

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM RELEASE FORM

Interviewee's Name: ELLIOTT W. COUDEN

Interviewer's Name: PATRICIA FILER

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INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWEE

Patricia Filer 5/15/99
Date

Elliott W. Couden
Date

IN: 00:01:10;27 D

OUT: 00:03:57;08 D

DUR: 00:02:46;11 D

Comments:

I: Elliot, I understand that you grew up in New York and Saint Louis. Can you tell us a little bit about your boyhood?

E: Yes,uh, in New York, I was born in New York City on Long Island in the town called Elmhurst, which isn't too far from Brooklyn where the, uh, the Luna Park and all of that exists. And then I moved to Murray Hill and then to Flushing which is a pretty well known city in the, uh, New York. When I was 8 years old, my Dad was asked by his, uh, firm to come out to St. Louis and open up a branch office. And uh, so at 8 years of age why we all, I joined the family in a train and we sailed off to St. Louis. Where I lived 'til 1936 at which time I, took a vacation trip out here to the West Coast. My uh, friend and I had decided that we were a little tired of St. Louis weather and soot and all that sort of thing. So we found a place on the West Coast that we, we could get a job within 10 days, we'd stay. And I got a job at Frederick and Nelsons to send, selling men's furnishings. He didn't get a job, he kept going and went back to St. Louis. He eventually ended up on the West Coast, as did most of my friends. Was really amazing. We were part of a migration to the West Coast that was really taking, starting to take place in a big way in those days.

I: Why do you suppose that was?

E: Uh, weather, new, new opportunities, uh, job availability all had something to do with it. Of course, you get, get a, an enthusiastic note from a friend, saying, "This is where you should be." That helps get you moving, too. As far as I was concerned, Seattle was the epitome, I learned a lot about big cities from New York City and from St. Louis and what, I could see that Seattle was destined to become a much bigger city within a short time, and it certainly has happened.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1
Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:03:58;00 D

OUT: 00:04:45;22 D

DUR: 00:00:47;20 D

Comments:

I: How did you learn about Seattle? When you were in St. Louis?

E: Well, it was merely uh, uh, uh dot on the map as far as I was concerned. When I moved from, uh, New York to St. Louis. I was looking for, a, for, for uh, wigwams, found out I was into a very, a very uh, old and sophisticated city when I went from St. Louis to Seattle as our first part, point going down the coast. I was looking for igloos when I got here. I soon found out that there was, there was life beyond the Allegheny Mountains. And uh, the Mississippi River.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1
Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:04:46;09 D

OUT: 00:07:34;26 D

DUR: 00:02:48;15 D

Comments:

I: Back to your childhood for a minute. I remember hearing about, in an interview you had done, about your involvement with the Boy Scouts and how that had such an influence on your life. Would you like to tell us about that?

E: I'd be delighted to. I, I consider being active in Scouting as one of the most important activities I became involved in, in my entire career. I had a Sunday school teacher when I turned 12 and he was a Scout Master at another church nearby and he talked me into joining the Boy Scouts of America. Oh, I joined and stayed with it, along with a lot of my friends, until I became the Scout Master of that Troop. And uh, eventually I had a job with a, department, a big department store in St. Louis in the Boy Scout department selling scout materials, clothing and equipment and so forth. And from that I went on down to the Seattle, the uh, St. Louis council's summer camp at Irondale, Missouri about 70 miles south, south of St. Louis, as a full time member of the staff. I was Handicraft Director. And uh, it was while I was there that I met my wife-to-be on a blind date and I left shortly thereafter, after camp closed to head out to Seattle according to our plans. Irma and I kept up a correspondence and 4 years almost to the day after we first met, we were married here in Seattle.

I: Marriage made in heaven.

E: So, Scouts played a role in a very important part of my life. It was no only that though, of course, it was the, uh, the uh, practical investment in, in, uh, in living that I learned. Learned about judgement, which didn't mean much to me before that, but I learned how to have judg-, uh, judge-, uh, I learned how to get myself oriented wherever I was. Irma gets lost in the city all the time. I find, I find the way every time, so she depends on me in that area. And and then of course the uh, Scout Law and all of the other value oriented things that scouting stands for were, had a great imp-, impression on me.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1
Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:07:36;26 D

OUT: 00:10:04;14 D

DUR: 00:02:27;18 D

Comments:

I: I understand that at that time that they came up with an aviation badge in Scouting which helped also shape some of your interests in life.

E: It definitely did. When uh, I was only about, Scout for only about a year or so, uh, St. Louis decided to have it's first Bird Man(?) Show. In a big area downtown. And uh, we were assigned a new merit badge called Aviation. And so we were instructed by our Scout Master at the time to get out and hunt down any equipment, material and information about aviation we could to put in a booth for display, and, and uh, hence I became a really life long advocate interested in aviation. As a matter of fact (dog barks) during the 1920's I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer. And one of the books that I aquired and studied was written by the chief aeronautical engineer at Boeing Aircraft here in Seattle. When I came out to Boeing, or to Seattle, the first place I went for employment was to Boeing. Uh, although I knew a lot of the fliers and people connected with aviation in St. Louis from hanging out at the field which was just a grassy field like Boeing Field was at one time. Uh, I, I got to know these people and uh, like Charles Lindberg was flying the mail from St. Louis to Chicago and I knew him just as Slim Lindberg. And within a year after I met him, he became the most famous man on Earth, after his solo flight from uh, United States to France and uh ever since although I, I, I didn't get into aviation as a lifetime work, I found that my, my uh talent was in selling, I became a salesman. An organizer. And that's been with me for the rest of my life.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:10:05;08 D

OUT: 00:10:54;01 D

DUR: 00:00:48;23 D

Comments:

I: I understand that you hitched a ride on a famous old plane when you were back in St. Louis. Was it with Mr. Lindberg that you got to ride?

E: Uh...

I: Remember to start our sentence with... I think I read where, or--

E: Of course, the Spirit of St. Louis was the name of the plane that Lindberg flew. That's probably what you're referring to. I didn't get to fly in that plane, but I saw it personally--

I: I see--

E: --before and after his flight across the ocean. It was quite an, quite an important thing.

I: That must have been quite an impression to have met Mr. Lindberg.

E: It was, indeed.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:11:02;11 D

OUT: 00:17:00;20 D

DUR: 00:05:58;07 D

Comments:

I: You told me that your first job was at Frederick and Nelson and then you moved over to an investment firm as a messenger.

E: Right

I: And then on to a real estate career. And maybe you'd like to tell us about those job opportunities and then think about kids starting out now and how different the job searches are and how that...

E: Well, I can't brag about how much money I made working in department stores. When I was, back in St. Louis before I came out here I was only making \$15 a week. Can you imagine? And when I came to Frederick's I went, I boosted that up to 17 dollars and 50 cents a week. But uh, I had a friend here who was in an aviation club that we had in St. Louis that lived here now and I stayed and lived with him until I could really get on my feet. So I was only at Frederick's for about 6 months and then I decided to try a different tack. All my life all I heard about was EA Pearson Company, which was a, was the largest stock brokerage in the world. And uh, my aunt, my mother's sister, was a partner in the company and ran the New York office, the home base. And uh, I just decided after going by EA Pearson Company's offices here in Seattle, a few times, (something) pop in there and see if I might be able to get a job, so I did. And uh, I was sort of apologetic about the fact that I didn't have a formal college education, but the vice, uh, uh, uh, manager of the office asked me, "Are you a college graduate?" And I thought, "Here it goes." And I said, "No I'm not." And he says, "Well, you're hired. I don't want any of those darned smart alecks coming in here, coming, telling me how to run my business." So, have, not having an education, a formal education turned out to be the thing for me at that point. I stayed with that company for several years, worked my way up from a messenger to various other posts. By the way, I didn't mention anything about my aunt being one of the big shots in the company to anybody and they didn't know about it for years. Till she came out to visit our office to see what was going on in Seattle. The irony of that was that when she came, I'd already made plans with a close friend of mine to climb up around the, uh the trail up at the top of the ridge of the mountains here. And we spent a week up in the snow. But unfortunately I didn't get to see my aunt and I hadn't seen her since my mother's demise which happened back in 1927. So, uh, that's how I got into that. Then I joined the National Guard and in the meantime and uh, uh, they told me, they told me after World War I started over in Europe, I mean World War II, that uh, they wanted me to get out because I was the oldest fellow in the outfit who was a non-com. I was doing secretarial work for the Captain, my field artillery battery down at, down on what we now call the, well it was called the Food Circus, the Food Circus or whatever down at the Seattle Center. And so uh, a fellow who was a lieutenant in my battery was a, a, a securities salesman for a company and he talked me into coming over from EA Pearson to work there and start selling stocks and bonds, which I did. For a couple of years and then the brother of the owner of the company I now work with breezed into town. He was a super salesman type and he lined up a big, uh, the sale of, of the largest uh, development to be, that ever existed in West Seattle. 377 new homes. And he said he would give me half the, half the pot if I would join him his selling these homes. So I did that and that's how I became a, I got a real estate broker's license right off the bat. And that became my, one of my uh, businesses from then on. Eventually I went into business for my self on advice from an old timer

IN: 00:11:02;11 D

OUT: 00:01:70;02 D

DUR: 23:51:07;17 D

Comments: (Previous entry continued) Eventually I went into business for my self on advice from an old timer in real estate, I diversified. So I ended up having about 6 different hats. Uh, in my own business. We called Couden Agency because we were agents for insurance, real estate, securities, property management. All that sort of thing. (Dog barks).

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:17:07;10 D

OUT: 00:22:04;08 D

DUR: 00:04:56;26 D

Comments:

I: Elliot, as a business man, I know that you were given quite an honor in the '60's and I was hoping that you would be able to tell us about that.

E: One of the things that uh, I found being in business for myself, was that I had an opportunity to become involved in a lot of activities that I would not be able to if I were working for some company I had to, I had a desk job or whatever. And so I decided early on to become involved in church activities in, uh, uh, matters relating to the city and uh, I was uh, one of the organizers of the White Center Lion's Club, I helped form the White Center Chamber of Commerce and was its president also. And I was invited by the Mayor of Seattle to be on the original human rights commission so I was on that for 7 and a half years and, uh, the chair of it at the end. I was very active with the Council of Churches of Greater Seattle and I was its last, last president before they turned from the Council of Churches to the Church Council under a different format. So I was engaged in a lot of different activities both in business and in private life. One of the things I was very much involved in was the open housing. Open housing was a very uh, very tough issue that the people of Seattle had to deal with whether or not we were going to be able to discriminate against people on the basis of, of, uh, color, creed or national origin and so on. And so I was, it was being, it was very interesting being a real estate broker while being at the, right at the front of the civil rights uh, movement that took place during the 1960's especially. Because the real estate board, of which I was a member was the primary organization against it. So it, it was a very, very interesting time. Part of the things I had, I went back to Washington DC to see Congress, speak before congressional committees, about, about this subject and uh, I got to know Senator Jackson as a result who was very strongly entrenched in Washington DC and eventually became a runner for the President of the United States. And so I think that he was uh, responsible for me getting this telegram from Lyndon B Johnson who had become President upon the assassination of President Kennedy. So on August 10th of 1964, I received this as follows. "I would be pleased if you could join me for a reception at the White House 4:30pm on August 20th. An exchange of views with you and other outstanding leaders of our country is, I believe, important and desirable. I would be grateful if you would wire me that you could be present. Please--, please present this telegram at south east gate. Lyndon E. Johnson. B Johnson. So I did, I didn't know much about what it was all about but I went back to Washington in response to this. What this was he was trying to calm the country down after Kennedy's shocking demise. And he had different groups coming into his, into the White House to let them know what the state of the country was in various areas. And so this, the East Room that we went to, all met in, was just full of so-called small business men. And it was quite an experience to be there at the White House and greet the President personally. And hear all the top people in the cabinet telling about where we stood militarily, economically, etc., etc. So that was an interesting experience that stemmed out of my activities.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1
Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:22:04;01 D

OUT: 00:23:57;01 D

DUR: 00:01:53;00 D

Comments:

I: I hadn't intended to ask you this but it's always something that's curious to me. When President Kennedy was assassinated how did south west Seattle react? How did, what happened here. I was from Iowa so I know how we reacted there I'm just curious.

(they take the telegram from him)

E: Well, of course, it was a tremendous shock to everybody in the country regardless of, of their political stance. Although he was tremendously popular in general. Uh, to see the manner by which he died, here he was being greeted by the people of Texas in a big parade of cars down the main streets and all of a sudden shots ring out and he's killed sitting next to his wife. And of course, the, the, just the act alone was enough to shock people tremendously. But for a President, a popular President to go out that way was hard to take. So everywhere we went you could tell that people were shocked almost into silence cause they couldn't express the outrage as well as the mortification of having our, this happen from an unknown person. So it was, it was a traumatic period and, and the new President of course realized that people were in this stage and that was when he started having these meetings at the White House with people to get them calmed down and let them know that the ship of state was still afloat and in good shape.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:23:56;20 D

OUT: 00:24:54;25 D

DUR: 00:00:58;03 D

Comments:

I: Many events have happened, during your lifetime, historically, including the death of President Kennedy. And I was just wondering if anything sticks out in your mind as something either unforgettable to you or memorable in our history.

E: Well I would say that the Kennedy incident is the one that stuck out the most. I didn't carry on a uh, trauma in me about what happened, but I was, I was shaken by the uncertainty that exists in life for all of us. And uh, in a sense it had something to do with my feelings about the history that eventually got into.

I: I didn't intend to ask you that I surprised you with that question, but I just felt like it led into that.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:24:55;06 D

OUT: 00:26:53;21 D

DUR: 00:01:58;13 D

Comments:

I: But let's go back to you and Irma now. And you're living in Seattle and you have 3 children. What made West Seattle, or South West Seattle a place for, that you wanted to raise your children? What were those qualities about South West Seattle? Remember to start with a sentence.

E: The primary reason I came to West Seattle was because that's where these houses were going to be built. The South East, uh intersection of South West Rocksbury Street and 35th Avenue South West was all just a big, uh, landscape of trees and shrubs and undeveloped property there sloping from the high point at 35th and sloping down hill to 30th South West. We learned to love West Seattle just by being here, we learned about all of the benefits we had. Almost ever present cool breezes that blow across this part of the of the city and the sort of small town atmosphere that happened because we were isolated, to some degree, on this peninsula. And, and, uh, it was also the greatest development period in the city of Seattle, all of West Seattle was being built up, lots of building sites were available and building permits were being given here. So when I left this project and went into general real, uh, real estate this was a very popular and interesting place for people to decide to live. So that had the most to do with it probably.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:26:54;23 D

OUT: 00:27:38;05 D

DUR: 00:00:43;10 D

Comments:

I: Were there benefits for your children as well? Were the school systems uh, growing?

E: Yes, there, uh, the schools, were built, we built new schools like uh, East, uh Sealth High School and the junior high school close by. Denny Junior High. And we were very active in the uh, in the schools. PTA's and other activities. So, uh, the, it was part of our involvement in the com-, in the beloved community. We enjoyed it.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:27:38;07 D

OUT: 00:28:06;10 D

DUR: 00:00:28;01 D

Comments:

I: Did you ever take your family to Alki Beach?

E: Yes we did. We used to go down there quite often. Beautiful place. We like the walks even in those days, it was a great place to walk along the water and uh, there were some pretty good places to eat along that road. So we liked Alki very much.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:28:07;10 D

OUT: 00:29:19;03 D

DUR: 00:01:11;23 D

Comments:

I: Were any of the old natatoriums or swimming pavillions still in existence when your children were there?

E: I think they were all gone at the time that uh, all those improvements left a lot of uh, pilings sticking out of the water they were all pretty well gone. All, not for a long period. The uh, ferry Kalakala, which is now in the news quite a bit, uh, was built and put in operation just a year before I arrived in Seattle. So it was uh, very interesting uh, boat for me because of the streamlining which, of course, I allied with a very important phase of aviation. So uh, we enjoyed seeing the Kalakala come back into local history again.

I: Did you ride on the Kalakala?

E: I'm sure I did but I can't remember specifically. It just seemed like I must have been on it. That was back in the mid 30's. That was a long time ago.

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:29:19;22 D

OUT:

DUR: 23:30:40:08 N

Comments:

I: Being a real estate person I'm sure that you were intrigued by some of the old buildings in this area. But there was a rather unusual piece of property that you and your wife looked at in the Alki area. Would you tell us about the stone cottage?

E: Well we, uh, have owned homes in several locations in West Seattle, but between times uh, of one sale of our home before we've located another one, was living down on, at Alki about a block from the lighthouse. And just a few doors from where we were living in an apartment, there was a little tiny stone house that just intrigued everybody that went by it. It had an elevator that took you from downstairs to upstairs which was nothing more than just a very simple device to to do that but it was intriguing. Well, we liked it well enough that we thought this is a good location for view and location for living, so we decided to look up the ownership of that building and see if we could buy the property and build our own permanent home on that location. But we were unsuccessful in our efforts, although eventually it was sold and moved away and a house was built on that location that is almost exactly what we had in mind if we ever did aquire it. But it was a very nice uh, landmark that we were sorry was--- (tape rewinds)

Tape: Elliot Couden tape1

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:31:56;09 D

OUT: 00:33:26;05 D

DUR: 00:01:29;24 D

Comments:

E: The uh, little stone house gained quite a bit of publicity when it was named by Ripley as a, smallest livable house in the country, in the world. So we were intrigued by that information.

I: And we were sorry to see that landmark--

E: We were very sorry to see that landmark go for, from Alki Point.

I: We've lost a lot of unique landmarks down there, haven't they?

E: Yeah.

I: The Stockade Hotel, the Natatoriums, were any of those even in shambles when you were there?

E: No, that, a, an apartment had been built where the Stockade Hotel stood and there's a marker naming that as being close to the landing place for the Schooner Exact when it landed at Alki Point. But there was a rather interesting looking building and so the, a developer decided to build new apartments there, up-to-date apartments, but save the facade that was on the old building so it does look now as it did pretty much when it was following the stockade. Very interesting.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:33:26;21 D

OUT: 00:37:31;11 D

DUR: 00:04:04;20 D

Comments:]

I: Now, being the founder of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society, can you tell us a little bit about what led you to realize that a historical society was needed in this area? And don't answer those questions, just start out by explaining...that you were at the Chamber of Commerce and they were gone and how all that led up to--

E: Several roads led to the uh, creation of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society. One of which was that I had taken for granted for some time that there was some repository, surely, that we had in West Seattle area that we had for important historical artifacts and uh, and memorabilia and so on. But when I searched for some little photographs of uh, some important pictures of White Center, I found that they, the Chamber's pictures had disappeared. And no one could tell me where they were. And I, I finally ran it down after research and found out what happened to them but they were beyond recovery at that point. That was one of the things that made me think that it's about high time for its, a, part of Seattle that calls itself the birthplace, from time to time, to do something about uh, a practical location for such things. And so I uh, I, I posed a question to the White Center Chamber of Commerce about starting up an independent organization for preservation of historical artifacts. And that was given the go ahead, so I was part of a committee that was researching what, what, the whole situation was in Southwest Seattle regarding that. And we came to the conclusion that it was uh, very definitely an open, uh, need that needed to be closed. So, my, our involvement in Sealth High School included the, uh, teacher who had later become the teacher of the uh, Southwest, South Seattle Community College. Mr. Jerry Brockey(?). And so I went to him and asked him if we could use the facilities at the college to convene a meeting or two where we could determine whether or not we wanted to start a historical society. He gave us full permission to use whatever we needed in terms of rooms, so on. So we put an ad in the newspaper, I put an ad in there, inviting people who would be interested in, in, in exploring the historical society creation to come and meet at the college as I said, (something) time. And while I was waiting for responses on that before the meeting. I visited some historical people and found out about Charles Payton(?) the head of the county's uh, cultural division and that respect and invited him to come to our, our gathering. So about 20 people responded to the ad uh, for an organizing questionnaire, we finally decided that yes, this was needed and we'll get in and support it. So that's how we happened to start it. And met there for long, from a long, many long years.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:38:02;01 D

OUT: 00:41:32;04 D

DUR: 00:03:30;03 D

Comments:

I: (Talks for a minute about the historical society) But first, as we're celebrating the 15th anniversary, you had a vision, or a dream, and how do you feel that it's accomplished what you had expected, or you had wanted?

E: Well looking at my own experience of moving across the country and seeing different things changing and happening. I, I realized that history is, is, uh rather different, difficult to define. There's a lot of different approaches to history. And one of the things I looked at as what had been my experience in schools regarding history. And it amounted, in those days, to "What was the date of the Battle of Hastings?" and "When did Napoleon retreat from Moscow?" and so forth. And I thought that, that's about as boring and out of context for young people as anything I could imagine. I, one of the things I learned from scouting was judgement and perception. In terms of perception, I like to think of myself as just going straight up from the earth and getting up high enough that I could look over a wide expanse and see all the different movements and attitudes and struggles and hopes and dreams that were taking place among the different people all around the world. And, and how the, when we're born into this world, the status of society at that time is, to us, the norm. This is the way it always has been and this is the way it always will be. But I learned over a period of time that forces are working towards changes in every aspect of our society. Our our value systems, our commitments, our priorities, our, our public interest versus our personal interest. Etc. And the only way to make sense of it was to keep posted on it on a day to day basis. History to me is not what happened way back then, history is being generated every day in dynamic ways all around this world. And, you either are aware of that fact and respond to it by keeping up with the news, uh, of the world as well as locally. Or, or, you're, you're just an observer and not a participant. And I feel that all of us should find a niche where we can be participant and have something to say and have something to put into society. And one of the old sayings that has some merit is try to leave this world a better place than you found it. And that's the kind of attitude that I try to build into people. And I feel that I've been a part of that. I just feel very fortunate to have been a part of that.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:41:32;04 D

OUT: 00:43:33;06 D

DUR: 00:02:01;02 D

Comments:

E: (Continued from previous entry) And so uh, the dream I had had had to do with dealing with generation gaps that I could see among children, which is evident today, even. That uh, the, the experiences in life that older people had are gone forever. For in many areas and, and yet children have to know that they arrived at where we are today by what's happened and try to close the gap and that, that was my dream that we try to find our way to do that. And of course I think that I'm, that all of us alive today have to be grateful, in a sense, for having lived in the most dynamic, most changed stage in the history of the world. Uh, it's almost impossible for me to compare what the world was like when I was born and became aware of it and the way it is now. In almost every aspect it's a different world. So we can't expect children to know what, what we went through or how we built the infrastructures that they're enjoying today unless they take an interest in history. In an interesting way, not just a, a, just a rote way of curiosity about some things but really a sense of involvement. So simply put, that's, that's what it, I, I see about history. I'm very interested in seeing how people become involved in their history. And I encourage them to do that.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:43:33;06 D

OUT: 00:44:33;00 D

DUR: 00:00:59;22 D

Comments:

I: Do you feel that the Log House Museum is providing that to children?

E: As far as I can see it's probably one of the best examples that we've had here in the Seattle area of, of a little different approach. Many of the historical societies that have a museum have set up a, a house or a room in a house, that has a lot of old furniture or appliances, and so on. And that's how it used to be and that's sort of a static structure. But I think our approach, by having, uh, many lectures and, and uh, opportunities for children to ask questions and see pictures and all those things is uh, makes them feel much more, in, invite, involved and a part of what's going on. So I'm very happy about what we've done so far.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:44:34;14 D

OUT: 00:46:20;15 D

DUR: 00:01:45;29 D

Comments: I: I like something that you said in a previous interview. You said...I am not an educator or an authority or even a historian. But I'm an organizer. I think if you can build a framework that is open, strong, and that you can move along, then you can keep the windows and doors open so that fresh air can come in.

E: That's right. I still feel--

I: What do you think about those words today and kind of rephrase them a little bit about building the historical society and where you expect it to go and how we can keep it fresh.

E: Well, I can see some problems and flaws in our present set up, but, I, I don't want to dwell on those until the time comes where we can sit down and together and, and, uh, iron out our directions and emphases and how we're handling our own structure. I sometimes see people come on our Executive Board and given practically no orientation on the society, what it's about, what it's obligations are and what it's limitations are and what it's aims are. And familiarity with by-laws and order, rules of order and things of that nature. So, I, I, I think that although we've always had a bunch of wonderful people that have contributed to and breathed life into the society, that there are things that we can do that can make sure we perpetuate what we're, what we've got started. So I'm looking forward to that kind of a session some, one of these days.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:46:20;18 D

OUT: 00:47:12;09 D

DUR: 00:00:51;19 D

Comments:

I: Do we have a next step?

E: Well, I think the biggest, the thing that needs to happen in the society is to be, start right now towards taking a good hard look at what needs to be, happen during the next year and put our priorities and time and effort towards those things. And we need to have, new, new leadership. We, we have to get people oriented to and involved in the society to the point where they know what they're doing, what we're, what we're about. And it would be presumptuous on my part to say this is, this is it, period. I just want to be part of, if possible, of the process that's what I would like to do.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:47:41;05 D

OUT: 00:49:26;05 D

DUR: 00:01:44;28 D

Comments:

I: If you could just briefly touch on some of the most important ones (activities done by the Historical society).

E: Well, of course, the salvation of the Admiral Theatre was one of our one of our greatest triumphs. It was interesting to see. People from all walks of life and importance parading up and down in protest against closing uh, the theatre and people really poured themselves into that project. And it's turned out to be a wonderful result. So that was one of our. The home tours have, were great, we had a lot of people, spend a lot of energy in pulling those over. And we're looking forward to the, re-starting those things that have been ended merely because we had too many sticks in the fire at one time and couldn't handle all of them. Uh, we have won a lot of awards on our newspaper and other, newsletter and other things, but, and so we've gained as much prominence as we could expect to have, ever expect to have in the historical field, but I, but I think that that's not as important as making sure that we have a, a blue print that we're following that's moving towards certain objectives. I think we're doing a wonderful job. We have a wonderful director of our museum, we're very fortunate in that respect.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:49:27;13 D

OUT: 00:50:54;14 D

DUR: 00:01:27;01 D

Comments:

I: When you talked about the Log House Museum before you didn't say "The Log House Museum." (She coaches him on what to say. They stop tape.)

00:50:10:17

The Log House Museum has, has won a definite stance and role in the, in the psyche of West Seattle and uh, most people are tremendously impressed by our being able to bring it together and get it formed and into, into work but uh, the best days are yet to come and, and that, I think we've done a tremendous job so far of making it well known and a destination point in people coming to Seattle.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:50:57;06 D

OUT: 00:52:10;23 D

DUR: 00:01:13;15 D

Comments:

I: I Have one question for you. You have a rather astute middle name.

E: Well, my middle name is, is Noble. I have a relative, a, who was a uh, Universalist minister who became blind during the Civil War era. But he was a minister and was appointed to be the uh, the chaplain of the House of Representatives at Washington DC. And so he served as the blind chaplain of the House from uh, late, the early, uh part of this century until the mid -20's. His name was Henry Noble Couden [Elliot pronounces the name "Cow-den"] or "Cooden" whatever way he pronounced his name. And uh, my mother and dad added that to my name in honor of that gentleman.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:52:28;17 D

OUT: 00:53:27;04 D

DUR: 00:00:58;15 D

Comments:

E: (in response to the Interviewer's question if he had anything else to add) I would like to see the Society uh, become very clear on its, on its direction and priorities in the days ahead and work toward that end. Uh, this is too good a thing for it to ever, ever face a chance of collapsing. Of course we realize that financing is one of our biggest problems. If all uh, non-public entities of this nature, and most societies are trying to find an answer to that. But I do feel that we have to get over that hump in order to be a long term advocate of historical priorities in this, this, uh vicinity.

Tracks: A1,A2

IN: 00:53:56;02 D

OUT: 00:54:24;17 D

DUR: 00:00:28;13 D

Comments:

E: (In response to another chance to add anything) I'm just glad that my wife and I have had a hand in the, in the, in getting this off the ground and as far as is possible we'll continue to make this one of our prime interests in life. And we're grateful for the opportunity to mingle with some pretty wonderful people.

Tracks: A1,A2

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