

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Narrator: Grant and Corrine Larson
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Interviewed by: Donald R. Tjossem
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I have Corrine Larson here for the second half of our history project and Corrine and Grant will share with us some about the early days that they had in Taylor Bay, how they met and their fishing trips to Alaska. So without further ado:

DT: “Would you like to share with us how you two first met?”

CL: “Oh! You are going to take us that far back? Our folks knew each other, our parents were friends, and ah, you know we just kinda grew up around each other little bit and then started recognizing each other as adults, as grown persons. And we just started getting interested in each other in that regard, we were kind of like friends at first and ah, goodness when we first met it must have been 1950 what... 1951 ... about '49 or 51?... Something around there, a little too far back to remember exactly now but we just kinda knew each other because our folks knew each other too. It's a little too far back to remember exactly but... we just kinda knew each other because our folks knew each other. Would you add anything to that?”

GL: “Well, just that we met about that time and for about two years we wrote letters and stuff.”

CL: “Yes, well actually, the first time we first started noticing each other was at that convention center in Olympia.”

GL: “That's right, oh right, that's right.”

CL: “And I thought, oh my goodness, he is kinda cute!”

GL: “Yes, we took a walk down to... remember one day we went down to the capital building, down there in Olympia? We toured that, the civic center where they had dancing and we sat there and talked awhile, heard the music, before we went back up to the assembly.”

CL: “Yeah, of course we were both kinda young at the time; why we were just really kinda getting interested in each other, yeah we wrote back and forth letters for a couple of years. I lived, clear in Port Orchard, which is a very long distance from Longbranch, I mean, that was a long way to go in those years, and so we wrote letters back and forth and pretty much our relationship developed and of course our families they associated

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with each other and they had get-togethers for dinners and stuff like that and in that regard. Then, early on, and so that developed and then in 1953 we were married, in November of 1953 and ah...”

GL: “November 7th”

CL: “And as time went on our son was born in 1955 in December and our first place, well we had that 40 acres across Taylor Bay, and where he grew up was on the opposite side of Taylor Bay, from where our little property was; where we had that property there. We built a little cabin there. A man that used to live in Longbranch, name of August Anderson, he told us how to set it up and he helped us put our little cabin together and it was just one room at first, and then of course he added on bedrooms and our bathrooms as we go, and the front room and the area and stuff like that. The first two years, I think we just had our little cabin there. And then our son was born like I say in 1955. And we lived there for years.”

GL: “It turned out that it became a nice little house!”

CL: “Yeah it was cute!”

GL: “Lots of room and real nice when we finally got done with it.”

CL: “Lots of kids liked to come and stay with us, lots of nephews would come and visit and stay with us because we lived sooo far out in the woods. With all that woods around us and that there were bears in the woods and it was a really wonderful place for kids to grow up.”

DT: “When you finally came to Taylor Bay from Port Orchard, did you have any sense of isolation or a feeling like you had dropped off the map of Port Orchard?”

CL: “A little bit, yeah, yeah, I did a little bit myself as a young gal because we didn’t have a telephone you know, we had to go to his parent’s house to use the telephone and in those days you know it was the crank, yep, a partly line crank phone and one long crank would get you the operator. And if you wanted somebody on your own line, of course you would crank out two shorts and one long and you could get a neighbor and you wouldn’t have to go through the operator because every line on that party line rang and you never knew who all you were talking to at the same time but it all went that way. But I did feel a little isolated when I first came out because I was quite a long ways from my folks ya know. To go clear to Port Orchard, it was still a long trip in those years. And I remember one thing that Grant’s father said, “way back in the day, he says ah, Grant wanted to borrow his dad’s car because it was clear in Port Orchard, he’d say ‘Port Orchard! Can’t you find a girl around Longbranch or somewhere?’” So it was a bit of a thing to drive to Port Orchard. And I did, I felt a bit isolated but not terribly because we all were always busy because there was always things to do coz, ahh early on, I picked brush, it was one of the things I did to earn money because money was still fairly tight,

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the depression had been over for a long time but money was still pretty snug and so I would pick a little brush and buy whatever I needed or something for the house and things like that.”

GL: “When my dad made that remark about finding a girl in Longbranch I had to say, ‘ahh dad, there’s too many scraggs down here’.”

DT: “Ok, well you guys related to me earlier that you were a fishing team up in Alaska for a good number of years, can you share a little bit about how you got into that and how that was?”

CL: “My dad was a commercial fisherman so he was always encouraging Grant to become a commercial fisherman and he was a commercial fisherman here locally so he fished with his dad and had done that so the opportunity came up to a get a permit, you have to have a permit to fish in Alaska and he got a permit, and he ahh, then we got a boat and off we went.”

GL: “At the time, I think our permit was \$25 thousand wasn’t it?”

CL: “It was very expensive, yeah, it was a serious investment, it took a period of years before we were ready to do that and ahh so off we went fishing in Alaska, I think that was about, it was ‘78, ahh when we actually got the permit, you had commercial fished before that with a skipper...”

GL:”Yeah, with a hand troller, so ...”

CL: “Yeah, before we went commercial fishing in Alaska, so we did that, travel back and forth for about fifteen years, travel back and forth, and our last year of fishing was in ‘98.”

GL: “Yeah, that’s really a beautiful run down through, from Alaska down through Canada. It was just idyllic, beautiful country.”

DT: “Where did you fish mostly up there in Alaska, where did you go?”

GL: “Well we fished a thousand miles of Alaska coastline. And we fished out in the ocean most of the time. In the fall sometimes we would come in the icy straights it would get so horrible outside sometimes that I would be skidding back and forth and my hips would be sore on each side from skidding... the boat would rock soo far over.”

CL: “Well the thing is, he is asking us is ‘what area did we fish mostly?’ “We fished from Ketchikan out to the westward, and Craig and clear up to Yakutat.”

GL: “Yeah, up to Yakutat, so all up and down the coast, around Sitka and that area on the outside, for the most part.”

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GL: “Yeah we covered a lot of tremendous good country. Sitka, I would consider the very epicenter of good Alaska fishing for salmon, trolling, and of course like we were talking about, it was good for halibut up there too. And we have pictures of our boat loaded with loads of halibut, we got pictures from stem to stern, down inside it’s full of halibut.”

CL: “**Down** in the fish hold, not in the cabin.”

GL: “No not in the cabin, not quite, nearly so though, but clear up in the front there was halibut, boy I got some fabulous pictures, and um, salmon, oh man we caught some whoppers.”

DT: “How long were the seasons at that time when you first started going up to Alaska?”

GL: “Well let’s see, it would go all summer.”

CL: “Yeah, we would start halibut in April.”

GL: “Yeah we had one closure; what was it a ten day closure on salmon?”

CL: “It just depended, well when we first started, they didn’t have closures, we got started with salmon quite early and they didn’t have the closures and that was wonderful; you could have incidental fish, halibut, but that all changed and they got really tight with that stuff. But we would go halibut fishing in April and then by May we could start salmon fishing and then we would fish salmon clear until the early part of Sept. We would try to be out of southeastern Alaska bout the 15th of Sept. because of the storms.”

DT: “What was your job on the boat?”

GL: “Well mostly my job was pulling fish and then keeping the hooks baited and then letting the lines back down and then she baited lots of the hooks too. And between us both why, she didn’t do much on the boat all she did was cook, baited hooks, fillet the fish and all that kind of stuff.”

DT: “How many people were on your boat?”

GL: “Most of the time it was just she and I and some of the time it was another fellow, Dan Bainter would go with us quite often and then my nephew went a few times too. And that’s about it.”

CL: “Yeah that’s about it, David would come yeah, but for most part for salmon it would be the two of us. But for halibut you would need a deck hand because that is so fast and furious that...”

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DT: “So that is real brave and risky just the two of you out there...”

CL: “Yeah, you don’t want to make any mistakes, you don’t want to do anything dumb.”

GL: “Some of your largest wishes whether you would make it over the next wave, tremendous, just tremendous waves. Another friend of ours would kinda be in our company and we would - they had a fifty foot boat and his poles started about four feet above the water and I remember lots of times go down at the same time and he would be one or two big waves over and we would and I would see about ‘that much’ tips of his poles and that is how tremendous the seas were. We would go down so far and then up so far and it’s just like riding a great big roller coaster all day. And sometimes those dog gone waves, those darn salmon were just biting like crazy. So we would fish as long as we could barely stand it you know.”

CL: “As far as the risk goes, we always buddy fished with somebody, you know we just kinda got together, he would fish over that way, and we would fish over this way. And we had a code on CB that we would talk back and forth and that way why if something happened you would always have somebody around you, and the fishing fleet as a whole, there was a lot of boats in the fleet, because they would all hear that the bite was on so they would all rush there. And so there were a lot of boats around so if you got you know but wouldn’t want to be complaining or asking for help you know unless you really need it.”

GL: “Yeah.”

CL: “So as far as the risk goes, that did nullify it.”

GL: “In the days that we fished, the fisherman, we all get along pretty good we all helped each other, in the old days when her dad fished, way back there, boy the fisherman were at each other’s throats and they wouldn’t help each other out.”

CL: “They were tight, yeah they were tight.”

GL: “Who was it that sat on the rocks and the boats just kept on going, they wouldn’t...”

CL: “That was Joe, yeah, that was Joe.”

GL: “Oh, well the guy’s name was Joe Ceresco, we bought the permit from him he said they were so bad, they didn’t like him very good because he was just a good very good fisherman and they didn’t, they were jealous of him and he would have those, checkers where they kept the fish he’d have a mesh of salmon, they’d be heaped with salmon and the purse seiners wouldn’t have even caught (sic) as many fish at the time and they were kinda jealous of old Joe Ceresco because he was such a tremendous good fisherman, and old Joe, he gave me, oh he gave me quite a bit of his tackle. I got some of his plugs and

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spoons and yet some of it brand new in packages and heck I got hundreds of fishing tackle some of it brand new right now.”

CL: “And there it sits, wishing.”

DT: “Well it sounds like you had a lot of interesting trips up there.”

CL: “Oh amazing.”

DT: “Did you keep your boat up in Longbranch is that where it was?”

GL: “Yeah, we kept it at the Longbranch dock.”

DT: “Did you go out with the Gig Harbor fleet or was that separate?”

GL: “Oh, not necessarily, we usually took off alone and then there would be... where would Jerry be? We’d meet him up in Blaine wouldn’t we?”

CL: “Uh huh.”

GL: “Yeah, this other guy, he lived up in Blaine and we’d go up there, and check in with him and we’d stay overnight, I think there was a dock there in Friday Harbor.”

CL: “Well we’d tell him, we’re almost ready, and how are you doing, are you almost ready? Then we’d take off and then stop up there and then go from there. And sometimes we’d stay overnight, and we’d leave out of Blain and head north, and that way you know you’d always have somebody to travel with and it’s fun because travel you know gets to be fairly long some days and you would talk to each other over the CB and tell stories and he had a million, because he fished over fifty years. He had a lot of stories. He was a great fisherman.”

DT: “Does it seem odd now to see many people down in the Taylor bay area as compared to when you first come?”

GL: “Yeah, it’s plugged with people there are quite a few people there now; it used to be a quiet place down there wonderfully quiet and peaceful. Now there are cars everywhere you look and people wherever you go. It’s just plugged with people. Yeah. It’s not like it used to be, you know, a lot of nice people but now there are so many people.”

DT: “Corrine you came there in the early fifties if I recall so you’ve seen a little bit less change but how would you describe the changes you’ve seen?”

CL: “It’s pretty radical because you used to drive in the old place, you go down what is now 80th, you’d go in and you’d go bumping over the roots and stuff it’s.. it was just an old driveway, down on past the barn, big, big red barn, it was always there, and it was

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wonderful. And then you'd drive up to the old house and it was a really nice old house; it had sliding doors into the front parlor and it was really great and it was just this big farm and you could look down through the orchard and look down to the water and now of course the old house is no longer there and there are black top roads there and a lot of people living there and enjoying it and that's nice in that regard, but the change is radical."

GL: "Almost all the people, well not say all but that we knew, are now living down in the estates, oh everybody is fine."

CL: "Oh sure."

DT: "And to wrap this up a little bit, well I'll ask both of you but I'll direct this question to Grant first; what do you think has changed the least, you know, well in your case it's been well over 75 years, what has changed the least?"

GL: "I'd say it, just to look at the old place, I'd say it's just it probably hasn't changed that terrible much, except for that old house isn't there but, looking south and looking the other way, it still looks respectably pretty much the same, and looking across the bay it's still looks pretty much the same except for now there is a nice big highway going down to the beach and a nice big ramp and big area going out to the pond and big turnaround...it's all that room for people to drive down and park, that is what has changed, just so many people. The people that own the place there are so many of them that they go down there now and they have a nice time there and it's a beautiful beach for them to play on and there is a good life on there so that part is real nice, that it has stayed that way, and nowadays I've noticed like even going clear across to our place, clear up to the spit at Purdy; the timber and everything has grown up so big all away along the drive, you got a beautiful drive all the way out here from Purdy clear out to Longbranch. It's just a lovely drive because there is so much beautiful wood all along the side of ya, so much timber it's just such a nice drive. But it wasn't that way for a lot of my years though; it was logged off so bad in many places; but now those places have all grown up to young timber or quite large timber so that's how it's changed in recent years."

DT: "That is a nice observation."

DT: "Corrine, what would you say has changed in the last fifty years or so?"

CL: "Oh, what has changed the least? I guess I would say like Grant said, the view is still the same. I'd say it's still beautiful, and there is still, when you come up on the Key Peninsula; there is still a feeling of tranquility and quiet that you don't get anywhere else being on the Peninsula. There is no through traffic and that is kinda nice. And changed the least I guess that would be about the views, looking out toward Mt. Rainier, all that area and Filucy Bay; it's still a beautiful bay, nice marina, and it was that way when I first came. There was that funny little tiny marina that was down there and it still looks like home when you come out and you kinda have a kinda easing down... there is no

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pressure of living out there that there is in the traffic that there is that you have to go through just to try to get to town or go to the doctor.”

GL: “I kinda agree with her there, you get down to Longbranch and look across the bay and you kinda let your breath out and you see that beautiful big mountain if those big clouds aren’t over it and Mt. Rainier is sticking out there and it’s on top of six thousand foot mountain range it just sticks up there, we’d stop there all the time and just stare at it.”

CL: “Yes, we’ve seen it a couple of times.”

GL: “Yeah, we never get tired of that.”

DT: “Well thanks a lot Grant and Corrine for coming out and being with us this afternoon and sharing a bit of history. I realized in this sixty minutes that we’ve covered, we haven’t covered all the history that you guys could share with us and maybe one of these days you would be able to write a book or have another one of these sessions at a different time.”

CL: “Sounds good.”

DT: “Well thanks a lot for coming out here this afternoon and sharing your experiences and a bit of history!”

GL: “Well you are welcome.”