

Carl Jenne Interview

By Roger M. Sherman

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Interviewed at Clark and Dorothy Shermans home in Coupeville, Washington. Those present, Barbara Jenne Betham, Al Sherman, Carl Jenne and Roger Sherman.

Carl is 97, birthday is November 5th, 1900 at the beginning of the century.

Q-Roger----Now you know what I'm interested in is the steam boats. I consider myself an amateur maritime historian. Before, when I went down and talked to Iva and you, you told me, since then, a story about ridding on the old steamer Fairhaven. Could you recount that for me again?

A-I can recount my first experience with a steamboat was the old steamer Fairhaven which was a stern wheeler. And that's the steamer that brought us, as a family, on about the 8th of November, 1908. I was seven years old at the time. Where we came from, _____???? near Vancouver which was in the delta part of the Frazer river, below Vancouver, B.C., separated from Vancouver by the bridge. My uncle George was the oldest of dad's brothers. They already lived there several years and was established on a farm there. He knew what good land was because it was all _____???? I guess you'd call it. _____???? land, made by the deposits where the fresh water current _____???? made the process there of meeting up with salt water. And having no electricity or anything where I had lived, I was in an upper bunk on the steamer Fairhaven and here was a cotton???? filament, a common (carbon???) filament. Anyway there was this filament that made it durable with all the shaking of the boat and the engine and so forth. And I could reach out and touch that lamp. My first experience with an electric light. As I recall, it was the same steamer that plied many points around the Puget Sound area. But I never rode on it any other time as far as I can remember.

Q-Roger----Can you, ah, you have any idea, or remember what color it was?

A-Carl----No

Q-Roger----Do you remember the paddle wheels, do you remember the paddle wheels, what color they were?

A-Carl----Oh yes, I remember looking. I think, like raw lumber.

Q-Roger----You don't remember them being colored, because at one time they were painted red?

A-Carl----That could have been.

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Q-Roger----But I don't know what color the rest of the boat was?

A-Carl----I don't either, but I do remember watching that stern wheeler (paddle wheels). I suppose I found my way as close as I could get without breaking the rules.

Q-Roger----Ok, now that's when you moved to central Whidbey here.

A-Carl----To Coupeville

Q-Roger----Right, Ok now, do you remember any of the other boats that used to call in here regularly? Did you ride on any of them?

A-Carl----Yes, I rode on the Calista, quite a bit latter. But I rode on other boats too. I can't remember their names.

Q-Roger----One would have been the Camano.

A-Carl----Yes, it was a smaller boat. It was steam also. The first boats were all steamers. They hadn't acquired the diesels yet.

Q-Roger----Ok, do you remember the Whidby, the steamer Whidby?

A-Carl----No I don't, especially, I may have ridden on it, but I don't remember it.

Q-Roger----Well it was only around for four years. It was built here in Coupeville, but it burned. It burned in 1911. You would have been pretty young then.

A-Carl----I do remember this about the first steamers I rode. I can recall catching them off the dock at Coupeville, were using cord wood, they were using cordwood, there would be a pile of cordwood on almost every dock that we stopped at all the way to Everett, I think we made a stop at Everett after Langley, and ah, Seattle. In Seattle, we were there only a few hours. We had very few hours before they had to start returning and ah, I remember those piles of cordwood and the crew would move those piles aboard to furnish steam.

Q-Roger----How long were those pieces of cord wood? I understand that they were about four feet. Is that right?

A-Carl----I think they were three to four feet long. Then sometime along the way, all of these boats discovered the availability of oil for fuel, fuel oil. So they started using that and the cord wood disappeared.

Q-Roger----Out of all of the boats that used to call into Coupeville, the Fairhaven was the only one that used cordwood. All of the other ones----

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A-Carl----No, no, no no, several of the others used cord wood.

Q-Roger----Oh, there was other boats. Do you happen to remember any of the names?

A-Carl----No I don't. I'm sorry.

Q-Roger----Ok, do you remember a steamer, well actually the steamer that took the Calista's place when it sank was called the Atalanta and it ran until the Deception Pass bridge was built in 1935. Do you remember ridding on that boat?

A-Carl----I think I must have because I rode boats I know after the cord wood, after the cord wood here and they started burning oil, fuel oil.

Q-Roger----Do you remember a boat, anything about the boats being built down here in Coupeville?

A-Carl----No, I do not but I understood the Calista was.

Roger elaborates on which boats were built here and which were not.

Q-Roger----Do you remember a steamer called the Reeves?

A-Carl----I know the Reeves family. Knew them very well and knew the mother of the Reeves family and several of the Reeves family were navigators.

Q-Roger----Did they live here in Coupeville?

A-Carl----No, they lived in Silverdale.

Q-Roger----I wonder if that's what the association was. The Reeves wasn't a regular boat but it was a substitute steamer when one of the other boats had to be worked on.

Carl reminisced about the Reeves family.

Q-Roger----Do you remember, ah, the docks at all, the wharves, anything that happened. When you were a kid, did you go down and fish off the wharf or anything?

A-Carl----Yes, _____????, I remember swimming close by the wharf, up under the buildings there that had their toilets discharge onto the beach. I remember that. They depended upon the tide to keep the place cleared.

Q-Roger----On the steam boats, do you remember any of the colors? Do you remember what color they were painted?

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A-Carl----No, I don't have much recollection on that, but the impression that I had was that they were some dark color. Some dark color.

Q-Roger----Do you remember anything about the mail? The mail that used to come in on the steam boats?

A-Carl----Not especially.

Q-Roger----Do you remember a Mr. Howard that used to be the postmaster down here?

A-Carl----Oh yes, very well. His son, he had two sons, one was connected with the post office for many years. I believe his name was Will. The other one, my age, was Chester. I remember one year we decided to, I guess, to become notable in some way or other, or foolhardy, in the month of February, we took a swim over near the sawmill, which was steam, Lovejoys Sawmill. That's where your granddad first worked. I remember seeing him when visiting with Chet Howard and see your granddad come down on a bicycle. They worked, I think, a ten hour day there, a responsible job on the sawmill. I'm not sure but what he was a sawyer at one time.

Q-Roger----Do you remember the boat works right next to the sawmill there, where they built the boats?

A-Carl----Faintly, faintly so, smaller boats. I don't remember that to well.

Q-Roger----Now, lets get back to the Calista. We were talking earlier today about Iva and her experiences when it sank.

A-Carl----I would have been on that too, very likely, because the purpose was to visit this Wayfarer production, which was a semi-religious production out at the University of Washington. I knew the _____???? who was a very wonderful speaker. Wonderful voice he was the _____???? production, and I would have been on that had I not been in Bellingham attending the state normal school in Bellingham. So I wasn't available for that trip.

Q-Barbara Jenne Betham----Dad, ah, what was the nature of most of your rides on that. Where did you go and for what reasons?

A-Carl----Sometimes, most of the time, I was with other members of the family who were shopping.

Q-Barbara----Shopping for what types of things you couldn't get here?

A-Carl----Clothing, sweaters. One of the best sweaters I ever had was on one of those trips. Another time I bought a suit, a suit of clothes.

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Q-Barbara----???????

A-Carl----No, that was in Victoria.

Q-Roger----Did you shop in Everett, or Seattle?

A-Carl----We shopped both, shopped mostly in Everett.

Q-Barbara----So, all of the boats had regular stops of the lower islands, Everett, then Seattle and _____?????

A-Carl----Yes, excepting Camano. Very rarely, once or twice is all I can remember stopping at Camano on one of those trips. Most of the time, I think, Camano was served by some other boat.

Q-Roger----Well, it was, but they also had a flag over there and if someone wanted a ride on one of those steamers, they would raise the flag and then it would make the stop. Do you remember the Clatawa?

A-Carl----I remember the name.

Q-Roger----Ok, well that steamer, for a lot years, if you wanted to go to Everett, you had to transfer from either the Calista or the Atalanta to the Clatawa and you either did that in Langley or rendezvoused, they tied together, you know out on the water. That was the transfer. The steamers on the Island run didn't to to Everett. It was in Aunt Mary's paper, the Clatawa and the Calista did tie together the day that the Calista was sunk.

Q-Roger----Now, you said that Aunt Iva got her feet wet.

A-Carl-----???????Part not legible, then Barbara talks about family history, the work that she has done.

Q-Roger----Ok, the wet feet, you said that Aunt Iva got that when she was climbing in the life boat, when the Calista was sinking underneath her?

A-Carl----That's right.

Q-Roger----Ok, and then you said something about her climbing up the side of the steamer, or the Hawaii Maru?

Carl says that it wan't Iva, Barbara explains that it was everyone except a real heavy woman.

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A-Carl----The impression that I had was by the time the sinking actually took place there were quite a number of other boats, like tug boats, in the area and my impression was that Iva and her dad and the rest of them got off on one of those tugs, on one of the other boats, but I couldn't swear to that, I wasn't there. Iva's mother went up this rope ladder, but not Iva, but I could be mistaken. (Roger's note: According to all research, everyone went up onto the Hawaii Maru except, the overweight Mayor of Langley, Mrs. McLeod).

Q-Roger----Is there anything else that you can remember about that, that Iva talked about?

A-Carl----I can remember one remark she made was that when your granddad finally sliced through the rope, the hawser, the front end sprang up, so it was already being pulled down.

Q-Roger----Do you remember any of the boats that used to come into the dock in Oak Harbor, some orange boats that were built and owned by the Puget Sound Freight Lines. One of them was called the Warrior, another the Indian. They were larger boats than the passenger steamers and they just strictly hauled freight.

A-Carl----No, I don't remember.

A-Al Sherman----The only thing I remember is that one that used to come into Oak Harbor when they were slaughtering turkeys down there and I remember that elevator and stuff on that boat and they were loading cargo on and off. But that's all I remember. I don't remember if it was a steam boat or not, but I used to go over there with dad when he was getting feed and stuff and I remember those boats.

Carl did not remember anything about the Deception Pass ferry, or the old ones at the south end.

A-Carl----I gleamed a little information about the early times from some of my friends, like the Graves family. Several in the family were sea captains and etc. On his first trip to Silverdale, long before we came, was along the beach because there were no roads. That's where your grandfather had the experience of having his father share their pennies, less than a dollar when they parted on the Elwa river. He sent Billie, who was to go around the coast line. There were no roads around the coast line. He took a job down at Aberdeen. There were only four or five lumber centers in the state and one of them was Sebec??(spelling) which was close to Silverdale and another was Aberdeen, another one was Buckley Logging, another was Everett and I couldn't tell you where another one was east of the mountains.

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Roger and Barbara talk a little about Jimmy Jean Cook's book, "A Particular Friend, Penn's Cove." In her book, she talks about why Penn Cove was an ideal seaport because of the deep water.

Q-Roger----Ok, Carl, the water festival, what can you tell me about the famous Coupeville water festival?

A-Carl----Not very much, excepting that it had become a tradition to celebrate the early history of the community.

Q-Roger----Well, you were gone by then, weren't you, because the first one was in 1929?

A-Carl----I was gone. I kind of think that I remember the canoe races in the old dugouts. They had the Indian representatives there. Yes, I must have attended at least one.

Barbara talks, but not legible.

Al----I remember the Indians and the tepees and stuff like that and I remember the canoe races.

Q-Roger----Remember any stories, any interesting happenings?

A-Al----Not really, we were always----I think the folks told us that the Indians did quite a bit of drinking and stuff and to kind of watch out for them. You know, I'm kind-a, but mostly, I just remembered the tepees and that kind of stuff.

Barbara-----They did all the dances.

Al----I don't really remember that, but I know they did. But it was a big deal to go out on the dock and watch the canoe races.

Q-Roger----Ok, ah, smuggling, do you remember anything about the smuggling era?

A-Carl----Not a thing. What was the name of the chinaman that lived on your granddads place?

Roger----That was Aw Soot.

Q-Roger----Do you remember any of the others?

A-Carl----I remember him because there were three or four of us, my age, school mates, would go around on special occasions, like Chinese New Years. We'd go around and stop at these various Chinese shacks and they would always treat us with delicious fruit nuts. Have you ever eaten them?

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Q-Roger----Are they what they call leachy nuts?

A-Carl----They may have been.

Q-Roger----Because that's what mom called them, leachy nuts, but I don't know if they were the same thing or not.

A-Carl----They were very sweet, juicy and had this soft shell on the outside. You could crack it with your fingers.

Q-Roger----Ok, and they would give those to you.

A-Carl----A sack full of those and some fire crackers. I don't know which one was prized the highest.

Q-Roger----Did you kids treat the Chinese good?

A-Carl----Yeah, we did, except for Wilbur's cabbage incident. One time he (Chinaman) spoke English well enough to be understood. His shack was by the old Paterson house (on hillside by Grandpa Sherman's house, to the north), anyway, he came steaming over to your granddad's and said, this was after he fired up his cook stove, and the smoke filled the room. I catchum, I killum, I sendum Seattle. He finally discovered the cabbage that had been stuffed into his chimney.

Q-Roger----Wilbur was ashamed of what he used to do to the Chinese. He said that him and Art Black were not nice to them. Do you remember anything about the fish traps?

A-Carl----A little bit, mostly through Wilbur. I knew that Webber???? took an advantage of, he worked on a fish trap once. It was through that connection, I guess that he discovered that they had to renew some document. I couldn't even tell you what it was. They hadn't renewed it on time and he'd jumped the claim. He renewed it and hired the most capable attorney in the area which was Zylstra.

Barbara talks, not very legible. She said that the family has a lot of his correspondence.

Roger----Ok, he had a trap at one time, I know. I think he got it a couple of years before they were outlawed in 1934.

Al----It was down at Lake Hancock (Greenbank). I always thought he paid ten thousand dollars for it because dad always talked about how he paid ten thousand dollars and then they shut them down.

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Barbara----You really should ask Roger and Sara (Purdue) if you can look through there, because I was just looking for letters, so I had to open everything and look in to see if it was something I wanted. There was a lot of correspondence on those.

Q-Roger----Do you remember a sailing yacht called the Calista? It was a private yacht.

A-Carl----No

Q-Roger----I think that was probably before your time. I think it disappeared before the turn of the century. Do you have any pictures of the early steam boats?

A-Carl----No, I'm quite certain we don't.

Barbara, Carl and Roger talk about some of the pictures, including Clark Sherman.

A-Carl----Everett was the photographer in our family. He had everything. He had the best equipment. His workplace was in the corner of the old woodshed. He had developing solution, equipment, the whole works. But remember, that was in the early days. The old box cameras were the first successful cameras.

Q-Roger----The old ferry house that is still standing, down by Ebey's Landing, grandpa LeSourd, he moved here in 1885 when he was ten years old, and he calls it the Ebey Inn. Do you remember that name?

A-Carl----No

Q-Roger----Do you remember anything about it?

A-Carl----I worked on the farm there when Jess Boyer had it, raising crops and I worked on it several years before that when Gill Herret owned it.

Barbara talks, but not legible

Q-Roger----Did you ever eat down there, or anything, they served there, it was an inn?

A-Carl----No, I never did.

Q-Roger----Do you remember any of the passenger boats, smaller boats, that used to come over from Port Townsend and land at Ebey's Landing?

A-Carl----No, but I'll tell you one thing, when my dad was growing up, he lived part time in Seattle. His mother died and he lived part time with the LeSourd family. As I recall, he took the contract to carry mail from Port Townsend to Ebey's Landing with a big sailing dory. So he had a lot of experience on that.

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Q-Roger----This was your father?

A-Carl----That's my father. Long before my time. I wasn't born yet. He had taken a contract apparently and had that durable boat that was heavy to manage and so I guess he could drag it up the gravel beach to get it above the surf. I think I heard him say that he had to learn to control it so that he would come in with the breaker at the proper time to be landed high enough up on the beach so that he could get out and drag it up the beach.

Q-Roger----I think they probably had some pretty spectacular landings down there.

Q-Barbara----Was a dock or anything down there?

A-Al----Yeah, there was, Wilbur and Karen have a picture of it.

A-Roger----There was no dock, it was a warehouse on the beach. (also a fish trap)

Barbara----Roger, I was going to say that date wise, that ah, dad, grandfather, and his mother married in 1888 or 1889 and at that point, he was working over in LaConner.

Carl----But he was a bachelor at that time.

Barbara----I'm giving him a timeline (Roger) so it would have been before then that dad is talking about. That he did the mail boat or whatever.

Carl----I don't know how long it lasted. My impression was that it didn't last very long.

Barbara----Well, he came out as a younger boy. He was the youngest of all the brothers. He came out with three or four other brothers and then he—

Carl----And sister.

Barbara----Yeah, and then dad's, dad and a sister and his mother came out last so it was within that time period. They came to the Island before grandpa went to LaConner.

Q-Roger----Carl's father's name was Will?

A-Barbara----Yes

Roger talks about the early day transportation from Port Townsend to Ebey's Landing

Q-Carl----Did you ever run across the story about the freighter, steam ship Governor?

A-Roger----I've heard about it and before, when I was talking to you and Iva, you mentioned it. You might tell me about that.

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A-Carl----Well, all I remember, when I was a kid here, growing up, I loved the high wind storms that would come up during the year and after a high wind storm, I always liked to go down to the beach to see the beach breakers coming in. And this particular time the steam ship Governor, lost control over on Destruction Island, somewhere around Fort Warden. Anyway, it went down there and I believe seven men were lost on that and when I went down there to the beach after that, I remember the breakers were real high and the pilot house, pretty well broken up, had washed ashore and I got a useless instrument out of it, thought was valuable. I didn't know anything about it, as its use or something, measured angles _____???? I had it for years. I don't know what became of it.

Q-Roger----Was it a sextant?

A-Carl----No, it wasn't a sextant.

Q-Roger----An alidade???? To Barbara----You run across that anyplace?

A-Barbara----No, but maybe I should know what to look for. I see strange things here and there.

Roger----That thing as an authenticated antique would be worth an awfully lot of money now.

Carl----Anyway, there were barrels and barrels of stuff. There was a big wooden barrel, it wasn't a thick wooden barrel, whiskey barrel, it was a thin slatted barrel full of peas in the pod, fresh peas in the pod. I tried to eat one and it was full of salt. I couldn't eat it. Fresh peas in the pod.

Q-Roger----I was confusing the Governor with the Diamond Knot. There was a boat over there sank called the Diamond Knot and I knew that one of them was a cannery tender. I guess it was the Diamond Knot because it went down with a whole cargo of canned salmon.

Carl----There was some people that got more butter than they could use.

Al----I heard that. Uncle Wilbur and dad talked about that.

Carl----I'm not sure that was the same.

Q-Roger----Can you remember anything about stories about docks or boats?

A-Carl----My experience with such things were just momentary, so I don't have background information. Maybe some of the names are not accurate, but as I recall, it was the steamship Governor on that occasion.

Page 12, Carl Jenne, Interview, Cont.

We spent some time talking about the Everett Massacre and the early union movement that caused it, also about dad being aboard ship as a radio operator.

This tape is available to anyone who wants to review it. I did not transcribe everything because parts were not audible enough and some was not information that I was looking for. Uncle Carl died in January of 1999 at the age of 98. He didn't quite reach the millenium.