

Telling Our Westside Stories  
Southwest Seattle Historical Society – Log House Museum  
*Sylvia Odom*

Interviewed by: Cameron Tanyi and Dursa Mohamed  
Madison Middle School, November 4 2011

*A section of this interview is missing see Sylvia Odom/Will Chin file for explanation – SF 2.2012*

Two Audio Files

*Sylvia Odom Pt. 1*

**Student:** So what was fashion like back then, what were the fashions? What did people wear?

**Sylvia Odom:** As a teacher I wore, had been wearing.. I'd always worn a dress and even though I taught first grade and many times I'd cross my legs and sit on the floor, there was a change in dress where women could wear pants. And that was a big deal because it made more sense to me to wear pants and sit on the floor and have to squirm myself into a dress.

**Student:** Today's date is November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. My name is Cameron Tawny, that is spelled c-a-m-e-r-o-n t-a-n-y-i. I'm with

**Student 2:** dursa mohamed, d-u-r-s-a m-o-h-a-m-e-d. We are interviewing

**SO:** Syliva Odom – s-y-l-i-v-a o-d-o-m.

**DM:** We are at Madison Middle School in Seattle Washington. We are doing a project called Telling Our Westside Stories for the Log House Museum.

**CT:** First question, how long have you lived in Southwest Seattle and what was it like buying a house?

**SO:** I've lived in West Seattle for, since 1954. Which is about 50 years on Myrtle Street, that was the first house I lived in. Then I learned about housing was very hard. I came from the Central District, the Central Area, that's where I was married and we needed housing closer to our work and so that was when I learned that there was something called discrimination and there was no housing for African Americans.

**DM:** What neighborhood did you live in and what was it like and how has it changed?

**SO:** The neighborhood I lived in was off Delridge Way. My house, the first house, that somebody would loan, would let us rent was on Myrtle Street. And this area was had very few houses and it was mostly lowland, where there was lots of water. The house we lived in had lots of would flood with water the bottom part, because it was low and it was really the creek and the city somehow had not learned or had not called it a creek. And that house I moved from that house, to another house which was, new houses had been built on Myrtle Street, there were 4 houses and we were there long enough to see the houses go up, and we were able to buy our house directly from the builder, so I remained on Myrtle Street. And Myrtle Street is on the southwest side of Delridge Way and there weren't many people when I first moved into the area. But later there were houses that were built and people did move in to the area, I watched, observed a lot of young families who bought some of the new houses

that was placed along the creek bank and often they lost their house because when there were really hard rains, heavy rain, their property would go underwater because it was on a creek!

**CT:** So that's our questions for today. Again this is Cameron Tawni with Dursa Mohmed and Sylvia Odom, thank you.

**SO:** And thank you

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*Begin Sylvia Odom Pt. 2*

**Student:** What were some of the most common jobs in the neighborhood? Is there one place that a lot of people worked?

**SO:** I was not aware of any jobs, except that in High Point. The people that I knew that worked, some of them did housework for where they had to get a neighbor, had to ride the bus from the neighborhood and I saw people who worked for the city who did cleaning up and work and keeping up High Point, so that was my awareness of it.

**Student:** Um, what were the parks like, in your neighborhood back then?

**SO:** In the when we lived in High Point there were few, very small play areas and the only park that I knew about was Lincoln Park and I would go to Lincoln Park. We would get to go to Lincoln Park because we had a car and we could travel there. And I love Lincoln Park. The trees and the water made it really, really nice.

**Student:** And how have they changed? And if they have for better, for worse?

*Talking in the background about the recorder*

**Student:** Did you go on trips, if so how often and where did you go?

**SO:** In the early part of my life, there was not much money and so the trips I went on would be like to spend the night in a state park somewhere, not many trips that I did and that was when I first came to, moved to the area. But later as I worked and I worked in the community and I learned, I met more people my life spread out and I began to do other things and go other places and then I had more money and eventually I bought a house on Myrtle Street. I was on Myrtle Street for the 50 years I lived in West Seattle and the first house I rented was there, so I was aware of the community, the water, the land and how some of the houses became flooded. The first house I lived in the basement often flooded when there was a large rain because it was a low area, and somehow the city had not claimed, at that time, that is was a, that is, was a creek and so I learned a lot about the creek, because I lived there. So when I bought a house, was able to buy a house, I lived on Myrtle Street, I just simply moved up one block and I spent the rest of my life there. I somehow did not want to go, event though things had changed, laws had changed, regarding housing, and I probably could have gone somewhere else, I chose to live in the area. I knew the area. I loved the land. I loved all the water and there were animals, lot of animals around me, raccoons and foxes and so forth, and so I remained there.



**Student:** Isn't Myrtle by Sanslo.

**SO:** Yes

**Student:** Oh, I went to school there

**Student:** Um, what do you consider to be the most recognized landmark in West Seattle?

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**SO:** The most landmark? I always think of I always think of, right now in my mind I think of Longfellow Creek because I spent a lot of time and a lot of work, there was a lot of work that went on and a lot of people that I knew. So it's the relationships that make it important to me, and I love Longfellow Creek and I think of Admiral Way, and the more spacious part of the city, where the water and the land I can see. I like the beauty and I'm not sure I know exactly. I always think of Alaskan Way and 35<sup>th</sup> as being the part that travel to and from a lot and I'm trying to think of Husky's and some of the small bakeries and cafes along there that I remember.

**Student:** What did you do for recreation and where did you do that?

**SO:** For recreation, um long walks. I love to walk and for years I used to jog for my health, and I would take long morning runs and uh I was there uh with my kids, my kids went to Sealth High School and my daughter went to Sanslo, you asked about Sanslo, and she went the first year that Sanslo, was built, she was one of the first students who entered there. And we loved Sanslo, we thought Sanslo was a really good school.

**Student:** What kinds of jobs were available for high schoolers back then and how were they different from now?

**SO:** I think I remember a few kids who, not many, a few that worked at McDonald's, if McDonald's was around then, and Hurphey's and I don't remember many others, those are two that I kind of remember.

**Student:** How did you get to work and what were the forms of transportation?

**SO:** I was, I was, I worked for the Highline School district and I first started off with being able to share a ride with a young lady who lived in West Seattle, and she moved, she would come down the hill, down Morgan, and pick me up and so I would ride her, with her, and I didn't, and I rode with her for probably about 4 or 5 years, and then she got married, so then I had to have my own we had, to have, I had to have my own transportation. And I bought a car, and then I would travel back and forth in my car.

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*End Sylvia Odom Pt 2 file*