

**Marcy Johnsen**

**Seattle, Washington**

**December 5, 2000**

**for**

**Southwest Seattle Historical Society**

**by**

**JonLee Joseph**



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Interviewed by: JonLee Joseph

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1st Oral Interview

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**JonLee:** It's December 5th, the year 2000, this is JonLee, I'm interviewing Marcy Johnsen, at Seattle, Washington.

So since we'll go back to the Log House Museum, but since we're on the topic of being gay, would you talk to me about what it was like growing up in West Seattle and making those small decisions during different times in your childhood and life to go around with different people and to have the courage to keep going around with them, even when you saw that other people made fun of them or beat them up?

**Marcy:** I think one of the first things that happens, happened with me and I'm sure it happens with many people, is that you have these little awakenings. These little light bulb moments where things occur to you. Where you think and really, you know, take some information and go, "Ah-hah." And one of the first things that happened to me as a very young child, and I'm not sure if I was second or third grade, but we had moved from Beacon Hill to Alki. And Beacon Hill was very diverse; folks from all ethnic backgrounds. Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Norwegian, French, light skinned, dark skinned, blond, dark hair, red heads, you know. And when we went to Alki, *nobody* was of color. And I didn't, I couldn't put my finger on it right away, but I noticed the difference, but I didn't know exactly what it was, until a family that was mixed race came in and they were



darker skinned and I went, "Oh! Duh! That's what's different here. There aren't any people of color, you know, there aren't any Negroes, or there aren't any, you know, black people or there aren't any Filipino people," whatever that was, because we used different terms in those times. That was part of it and I thought, "Oh, well gee, that's really different and why is that?" I didn't get any answers, it's just the way it was. And sometime later on, I can remember my mother talking about a dermatologist that she was taking my sister to and then my older sister and then later my younger sister, who was a black man and that "He was so nice and so handsome."

**JonLee:** Dr. Brown?

**Marcy:** His name was Doctor Harris, I think. Yeah, I'm not sure whether he was downtown or in West Seattle. But, he, but it was, you pointed out the color of somebody, you know, and really recognized the difference. Why, I wasn't sure, but it was like, "He's a black a man, but he's okay. He's really nice and he's a good doctor." Like, "Oh, okay, well, gee, why wouldn't he be? I don't know." So, my parents never instilled any anti-Semitism, any anti-gay, any anti-black about people. They didn't really instill any of that in me, that I recall. And I think, my siblings have different recollections. But I didn't see that. So, for me I had a clean palate. And I was just really formulating my own opinions. To my knowledge, I don't remember meeting another, meeting a gay person until junior high school, when I met Lynne. I think there was another girl who was very obviously more masculine and struggling. She was standoffish and aloof and wasn't somebody that I felt, she didn't approach me and I didn't approach her. I didn't have any classes



with her so there wasn't any connection, but I noticed her. But it wasn't until meeting Lynne that I really felt, or started to make those kinds of decisions, really even thought about people being gay.

**JonLee:** Well, we didn't know anything about it when we were growing up.

**Marcy:** Yeah. I suppose if I'd known somebody, who, at a younger time was *really* a tomboy or *really* definitely, you know, leaning one way or another, boy or girl, that I would have had something at the younger age, but I just wasn't exposed to that.

**JonLee:** Well, what kinds of things kept you being friends with Lynne even when you saw extra cruelty and extra discrimination towards her in terms of, she's different and you said, during the pre-interview that she got beaten up.

**Marcy:** Oh, yeah, later in high school.

**JonLee:** So, what kept you steadfast as a friend with Lynne?

**Marcy:** Well, first of all, I became friends with her before I knew that she was gay, so it wasn't even a subject that was discussed it was only that, she dressed a little, I don't know that she dressed a little more masculine necessarily, because we all had to wear skirts or dresses or whatever. She always wore a skirt. And she liked vests and she would wear a little more tailored clothes as opposed to real frilly. But then, I did, too, I didn't wear real frilly things either. I'm just not a real lacy person. But we became friends. I met Joey, my current partner in junior high school. I didn't meet her at school,



but I met her, we were taking CCD, Catholic Christian Doctrine classes at Holy Rosary and we were at rehearsal and they lined you up in order of short to tall. And so we were the two tallest and we were in the back. And I'd never met her but I said, "Hi" and she said, "Hi" and as conversations go, "Well, where do you go to school?" And well, we went to the same school. And, "Where do you live?" Well, gosh we lived on Alki. And she had moved around so much that she was always the new girl in school so she was thrilled to meet somebody who lived on Alki, somebody else. She said, "Oh, you'll have to meet our friends, my friends Lynne and Marianne, they live on Alki, too." "Oh, great." So, the three of them were a grade ahead of me. I was in seventh grade and they were in eighth. But we walked through the park together, but the schools got let out, different grades got let out at different times. So there might be five or ten minutes between bells. But at any rate, eventually one day I was walking down the path through Schmitz Park, which we always did, and caught up with them. She was thrilled. They were thrilled. They were all smoking. I didn't smoke yet, but they were smoking. It was like, "Ooh get in the park and smoke, you know." [laughs] So we just started walking home together everyday and you know, kids talk. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, that's all you do. Because you're just so eager for information, learning about this, that and the other thing. And we just got to be real good friends. And it wasn't until much later in the year that I learned that there was something different. There was one day we were walking home from school, and I don't, Joey wasn't there, I don't know whether she'd already moved or what, but she wasn't there any longer. And Lynne and Marianne were just, really, head to head, some problem, some, you know, dramatic thing and I said, "Well, gosh, what is it?" "Oh, no, you're better off not knowing,



**JonLee:** blah, blah, blah." And I can't stand that. I, you know, [laughs] inquiring minds have to know. And I like to know. If I don't know anything about it, it doesn't disturb me, I'm not concerned about what happens in the world that I don't know. But if I have an inkling about something and it piques my curiosity, well, *then* I want to know. So, I just said, "Come on, you can't, what is it? You know, you guys are you're not," I really just said to them, "Look, you know, we've been friends now all this time and it feels like you're keeping something from me and don't pull that crap about being older and protecting me, that's baloney." So they finally said, Marianne sort of made some gestures about Lynne kissing other girls. I mean, she didn't just come out and say, "Look, Lynne's a queer." She did *not* say that. But she made it very clear through gestures that Lynne liked to kiss girls. And I thought, "Jesus Criminy, is that all?!" I was thinking there was some huge thing like somebody was getting suspended, or you know, some horrible crisis and who gives a rip! You know, so it's like, *please*. Well, Lynne was worried and she was walking way ahead and then I think it was the next day that we were all talking and I said, "I don't give a, it doesn't matter to me. You are who you are. If you like girls, so what!" It, you know, it got me thinking about it. But it was like, "Gee, I never even thought that there might be a choice." Who knew? So, we were friends first.

**JonLee:** 'Cause, you used the word yourself, and at that time see, I'm a little older than you, I graduated from high school in 1960, and you graduated in '60 what?

**Marcy:** '70.



**JonLee:** '70. So, but at that time, the language was different. Even the word "queer" was what was used at that time.

**Marcy:** It was used, but I hadn't heard it, really. I heard it later, as I got to be, as I spent more and more time with Lynne and Marianne. We always went in groups. Almost always, you know, packs of kids. And, as we were out more socially together, *then* we heard the epitaphs, the hate crap, and "queer" came up.

**JonLee:** And how did you survive that?

**Marcy:** It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. But, you know, you grow up as a little child learning, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, words will never me." They do hurt, they do hurt. They don't cause open gaping wounds that are visible, but they do hurt. Their intent certainly stays with a person. But I didn't let it deter me in anyway. I just thought, "You know, why do people have to throw around, throw their weight around and throw away," to me it's a form of energy. And a very bad use of energy to throw hate around and to spend time on that.

**JonLee:** You mentioned your father and something that he had said at that time. It was in his concern for you. Would you repeat that?

**Marcy:** I will.

**JonLee:** Not to put him in a bad light, necessarily--

**Marcy:** No!



**JonLee:** -- but just to present his viewpoint at that time.

**Marcy:** Well, I've had a lot of years to think about it, too.

**Marcy:** My mother and father both were not pleased that I was, they liked Lynne, I can't say that they didn't like Lynne, because they did. She was witty and smart and cute and endearing. She had all of those qualities. There wasn't any reason anybody wouldn't like her, except that she was a lesbian, and they didn't like that. I mean, it was scary to them, I'm sure. Like that is *not* the normal thing, that is *not* what we want our daughter having anything to do with. So when something about that came up and it seemed to me it had something to do with notes that another friend and I had passed back and forth that my mother cleverly found in my drawer underneath all my socks, you know. And when you're fifteen, sixteen, that is the *last* thing you want your mother doing, is snooping in your drawers. But, some kind of conversation, heated conversation came up and in the argument my Dad just said, "Look, I'd rather see you pregnant than queer." And I was stunned. I was absolutely stunned. I thought, "How ignorant." I didn't say that to him. And I didn't necessarily think it right at the time, but as I began to really think about it, I thought, "How ignorant can that be to see a fifteen or sixteen year old girl, pregnant! Excuse me! And pregnant and what, single?" You know, gonna have to give your baby up for adoption, or raise a child from a young age, than *what?! Being friends with somebody who's choosing to love somebody of the same sex. That just, that just appalled me. I just thought, "There's so much more for people to learn."* And I really felt like that was a turning point in my time. That I was beginning to be more of an adult than my parents were, in terms of thinking.

**Marcy:** Well, when we moved there, it was off limits. But when we moved

**JonLee:** You're remarkably clear-headed. *is off limits to my brother and*



**Marcy:** Well, I've had a lot of years to think about it, too.

**JonLee:** This is some reflection and some--

**Marcy:** Yeah. Yeah. Cause as I say, I don't know that I thought about it in those complete, you know, as articulately then. The feelings, those same feeling were there. And some of the thoughts, but not quite just, it was very clear at the time that there was a separation of parent and child and I felt that the tides had been turned. I thought, "I am my own person. I'm making my own decisions." And I did. I continued to.

**JonLee:** Thank you, thank you for that.

I want to go back now to your use of Schmitz Park. Because I never, I was raised in West Seattle, and I had been around the world. Alone and with friends and with people I met. I have never been to Schmitz Park. It was not considered a safe place for a girl to go. As an adult woman, I will not go alone. I will gather some friends one day and go on a picnic there.

**Marcy:** Oh yeah, sure because Maureen was right up at the top of the hill.

**Marcy:** You need to, it's wonderful.

**JonLee:** I interviewed Janet Scadden, the granddaughter of Ferdinand Schmitz, who donated the park, so I'll gather a group of friends and we'll take a picnic lunch. But would you tell me how the park was, as a child?

**Marcy:** Well, when we moved there, it was off limits. But when we moved there I was in first grade. But it was off limits to my brother and



**Marcy:** sister who were five, no four, and nine years older than me as well, because there had been some assaults. And I don't remember if rape was part of it, but I thought so. So, it had a bad reputation at the time. Somewhere along the line we either, that either calmed down a little bit, or, actually, I was in Brownies and we had some Brownie expedition into Schmitz Park to look at leaves and trees to identify, you know, nettles and different berries and bushes. And so that was like, "God, there's this gorgeous place." So that was probably third or fourth grade, that we were in there in the park. And I thought, "Wow, this is great!" And so, gradually the park was getting more and more use. And my childhood buddy, Peggy Murray, who lived across the street and up a little bit on 61st, why, we were on our bikes and up and down through the park constantly after that. So, it, you know, as the problems diminished and the memory of those earlier problems diminished, then the park got to be used a little bit more.

**JonLee:** And you used it later on when you went to Madison and high school for a short cut, right?

**Marcy:** Oh yeah, sure because Madison was right up at the top of the hill after you came out of the pathway from Schmitz Park. So, if you missed the bus, the fastest way to get to school would be to run through the park. Now, it wasn't greatest thing to do alone. But we did it and I've done it alone as a kid, seventh or eighth grade. Didn't really like it, but then you're running, so, you think you're gonna outrun [laugh] --

**JonLee:** It's easier than being late.



**Marcy:** It's easier than being late, right. Yeah. [laughs] But he tried. And

**JonLee:** Being late or tardy and sitting in whatever it is after school. Now, would you at this time, too, talk about coming to West Seattle, your family? What made them to decide on West Seattle and what made them decide to buy the Log House?

**Marcy:** I can't say exactly what made them go to West Seattle, except that my mother and grandmother had lived in West Seattle when they first came to Seattle, which was, my mom was about sixteen. They had come from Oklahoma. My grandmother's sister, my Aunt Ida, lived here and worked at Frederick's, and so, the two of them came out and they lived someplace in West Seattle, down south of the point. Somewhere off of Beach Drive. They lived there first and then they moved to Queen Anne and then, you know, they did several things. But I can remember before moving there, coming, especially with company, coming over to Alki and clamming or just rock hounding, or you know, we'd take Sunday drives and come over.

**JonLee:** Cause you could go play there, right? Your mother could stand on

**JonLee:** Where did you go clam digging?

**Marcy:** Uh, somewhere off the beach. I don't know whether we got anything but we were digging around. We have home movies of my cousins from Kansas City with crabs and clam shells and different things. Shoving them up the camera lens to get a good view. My cousin Dan, he was the mad scientist and he would take samples of everything and pickle them once he got home. But, it was at least a three, four day drive between here and Kansas City, Missouri, so, some of the things in the trunk were pretty ripe by the



**JonLee:** time they got there, which was not good. [laughs]. But he tried. And then, you know, they must have just decided to come looking in West Seattle to see what they could find. And my mom liked  
**Marcy:** antiques and she liked special things. And I can only think that she just saw this house and thought, "Wow!" And really saw the uniqueness of it. And, because there was another log house on the opposite corner, 61st, 62nd and Stevens. It wasn't as big and it was in, well, it wasn't for sale either, but, it wasn't in as good shape as the one on the corner, the Log House. So, somehow they bought it. I was too young to really know what was going on necessarily, but, oh, we were like kids in a candy store. Here's this great log cabin house we were going live in, that had cubby holes that you could play in and then a block from the beach. The beach! We grew up on Beacon Hill where there was wonderful Lake Washington and we would take trips to the Lake, and, you know, in the summer and have a great time. But to live a block from the beach, was a whole different story. That was, boy, independence city when you were down there.

**JonLee:** Cause you could go play there, right? Your mother could stand on the corner and--

**Marcy:** My dad whistled. My dad would whistle on the porch and everybody in the neighborhood knew that whistle.

**JonLee:** Knew that whistle and if they'd seen you--

**JonLee:** Okay, and you mentioned there were two chandeliers in the living

**Marcy:** Oh, and you could hear it for blocks. We could be at the elementary school, Alki, and hear it. [laughs] I forgot about that!



**JonLee:** Would you tell what the log house looked like when you lived there.

**Marcy:** You know, it looked almost the same as it does right now. Prior to the renovation there was a different kind of railing and the pictures show that they were a little more lateral railings, with a plank on top. And so, that plank, we would walk on that plank, or sit on that plank, that was kind of nice. And we would also use it to hang the Christmas decorations, we would stand on it and curl around the logs and hang the lights, and so it was very functional as well. The living room is exactly the same, but the video room was the kitchen and so the opening to the kitchen was not where the opening is now. In the corner, what would be the southwest corner, there's a display case and that's where the opening to the kitchen used to be. You can tell by the logs if you look closely.

**JonLee:** And where was the dining room? Where did you sit around the table?

**Marcy:** Yeah. Or the radio, or if my folks didn't have a piano, but other  
**Marcy:** Well, there was enough room in the kitchen for a family, for a kitchen table as well. The kitchen had beautiful Birdseye Maple cabinets. And yellow Formica, ugly yellow Formica, countertop. But my folks always had a big stove and a little thing next to it. And it was a very efficient nice-sized, 'cause there were always five or six of us there. And it facilitated us eating as a family in the kitchen.

**JonLee:** I wasn't there.

**JonLee:** Okay, and you mentioned there were two chandeliers in the living room.

**Marcy:** Aren't here. 1965 big earthquake, well it was 6.5 that's how we remember the year and the magnitude. And it did a lot of damage to a number of homes on Alki. Our house, the structure of



**Marcy:** In the living room right in front of the front door, which is the same of course, there were, in a line, two chandeliers which were probably not period necessarily. But they were two crossed logs and hanging from them were kind of conical shaped bulbs. And the light switch was next to the front door. So, it wasn't something that we used very often because they sort of lit the room rather garishly, really. But they were nice to look at and of course they added charm to the living room. But, in the living room was then just a living room and it was *really* nice because of the size of the room. You could change your furniture around any number of ways, which we did. It was great. My folks liked to dance, too, so the hardwood floors were great. They would just roll up the rug and they'd have, you know, *parties*. In the '50's and even into the '60's people had house parties. At home. And so my folks would invite folks over and they would invariably dance at some point.

**JonLee:** And put on the record player.

**Marcy:** Yeah. Or the radio, or if my folks didn't have a piano, but other places if they had a piano, somebody would play and they'd dance. And, of course, they'd all had a few drinks, too, to lube everybody up. The fireplace is almost the same. It's had a couple of transformations. In 1965 there was an n earthquake in Seattle, remember?

**JonLee:** I wasn't here.

**Marcy:** You weren't here. 1965 big earthquake, well it was 6.5 that's how we remember the year and the magnitude. And it did a lot of damage to a number of homes on Alki. Our house, the structure of



**Marcy:** the way it was, it just shook like an orange crate. They, one of the surveyors that came, it was flexible and it just, it wasn't going to go anywhere. He said "This place could withstand, you know, a stronger earthquake and it's not going to anywhere." What it *did* do is it completely wrecked all the plaster walls inside. So those all had to be replaced, but also the fireplace was brick above the mantelpiece and below. And the bricks above the mantelpiece disintegrated. I mean, they just fell through. And in the restoration after the earthquake, my folks chose to have it be a fire, some kind of fireproof wood, instead of putting brick back in. And put a cabinet on the side, south side of the fireplace. That little nook was where our dining room table was. So to have a cabinet there was really nice because my mom put her good dishes there, then.

**JonLee:** Had that fireplace originally been cobbles?

**Marcy:** Not when we lived there. It was the same brick that's there now. Yeah. And the other side of the fireplace, there's another, equally as large an area and my mom usually had a desk, which I have now, a desk and a chair and a knickknack shelf and, you know, some. It was a place, a little play area, my little brother would play there after he was born. He was born in '63. That's where we always put our Christmas tree in that nook, 'cause then it could be seen from the street. People peeked in.

**JonLee:** When you go back to the Log House Museum now, is it like looking at ghosts? I mean, do you see the exhibit and then do you see, as you climb the stairs, do you almost expect to see your brothers and sister, your one brother and sisters someplace?



**Marcy:** I did at first.

**JonLee:** It seems to me you would have a kaleidoscope because of your personal history with the building.

**Marcy:** The more I'm there the less so it happens. I felt very odd, you know, eerie almost, the first few times I was in the house. I'd been in it a couple of times since my mom sold it and that was in '72, I think or '73. '73. I'd been back a couple of time because various people owned it and we'd say, "Oh, we used to live here" and you know, we'd go in and see what changes they'd made. And that was always fun to do. A lot of people do that with, I still drive by the house on Beacon Hill every now and again to see what it looks like. But, yeah, it was really emotional, a few times. Peggy came back and my older sister and my younger sister and I have been there together and it really has been emotional at some times. But for the most part because I'm on the Board, and I'm there frequently enough, it's, I've gotten past the "Gee, all these people are really talking about this house like it's theirs. It isn't *theirs*, it's *ours*. You know, it's not *mine*, it's *ours*. It's the whole community's."

**JonLee:** It's gone from private to public.

**Marcy:** Yeah, and I had to make that transition. I had to, you know, let it go in my heart. And just to say, "It's okay. These people *really* care about this place! They wouldn't have raised all this money to *buy* it!" And as were growing up as children we thought, "Boy, this would be a neat place for a museum." Oh, people said that. And it wasn't just us because we lived there. Other people said it and I'm sure that that contributed to because those are the same kind of



people that gave money. Those are the same people that live in West Seattle and maybe they don't live in West Seattle and they gave money! I don't live in West Seattle and of course, I'm connected because I lived there more than anything. But I think there are people who have moved from the area who still feel a fondness; that just feel connected. So they gave money to buy it.

**JonLee:** Oh, that's lovely!

**Marcy:** Oh, it was a great dream come true, really. I wish my mother were here to see it, she would, well, I think she knows. I have that spiritual sense that this is not the only life we live.

**JonLee:** Thank you, thank you for that. That's wonderful. I want to go back too, because in the pre-interview we talked about going to Alki Elementary. And you know, I just did an oral history chapter on Marguerite Parlotto and you talked about her as a teacher. Would you talk a little about her and what kind of impact you think she had on her students?

**Marcy:** Well, I think there were at least two teachers for most of the grades, each of the grades that were there, and so you kind of, you know, you'd hear things or you'd hear the teacher and you kind of think, "Gee, I hope I get so and so for, you know, next grade, or whatever." So, I think that, and her daughter was a student there too, I'm blanking on her name. Her daughter, I can't believe that, well anyway, it'll come to me. So she was just somebody that you hoped you get as a teacher. She just exuded personality and charm and warmth and enthusiasm. And so I was lucky enough to be in her class and I was so thrilled because she just, she didn't



**JonLee:** seem to ever favor any child in particular. And she just seemed to bring the best out in everyone. Praise, but not undue praise, I mean, she didn't just go, "Good," you know now it's like overly done sometimes. "Good job, good job" you know, falls on deaf ears. No, she was genuine in her praise for people and in constructive criticisms and she was a delight to have as a teacher and *absolutely* has stuck with me. I don't think you remember the names of the teachers who were insignificant. Yeah. And she definitely made an impact on me. Things just sort of came into, I don't know, bloom.

**JonLee:** Now, did she teach art there, too?

**Marcy:** Well, she may have, but I, it's funny, 'cause as, I was thinking about color, because I can remember coloring in her class. And I, so I'm not sure that we actually had, we must have had an art time. You know, you had different periods of the day where you, you're with the same teacher, but you, "It's time for social studies now, it's time for reading, time for this time for that." Yeah, I can remember being in her class. And some of my classmates coloring or making things. She was excellent.

**JonLee:** Thank you.

**Marcy:** They had good teachers at Alki, I think. They had good teachers. And I think that, you know, those are the formative years. You're really just like a little sponge and you're just slurping up all that good stuff, or bad, if it's bad. So, if it's good, that's better for the kids. I was lucky. I think I was lucky to be at Alki.



**JonLee:** Thank you very much.

**Marcy:** You're welcome.

**JonLee:** Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think would be important to say?

**Marcy:** One of the reasons that I live in Ballard is that it has the same sense of community that I felt when I lived in West Seattle. You just felt part of something, you felt part of the community. Even if you don't interact, there's something about it. And I don't know whether it has to do with what's been here before, as opposed to what's been in other places. I've lived in Shoreline, I've lived in Lynnwood, I've lived in North City. Those places don't have that feeling for me. I had never lived in Ballard. I had family that lived Ballard. But when I moved to Ballard for the first time in 1978, I just thought, "Wow! This is really cool!" And I think it has a little bit of the same kind of history, not that it was the birth place, but, you know, they're a little bit further from the city, access is a little harder, but people come and they stay or they come back. And that's how, you know, I have a real fondness for West Seattle and Alki. And, I don't know, some day I might move back. But right now I'm happy here because.. [tape stops]

**JonLee:** Did he keep a lot of photographs up on the wall or something, or  
End of interview

**Marcy:** Ohh, I maybe I just remember, you know, the space is pretty much the same as it is now. And, kind of triangular, and so the



# **Marcy Johnsen**

**Interviewed by: JonLee Joseph**

**December 14, 2000**

**2nd Oral Interview**

**Seattle, Washington**

**JonLee:** Twelve fourteen, 2000.

**Marcy:** Now, you e-mailed me with a story I just love about Charles Ritchie(?), 'cause I have never heard any Charles Ritchie stories in the times that I've been doing the oral histories. I remember the drug store myself. So would you tell that story?

**Marcy:** I love the drug store. Seaside Pharmacy. I mean, we went to the Pharmacy to buy Cokes, and we went to the Pharmacy to buy little sundries and of course the bus stop is right there, still is. But, so it was, and, and it always opened early so no matter how early you had to go to school or to work, the Pharmacy was open and people could come into the counter cause there was a soda fountain, a cafeteria-like counter, and have coffee. I don't remember when they opened, but it was early.

**JonLee:** Did he keep a lot of photographs up on the wall, or something, of customers and people?

**Marcy:** Gosh, I, maybe. I just remember, you know, the space is pretty much the same as it is now. And, kind of triangular, and so the



store was narrow when you walked in but then bloomed out. And so, there was quite a bit of space. An the fountain was to the left as you came in. And cards and magazines and things were to the right, and then, you know, counters here and there, and then the Pharmacy was way in the back. And that was the Pharmacy that everybody got their, well, I mean, everybody, lots of us got our prescriptions filled because there wasn't any place else on Alki.

**JonLee:** Did they both work at that Pharmacy, Mr. and Mrs. Ritchie?

**Marcy:** You know, I don't remember Mrs. Ritchie. Bella, worked at the counter. Don't remember Bella's last name. But I understand she's still around. And I should visit her, that would be fun.

**JonLee:** If I find her I'll let you know where she is.

**Marcy:** Yeah.

**JonLee:** Now, would you tell the story about going in and looking at something you were going to buy for a gift?

**Marcy:** I have two really good memories about the store. One is when I was a little older, one I was younger. Which do you want?

**JonLee:** Both of them, please!

**Marcy:** Well, I had a cousin, Anne, who, she was like a third cousin. But she and her mom lived on Del Ridge and they would come over every once in a while and visit, or we would meet up in the Junction, but that's a whole 'nother story. But Anne would come



over and we would play dress up. We just loved to get in our old go  
mom's old clothes because they were clothes from the Forties and  
earlier Fifties, but especially the stuff from the Forties.

**JonLee:** Satin dresses?

**Marcy:** Oh! And velvet gown things!

**JonLee:** Silk velvet.

**Marcy:** Oh! Lovely things!

**JonLee:** Before there was rayon velvet.

**Marcy:** Fancy things.

**JonLee:** And shoes with heels on them.

**Marcy:** And rhinestones.

**JonLee:** And hats.

**Marcy:** And hats.

**JonLee:** And gloves.

**Marcy:** And gloves. And so, they were in boxes my mom was going to give  
all this stuff away and it was on the porch for some reason, of the  
Log House. And Anne and I would go through it, picking out stuff  
and we would find some get up, you know, some outfit to wear like,



you know, a gown and heels and hat and things. And we would go walking down the block to Seaside Pharmacy and sit at the fountain and order, just like little proper ladies, you know. It was fun. And we would be treated so, you know, properly, and so well, that we were learning to be grown ups. I loved my cousin Anne. She and I had a birthday, we both had birthdays in December, in fact, I think yesterday or today is her birthday. And we just had lots of fun together doing that. And we would do that, you know, until finally the clothes had to be sent away. Oh, we had great fun. It was a very sad to me when the fountain went away from the Pharmacy.

**JonLee:** The fountain left before the Pharmacy did?

**Marcy:** I think so. I think so. I think they finally, you know, it was just fading away. And I think so. I could be wrong. But that was--

**JonLee:** I don't know. It was part of the neighborhood.

**Marcy:** Yeah. Well. And lots of times, of course, if you went to the bus early and it was, you know, you'd sit at the fountain and have a cup of coffee or a Cherry Coke or a, oh, Green River, which I hated, it was so sweet and green! But Chocolate Coke? Cherry Coke? Man. And right from the fountain. That good tinny, tingly--

**JonLee:** With the syrup on it and they'd pour seltzer water--

**Marcy:** Yeah!! It was good. So, I spent my life, you know, running to the drug store for this, that and the other thing. Or wandering around, you know, if you're waiting for the bus and you didn't have any



money to spend, you just wandered around and looked at stuff and you know, kind of bide the time. But as I was a little bit older, I had several steady jobs and you know, eventually was earning kind of a little steady income and at that point was, you know, thinking more and more about Christmas, especially. You know, where you're wanting to give. As a child you're given to and receiving so much and so you get to a point where you want to really give back and buy things. Not just make them in school and come home and like we all do. So I remember, yeah, being in the drug store and Charlie Ritchie, both Ritchies, the elder and junior Charlies, worked in the Pharmacy at different points. But, eventually, the older Mr. Ritchie quit working and it was primarily younger Charlie. But he was a very nice man. And I think ran a very good store. And I can just remember this so clearly. I was wandering and just really looking at everything trying to figure out how to spend my money so carefully and how could I spread, you know, a certain amount of money over ex amount of people in my family, and whatever. And I must have been just there forever and ever and ever, because finally he came up to me and he asked me if he could help me. And I said, "Oh, you know, that I was trying decide what to buy." And I think he asked me some questions about, you know, "Well, did I know how much I had to spend" and "What was I really looking at?" And so we had some kind of conversation like that and finally he offered that, you know, because he'd asked me if I had a job. And I said, "Oh yes I've had blah, blah, blah jobs." And he said, "Well, if you find that you want something and you don't quite have enough money for it, we could open an account for you." And then he explained, what a, you know, kind of a charge account was. Huh! I was like in heaven! You know, I must have been about fourteen, probably



thirteen, fourteen, right around in there. So, to think about having a little charge account was like, "Whoa!" I mean, my mother had a charge account at Rhodes and the Bon and I think MacDougals was already gone, but of course, you know, families had their accounts because, I guess it was the thing to do. At least, that's what our family did. So, I was thrilled. And he opened an account in my name and I began to, you know, then it was like, "Oooh. What can I buy!" So I picked out the things I wanted, and paid him what I had and then began to pay him so much per week, until it was paid off. And I kept that account for, probably until I left or the store closed. You know, one or the other.

**JonLee:** Your first charge account.

**Marcy:** Yeah! And I'd completely forgotten about that until I started thinking you know, about different things. It's great how things'll come back up. Yeah, my first charge account was at Seaside Pharmacy.

**JonLee:** That's great! Were there other stories that you remembered that you wanted to share for this.

**Marcy:** Yeah.

**Marcy:** [pauses] Well. I was thinking more about the Brownies and how I was in the Brownie group, probably second or third grade. And the two Brownie leaders were Mrs. Sears and Mrs. Smith. And their daughters, I went to school with one of their daughters. Joyce Smith was at Alki. Jan Sears, however, was at Holy Rosary. And that was, you know, that was the place I wanted to steer clear from. But it was nice to know somebody who went to school there and she was very, very nice. She lived up at the top of, I think its

**Marcy:** Hanford, the street that goes up top of the hill, off of Admiral and then Joyce's family up the street from them. So, they bordered Schmitz Park. And that's where, I think in Brownies, that we finally took some walks into Schmitz Park and it sort of felt okay, then, once we went as a Brownie group and learned some of the native stories and started learning about trees and plants and things. Yeah. So. By the time I got to junior high and then we were walking to and from school, James Madison, through the park. It was, I'd been there. You know, it was perfectly fine. And it's wonderful how you can remember people because one of the openings at the museum, I was there helping to docent, and it was like my first time so I was a little like, well, this is so odd, 'cause it still kind of felt like my house but not, and you know, I hadn't been in it for years, of course. But memories still feel fresh and other people are claiming that for their own. But this woman and her husband came through and I instantly knew that I knew her. And sure enough it was Jan Sears. And I hadn't seen her oh, probably since 1964. And this was, what, 1998 or something.

**JonLee:** Isn't that funny.

**Marcy:** Yeah!

**JonLee:** Don't you think people retain their kind of physical gestures even though their looks change?

**JonLee:** Oh, it was, access was controlled in a way.

**Marcy:** Yeah.

**Marcy:** Well, the, oh yeah, the lifeguards would be in their little boat and

**JonLee:** The way that they have of moving their hands and legs and body.

**Marcy:** Yeah, the, the little boat, next to me because, if I went



**Marcy:** Yeah. She just moved in a very kind of upright way and I just had this, yeah, sense of recognition. It was great. Oh, the beach. The beach was a wonderful place to go. My mother worked days and my dad worked too, so us kids were, somebody had the key to the house during the summer, around their neck on a chain and it was invariably was my brother and he would lose it. So he used to have to climb up the logs to the second story to get in the window. I tried it once and I think I got up to the roof and at that point, you have to, you really have to have some strength and fortitude to get over the eave and I didn't have it. I chickened out. So I think I spent the rest of the afternoon in the yard waiting for somebody to come home. [laughs]. But the beach was a wonderful place as a kid. Gosh. The bath house was alive with life guards for one, you know, it was a manned beach and I don't think it is any more. Yeah. So there were always things to do, something going on there. And the raft. The big goal was to swim out to the raft. And I had really balked at having formal swim lessons, because I think naturally I paddled around and I felt that was fine. I didn't want to be told what to do and how to do it, ever. Odd. But. So, trying to take lessons at the edge of Alki Beach, with it's seaweed and rocks and things, was, I did it for, like, two days and that was enough. But as long as I could paddle and prove that I could paddle, and you kind of had to do that, I was allowed to go out to the raft.

**JonLee:** Oh, it was, access was controlled in a way.

**Marcy:** Well, the, oh yeah, the lifeguards would be in their little boat and they would, I can remember many times, the life guard was paddling right next, the little boat, next to me because, if I went

**JonLee:** down, they were going to be right there. I was not that strong a swimmer. But I had a lot of determination. Later, and I mean, like five to six years ago, I took adult swimming lessons, to learn how to over hand swim and breathe at the same time. It's fabulous!

**Marcy:** [laughs] But that's been in Ballard Pool, you know, nice clean water. But I've swum all my life. Keeping my head above water.

**JonLee:** Were there two rafts? One farther out?

**Marcy:** You know, I vaguely remember two rafts, but more really one. And when the tide was going in at the end of the day, it was a longer swim back in. So, the interesting thing was you'd be, you know, really jumping off the raft and swimming around and getting up

**JonLee:** and doing that, you know, fifty to a hundred times. And then, it's time to go home and you have that long, you know, fifty or a

**Marcy:** hundred yard, whatever it was, swim to get in. I can remember coming in and saying my prayers for getting to the shore! [laughs]

**JonLee:** With the life guard paddling! [laughs] His boat along side!

**JonLee:** Do you remember the two lessons you took? Because Helene Madison used to teach at that beach. And I wondered if you had a woman teacher.

**Marcy:** Oh boy. I think so, I think so, but beyond that I don't remember.

**JonLee:** That may have been before your time.

**Marcy:** Now, we're talking 1959. Or maybe even the summer of 1960, because that would have been second grade.



**JonLee:** Yeah, I think she'd already gone on from then because I took swim lessons from her in the Fifties, the early Fifties at the Moore Pool downtown.

**Marcy:** Yeah, and I really, literally quit because sitting at the edge of the water, learning to kick your feet with the seaweed and the sand up your suit was *not* for me. [laughs]

**JonLee:** Thank you! [laughs] Were there any other stories that you thought of that you wanted to add?

**Marcy:** Not right off the top of my head.

**JonLee:** Then this is good.

**Marcy:** They just come to me, or came to me.

**JonLee:** And thank you for remembering the stories and being willing to tape them.

**Marcy:** Well, you're welcome! [stops tape] So, I wanted to know if anybody had talked to you about the Trig Grocery Store? Well, Trig Grocery Store, was right across the street from Seaside Pharmacy where Alki Café is now, that building of commercial on the bottom and apartments up above. And when we first moved to Alki in '59 there was the little Trig Grocery Store and I don't know what was behind it, because there was some space, maybe it was just a parking lot behind it and then next to it going along Alki was the delicatessen and the cleaners and something. But Trig Grocery took up a big portion of that corner. And so that was before the



grocery store was built on 63rd. And that was, I mean, we, I think my parents shopped up on the hill, whatever grocery store was there, Safeway or Thriftway or something. But, you know, if you needed something from the store right at dinner time or whatever, you ran down to the little store and I'm sure many people did lots of their grocery shopping there that didn't have access or didn't need to go a big supermarket. And I don't remember if that was his name, but that was the name of the store. Trig Grocery. And of course, then it was bought. But we would go into Trig Grocery or the delicatessen and buy our little penny candies or whatever. And one of the stories I can remember, and this is telling on myself. But my mother had showed me how to write checks. Because I was interested, I was always very good at math, well, you might not think so after this story, but really am fairly good with numbers. So, second, maybe third grade, but probably second, my mother had some blank checks that she wasn't using and I said, "Oh! What's that?" And she showed me how to write them out and I was as just fascinated because I knew I'd watched her write them out in the store and take them in. And so she said I could have them to play with. Well, I got it in my head that "Gee, you buy things with the check, you could just take a check and go on down to the store." So, I had some little playmate, I remember it being some little boy in the neighborhood. And I said, "Oh, well, gosh, let's try it!" So, I wrote out this check. [laughs] Oh, I told such a big whopping lie, fib, but anyway, so I wrote up this check for, my mother had showed me I think with five dollars. So, but I said, "Well, gosh, let's say ten." So, to Trig Store and I put the date and I wrote ten dollars and I signed my mother's name because it was, you know her name on the check But in the place where you write it out, where you actually have to write "Ten dollars." I wrote, "five" because



**Marcy:** that's what she'd written and I didn't, for some reason, I either just made a mistake or didn't transpose that you had to write the same number as you'd written. So I wrote what she had showed me. And I took it down to the store and said, "Well, gee, you know, we probably ought to buy something, you know, believable." I knew I was pulling a fast one. I didn't know how bad I was trying to pull it off. But, so, Mr. Trig, looked at the check and he was so nice and he said, "Well, gosh, you know, this would be fine except that your mom made a mistake on the he check and she'll have to initial it or correct it." And he explained what was wrong and I was horrified. I thought, "Oh my god, he's being so nice and I'm lying through my teeth and I'd been found out." So, of course, I had to hide my tail and go, "Oh, you know," I don't think I fessed up. I had to hide my tail and go home and like, "Whew." And I don't know whether he ever called my mother or not, I was like, "I am not touching those checks."

**JonLee:** [laughs] Thank you.

**Marcy:** My little experiences with the commercial, you know--

**JonLee:** That's how we learn,

**Marcy:** Oh boy.

**JonLee:** Lots of things. Now, I'm going to be speaking to a Mrs. Watt(?), who had a little grocery store at 63rd before the Alki Grocery was there, must have been in the Fifties. A little Asian woman. Do you remember that store?



**Marcy:** Well, there was C & H Grocery that still exists, now, and it has on the corner of 62nd there is a restaurant. It used to be a laundromat, but it's a restaurant now. And then there was C & H Grocery, which still exists as a little grocery store and I think a take out Chinese now?

**JonLee:** Is it the Golden Sun?

**Marcy:** Yes.

**JonLee:** 'Cause she owns that.

**Marcy:** Did she own the same spot?

**JonLee:** I'm going to ask her.

**Marcy:** Yeah. And that was the first Chinese take out down on Alki, that was great.

**JonLee:** Okay, thank you very much,

**Marcy:** You're welcome.

End of interview



# TAGS

"SCHMITZ PARK"  
"GAY", "QUEER", "LESBIAN" ("Pregnant")  
"LOG HOUSE FORMER RESIDENT" ↑ poss.

Johnsen, Marcy

## 4) SCHMITZ PARK

- 1) Theme: growing up gay in Alki
- 2) Theme: memories of people + places in Alki
- 3) Theme: former resident of Log House Museum!

Marcy  
came from  
Beacon Hill  
age 2nd or  
3rd grade.

Beacon Hill - <sup>very</sup> racially + ethnically diversified  
Alki - not diversified at all →

She noticed that  
right off,  
even as a  
child.

## People of Colour

- Dr. Brown?
- Dr. Harris - a black man

## OTHER PEOPLE

AUNT IDA

ANNA - (3rd Cousin)

PEGGY - (sister)

DAD - "whistled" for Marcy  
+ her siblings to return  
home - you could hear it  
"for blocks".  
- wonder she was gay.

- Marguerite Parlotto,  
Alki Elementary Teacher.  
• affected Marcy in a positive way.

## BROWNIE SCOUT LEADERS

- MRS. SEARS & MRS. SMITH

CHARLIE RICHIE / SEASIDE PHARMACY

- BELLA WORKED THERE

- MARCY'S 1st change acct was there,  
age 14.

## Gay People

- Lynn  
• a female girl "masculine"  
• got beaten up in hi-school  
for being gay
- Joey - Marcy's partner now  
- they met in jr. hi.
- Marcianne

These 3 + Marcy hung out in  
jr. hi together

→ \* Marcy's dad said  
"I'd rather see you  
pregnant than queer."

1960's "queer" a derogatory  
but descriptive word of the  
day for all gay people.  
Marcy even used it for  
herself!  
"lesbian".

~~THE CHURCH TAKEOVER IN ALKI~~

(OVER)



## PLACES

- BEACON HILL - very racially + ethnically diversified
- HOLY ROSARY -
  - CCD - (Catholic Christian Doctrine [classes]) - Marcy took them.
- ALKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
  - MARGUERITE PARLOTTO
    - impacted Marcy in a positive way
- BEACH DRIVE

## ★ SCHMITZ PARK

- Early bad Reputation
  - had a dangerous reputation when Marcy was a child
  - the park got more use + its reputation improved.
  - ~~Marcy~~ Marcy + her friends hung out there + smoke cigarettes.

## ALKI BEACH ACTIVITIES

- C+H grocery
- THE GOLDEN SUN
  - 1st Chinese take out in Alki
- JAMES MADISON SCHOOL

- clamming
  - rock hounding
  - Sunday drives
- do this with company!

- TRIG grocery store
  - right across from SEASIDE PHARMACY
- SEASIDE PHARMACY / CHARLIE RICHIE

## THE LOG HOUSE

- MARCY grew up in it
- 1965 earthquake
  - "'65 / 6.5"
  - "shook (the house) like an orange crate"
  - "The Log House belongs to the whole community"