

on Apr 2001  
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## Eloise Mackie Interview

By: Roger Sherman

September 24, 1999

R-----I'm at the home of Eloise Mackie and your husband is Leland?

Note-----We start by looking at old maritime pictures.

E-----Uh-huh

R-----Ok and this is Walt Hunziker?

E-----No, that's Stanley Hunziker. That's Bill's dad.

R-----Here's some stuff on Berte. This is the "Acorn." This is the Utsalady ferry.

E-----My great grandpa Olson landed when he came from Norway. He jumped ship at Utsalady and he rowed over to Coupeville and set up homesteading there. Do you remember Andrew Olson?

R-----I've run across the name.

E-----I was looking through one of these old albums this morning of Aunt Berte and her babies when they were first born. What was it, the "Acorn" and what were some of the other names? Oh, there's the "Calista."

R-----I didn't pay much attention to the boats in south sound that she ran. I know that she took the "Acorn" with her and then it explains that it eventually went on to the Hat Island-Everett run. Now you said that your dad was a skipper?

E-----Yeah, for 39 years with Stanley Hunziker.

R-----Ok, and what was your fathers name?

E-----Elwood Melling.

R-----Do you have any idea where this one came from?

E-----No, nothing.

R-----I never heard of that one. That looks like---

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E-----Well, I think it ran down here for awhile because I know I heard dad talk so much about the "Central." Here's the old "Puget" that ran down here to for awhile.

R-----Yeah.

E-----The "Tahoma," I don't know where that was.

Note-----Ivan Olson said that his dad had the "Tahoma" built after he split up with Berte. It ran south sound routes.

R-----Yeah, this looks like it could have been, like the "Clatawa," remember the "Clatawa?" That was converted into a ferry and it kind of looks something like this.

R-----I have this picture. It's a postcard. Fortunately they made all of these great postcards back in those days.

E-----That's what I noticed in my own stuff. Even Christmas cards and Easter cards were all post cards. Like I've got them from 1900 and 1910 and stuff, ones that were sent to my grandma Inga??? which was Aunt Berte's sister. Inga Melling. She was Inga Olsen until she got married.

R-----How is that spelled, is it (son) or (sen).

E-----I never know.

Note-----Berte's son Ivan Olson said that Berte's maiden name was Olsen and her married name was Olson. Various newspaper articles spelled it both ways.

R-----I'm going to have quite a bit on her in the book because there wasn't very many women skippers around.

E-----And here's, what did you say, Peabody, that him?

R-----Yeah, he was friends with her.

E-----Here's my dad and Aunt Berte and Peabody.

R-----So many show the cars which gives you a pretty good idea of when the picture was taken.

E-----Oh yeah, I noticed that on some of these and I don't know what the picture is supposed to be of. This is the old Vashon and I don't know what they were doing there, but they're cutting ribbons and doing different stuff.

**Page 3, Mackie interview, cont.**

Note-----This was probably when Peabody (Blackball Line) started the new route on Hood Canal in 1950 (when Berte sold out and retired). He closed the Port Gamble-Shine route (by the present Hood Canal bridge) and moved it about three miles south.

R-----This is interesting, see the Williamson on there? He donated his whole collection to the Museum of History and Industry and so some of the pictures that I got down there were from this studio.

E-----See, now look at all of these old cars, but there's nothing on the back. Here's a postcard, Oak Harbor Ford Garage, look at that one. Was one of Berte's ferries the "Deception Pass?"

R-----Yeah, that was her ferry and she had that built about the same time as the "Acorn."

Note-----Ivan Olson said the "Deception Pass" was built in 1921 and the "Acorn" was built in 1924.

E-----Here's where my mom was born in Coupeville and I think the house is still there on the bluff. You know where the house sits down there on the beach, as you come into town and over there on the right, there's a house that's built on pilling and practically on the beach? This one is almost above it.

R-----It doesn't look familiar to me. The one that's across the street from it used to be the old bank, the one that Dr. Vracin lives in now. Are you talking about across?

E-----As you come into town, you turn, like you're going down to front street, you turn right and go over about a block and that's where this house was. But then, I don't know when they sold that house because grandma Howard lived on the street over towards the court house. I used to go up and stay with her when I was about ten-twelve years old, during the water festival.

R-----That was one of the questions I was going to ask. Would you mind telling me your Age?

E-----I'm 69.

R-----And your birthday?

E-----June 23, 1930.

R-----How do you spell Melling?

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E-----M e l l i n g.

R-----Now how were they related?

E-----Berte was my dad's aunt.

R-----Do you know the story behind her and her husband? He was supposed to have been a commercial fisherman.

E-----Yes. In fact she went up to Alaska one year with him. Must have been when they were first married and she thought she was sea sick the whole time and it turned out she was pregnant with the twins. That's about the only thing I heard, but I don't know how come they didn't stay together.

R-----Yeah, because she gets the credit for building the two boats.

Note-----They (Berte and her husband) didn't divorce until 1936.

E-----Yeah, they were split up long long before she got into the boats, I think.

R-----How many children did she have?

E-----Just the twin boys.

R-----And their names were?

E-----Gilbert and Ivan. One's called Augey now.

R-----Are either of them still alive?

E-----They both are.

R-----Any idea where?

E-----Up by LaConner, my cousin Cliff has that. He's the one that I called and got the phone numbers from, that I called and gave you the phone numbers, but I don't have their addresses or anything. I don't have the one for Gibert, just Ivan.

R-----Boy, Berte liked that uniform, didn't she? She was pretty proud of that.

E-----Look at this old car. What it says on the rear end. That must have been her car. That was taken down here at Clinton, up here on the hill where my grandma lived and of course my grandma was Aunt Berte's sister.

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R-----Deception Pass Ferry, hourly service. (on the back of Berte's car)

Note-----Eloise called Aunt Berte, Aunt Bert.

E-----She always used to drive, you know, when I remember, when she got older, drive great big cars, Cadilacs, and we always laughed because she was such a tiny little thing. In fact, I have a picture of her home down on Hood's Canal. There's where she used to live. But I don't know exactly where it was. Close to what town, I don't remember.

E-----We went down to the Mariners game last Sunday and going down there on the bus, we saw the old "Kalakala" laying in there. Boy, it sure doesn't look anything like it does in these pictures.

E-----Andrew Olson, I understand gave a lot of his dad's things, which was Andrew Olson also, to the museum, (south Whidbey) the plat of their homestead and different stuff and I've never even gone up there and seen that.

R-----Ah, Clinton, how far down was the original, well people always, from my end of the Island, mixed up Clinton and Columbia Beach.

E-----Same thing.

R-----Same thing, but there was a separate dock at Clinton, down a ways.

E-----Yeah, down at what they now call Brighton Beach??? That's where the post office and the store used to be. You know where the church is over here, the Lutheran church? There's a road there that goes down the hill to that beach and that's where that dock used to be. It's not there anymore.

R-----Ok, because one of the guys that I interviewed used to work on the "Atalanta" which was one of the boats that ran and it actually refueled a Clinton.

E-----I think there's a picture of that beach in there someplace.

R-----What boats did your dad work on over the years?

E-----He'd been on the "Rhody," the "Olympic," the "Chetzemoka," the "Vashon," the "Bainbridge," the "Kitsap," the "Puget" and the "Washington." What were some of the other ones that ran down there?

R-----Ok, here's the "Camano" going into the Clinton dock.

E-----Yeah, now this is down at what I call "Old Clinton." And this is where the town

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was a long-long time ago. I remember my dad talking about when he was a kid, he'd have to take the old horse and buggy from up here on top of the hill and go down to get the mail, maybe even go to the store for his mom, clear down to "Old Clinton."

R-----Did your dad always live on the Island.

E-----Uh huh, he was always on this run. He worked for the Blackball ferry line and he's got a letter in here from Mary Liske when he was getting his time together and it said something about he worked for her for a year. I don't know where that would have been.

R-----Who was Mary Lieseke?

Note-----Mary Lieseke was president of the Horluck Transportation Company. Her father was Captain Nearhoff who began the Mukilteo-Whidbey Island run in 1919. He sold it in 1930 to Blackball line. They owned several ferries and had other interests as well.

E-----Well, she had ferryboats.

R-----I didn't know that there was another woman owner.

E-----Now there's the old "Central." Here, it says: "Veteran ferryboat 'Central', first genuine ferry to be placed on the Columbia Beach run. She was built in 1919 by Willis Nearhoff, was gas powered, measured 65 feet in length. Mr. Nearhoff's daughter and wife can be seen standing in front of the pilot house."

Note-----Apparently the "Central" was built for the Whidbey Island run.

E-----Here's one called the "City of Mukilteo." "Clatawa," does that ring a bell?

R-----Oh yeah, that was on the Langley-Everett run for years. Mom remembers riding on the "Clatawa." In fact, the book that I wrote has quite a bit on the "Calista," you know, the "Calista" sank with our family on it and the day that the "Calista" went down, she had rendezvoused with the "Clatawa." If someone came from Oak Harbor or Coupeville and they wanted to go to Everett, then they transferred to the "Clatawa" and sometimes they didn't even go into the dock. If it was smooth, they would just tie side by side out in the bay.

E-----And transfer people.

R-----Yeah.

**Page 7, Mackie interview, cont.**

E-----Here is a Puget Sound Navigation Co., Blackball Line invitation to the party on the Kalakala to commemorate Alex Peapody's management of the Puget Sound Navigation Company ferry system. May 26, 1951.

Note-----This was during the period of time when Blackball was selling their ferry system to the State of Washington.

R----- (reading from a newspaper clipping) "Berte Olson was a lady, but she decided to go into the ferryboat business anyway." They spell it (son) here.

E-----I always thought Norwegian Olson was spelled one way and Swedish was spelled another way, but I don't know which was which. One was (son) and one was (sen).

Note-----See page two for the proper spelling.

R-----Here's a nice article on Berte.

E-----Berte Olson, "the tug boat Annie of Hood's Canal." That's one of her ferry's then, Port Gamble-Shine.

E-----I think dad started, let's see, mom and dad got married in 1927 and I think he'd started on the ferries before that and he didn't retire until he was 64 or 65. He was semi-retired. He went back in the summer time and worked. But then, he got leukemia and died in 72. He was 69. So he's been on here a lot of years. On the ferryboats.

**Postscript:**

This entire interview was done while looking at pictures and scrapbooks, so it may seem disjointed. I did not transcribe some of the conversation that was not pertinent to maritime history. Eloise has a great collection of south Whidbey history. I copied many different items, mostly photographs.

Thank you Eloise for making this material available to me for my second (and hopefully last) book on Whidbey Island's maritime history.