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Flora Belle Kay (sisters)

Interviewer's Name: JonLee Joseph

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INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWEE

12/31/00

JonLee Joseph 12/8/00
Date

Juneve Kay Dammus
1405 Temple Hgts. Dr. Date
OCEANSIDE, CA 92056-3006

J.B. Kay
6525 Calif. S.W. #107
San 98136-1873 206-435-9120

**Flora Belle Key
and
Juneve Key Damus**

Seattle, Washington

December 31, 2000

for

Southwest Seattle Historical Society

by

JonLee Joseph

Flora Belle Key and Juneve Key Damus

Interviewed by: JonLee Joseph

December 31, 2000

1st Oral Interview

Seattle, Washington

JonLee: Today is December 31st, 2000. This is JonLee. I am interviewing Flora Belle Key and her sister Juneve Key Damus. These are two sisters in a family who have lived for years in the Fauntleroy area. Flora Belle is 68 so that dates her from the '30's. Her sister's 77. She moved to Alki in 1925.older. So they will have early memories of Fauntleroy and Alki.

Okay, we're "live."

Flora Belle, now, you were raised down at Fauntleroy. You both were, but Flora Belle's responding first here. Would you tell me some of the memories that you have of Fauntleroy? I remember you saying something about you knew the house where you were conceived. But would you talk about what it was like in that neighborhood for you and how you went to the physical education things that the church held, but you didn't go to the church because your father was very active in another church. Would address some of that please?

Flora Belle: Yeah, our Dad was very active in the other church and he made us go to the Gatewood Baptist Church. Because the Fauntleroy Congregational Church was too liberal, even though that's

where everything was going on in the community. We could go to the gym, and the "Y" (whatever they called it when other people went before me). And it was right across from darling Fauntleroy School, which is still there. And the Church is still there. It's remodeled you know, the gym part is different, a little bit, but that was really nice. And I have to always here say how we went to summer camp thinking that everybody went to summer camp, 'cause it was free, or practically free. I don't remember paying anything. Maybe the folks had to pay a little bit, but it would be because of Ken Coleman, Coleman's a big name, the biggest name in Fauntleroy. He donated (shared) his private property.

JonLee: So where was that summer camp?

Flora Belle: Horse Head Bay, which is by Purdy and, well, if you live here you know it's--

JonLee: Port Orchard?

Flora Belle: Mmm, sort of, Gig Harbor, sort of, it's south, over in there. And, so, Mr. Coleman's big private yacht, "The Osprey," would pick us up right down at the beach there, just below our house, and we'd see it coming and get all excited and we'd follow his orders: "Be careful, very narrow gang plank" and all these different things. But so exciting to go there for a whole week. And I remember my first time, I'd never been away from home and I was homesick that first night, but I was determined not to cry. [laughs] But I felt it a little bit. It was really nice. And when I grew up and told other people I went to camp, I just assumed

they did too, somewhere else, you know, but no, we really had it very nice, thanks to the Colemans living there and sharing with everyone.

JonLee: Was it everyone at Fauntleroy who could go?

Flora Belle: Everyone I knew of. I suppose you had to be involved in the gym, to know about it. Well maybe the Catholic kids didn't go because they couldn't, you know, weren't able to go the "Y" and the gym and everything there that I know of. We knew we were the only Baptists around that had to go to Gatewood.

JonLee: Is Gatewood Baptist up on--

Flora Belle: Myrtle.

JonLee: Myrtle and California.

Flora Belle: Yeah. And it faces Fauntleroy Way, too. It's a big area there.

JonLee: Do you still go to that church?

Flora Belle: No. You know when people make you go, you don't want to go when you grow up.

JonLee: So which church do you go to now?

Flora Belle: I go to the U.U. Church occasionally, Universalist Unitarian or Unitarian Universalist, I don't even know, it's U.U. It's back of the Junction, east of the Junction. I tried to go today but they only

have three services a month and today was a special day and it wasn't open. It was later or earlier or something. Anyway, so we had to march up to Gatewood. But Fauntleroy to me was a wonderful place. And maybe every place you grow up is wonderful. Was very isolated. I had very few play mates when I was real little. Just one little boy, Billy Ward. And but yeah and my sister was around but I don't remember my brother because he was fifteen years older. So when I was cognizant he was already gone, left home. But, we were surrounded by woods, it was just wonderful.

JonLee: Since you have pointed out to me the landscape of the family home, would you talk about being raised there and how it's vista was overlooking the water and Vashon Island?

Flora Belle: We can see Blake, too. It's still there. The house is still there and it just recently sold. And it's up high, so the view is different and I call it better because I'm used to up high. And it's just lovely, just a lovely view. And what else about it. It's a great big what they call "Craftsman," now, house, with a great big front porch. And I could skate on the porch. I was so spoiled I guess.

JonLee: How many children were in your family?

Flora Belle: Just three.

JonLee: And what did your father do for a living?

Flora Belle: He worked for the phone company nearly all of his life. Prior to that time he had a lot different jobs, but moving out here, where

two of his three brothers were, he'd got on with the phone company because one of his brothers was already there. And that was a very good job during the Depression. He never was without a job. He was cut back some, but he had his own little green car from the phone company and so we were really better off but didn't know it. When I talk to people now, I can see that we were in a way.

Juneve: Green car?

Flora Belle: Yeah, AT&T, he called it.

JonLee: So did your mother work outside the home?

Flora Belle: She wanted to. But those years, a woman did not work outside the home. You were a home maker, period. And she was the one with the education and the skills and the far-sightedness and just so much talent.

JonLee: So, did you, then? You worked--

Flora Belle: Well, later, yeah.

JonLee: Later on you became educated?

Flora Belle: Different generation.

JonLee: Went on to college?

Flora Belle: Yeah.

JonLee: Different generation. So you lived out that--

Flora Belle: Dream of hers. She went back to the U when I was at the U.
That was good.

JonLee: Had your father died by then?

Flora Belle: No, he was still alive, he was still working.

JonLee: What made her go back? She was free from child care?

Flora Belle: She had been to prestigious Stephens College. She loved education. She came from an educator family; she was a linguist, for one thing. She really could speak several languages and loved it and taught our brother, as a baby, to quote French phrases, etc.

JonLee: Which ones?

Flora Belle: Well, you take Latin first. And then all the Romance languages come easy. So French and German-- later Spanish--

Juneve: She wanted to learn Russian as I recall, didn't she?

Flora Belle: No, I'm the one who did that. But anyway she taught me the value of education. And, I just assumed that I just go to college, because that's what you do. I'm grateful for that.

JonLee: Now, Flora Belle you have married and raised your children and they're all raised and now you're a single woman again and you're back to Fauntleroy area again. And, what drew you back?

Flora Belle: Well, it's a lovely area, it's one of the nicest areas in Seattle. And it's changed very little. There's changes but they're gradual and it's just very nice and there's a few people that are still there from the '30's and '40's and '50's, and so on. And it's just convenient. It's isolated to some people, I suppose, but the little shopping area just now, has a brand new deli/restaurant that's very exciting and wonderful.

Juneve: But mostly because she owned real estate there.

Flora Belle: Well, yeah, I never left really. Well, I left when I got married, you know, that changes you when you're married. Yeah, the house I own is still there. See there were three houses on one piece of property. It's hard to explain. And two streets. One's up high on a bluff. But it's all, it was at one time one piece of property. So, that's why my children live there now, again, still: it was always considered the family home or "grandma's house." And, it's just a nice gathering place.

JonLee: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Any particular memories of, you lived there before the ferry came in, didn't you?

Flora Belle: No, no, the ferry was in the early '20's I think. I'm not sure.

JonLee: This is where I don't know my history.

Flora Belle: Ada Hallberg, have you interviewed her yet?

JonLee: Yes.

Flora Belle: Well she's been here (Alki), not there (Fauntleroy). I can point you to the Fauntleroy people who would know dates and stuff. Well, it was a wonderful place 'cause of the deep woods, I remember seeing a China Pheasant, which I'm sure people don't even know what one is now. I thought it was great, using my imagination, 'cause I didn't have play mates. And I just loved that. Is that enough?

JonLee: Yeah, thank you.
We're live. And now we're speaking with Juneve Damus. And since you're Flora Belle's older sister, you might have different memories.

Juneve: I do indeed.

JonLee: Would you please talk about those?

Juneve: I was born in '23 in Missouri and my folks moved out here when I was eighteen months old. And we lived on Beach Drive. I almost remember the numbers, 3743 or something like that. In a little dark shingled house that my folks rented. And the water, the tide came up and slapped against the house twice a day. And we had a sleeping porch out there and it was screened in that we slept on and so it was really right on the beach. And

when the tide was out and I could go down there and walk on the rocks and paddle in with little logs and stuff. I had an older brother, and his friends would come around and that was always something to remember. When the first crystal set came into being and we sat for the first time at the front door 'cause this little house was down the level from the street and we had to go down to this little house. And we listened to the static of the Crystal set and could hear voices. It was real exciting. The little lot had a play house on it, which was a big part of my life, I guess. It was a cute little play house in a flat area. We played Kick-The-Can a lot up on the street into the dark night, it stays light so long here, you know. And we had skate boards in those days, which was just a wooden box which we would keep the handles, the top part of the box would be where we held on I guess, and roller skates had four wheels and they made a lot of noise in those days, you strapped them on your shoes. And, then when I got old enough to go to school, there was no kindergarten in those days, so I started in the first grade. And I remember my first day of school, how strange it was. And eventually then walked by myself. It was quite a ways to what would it be? Alki School. And I remember not much specifically now, unless it comes to me. But my family moved to Fauntleroy when I was nine years old. So, you, Flora Belle were actually conceived down in that beach house.

Juneve:

Yeah. When I was nine years old. But you weren't born yet, but Mom was pregnant when we moved to the "big house" so to speak, in Fauntleroy. And so I had to change schools, was I in about the fourth grade at nine years old? Seems like it was third or fourth. And that was interesting because I had to walk down a

steep hill. I'd lived on the flat land all that time. I used to roller-skate from where, oh you need to hear that on the beach drive area I lived just a block from a grocery store that was a very vital part of our lives. And the trolley came and turned around right there. Which was one block north of the house. So, that was a landmark, those are landmarks that--

JonLee: Was that Esther's store?

Flora Belle: It wasn't called that then.

Juneve: It's where the divide to go around the beach where the light house is, just before, yeah.

JonLee: Oh, the store on the waterfront side.

Juneve: Umm-hmmm, yes.

JonLee: Okay, got it. That's where your park is, Cormorant Park. Okay.

Juneve: That was very important. Because you had to come on the trolley and get off there and it was easy to get right home, we're right at home when we get off the trolley. So when I moved to Fauntleroy I had to walk down a hill to get on the trolley which was up in the woods. (Flora Belle could show you where it was.) And you had to know the schedule and get there and it was kinda scary going, they finally made a path to go more direct. The thing that was different about living there was the awesomeness of it. It was, is, a huge big house and very imposing and I had my own bedroom and this big porch and a

back yard with fruit trees and gardens and several levels, an apartment below it and it was a handsome piece of ground. But rather isolated. I, too, was almost like an only child because there was nobody to play with. But I had to walk down a steep, quite a grade to go to school. I remember having to run to get there in time in the morning, to Fauntleroy School. And I too, when to Horse Head Bay, on that, before you, of course, wasn't it? On that "Osprey" that took us? And, I remember being in a play there where I had the part of an old man and I had to try to talk like an old man. [laughs] I could sound like [inaudible] a tiny bit. Let's see, what else. I'm trying to think of landmark things that you could look up. Well, there was an old man named, oh--

Flora Belle: Doctor Kilbourne?

Juneve: Kilbourne, yeah, do you know that name and could get in touch with people who knew him? He was old, old then, and of course, he seemed even older, white haired, but handsome. And very active. He was some relative of everybody, it seemed. And (this is a funny little thing to say about and I don't know what you want), he loved to hold little kids on his lap and sort of pat their bodies and feel their little bodies while he talked to them. And we didn't realize that he was kind of feeling us up. Nothing serious or anything. But he got to be kind of notorious; people knew that he was a "feeler." [laughs] I don't know why I thought of that.

JonLee: Was he a medical doctor?

Juneve: No, I don't think so. Where we lived then, just in case you need records of, down the hill to the south, the big house was sort of on a rise that came up and then went down and you were up on the big bank here looking out the water. The street went on down and then the *really* steep hill down to the hospital on the beach (now, West Beach Condos). It was a TB hospital, a sanitarium, Laurel Beach Sanitarium (Drs. Slyfield and Nelson) and that was a landmark thing. And it was kind of scary to go down there and to think that sick people were there and stuff. I remember too, playing on the beach and we would know what time to go home. It was a real signal for us to go home when the ferry tooted a certain amount of toots coming home, we'd know it was time to go where we had to go. I had to go to the grocery store every single day to get milk. And in those days it was in glass bottles and I had to come from the beach when the ferry went toot- toot and get up to that store before the store closed, I guess, at five o'clock or whatever.

JonLee: Where was the store?

Juneve: It was up where the trolley ended.

JonLee: At the Endolyne.

Juneve: Yeah, up in the woods there. It was wooded.

JonLee: Was that before, close to where the church is, Fauntleroy Church and Fauntleroy School?

Flora Belle: South of that, up the next hill.

Juneve: Yeah. All of those things are different, I'm sure now, but they were part of the landscape.

JonLee: You didn't have milk delivery?

Juneve: No. No, we didn't. They would have had to walk way up there. It would have taken them too much time. The house was way set back, an estate, sort of. (Just give us some clues about things you'd like to hear, what other people have added that I can remember, then.) Later, the Carnation milk man delivered bottles.

JonLee: Well, mostly specifically, I was looking for any stories about your area of geography, the region you were raised in. And getting to hear about the summer camp was splendid. That the kids from that area got to go.

Juneve: Very, very big part of our lives and I too, was forced to go to church. We never did like to go because of the attitude of my father's, not whipping us, but you know, so called getting us there. And Mom was not cooperative and she'd kind of drag back just to aggravate him. 'Cause she wasn't a churchgoer much. I'm sure that had an influence on our two tastes as the years went by 'cause I'm sort of a Buddhist now.

JonLee: You graduated from West Seattle?

Juneve: Yes.

JonLee: And then did you go on to college?

Juneve: I went back to Missouri, because I'd heard so much about it, it's where I was born and we still had relatives there. So I went back and went to just one year at Drury College. And stayed in the dorm there and joined Pi Beta Phi.

Flora Belle: Springfield, Missouri.

Juneve: Yeah, it was a lovely little city and fun to be there because I was the only one from the West Coast at the time who'd ever been there. And it was still co-ed. This was now during the War (1942-1943) and all the good guys had been drafted off to War and it so happened they brought a contingency of young cadets to that campus and so we were in "seventh heaven" and me especially cause they were West coast people and I was in Missouri. That was special. But it had nothing to do with here.

JonLee: No, that's okay. It's just part of the trails of life. But you never came back here to live. So that's what I was getting to. Did you marry and then move to California?

Juneve: Well, I moved out by Green Lake as a bride.

Flora Belle: And then Sand Point.

Juneve: When I was married I lived out at Sand Point Way until I had my third kid and he's now fifty something?

Flora Belle: Forty five.

Juneve: In 1955, we moved to Las Vegas, Nevada where I lived for forty years. And now I've been nearly seven years in Oceanside California. So, I wouldn't come back very often 'cause it was a "trip" with kids. In fact, I didn't come hardly at all when I should have.

Flora Belle: You were too busy.

Juneve: Well, I just couldn't leave the kids. [pause] Let's see. I wish I could remember stuff about the lure of the city, of what I experienced.

JonLee: Well, do you remember taking the trolley across the tide flats?

Juneve: That would be Duwamish Bay.

JonLee: West Seattle.

Flora Belle: It was on a trestle.

JonLee: It was on a trestle and it swayed.

Flora Belle: Scary.

Juneve: I hadn't thought of that for so long, I guess, it's not a vivid picture. Where did it come down to, then?

Flora Belle: Avalon Way, as I recall.

Juneve: I don't recall that.

JonLee: Where did you learn to swim at?

Juneve: Oh, I didn't learn till I was thirteen, 'cause where we were on the beach there, one time, my brother, I was trying to learn the dog paddle and he pushed my head down and held it until I thought I was going to drown and it took me then years to get over that experience. I was thirteen when I taught myself to swim

JonLee: Do you remember when the swimming pool went in at Lincoln park? Did you go play in Lincoln park or was that kind of far?

Juneve: Yeah. Well, it was kind of far and we were too little. But I'm pretty sure when they built it. I know I remember when they built it, 'cause it took a while and you could see down on it and walk up to it.

JonLee: It was a salt water pool.

Juneve: Yeah, that was very special, I remember now swimming in it. It was heated salt water, yeah. You had to wear a bathing cap and stuff, I'm sure.

JonLee: And you had a locker with a--

Juneve: Yeah, yeah. That was an experience.

JonLee: A metal safety pin with a number on it for your locker.

Juneve: Yeah, yeah, good for you.

JonLee: And your feet, you had to walk thorough some-

Juneve: Disinfectant. Yeah.

JonLee: --chlorinated water before going in.

Juneve: I think so . Must have. Because I've done it and I guess it was there. Yeah. Yeah.

JonLee: Did you ever take any music lessons?

Juneve: I did. Mrs. Hanot lived down on the beach from where we lived and she came up and taught me piano lessons at a big upright piano.

JonLee: You didn't go to her house?

Juneve: Once in a while. I don't remember the sequence there. But I remember very well in my own house and being down there a time or two at least. And played in the recital somewhere, of course, at the Baptist Church I guess. Somewhere else. And I learn fast and forget fast. I can't even read much now, haven't for ages. It taught me an appreciation for music, that's one thing again our mother did, took me to the ballet and plays and stuff when I was too young to know what I was doin', but it impressed me. I had the lead in the senior play at West Seattle. The play was the night before Pearl Harbor, so it was always

unforgettable. But we're into Fauntleroy, so I guess, I can't add any more unless you just chat among you or you ask us questions that others have brought up and we can embellish.

JonLee: No, that's good. I thank you very much.

Juneve: I don't think you got much, but you're most welcome to it.

JonLee: Well, I got what only your voices can say, so that's important.

[tape pauses]

JonLee: I just want to say it out loud, because you two women are very attractive and I know Flora Belle is health conscious and is athletic and I don't know about your habits, but I wanted to ask you if in your family if you had learned these kind of values from your mother and father?

Juneve: Well, I'm sure we did because my mom was of the Gaylord Hauser era, I guess that's how you say it. He wrote books and expounded on health and everything. So my mom ate wheat germ. Oh, she used to have to send away for it and it came in wooden buckets, wheat germ. And we were eating this way back when I was a little child. And Mom used to reach out the back porch, which was the ocean coming in the Puget Sound slapping up against the house, and she'd put a rope on a bucket and dip up the water and bring it up and bathe her nude body in it. And use the salt water to invigorate her skin. I remember that really well. And so, she was health food conscious very much so, even in those days, there were people

who were careful about that, so it affected our lives, of course. I teach yoga and walk a lot and have been a lot of places in the world. So, I have a different energy level and different metabolism and stuff, but I'm still involved in physical fitness stuff and talk about it in my yoga classes and reminding people of healthy ways and I read all kinds of things every day about it. So we inherited that zest for life, or for healthy life, certainly.

JonLee: Did you want to add anything?

Flora Belle: I remember her grating carrots . She'd grate carrots (this is Fauntleroy, big house), and squeeze the juice through cheese cloth, cause we didn't have anything else. It worked fine. Drinking that. The pulp went in the garden.

Juneve: We had a wood burning stove in the kitchen of that big house, if you care about that. And we had just an ice box and a door that had a screen on the outside of the wall so that air came in. Long before refrigerators and electric stoves and things. We used wood on the fireplace in the living room a great deal for heat too. So we were raised with kind of some old country ways of survival of heat before access to conveniences certainly.

JonLee: Good, thank you, very much. [tape pauses] Would you say again Juneve that you were Miss Endolyne?

Juneve: How it came about, it had to be through our father. He must have been an officer in the community something.

Flora Belle: Endolyne Improvement Club.

Juneve: And because of that they were giving some kind of party or something. And just because I was a female I was Miss Endolyne. And I remember being at some party with a banner across me and just a symbol figure of their little club, I guess. But I guess those things led then to stage presence and whatever that continued in my life because I've given lectures and stuff around the country.

Flora Belle: I was so proud of her. My big sister was beautiful. Otherwise why would she be Miss Endolyne? And we had that ribbon later and everything

Juneve: I don't remember where we were, what we did about it in the public.

Flora Belle: But that was a real honor. Remember, there were other teenage girls around there. You're down-playing yourself.

Juneve: Wonder what the purpose of that was?

Flora Belle: Well, Endolyne Improvement Club wanted to have, some--

Juneve: She must have, the winner must have won a crown and done something, you know I don't remember that.

Flora Belle: Just you know, some reason to be.

Juneve: So there used to be an improvement club back in the, whatever year that was.

Flora Belle: Well, you were sixteen.

JonLee: Would that be '40's?

Flora Belle: She was sixteen.

JonLee: You were born in '23?

Flora Belle: About '39. Late '30's when she was Miss Endolyne.

Juneve: I just turned seventy-seven.

JonLee: Congratulations and happy birthday, just a few days ago.

Juneve: Yeah, that's why I came, kind of to celebrate all this. Seven turns of seven. But when we talk more about the landmarks, that's what I'm trying to help think about and what was different.

Flora Belle: Well, I can point out where that store was in Fauntleroy, where the path went through the woods to get to it. I'd have to take you there to show you. But that was important. That was the only grocery store, Naylor's Grocery Store.

Juneve: And if our brother had a paper route, did he?

Flora Belle: Probably, I was too little.

Juneve: Those were hard to deliver in those days--all the hills, isolated homes.

JonLee: Is he still in the world?

Juneve: No.

Flora Belle: He died at 53 in 1970. A long time ago.

JonLee: I'm sorry.

Flora Belle: He knew everybody. He was this outgoing person who had tons of friends. I'm sure, I would think that he hated to move from Alki to Fauntleroy, because it was woodsy, far, and isolated you.

JonLee: Okay, thank you very much.

End of Interview.

