

Salishan Story Fest Storytelling Transcript

Charles Carson, Date: 08/13/2022

Charles Carson: 00:00 I'm from Tacoma, so I was raised here. I'm 51 years old. I was born in Tacoma General, and I was raised, my first four years were on Hilltop on 25th. Don't quite remember that part cause I was so young. But I do remember being small enough to get a bath in the sink. I do, I really remember, that's one of my memories. But my fondest is when we relocated to 35th and McKinley in 1975. Okay. Without going deep into that history, how I ended up in Salishan was in 1978, our house caught on fire. And so, we were relocated to 40, we're on 48th here, well up here, corner of 44th. And so, we jumped from our house on 35th, which was small, but into a house on 44th. And I remember being young and it didn't really hit me like I'm going from this to this.

Charles Carson: 01:02 I just knew our house burned down and we have another house. Visuals are like so important because what happens is we see this now and we see, I love the piece, that Lister school did. Because it's hard to find those images of the Salishan that most of us lived in, right? Or some of us, have seen. But one of the shared connections was that you did get to know everybody, and it was not, it was either voluntarily or not <laugh>. So, the interesting thing about it was everybody kind of knew you didn't have to have a bunch of conversation to know that we were all struggling in some way, shape, or form. And that brought you together. Okay? And the reason why that was important is because then it shapes what we do later and how we view things when we're, when we, uh, enter into a new demographic Okay? Or enter into a different socioeconomical position. It's the whole idea of forgetting where we come from or not. So, I was only here for about five months while they remodeled our house, but who in this room remembers that? The seventies Salishan.

Charles Carson: 02:35 You can say it. Do it proudly. <laugh>. Proudly. Okay. Or how about, let's not say seventies. Let's say who remembers the old Salishan. And then the stuff around Salishan like, who remembers Piggly Wiggly? Okay. Who remembers the trail that went around it, and you crept up that trail to get up to? Right? Those are the little things, the maps, the little things that little kids get into. So, when your mom says go out and play, or your dad says go out and play, they actually used to say, get out of the house, right? We had these maps. So, what we would do is we'd say, what do you want to do? Let's go up to the trail. The gulch, right? You had all the different grass areas where you could meet, or you meet up to then go to the McIlvaigh trails and things of that nature.

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- Charles Carson: 03:27 So these are the landscapes that kids piece together as they're growing up. And it also becomes where parents know their kids might be. That's what I was able to do with my time here. But the interesting thing is, is that Salishan wasn't, wasn't always about living here. It was about knowing people that lived here as well. So just because you lived on the east side or may have lived right up the street here on Portland, right? Or even deeper in McKinley or even farther down McKinley Hill towards, old MP. We understood the dynamic because that did not mean you weren't poor or that you weren't struggling. It just meant you ended up there. Some people ended up here. I'll tell you one thing: I remember Salishan more than I remember a lot of the places that I actually grew up on Upper McKinley. And we would still venture down cause we had friends here. So, does anybody remember the story about the Baldheaded Murphy?
- Charles Carson: 04:32 Okay, I was actually asked this funny because Anna asked me, she said, Charles, well since you're doing the documentary, would you be willing to talk about the Baldheaded Murphy? I said, what? I said, sure. So, I actually broke it down to her right there. So, I'm gonna throw a couple things out. Who was the Baldheaded Murphy <laugh>. Go ahead. What do we got? Who was he?
- Bob Penton (audience): 04:57 Oh, I know them.
- Charles Carson: Was it you? The Murphy family. Okay. No, go ahead. Okay. Yeah. So, can you give us maybe real quick, is this the Baldheaded Murphy? Are you getting ready to tell us that he's from this family?
- Bob Penton (audience): Yeah.
- Charles Carson: Okay. Give it real quick. Who is the Baldheaded Murphy? You're on the spot.
- Bob Penton (audience): 05:16 Well, it, it was several brothers I remember.
- Charles Carson: 05:20 Okay.
- Bob Penton (audience): 05:20 They were baldhead and we was afraid of <laugh> because they was baldhead, they was different.
- Charles Carson: 05:26 So they were just, so this, whoever there was several Baldheaded Murphy's. It was a fam. So we got Baldheaded Murphy's, now, alright. See, but here, let me tell you about the

Baldheaded Murphy that we knew. Okay. And so, anybody know Rogers Elementary? Okay. El Street goes down, right? Yeah. And when you get to the end of the, of the field, right, of the baseball field, there's an alley. You know what I'm talking about? And if you don't, so picture this Rogers, right? You go down the hill and here's the school. There's a, there's a field and then there's a alley. Okay? And you go down like this and there's a, there was a green house. Yeah. And one day we were playing on that field and there was a ball headed guy. <laugh> and his eyes were swollen, right? And he hunched over <laugh>.

Charles Carson: 06:17

And we were like, that's the Baldheaded Murphy <laugh>. This is, I'm not kidding you. This is how it went down. So, we were like, you know, seven, eight years old. Hey, how you doing man? Um, seven, eight years old. Here's where it gets funny. So, we would see this guy throughout, you know, the weeks and the years and it was always, he'd walk everywhere. So, he'd come out. And he'd look at like, you know, as a kid, but growing up, so I was 15 years old, and I was at Gulf Grocery and I went in there to buy some Lemonheads. I think I had the munchies back then. I did bad stuff. But anyway, I'd walk out and boom, he's right there. But I'm 15 now. I'm like, yeah, right. Do something <laugh>. And I went, hi. He went, hi. And my Baldheaded Murphy stories over now!

Charles Carson: 07:12

This dude is like this a normal dude, right? But no one ever said nothing to him. So, you know, I learned that lesson. I know it sounds funny but imagine how this guy felt. If he would've known that every kid at Rogers and the trickling rumor that however far it went, thought he was like a child killer or he was gonna do all this stuff. And the first word I said to him was, hi. And he literally said hi back to me. Yeah. So, there's your Baldheaded Murphy story. <laugh>, at least from my experience. Okay. Salishan, the word as we heard is, uh, yeah, I got you is a Native American word. I was fortunate enough to be raised by Ramona Bennett. And I learned a lot about culture, not just Native American culture, but African American culture, any culture, Mexican, Latina, um, anything.

Charles Carson: 08:18

And just to understand that we all have a place. We're not just white, Black, we're something that embodies us. Okay. But I think what's important about Salishan for me is that it also shows that we all can't sometimes achieve this big American dream idea in terms of finances, but we can achieve it in terms of the thing called the melting pot. That whole idea that we don't hear about much anymore. We can do that on our own.

We don't need politics; we don't need leaders. We just need to see and love and care. And so that's what Salishan really means to me is I remember the love, the diversity, and that nobody judged anyone. And I think that's what we're trying to kind of get back in our world today. So I appreciate your time and I love what you're doing. So, thank you. Thank you again.