

A TAPED INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MARYLOU HANFORD, BY AUDIE MANGOLD ON
FEBRUARY 16, 1993.

The main objective that I have is to discover what kind of a community we have on Day Island. What kind of people live here and what kind of an involvement did you have with it? It is your story that is important.

Audie: When and where were you born?

Marylou: I was born in Olympia Washington in 1931, on January 14th.

Audie: When did you move to Day Island and what inspired you to move here?

Marylou: After we got out of school, we had a little starter house up on 35th street, and every Sunday afternoon my husband and I would drive around and around all over Tacoma and try and figure out where we would like to build or where we would like to buy, when we got up enough equity in our little starter home. We always loved Day Island. When we were dating, and I was in nurse's training during the early 50's, one of our rides was to come down to Day Island. It was so pretty, and we always liked being by the water. As we got more equity in our house, we decided to look at houses down on Day Island. We almost bought the Gish's house for \$7,500.00 when it came up for sale before we bought the house up on 35th street. Finally we decided that when we had enough equity and money in the bank that we would buy the first home that came up for sale down here, because they weren't advertised in the paper, we would hear of a house for sale down here and it would be sold by the time we got down here to look at it. So we decided that the only way to get a house here was to buy down here. This house came up for rent and we called the people in California who owned it and who also happened to be an old teacher of mine, and we convinced them to sell it to us. Their old renters had not been good renters and they were willing to sell right away.

Audie: So this house was a fixer-upper or a starter house?

Marylou: This was a dump. When we moved in the first thing that we did that day was to sit by one of the windows and cry. I cried and cried to think that we had spent all of our hard earned money on this dump. It had been built in 1910, and I don't know how long the original owners had been gone to California, but when we moved in it was a dump. It was just a little cottage back then or just a step up from a beach cottage. It had originally been a weekend home. In 1935, the original owners had moved out here permanently and then later had moved to California and rented this out.

Audie: When did you first move in to this house?

Marylou: In 1962.

Audie: Since you moved here, have any of the original feelings that you had for Day Island changed, and if so how?

Marylou: We love it here. When we go away on vacation we always come back and think why did we even go, especially when we have gone on vacation in the summer. This is just home and we're always so glad to be back. I would like to have more land for a vegetable garden and fruit trees. I love Day Island enough not to want to move away from here to get those things. We love it here, it was a lovely place to raise our daughter.

Audie: How and where did your original family live?

Marylou: Don and I lived up on 35th street. My husband is an optometrist and I was a housewife which is what I always wanted to be. I was trained to be an R.N., and I worked at that for 6 years after we were married, but my only aim was to be married and have a lot of children, which we didn't have.

Audie: Tell me about your daughter?

Marylou: She was born after we lived here for 5 years. She is married and lives in Seattle now. Within two houses of this one, there were 5 children that were born within just a few months of each other, Ricky Knight, Barrie Smith's two children who were 8 months apart, Sheri Tucker who moved here when she was 5, plus Brooke. So all the kids were tiny together, they went to kindergarten together, they went through high-school together, they had a nice life. Susie Knight called it "their little pink and white childhood," because it was fairly idealic for the kids. They were pretty much protected out here, when the kids would play on the beach, one or another of the mothers would be watching them. The kids always thought they were alone on these big adventures, but one of the mothers could most always see what they were doing at all times. As they got older, they got involved with the boats; Brooke and Sheri had a canoe and they would be in the water having their adventures and we always knew where they were. And the streets were always safe, they would run up and down the island and you knew that nothing was going to happen to them. They all learned to ride their bikes in the street.

Audie: Do you know how they felt about growing up on Day Island? Did any of them ever tell you?

Marylou: I always felt bad that Brooke was an only child. Since she's grown up, she has said that she always liked being an only child. As she put it one time, "when would you have time to read if you had brothers and sisters?" She was a great reader. She liked the island as a home, I know she did. I hope one day she'll live here.

Audie: Are you making preparations for her to eventually return?

Marylou: No, not really.

Audie: Are you going to wait until you are gone and then let her have it?

Marylou: Yes. You bet, we are not leaving here one minute sooner than we have to. Actually, Brooke and her husband love Seattle, they love the cultural life there. They both are into the arts, and they both work in Seattle. Her husband grew up there, he went to Jr. High and high school there.

Audie: Do you remember any interesting events that happened on or nearby the island?

Marylou: Oh many, many, many. Soon after coming here, we moved in on the ides of March of 62, and in May of that year a windstorm was so bad that the waves would roll in, the surf would bash against the bulkhead, and the accompanying wind would slam the spray against the second and third story windows. That made a lot of noise. That was something that I wasn't used to, having come from Olympia where that sort of thing doesn't happen. It was really spectacular, it was the first storm we had ever seen here, of course, it was only one of years and years of storms just like that. At the time it was very interesting. All of our wind (in a storm) comes straight out of the southwest all the way from the Nisqually flats and it has time to gather up a lot of speed by the time it gets here. The storms can be quite spectacular; I remember one time when I was sitting here, the waves would smash on Smith's old bulkhead, and the spray and everything would go up and over the fruit tree that was in their front yard. That last storm that we had, on January 20th, the tide was down further near the base of the bulkhead so that we didn't have the damage that we normally get, even though the waves were spectacular. It was just like the ocean surf. The only problem with this last storm is now we have no beach, it washed all of the gravel away and we are down to hard pan again. It builds back up in the summer somewhat, like during the calmness of the summer of last year we had quite a bit of beach built up, more than we've had for years, but now with one storm it is all gone.

Audie: Where does all the gravel from the beach go after a storm?

Marylou: The way it was explained to me, the gravel pit to the south is where most of our beach gravel has come from. The wave action on Day Island's west beach is most always from south to north, even on an incoming tide. The back eddy keeps the current south to north. The railroad has stopped the natural movement of gravel from the south so when our beach goes north, it is not being replenished by natural attrition. Our beach gravel moves slowly north eventually into the narrows deep. That's why our beach has gone down so much. We've been here 30 years and its gone down quite a lot. I have a picture from when we originally moved in that shows the bulkhead and our house with the gravel half way up our bulkhead, but now that is all gone. (She gets up to retrieve some old photographs.) This is our house when we first moved in, it was much smaller then. We changed the whole house. When Brooke was 2, the carpenters came in and framed in this whole section on the south end of the house, and then they started to put the roof and the siding on. They were going too slow at \$9.00 per hour, so my husband came home from work one day and they had only put on 8 rows of siding and he fired them all. So then he finished the rest of the house by himself, and we were really proud of that.

Audie: In your own opinion, what kind of a community do we have here on Day Island?

Marylou: Just what you see, a circumscribed community that at one time used to be off by itself. Back in the days when the hills were full of trees, each family only had one car and the man took that to work. It got to be a really close community, and I think that it stayed pretty much that way for a long time. The community definitely isn't as close as it used to be. However, different things have happened on the island over the years, even though sometimes we think that we are not a close community, when a few of us have some trouble like when Jeanne Pitts's house burned down, we were all there to help. And I know that if I had any problem that the neighbors would help.

Audie: How about recently, how do you see the changes in people's lifestyles and the new people who are able to actually buy down here, how do you see all that changing your life?

Marylou: I think the new people who are coming on the island are coming on only for the waterfront and not for the community. I don't like to see our property taxes going up. Just as we lost our bus services to the island, I think that higher taxes might force some of the older people off the island

when they are at a time in their lives when they would need old friends and community the most. The new people moving to the island seem to want to live here only for the water, not for the community. The new people seem to want to stay apart from the community.

Audie: In years past, we had basically one-income families on Day Island, and now the new people who are moving to Day Island are two-income families. (So) people are too busy with their own work to become involved in anything other than their own lives. Do you see this two-income family trend as being the issue to the new people's reluctance to get involved in community affairs?

Marylou: Everybody has to live the way that they want to live. I feel very strongly that when you have a family, have children, they are our next generation, they are our future, they need to be protected and they need to have happy childhoods. That is always one thing that I loved about Day Island, it is a permanent community and people own their homes for the most part. Some of the homes are even handed down to the members of the families. People stay here until they really have to move off, or unless they do it to get the money out of their property. When Brooke was growing up, we had so many functions at the club house, it was just so nice. When you walked around the island the old people knew the young people, and when the kids got to be teenagers not too many of them got into trouble, because who was going to rob from their friends? Day Island was a community of young couples with young children and older couples who had lived here most of their lives. In this community there is a natural mix of society. The kids who didn't have grandparents were really comfortable talking to older people. I always thought that was really great, to have the little kids come along and have good conversations with an older person. I don't think that you see that in a whole lot of neighborhoods because the older people think the younger kids are pesky or troublesome or noisy. I like the mix and I think that it is good for everyone.

Audie: What were some of the issues that affected Day Island that you were involved with and why?

Marylou: I was never involved, except in a minimal way.

Audie: Is there an East side verses a West Side issue?

Marylou: Well they (the East siders) accuse us of that a lot. At the times those things were going on, I just thought that the outcomes were always predictable. With all the issues that happened with the boat house expansion, (increase from 80 to 162 boat houses) you just knew what the outcome was going to

be, so why fight that at all. Why spend any energy or money fighting that. And the thing on the top of the hill (large apartment complex and elimination of a green belt) was about the same. However, they did get them to come down from the number of units that they originally wanted.

Audie: What kind of an interest do you have in the Day Island Club, or in writing the Day Island Soundings (a community newsletter)?

Marylou: Years and years ago, Mrs. Fern Almquist wrote the Day Island Soundings. She wrote a lot of articles and was quite active in the community. A very nice person, very smart, I liked her a lot. I had read some of her Soundings and I thought that they were interesting, then for years Gerry Garrison would put out a Soundings, quarterly or just when the club house had something to say, but at least she kept it going. When my husband was elected Day Island President, I think it was in 1966, I wrote it just for that year. We were quite active in the club house for that year. We had things like pancake breakfasts and pot lucks at the club house which were a lot of fun. Then I didn't do it for a bunch of years, but Gerry Garrison kept it up during that time. In 1982, I started it back up again because I thought that so many people around the island didn't know what you were talking about when you mentioned the various ducks and birds, or the shells or anything about the beach. So each month, I put in a little bit about the shells and the birds and a lot of people thought that it was really nice. Some of the people had lived here all their life and never knew anything about the beach and different facts about the island. I wrote about the different things that happened in the past, like when the powder boat from DuPont came down here with its red flags and sirens and then it caught fire and blew up off Pt. Fosdick (in front of the island). I enjoyed talking to the old people on the island and getting some history and the facts about the island for the Soundings. It was fun for me to gather them and put them together; the old timers on the island used to say "Oh, I remember when this or that happened." So that was my involvement in the Day Island happenings.

Audie: If you could make any changes to Day Island, what would they be?

Marylou: First I'd have good roads. I would have street lights which so many people are against, because it ruins their view from the inside of the island, and I can understand that, but it could be done in such a way that it would make our streets safer and I think it would cut down on the crumb-bumb stuff that goes on around after dark. Especially since the hill side is filled with those (apartment) units now, with so many people walking around after dark and before light in the morning.

I would bury all of the power lines. I remember one time Eunice Brown, who was on the Day Island improvement committee, proposed to have uniform mail boxes on the island, which didn't get very far. I would have more activities over at the club house for the community. One change I would make is to have mandatory attendance at at least one Day Island community club meeting once a year. They only have the one meeting a year now, it seems to me we used to always used to have 2, there was one was in October and then the main one in April. If you can't make it in April then you are lost for a year, and the information simply doesn't get out to people.

Audie: How would you make that mandatory?

Marylou: Well you know, just say that you should come. This way if anyone has any complaints then they can make it at the club house in the meeting. A lot of people can't remember their complaints for a whole year and this way they can resolve the issue instead of letting it go for another year.

Audie: What do you think of the idea to publish the names of the board members everytime that the (Day Island) Soundings comes out?

Marylou: Why not? The (Day Island) Soundings is paid for by the club and as I look at it, it is an instrument of the club for the benefit of the community. When I did the (Day Island) Soundings, at least every month I would call Gerry or Earl Garrison and find out what they wanted to put in that very first part. The very first section was the club house news. Then the rest was general news. You could put them (the board members' names) up by the masthead (letterhead). I think once a year I always put the new slate of officers, but I think that that is a really good idea.

Audie: Since its beginning as a camping ground, Day Island has been the home to some of the important people of Tacoma, (such as) Henry Foss and Al Davies. Do you remember any of these important people?

Marylou: As I saw it, everybody on the island was important, each contributing their own gifts and each taking their turn with the community at the time their particular gift was needed. Each made a part of the whole.

Audie: Which is really the overall context of what I'm looking for. That is an excellent answer. Do you have any interesting stories, you mentioned Henry Foss....

Marylou: What was I talking about?

Audie: Tell me one more time about his funeral...

Marylou: Oh, I don't remember it too well. I think I wrote about it in the Soundings, I write things and then I forget them. I remember his tug came out here and I'm sure that they sent messages out on the boats. I was watching with the binoculars and they put the wreaths and the flowers out on the water, and they threw his ashes out over the water and then gave the toot salute that the tugs always gave as they passed his house. It was long and low and mournful and you knew that it was for the funeral. There was no doubt about what they were doing.

Audie: What kind of a man was Henry (Foss)?

Marylou: I didn't know him intimately, just from talking to him on the island. He was wonderful, friendly, open, interested in everything. I always remember one time at the club house, it was after a pot luck, he shooed all the ladies out of the kitchen, and did all of the washing and the drying of the dishes for the whole pot luck, all by himself. He just said "skitter, everybody out of the kitchen." One time after he had bought the Nolty house next to the bridge, he was coming down the island and he was carrying a broom and some rags. I was up on the road and I asked him "Where are you going?" He said tha on of his renters had left the house looking like a pig-sty, and that he had been down there cleaning it up because he would be embarrassed to leave it looking like it was. And you know he was along in years and instead of hiring somebody to come in and do it, he went in and did it by himself. He was really down to earth, I've never heard anybody say anything bad about him. Just from what I knew about him you could never say anything bad about him. You know they named the high-school after him. He would go over there each spring and would attend the graduations, and he would be there in the fall for the first day of school and the dedication ceremonies. He enjoyed everything and he enjoyed living. He certainly enjoyed the beach and he enjoyed Day Island. That is why he had his ashes put here. Several people had their ashes put here, Nyman's have their ashes buried here, and Mr. Allard had his ashes disposed of off their beach, with appropriate ceremonies with rose petals from his rose garden.

Audie: That is one of the issues that I've discussed in my paper, is the fact that once people move here they typically die here, and if you can find a house on Day Island that is for sale, it rarely is advertised and it is typically sold immediately.

Marylou: It is just like us, many people have come and given us their card and have said that if you are ever going to sell,

please contact us. We always say, we're not going to sell until we die. To a man they always say you don't know what is in the future, which is true, we don't. You know, I guess people get divorced, that wouldn't be in our case, I don't think. As long as you can pay the taxes, you are pretty much here until you die. If anybody would have told me, (I grew up on 4 city lots,) in my younger years that I would have lived out my life on a 60 foot-wide lot...I mean that that was just not a possibility at all, and been happy.

Audie: Any other interesting people, Henry Foss was certainly an interesting fellow.

Marylou: Mary Babare, she was a saint. She was the one person in my whole life that has come the closest to sainthood in my estimation. And I've told her that before.

Audie: She is the person that influenced your life, could you tell me about her.

Marylou: She was the kind of a person you only meet once in your life. She was the kindest person, the most open person, the most accepting. Not to say that she was a patsy, she had very strong feelings about her life. She loved life, every part of life. She was wonderful, a fabulous cook, absolutely fabulous. Smart and fun to talk to, with a great sense of humor, always chuckling about something. She had a very exciting life. They always did everything for themselves, and that was one thing about my husband and I, Don and I have always done everything by ourselves. All the gardening and all the housework, nobody has ever come in to do it. Except for putting up the new shell of the house, my husband and I have always done everything. We are working on the basement now. The Babares were that way and got a bang out of it, took pride in their work. George Babare was really nice, he was quite a bit like Henry Foss with his interest in the children, and his ability to be down to earth and just enjoy everyday life on an everyday level.

Audie: There seems to be a lack of minority races represented on Day Island. Why?

Marylou: I don't know. I really don't have a clue. We've had some in the past but they've been mostly renters I think.

Audie: How do you feel about that?

Marylou: I have no feeling about it; I just haven't thought about it.

Audie: If there had been a minority race represented here on Day Island at any time, what do you think would have been the overall attitude of the island residents?

Marylou: My first answer to that is we've had minority residents in the past, mostly renters I think, and I've never heard anyone say anything, one way or the other. You may have noticed that many Day Islanders are, for want of a better word, unusual. You can't have people living next door to each other on 60 foot lots and have too many prejudices. We have a lot of characters on the island that may even tend to be "half a bubble off plum," as my dad used to say, but I don't know of any that are mean spirited. . . . I don't know, I just think people are people.

Audie: Is diversity good?

Marylou: Why not? The schools have many different races, and Tacoma being a port city, and also a military city, our town has always been mixed. And the first resident here on the island was an Indian.

Audie: Well, we haven't had a real representation (of minorities) on the Island.

Marylou: The only (minority) that my daughter had contact with on the Island was the Smiths for years had a housekeeper that was black. Her name was Norvene. At Jody's wedding reception at their home, I said, "oh, you're helping Barrie (Smith) out," and she said, "Well, the kids think I'm their grandmother." She was a big part of the kids' lives. She was a wonderful women.

Audie: And she was an accepted part of the Island?

Marylou: Oh yes.

Audie: How do you feel about the increased attention that's being given to women's issues?

Marylou: It's about time. Most of the businesses and politics are dominated by white males, this had an effect on me because as a hospital nurse back in the 50's, the doctors were considered God-rulers. There were many, many times when it was terribly unfair and unjust.

Audie: What do you think of a woman for President of the United States?

Marylou: It would have to be because of her abilities and her proven accomplishments. Not just because every female in the United States voted her in because she was female. I have a hunch that a lot of the people who got into office this term, were voted in for that very reason. They've whipped up this "Year of the Female" thing which is great, but I have a hunch that a lot got in just because they were female.

Audie: How do you feel about Hillery Clinton?

Marylou: Oh I think she's great.

Audie: Do you think that she is qualified to be the first woman president?

Marylou: I don't know, she hasn't proven anything yet. When she got up and said that she didn't want to stay home and bake cookies, and some of the other things that I've read, I didn't like, but she seems to know her business and most of all she doesn't cave in to everything in the press. I was a cookie mother and that is why that (Hillary's remark) originally crossed me, but then I thought that she is such a good role model. I'm all for her.

Audie: As you know, Tacoma has long been considered a blue collar town, with strong ties towards unions and union issues. In your own opinion, what were some of the opinions of the residents of Day Island towards unions?

Marylou: Gee, I just didn't care one way or the other. I come from a blue collar background, my dad was a union man. I never heard comments one way or another. When we first moved here in 1962, I was told that Day Island was a nifty place to live, and that in earlier years residents were quite snobbish about living here. In 1962, we moved into this run down house that had been built in 1910, and for the most part we thought that Day Island looked seedy and beachy. We snickered a lot about it being a classy place to live and we still do. For a lot of old timers, we've lived here for 30 years and don't consider ourselves as old timers, they talk about it being a great place. Then we have the new people coming in paying \$500,000.00 for these places, for whatever reason. We snicker at that to.

Audie: How has their (new residents') purchase of these old houses, and the reconstruction of the entire property and then their rejection of becoming a part of the community, how has that affected you? It is not just going to happen there (3 houses to the north), it's going to happen again and again as it has already happened.

Marylou: Its pretty much happened right next door. Those people bought that property for \$250,000.00 and then put that much more right back into it, and then they are never there. What goes on beyond my boundary, I don't pay too much attention to. As I said before, I think that about the only way it affects me is that if the property taxes go up too high, then it forces the older people off the island at the time when they need their friends the most. I don't care if it's Day Island or wherever, if somebody has lived in a home

or a house, and made it a home and spent a lot of years rebuilding and remodeling it while they live in it, and then have to move when they are old just because they can't afford the taxes, something is wrong there. A lot of old people moved off when the bus line stopped (coming to Day Island) because they couldn't drive anymore. Of course now they have that shuttle service, so that will help.

Audie: Do you have any opinions about the Depression?

Marylou: I was a child and not affected at all.

Audie: What was your opinion of President Hoover at that time.

Marylou: No opinion. We owned a Mom and Pop grocery store and my Dad helped ever so many people, and he literally saved several families from starvation during the Depression. People would run up terrible bills, one family went bankrupt, and it was just a small operation. My Dad was just an ordinary working man, he had the grocery store and then he worked at the ship yards during the war. He worked at making plywood after that and then retired, and (when he died) he had one of the largest funerals in Olympia. People came out of the woodwork, and they told us many stories that of course my dad never told us kids, but stories about how my Dad had carried them through in times of sickness and the Depression. Whether they paid him back or not, Dad didn't care and every Saturday he would always have candy for the kids. During the Depression, people would come in so hungry, Dad always had a sack of beans and a big hunk of salt pork for them. Dad was a Navy man so that was his idea of living, the basics, and he would give it to them.

Audie: So the Depression did affect you.

Marylou: I remember the tail end of it, but mostly I remember it in retrospect, especially when those families came to my Dad's funeral and told us all the things that my Dad had done. He went through life as if he had never done a thing, as if he were a simple working man, and yet he was a wonderful person that I wish I had known more about before he died. Because no kid ever appreciated their parents that much.

Audie: How was the government's lack of support, in retrospect, how did you see that for the Depression?

Marylou: The only part that I knew about was the government's support of people (who) were my older sister's age, they could get into the CCC, so we only saw the positive parts of it. You know, the men had a good healthy time, with good food up in the mountains with all the CCC projects, I never heard any of the guys ever say anything bad about it. We had enough

property at that time, that we always had a huge garden with fruit trees and chickens, so if you had food to eat I figure that you didn't have a bad time of it.

Audie: Were you actively involved in any of the labor rights or civil rights movements?

Marylou: Never.

Audie: How did you feel about it, the 60's and the 70's?

Marylou: I'm sorry to say that I wasn't involved in it. People should have the rights' that are the law of the land, what is fair is fair. They shouldn't have had to fight for them.

Audie: Does that upset you that they had to go through what they did to get basic freedoms?

Marylou: Of course. I saw a lot of the prejudice when I worked at the hospital, not that I worked there that long, but I just couldn't believe some of the things, I had never met up with anything like that before. I'm sorry now that I didn't speak out. At that time it was all so new and so unbelievable.

Audie: What do you want to be remembered for?

Marylou: Oh, that's very clear. I want my family to remember that I was funny, that I was fun to be with and that I loved them very, very much. and I don't care a fig if anybody else even knew I was alive.

Audie: How about Day Island? How would you like Day Island to remember you?

Marylou: I don't care a fig. My family is all that I really care about.

Audie: My last question. Do you have opinions about the future of Day Island, and the people on it?

Marylou: I would like to see more community spirit, and involvement in such things as, the club house for the children and island residents. Getting everybody back together with more of a community spirit, road cleanup, beach cleanup, club activities. Help for the sick and elderly in the way of meals for the sick, you know if they are really sick, not something that would go on forever but just temporarily. Anyway, meals for the sick, and shopping for the elderly. I like what they do on the south spit every year, they have block parties and I like that, I wish that Day Island would do that. I remember one time years ago, we had a big one

(block party) in front of the club house, I think that Peter Dempsey was part of that. As I said before, I would like to see information packets to the new residents including a short history of the island, and club house rulers. I would like to live in a clean, friendly, safe neighborhood community. We used to have many club house events for kids, bike clinics, Halloween costume parties, spook houses, ballet lessons, dances, we used to have a yearly open house. One time we had a series of lectures and beach walks given by an island resident who had been trained as a marine biologist which were super. With each person utilizing his or her talents for the benefit of the whole. The kids are the future and let's give them lots of good memories for them to remember about the community they grew up in. It takes so little effort to do these things here, to have an active and vital community just like anyplace. If each person does a little, it makes a big difference.

Audie: Thank you.