunno, what, what is there, what is in there? I gotta find out. I didn't study about it.
- dindria barrow: 01:00:12 So that's, that's part of, uh, what your future holds is finding that journey. Journey of, of being a Buddhist.
- Sulja Warnick : Yes. <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: 01:00:19 Alright. Um, um, I have two more questions, but
- dindria barrow: 01:00:26 Yeah, sure. You know,
- dindria barrow: 01:00:26 Um, they can kind of go together. What do you want others to hear? Oh, sorry. Why do you want others to hear your story and what do you want listeners to learn from your story?
- Sulja Warnick : 01:00:38 Oh, yeah. You know what, just like I was Buddhist, I was saying, um, you I do have some Buddhism thinking, I guess, you know, we, I feel everybody here in this world, somehow or another you don't know, but it's connected to each other, I do believe strongly what you do make difference in me. What I do to you is make difference and treat me just like as if you wanna be treated. Yes. And I think we really, if we really help each other that be, because you do feel strongly, you are connected, you do have that feeling of connected. You have to help each other. And so that we can make a better community and better living place, you know, and make you happy. And yes, me happy.
- dindria barrow: 01:01:42 Right. We want the happiness on both ends.

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Sulja Warnick : 01:01:44 Yeah. Yes, exactly.

dindria barrow: 01:01:46 All over. And I think you demonstrate that Sulja in your story of wanting to meet needs of the community. And so it's just always trying to fill the gaps so that people can find their happiness. Yeah. You know, and having a home and having healthcare and having, language and culture,

Sulja Warnick : 01:02:07 Yeah.

dindria barrow: 01:02:07 Support. And, um, I'm just really, I'm really glad you told your story to us, so you, so that we can share it with

Sulja Warnick : 01:02:16 Others. Oh, thank you. I mean, it's something helpful, I hope. Yes.

dindria barrow: 01:02:20 Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Sulja Warnick : 01:02:21 Thank you so much. <laugh>.