

**Emma Taylor Harman Interview**  
**Interviewed by Anna Samuels, Legacy Project volunteer**  
**September 10, 2012**

**Anna Samuels:** This is Anna Samuels, volunteer with the Washington State Legacy Project through the office of Secretary of State Sam Reed. It's the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, 2012 and I'm with Emma Taylor Harman and her daughter, Jane, at her home.

**Emma Taylor Harman:** Can you talk a little louder?

**Samuels:** I'm with Emma Taylor Harman and her daughter, Jane, at her home in West Seattle.

**Harman:** Okay.

**Samuels:** Thank you for having me. So, I figure we'd just start right at the beginning, so why don't you tell me when and where you were born.

**Harman:** I was born in Napavine, Washington, that's in Lewis County, May 5, 1912.

**Samuels:** Alright. And, what were your parents' names?

**Harman:** Albert Taylor and my mother was Lily Tutt Taylor.

**Samuels:** Tutt. T-u?

**Harman:** T-t. I say that because she came to the state right after it became a state.

**Samuels:** Ohhh.

**Harman:** And so, you know, they're kind of, that has always been in this area. Yeah, King County.

**Jane:** But she actually came here before Washington was a state.

**Harman:** No, she came here after.

**Jane:** Oh, okay.

**Samuels:** What year was that?

**Harman:** 1888.

**Samuels:** 1888, Lily came here, okay.

**Harman:** She was a baby, of course.

**Samuels:** But she was here right at the beginning.

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** Let's see, and where did her family come from?

**Harman:** My grandfather, great, yeah grandfather, came from Kentucky, and my grandmother came from a French Canadian family that came down to Illinois.

**Samuels:** And then they moved to Washington.

**Harman:** Yeah. Well they came to Washington, well in 1888 they were already married then, yeah, my grandparents.

**Samuels:** Okay, and did you have siblings?

**Harman:** I had three sisters and four brothers.

**Samuels:** That's a lot!

**Harman:** (laughing) Yeah, big family.

**Samuels:** Big family! What were your sisters' names?

**Harman:** My sister was Ada Taylor Titmer and my, Juanita Wilkinson, of course she's Taylor, too, and Ida Taylor, they were my three sisters.

**Samuels:** Okay, and your brothers?

**Harman:** My brothers were James Taylor and Claude Taylor, and he was a twin with Ada.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** And, uh, Ralph Taylor and then John Taylor. And almost all of us ended up in King County.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** My one sister moved to Lewis County, but the rest of us all lived in King County.

**Samuels:** Oh, ok. And did your extended family live close by? Did your grandparents and maybe aunts and uncles?

**Harman:** Yes, I had on my mother's side, I had my grandmother, my grandfather died when my mother was young.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** And they went to Newcastle, that was a coal mining community.

**Samuels:** U-huh.

**Harman:** And my grandmother lived there for the rest of her life. She went there in 1888 and that's where she spent her life. And my mother had an older brother, Wallace, and he lived there too, the rest of his life, and a sister Julia Carmichael, and a brother, Claude Tutt. And almost everybody stayed right here in King County.

**Samuels:** Oh okay. So you saw them pretty often?

**Harman:** Yes, not pretty often, but I saw my grandmother as long as she lived, once a week maybe.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** And my uncle, oldest uncle, but the rest of the family we saw, you know it wasn't easy to get around, we saw each other three or four times a year.

**Samuels:** And that was all on your mother's side.

**Harman:** That's my mother's side.

**Samuels:** Did your father have family here?

**Harman:** My father came here from Indiana, and later in our life, when I was about 10, his sister came here to live, well that's all that ever were here.

**Samuels:** So he moved by himself. Let's see...what do you remember about your childhood. Do you have a few memories that stick out?

**Harman:** I remember when we moved from, my parents lived down on, at Kennydale on Lake Washington, and I remember when they moved from there to where they spent the rest of their life at Newcastle. But my mother had come from Newcastle in the first place.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay. Why did they move back?

**Harman:** Uh...my mother never cared for the country, she liked it a little closer to cities, and Lewis County was just farming area.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay. So, how old were you when they moved back to Newcastle?

**Harman:** When we came here?

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** I don't remember. I must have been about two.

**Samuels:** Okay, little.

**Harman:** Yeah, I don't remember at all. But I do remember living first in Lake Washington and then my dad bought a piece of property at rural Newcastle, wasn't right in town.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** And there I was raised until I grew up.

**Samuels:** And was it a farm?

**Harman:** It was a so-called farm. We did some farming, small farming. My dad had, my dad worked, of course.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** But he had raised chickens, we raised quite a few chickens, and we had strawberries we sold, and those were the two main things. Otherwise we just farmed for our own purpose.

**Samuels:** Okay. So what did your father do? What was his job?

**Harman:** Dad worked in the, well several things, he was kind of an odd, you know, whatever job. First he was in the coal mines, but he wasn't a miner, he worked in the electrical part of it, so he wasn't big in coal. And then he worked in logging and sawmills and for the state, during the Depression, he worked for the county part-time. The county had a program where you worked so many days and somebody else had so many days because of the big Depression.

**Samuels:** Yeah, kind of rationing it out?

**Harman:** Yeah, share the work. And then he went to work for the brick, what's the name of it? Brick company.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** It's a California organization who built brick here. And then he worked for the, where did he work when he quit working? Car shops, Pacific Car and Foundry, and then he retired.

**Jane:** Wait, now how come he left the coal mine?

**Harman:** Because the coal mine was having a strike and he went on, they went on strike, then he never went back to work for the coal company.

**Samuels:** Why were they striking?

**Harman:** Raise and wages. At the end, all during WWII they couldn't get a raise of wages and the company promised them a raise. But when the time came to give them a raise, they didn't do it.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** So most of the miners went out on strike and they never went back to work there.

**Samuels:** So he really was a jack of all trades.

**Harman:** Yeah, jack of all trades.

**Samuels:** Did lots of different stuff.

**Harman:** Like, he built our house and he cleared our land, and that kind of thing.

**Samuels:** And did farming, it sounds like.

**Harman:** And did farming, and he worked at the end of his career in the bricklaying, well not bricklaying, making brick.

**Samuels:** Okay. Did you like growing up with a lot of land? Was that fun, growing up on a so-called farm?

**Harman:** You mean living in the country?

**Samuels:** Mmmhmm.

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** You liked that?

**Harman:** I liked that, we had a lot of fun. We didn't have many neighbors, not like it is here, and there weren't many other children, you only saw them at school.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** But I liked living out in the country.

**Samuels:** Well, and you had so many siblings you probably didn't get bored.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right. And you didn't, you knew your neighbors there better than you know your neighbors here.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And when you got together with your neighbors it was an occasion. You know, they'd drop over and talk to your mother awhile, or that, so we all knew each other.

**Samuels:** Did you enjoy going to school, though, to get to see-

**Harman:** Oh, I loved going to school.

**Samuels:** Yeah? And what was the school? How far away was it?

**Harman:** The first school I went to, well I'll skip the first year because I went to kindergarten. We were in a school district and the school district was quite big but it was cornered on by two other districts. So the first year I went to school, I went to school at Kennydale, and then the next year we went to school in Newcastle, in our home district.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** And we had to take a bus, it was two miles away from school. And then, after I went there two years, they divided because of this strike they divided the school and I walked to school which was fourth, fifth, sixth grades. And then seventh and eighth grades I, that school disbanded because of people moving away and I went to school in a neighboring district, which was two miles away.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** That was through the first eight grades, there was no kindergarten. Then, when I finished grade school I went to Renton high school and that was in Renton and that was five miles away. And there was no bus system, you kind of got your way to school the best you could. Sometimes your neighbors, you rode with neighbors, somebody drove you there, mostly my dad if he was on shift where he could. And after, that was through the eighth grade and I couldn't go to high school, or college, I didn't have enough money.

**Samuels:** Yeah, and the Depression hit right when you were about to graduate from high school, right?

**Harman:** Yes, I graduated from high school in Renton. But that was a country school that was going to a neighboring school district.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** Do you remember your family being politically minded when you were growing up? Did you hear conversations about politics at home?

**Harman:** Mostly, yes.

**Samuels:** Yeah? From your mother and your father?

**Harman:** Both parents. But my mother was from a political family.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** They were always a democratic precinct committee man, or committee person, someone in the family. Like, first my grandfather, then my uncle, then my mother, you know, in that order.

**Samuels:** Okay, so you were used to hearing that kind of stuff.

**Harman:** And the first time I really, we were aware that, we always had a newspaper. And we knew there were political things happening. I always knew there was a president of the United States. We always knew when there was an election on cause I remember my mother saying to my dad, saying, "Who are you going to vote for, Lily?" That was my mother's first vote for a president.

**Samuels:** Wow, how exciting!

**Harman:** Because you know that women could vote in Washington, and for all the offices you couldn't vote for president cause it had to have all the states ratify the voting of women. Women couldn't vote until all the states ratified it, or, you know, a majority. I don't know, not all of them had to, but the majority. Well, when I was in third grade my mother could vote for the president. I remember my dad saying to mother, "Who you gonna vote for, Lily?" And she said, "Not for Harding." That impressed me. If she'd just said, "Whoever," I probably wouldn't have been as impressed as that "Not for Harding" she'd said.

**Samuels:** She'd probably been waiting a long time to vote.

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** And to have her vote count.

**Harman:** These women not having opportunities in those days made it so that when they got an opportunity they were very proud of it. You know, it meant a lot, yeah.

**Samuels:** Let's see...so you liked going to school, you told me that.

**Harman:** Yes, I liked going to school. All of it.

**Samuels:** Yeah? You liked all your classes?

**Harman:** Yeah. I wasn't, you know, like all the students. I was just an ordinary student, but I loved going to school.

**Samuels:** Oh, good! And did you, what did you dream about when you were in high school? What did you think you wanted to do?

**Harman:** I wanted to be a teacher.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay. What did you want to teach?

**Harman:** I thought I'd like to teach second or third grade, or maybe a grade school, I never thought of teaching high school. Well, I would have liked to teach history in high school, but the high school teacher said they don't need many teachers for history so therefore you should look for a more rounded one where you could fit in more places. Yeah, so I decided I'd go, I would want to be a teacher of grade school.

**Samuels:** Okay, but then the Depression hit.

**Harman:** Then the Depression hit. And it came, I graduated in '31 and the stock market was what started the Depression, that was in 1929. So the last year of my high school was really hard. Nobody worked. I mean that. If every person in this whole community didn't have a job, you know what it would be like. No one was working. Now, it wasn't only people in coal mines, it was people in everything. No one was working.

**Samuels:** And was that hard on your family? Do you remember?

**Harman:** Yes, it was difficult for everyone.

**Samuels:** Especially with so many children.

**Harman:** We were lucky because we could raise a lot of our food, but it was really a problem of getting enough money to pay your taxes.

**Jane:** Okay, so how did grandmother earn money to pay the taxes?

**Harman:** Well part of it was we swept the floors at the neighborhood small school. The school was divided, it was a portable school, so my mother had the appointment, or whatever, job relating to taking care of the school. You swept the floors, you cleaned the school, you washed the walls, you brought the wood in to build the fires in the school. They were just small school rooms, there was two rooms, first, second, third fourth, and then the higher grades were fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, all in one room. Or no, in two rooms. And so my parents, my mother had the right to, or had the—

**Jane:** Like appointment.

**Harman:** Appointment to do that janitor work.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** And so we kids did a lot of it.

**Samuels:** Oh, alright. She would take you there and you would all help?

**Harman:** Well, each mom would help and supervise. But we swept floors, and cleaned the boards, and brought in the wood to start the fire, and coal, and to get the water bucket in and get the water ready. We had a big bucket of water that you drank out of with a dipper. And it was fine, we had outside pit toilets.

**Jane:** Okay, and then also, didn't you guys, a couple things I remember: you used to pick berries—

**Harman:** Oh yeah.

**Jane:** And I'm gonna just finish my sentence, and she would raise turkeys. Didn't they raise turkeys and sell them at Thanksgiving?

**Harman:** Yeah, my mother was, my dad worked at whatever work he could get, he worked in the mines, but then when that ended he worked in the saw mills, or in the logging—

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** Or he'd do some himself. And then finally he worked in the car shops and the brick works. So he had a very, off and on he'd get employed by the county. I think it's important to say that employment in those days were the mines would be opened up the first of September and the announcer would go around, "The mines are gonna start

employing September first,” and then people would be called back to work and then they’d work there until the end of, the first of April, and then they’d say, “Alright, everybody’s laid off.” Everybody. So, they would close the mines down and that was it for that year.

**Samuels:** So you had to be ready to do something else.

**Harman:** Yeah, what you could find. Which for my father was he raised garden crops, whatever he could sell, and he had some cows, and we had some chickens and we sold eggs off and on. You know you’d sell all these things. And my grandmother raised turkeys to raise extra money for the things she wanted, too.

**Samuels:** So did you have a stand outside? How did you sell the produce and—

**Harman:** Well, the eggs we sold by selling them to the commercial outlets in Seattle or the neighbor came by and sell them a dozen eggs. And that’s the way with, then with the cows, we sold the cream to the, sent it off, like they still do in some places, to town and they would use it, make the cream into butter. They don’t have that anymore cause they don’t have any cows around here, but they did that then. Yes, and my grandmother, my mother in order to make money to buy the extra things and keep things going and pay taxes, she, besides having the janitors job at that school, we picked berries. We’d go down and pick strawberries in the strawberry fields or raspberries in the raspberry fields, or then she did blackberries in the wild, wild blackberries we picked. That was a three-week project every year.

**Samuels:** And sell those?

**Harman:** And we’d sell those door-to-door.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** Do anything you can, you know.

**Samuels:** To make some money.

**Harman:** Yeah, in the summertime. And then my mother, my grandmother raised turkeys which she sold at Christmas and Thanksgiving, the big sale was Thanksgiving. And I don’t know how many she raised, maybe 30 or 35? Something like that. And we’d pick those and get them all ready for the market, she’d take orders.

**Samuels:** That's a good idea.

**Harman:** It's a good idea, it's a lot of work (laughing).

**Samuels:** Yeah, I bet you were busy.

**Harman:** We were busy. We children helped, I mean we all helped. We helped pick the berries, we helped pick the crops and we helped can the crops and that sort of thing. So besides having enough for your own use, you sold some of it, too. Yeah.

**Samuels:** So, you helped each other out, but it sounds like your family made it through.

**Harman:** Yeah, we worked with what we could.

**Samuels:** So, what happened after you graduated from high school?

**Harman:** Oh, it was a very, very hard time. There was no jobs, none, absolutely none. And as someone once said, "What do you think about the way women made quilts during that period?" And one of my neighbors said, "Well it was something to keep us busy." No matter if you had any use for the, all these handmade quilts that they show in the shows, at least you had something to do with your time. And we did that. The quilts and whatever we could find to do.

**Samuels:** To just fill up the time.

**Harman:** Yes. And you'd love to get a job but when you go everywhere and there are no jobs.

**Samuels:** It's a disappointment.

**Harman:** Nothing's available, then what do you do?

**Jane:** Now, eventually you started going to town with the samples, right?

**Harman:** Well, I should go back a little bit and say— We also made our own, you know children in those days and young people did what was available. And the community had a grange, and we had a Democratic Party and we had a community club. And we went to the meetings along with our parents, I was 16 and going to those meetings. I wouldn't miss a meeting, it was social life, and also I was interested in what was going on.

**Samuels:** Okay, and then, I read something that you started working for the community club? Or volunteering? Is that right?

**Harman:** Well there was a group called Washington Commonwealth Federation. Well I went to work for them because I read that they needed help so I went in there and started working, filing and this and that. Now I made one big mistake when I was going to school, I didn't take any commercial subjects. I was planning to be a teacher. So I had to learn here at home how to type, I never learned to take short hand but that was a real draw back, I should have learned how to type. And take book keeping and shorthand, that would have been a help.

**Samuels:** So you had to teach yourself, kind of?

**Harman:** That I did myself, yes.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** So then I went to work. I read in the paper about they needed part time help, so I went, I took the bus. I went with a neighbor to Renton, we lived 5 miles from Renton, in the mornings and then I took the bus into Seattle. I went to work in that office. And that's where I really got, I was always interested in politics in the community and what was going on, but after that I really got into some of the Democratic Party works and that was the, the Commonwealth Federation was a political party but not a, not the Democratic Party, it was an independent.

**Samuels:** What kind of work were they doing?

**Harman:** Oh, they were working on election campaigns and on social subjects. You know, there was ...what did they do? They started the pension, when you're in a group, when you have an office and you're working you attract people that need help. And so they realized that people needed help for work, find work, so they supported them what they could. It was a group of people gotten together to well politicalize, to help make people see what was needed and to help support people who were running for office, or that would promote those programs.

**Jane:** Okay, now what was the Pension Union office? Is that the same thing?

**Harman:** Well, at the same time they discovered that all these aged people in the state had no means of support. They no longer could work, and they couldn't save enough to keep their—you know, you had a small savings, but you didn't have much money to live

on. And so we had these people constantly coming into this office saying that they couldn't get enough to eat or they couldn't have a room. And the state was giving out some aid, but then they got started giving help to the aged, but it wasn't organized, really. You'd get some help and maybe you wouldn't. So they started the Washington Pension Union, which really did a wonderful job for those elderly, and they began by working on an initiative to provide \$30 a week for each pensioner.

**Jane:** Is that \$30 a week or \$30 a month?

**Harman:** \$30 a month, I'm sorry, I made a mistake.

**Jane:** That's okay.

**Harman:** \$30 a month for, to each aged family if they qualified. And so that was a big thing, that was a big change in the political movement, it organized all these voters. There were a lot of old people that were almost disenfranchised because they didn't have any connection to the political system.

**Samuels:** So was that a separate office from?

**Harman:** It was a separate office but they worked together, you know. These groups worked together.

**Samuels:** When I was doing my research on the Washington Commonwealth Federation there were a lot of suspicions floating around about communist activities. Did you hear about that?

**Harman:** Well, you knew it was, might be happening. There was communist activity everywhere, you know, cause it's a legal party.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And they run people for office. But I don't think there was, that wasn't a communist organization.

**Samuels:** Okay, it was just probably everyone was getting pinpointed.

**Harman:** Whoever they were, they came in and talked to you, no matter what. Or they talked on a particular issue, like the getting that \$30 a month for the seniors. That came about, I'm sure that all the groups were supporting that, like the Commonwealth

Federation, the Democratic Party, all of them. And I was very active on that, because my grandmother had no means, she had money.

**Samuels:** Oh, cause she was a widow, right?

**Harman:** Widow. And her oldest son took care of her, and he never married.

**Jane:** And wait a minute, that's your grandmother.

**Harman:** My grandmother.

**Jane:** So, and she died when my grandmother was, the husband died when my grandmother was like six years old, right?

**Harman:** When Grandma was—

**Jane:** How old was Grandma when her father died?

**Harman:** She was nine.

**Jane:** Nine, okay. So, young.

**Harman:** Yeah, and my grandmother raised her children. She had two young children and two grown children. And she raised them. So, at that point she had no visible sign of support. She had taken in washing and washed clothes, and took care of sick people, and cleaned their houses and that kind of thing. And there were a lot of women who did that, it wasn't just my grandmother. Whatever women could get out and do something, they did that, cause women didn't have jobs. So, women weren't trained to work. And so my grandmother was one of the first people that I was concerned about getting a pension. I was thinking about her pension when I was younger.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** So when there was a discussion come up about getting \$30 a month for seniors, she was one of the first persons I thought about, she'd have it. And she used to say, "If I get my \$30, I will have, that will be my money. You know, I'll be able to buy things I think we need." Yeah, the rest of it, every money they got was going toward, for my uncle, was to pay the rent and buy groceries. And everything else she didn't have, that's all.

**Samuels:** So what ended up happening with the pensions?

**Harman:** My grandmother never got one, she died first. It was slow coming and they did get the \$30 a month for seniors.

**Samuels:** Do you remember what year that was, when it finally?

**Harman:** I'll think about it.

**Samuels:** But it was after she had passed away.

**Harman:** It was in the late '30s sometime because everything kind of changed when WWII broke out. There was a tremendous depression on all during this time, from '29 until '41.

**Jane:** Now, one of my favorite memories, and it seems like I'm getting a lot of things incorrect, but you told that when WWI ended didn't you guys get up and hear on the radio, or the bells rang in the neighborhood?

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** Yeah. So she can, my mom can remember that.

**Harman:** I can remember that, when WWI ended my grandmother, my mother got us all up to hear the war was over. She wanted us to hear that we were at peace.

**Samuels:** That's great.

**Harman:** She was a very peace-loving person. It was hard for her to see us go into WWII. Yeah. But my grandmother lived until maybe '34, right after I was out of high school. And she never got that pension, never was available. She was really looking forward to that.

**Samuels:** I bet. So you were, you were working in different political organizations after you graduated, Washington Commonwealth Federation as well as—

**Harman:** I was working. I was interested in the community. And first I was, in the community there was the grange, I went to grange meetings all the time. We were just 16 or 17, but you're still going to the grange meetings, it's social! And then they had an improvement club and then we eventually had a Democratic Party in the community. And in fact I was secretary of all three at one time or other.

**Samuels:** When you were in high school?

**Harman:** After high school.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** This started, really the political activities in the community grew much after 1929 when the Depression hit. I didn't graduate, my high school went until 1931 so I was really young. Well I still was going to all these meetings, I enjoyed it, just liked going to meetings! (laughing) Well, you don't have a real social life.

**Samuels:** Exactly! You probably got to see all your neighbors and friends at the meetings.

**Harman:** That's right. And people lived in farms and you lived further apart and you didn't have cars. You just went to the meeting, that's it, that's the only way you did, with what car you had you went to the meeting with them, you didn't just like a kid own a car and drive somewhere. And there was no transportation, none, there was absolutely no transportation whatsoever. It's hard to believe that, uh, when you wanted to go to town five miles away, you got in your car and went. That sort of thing. And you went once a week, better not forget something or you're gonna go a week without it! (laughing)

**Samuels:** Yeah, exactly.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** So by the time you decided to run for a position in the Legislature, you had already been involved in quite a few different groups.

**Harman:** Long time, for a long time. I started being actively interested in that sort of, not the Legislature exactly, but I was interested in the things that they do. Like being secretary of the community club we would discuss things that were going wrong in the community. And we were talking about needing a sign on the highways that would show where there was a lot of accidents, they didn't have any signs to say that you're coming up to the end of the road, it's gonna start this way.

**Samuels:** Uh-huh.

**Harman:** So that was one of the first letters I wrote was to the state to say, I was secretary of the improvement club, to get a sign on there saying, this road, you know a sign that showed that the road ends here and it goes this way.

**Samuels:** Uh-huh.

**Harman:** Yeah, that was between Issaquah and Renton and that was the main highway to Eastern Washington.

**Samuels:** And did they put the sign in?

**Harman:** Yeah, they put the sign up.

**Samuels:** Oh, good job!

**Harman:** Well, it was obvious. Just that they didn't have the thousands of miles of roads, there hardly was enough money to take care of it, you know, that sort of thing. So that's what we did in the improvement club, and talked about fixing things in the neighborhood and that sort of thing. And then I went to work, I read that they needed help in these, in the Washington Commonwealth Federation. So I went there as a helper, just folding papers, etc., and eventually I started talking to people about their problems as they came in. Here people are drifting in and they don't have a job or they need all kinds of things, you know. It's hard to realize that people didn't really have a place to go to to get help. And now you, we know it's closer to you. But country people didn't have anywhere to go. And there was lots of obstacles to getting the help. They didn't have many people to help you, they didn't necessarily see the need, you know, that wasn't exactly what was the most important problem that they had. And you didn't have, the towns were very small and the Chamber of Commerce was the most active part of the community in the town. So if you saw that there was a problem in the community, sometimes you'd go to the Chamber of Commerce, and of course it wasn't their line at all, it's not what they're doing. So it was a good time for a community organization to start to improving their community, and improving the lives of the people in the community.

**Samuels:** Uh-huh.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** So then, what made you decide to run for the Legislature? Had you just heard so many people talking about what their problems, and—

**Harman:** Their problems. I saw all these people, mainly I was interested in all these people who couldn't get work, all these people who couldn't get pensions and they no longer could work. And the most outstanding thing I remember was one old man came to me and said he didn't have any means of support. And he was a neighbor, I didn't know him, so he was talking about he needed help and I steered him through the Pension Union, Washington Pension Union, to get him to apply and get his pension because these things are complicated for people who have had no political experience.

**Samuels:** I'm sure.

**Harman:** Probably only eighth, or third or fourth grade education. You're not talking to an educated person who's had all kinds of opportunities. And then by helping them they would get their pension, but they wouldn't know how to go about it even. There wasn't a county city building everywhere you could go say, "What can I do to get this?"

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** So you had a lot of first hand experiences with people.

**Harman:** Yeah, first talking to people. That was my first activity is talking to people about problems. Or they'd come to the community club and say, "Oh, I can't pay my taxes, what am I gonna do?" you know, that sort of thing. And so you got to talking to them about how to go about that.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** (Laughing) Not important talk.

**Samuels:** No, it is! Very important. I have, correct me if I'm wrong because I pulled these dates I think from the other oral history I was reading, but I have that you ran for office in 1941?

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** Is that right? And what led up to that? Other than all the other work you'd been doing?

**Harman:** Well, we see the need for the people who represent you in the legislature to present the programs that you need. For example, the highways you need, the social

things you need, and that sort of thing. And a school, the school needs more money. It was an all inclusive thing, you worked for everything, it wasn't just one thing.

**Jane:** One thing you haven't mentioned that we talked about earlier is you said you were interested in aid for women and children.

**Harman:** Small children, yes.

**Jane:** With no means of support.

**Harman:** Well that was after I got to the, well I had always been concerned about my grandmother raising these children as a widow.

**Samuels:** Yes.

**Harman:** So when I got the legislature I presented a law to get aid for women with dependent children, and that was aid for women that had small children and no money, no sign of a good job. And it would be some aid, whether it was complete aid or some help for them. And I wasn't talking about babysitting or anything, just money to help them finance living.

**Jane:** And did the bill pass into law?

**Harman:** It did not.

**Jane:** It did not pass.

**Harman:** It did not pass.

**Samuels:** Never passed.

**Harman:** No, it didn't pass into a law. It stayed, died in office, in when I was there, in a session of the Legislature. And actually I was telling my coffee group the other day about the fact that when I was in Olympia I presented this law for aid to women with dependent children. And one of the legislators I talked to said, "Let their family support them." That means their brothers and sisters that have children of their own, or their parents who are old and don't have anything. So, anyway when a few years, not too many years ago, maybe 20 years ago, somebody came to me with a petition saying that this, one of the legislators that had told me about that, "Let their families take care of them," said he wanted to give a special pension. I'm not eligible for a pension from the state of Washington because I didn't serve in the Legislature long enough. Well he was

one of them too. And they came with a saying, "Could we work together to try and get him a pension?" And this came to me all of a sudden, what did he say when I wanted aid for these women with children?

**Jane:** Their families can do it!

**Harman:** Yeah, so I just said to him, to them, "Let his family help him." That's what he told me.

**Samuels:** Well, good.

**Harman:** Now, that's kind of mean, but after all that's what he believes!

**Samuels:** He got what was coming to him!

**Harman:** Right, never saying that I thought that was a good chance you get back, how I felt when he told me that! And I was particularly interested because my grandmother had raised two children.

**Samuels:** Without a job and without a husband.

**Harman:** No! She just washed clothes and took care of sick people and sewed a little bit, took in sewing at night, and all those things in a small community of working people. They didn't have lots of money to hire someone to come and do that. Minimal wages, minimal, just very little money. But she got by with it.

**Samuels:** Yeah. Well I'm sure she was proud of you for proposing things, I mean even though she didn't get the pension, it's great that that's something that you were really passionate about.

**Harman:** Yes. She really understood what I was trying to do.

**Samuels:** And was your family supportive of you running?

**Harman:** Yes. I had support of all my family, yes. In fact, they were very helpful, very helpful.

**Samuels:** Did they help you campaign?

**Harman:** Yes, some of them, well all of them a little bit. But they helped me campaign but they also helped me with driving there and help giving rides to the next meeting, you did a lot of going to small meetings. They don't have them anymore. There're not many small community groups going.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And then in those days they had granges and community clubs and all kinds of things meeting. Well you could go to those meetings. My mother had a group of women that got together once a month and brought their sandwiches, and then they'd have the person whose house they met at would, she'd serve cake and coffee, you know that kind of thing. Just a social thing. You know you'd talk to them to and it was really an all, it was really more down to earth, grassroots voters than we see today.

**Samuels:** Yeah. Well it sounds like you were really talking to individual people.

**Harman:** One at a time. Or a few at a time.

**Samuels:** So did you, you went to meetings, did you go, like, door to door?

**Harman:** Oh yes! We went door to door. We also had groups of people who got together and went door to door. Now, the district, 31<sup>st</sup> district, which is what I represented, it's from here to the top of Snoqualmie Pass.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** So this is a big district. You print a little leaflet, and I don't have one anymore, about what you were campaigning for and then you'd take those door to door. And these—the Democratic Party was never as hardworking as the Commonwealth Federation was about getting individual community groups working. And they would work, other people in the group would help you, they'd go out with you in a group and talk door to door. And I don't think that's as effective nowadays, people are more divorced from their political needs.

**Samuels:** Yeah, you really don't see a lot of direct communication like you're talking about.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** So it seems like there were some women who were involved in politics on the same level as you, but did you run into any sorts of discrimination, just campaigning, or?

**Harman:** No, I never felt that either the men or the women that I talked to ever felt that women couldn't do that.

**Samuels:** Well that's great.

**Harman:** I never had a feeling that I was discriminated against as a woman. And I don't know why. Maybe it's because I came from an active political family, I don't know why I didn't feel discriminated against.

**Samuels:** Well, that's a good thing. Maybe you weren't.

**Harman:** Well that's it. I had the support of people, and it wasn't just the men, it was the women, and I talked to the women too. You know, I would go out and knock on the doors and talk to women as well as men. And women were more, participated more, the average woman and the average young person than they do nowadays. They're really quite removed from politics nowadays.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** You know, in those days almost everybody felt the need to be registered and vote.

**Samuels:** Lots of people don't want to vote nowadays.

**Harman:** No, it would surprise me. Well, they're not, even those who should be, that have reasons, social reasons to need to vote, they feel like it's not gonna do any good anyway. Not gonna help. And that's too bad, it's really, really too bad. It would change the whole political picture if they did.

**Samuels:** Yeah, yeah. Something needs to change with the way people are thinking about elections.

**Harman:** Now with the, like in my district here, and it's a big one, we had all women and men and everybody supporting the Democratic Party, and there were some Republicans but it was really a Democratic district.

**Jane:** Primarily.

**Harman:** Yeah, primarily, there were Republicans, but there weren't that many, you know, it wasn't a strong hold of Republican thinking people. Now I read this last summer that some communities in Eastern Washington only have three Democrats in the whole city! In the whole community!

**Samuels:** Wow.

**Harman:** It's all completely Republican. And so you see, it's workers and small businessmen and retired people, the difference in their thinking then maybe the people who own businesses and bigger farms and things in those other communities is what I can see is the problem.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** That would seem to me that there's that many rich people in those communities either.

**Samuels:** Yeah, lots of farming, that makes sense. Let's see, so how many, do you remember how many people you were running against?

**Harman:** In the Legislature?

Samules: Mmmhmm.

**Harman:** For the Legislature? In the 31<sup>st</sup> District there might have been, well there's a whole group, you know, the county commissioners, and the county treasurer, and all of that was running, plus the president of the United States, you know it was always a regular election when you ran. But the district would have, there were three running that won one, and there was some others, but not lots of people ran for office.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** We didn't have 15 or 12 or anything, maybe four or five.

**Samuels:** But you, you got in, 1941.

**Harman:** Yeah, I was elected.

**Samuels:** Were you excited?

**Harman:** Yes, I was anxious to get elected.

**Samuels:** Yeah? How'd you find out? Did they call you or something?

**Harman:** Well, we had a pretty good—this district was different, 31<sup>st</sup> District. And well, we had a good working crew, too, but I found I was elected by going around to the telephone poll, well some called in and told you how you did, but also by looking on the telephone polls and you could see. They posted it outside of the polling place, you have a list of the polling places, you go round and check them out. So the night of election we

went around after they'd done that and counted them up, and we knew we were elected! We didn't have to wait for anybody to tell us.

**Samuels:** Oh, wow!

**Harman:** It was a real good working, having a political campaign by the people, a group of people is better than just one person running for office.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** You represent more ideas, and you do more work, and you're more available to the citizenry. They can tell you their thoughts, too.

**Samuels:** Yeah, exactly. And it's about a bunch of different people, not just about one person.

**Harman:** That's right. And we had small towns, we had farming communities, we had working communities, so we had everything represented in this district.

**Samuels:** Mmmhmm. So, when you were in the Legislature, some of the things you talked about you were interested in old age pensions and children's aid, that's correct?

**Harman:** Children's aid.

**Samuels:** What other things? Do you remember what you talked about?

**Jane:** One thing you said this morning is you were always interested in a more equitable tax policy. Now was that in the Legislature?

**Harman:** That was in the Legislature. The biggest issue in this, one of the biggest issues in this state is that there is not a real way of earning money to run the state. We're always looking for money for the schools and this and that, well the tax money comes into the state and some things are already set in stone that they're going to be paid for. Like the governor is going to get his salary and the judges and the, they're going to get their salaries, works right down to the mayor is going to get his salary too. But then there's a lot of other, all the other social programs are down there, and the schools are down there looking for money. And it's a hard way to run a budget. And the only way of having, raising money in this state is by the sales tax, and nuisance taxes, and taxes on property, that's it. We don't have income tax.

**Jane:** So, wait a minute. When you were in the Legislature, were people working on the income tax at that time?

**Harman:** The income tax was presented, I even presented it. But it doesn't get out of the committee.

**Jane:** Okay.

**Harman:** It was hard to get the income, nobody, people say this and they will tell you that today, anyone you ask, "Well we have enough taxes and I hate to see another tax get on, and the income tax will tax my income!" And they don't wanna do that. So it's a man owns his house, and the man that buys groceries that pays the taxes in this state. Really! It comes from the sales tax and property tax and a bunch of nuisance tax, like giving a dog tax if you have a dog, and that kind of stuff. But that's what happens in this state, we don't have an income tax, overall, for supporting a program. And the two, the thing that's always available and taken care of in this state, and it still is and it was when I was down there, we were talking about it down in Olympia when I was in Olympia, some things are provided for right away, like running the state. Like having the jails, you're gonna pay for the law, you're gonna pay for keeping these various offices going. Like the country treasurer and the city treasurer, well city treasurer has to get theirs from the city they live in. It's all set in stone. But the two things it seemed to me always come down to Olympia, is the social programs and the schools are looking for money.

**Samuels:** They're the last ones on the list.

**Harman:** They're the last people on the list, and they're always short, they never get enough money.

**Samuels:** So you were proposing an income tax?

**Harman:** I proposed an income tax, I proposed aid for dependent women to get some money. Really the income tax is the only tax program that I really supported because we were already paying on the houses and groceries and all that sort of thing. Well groceries weren't, you didn't pay for, but you paid on, like, your new sewing machine and your clothes and all that sort of thing had taxes on it, 3%. I think it's 9% in the city of Seattle now, isn't it 9% Seattle taxes on things? Almost, I don't know, somewhere

around there. I don't think people realize that, except food, they don't charge that on food.

**Samuels:** No, no tax on food.

**Harman:** But, when you go down, and when you look at that and it surprises you, when you buy something, what you were paying on sales tax for that item. But if you suggest to people that we have an income tax on it, "I don't wanna pay more taxes," they say. It's kind of a backwards way of looking at it.

**Samuels:** Well, and there are so many great programs, that that's the only way they're funded. Like, I work in a library, it really doesn't have much money at all.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** And it depends on taxes.

**Harman:** But you notice that, the police department has to have enough money cause people see that. They wanna be protected from criminals. What other things are provided for? Collecting the taxes, the city treasurer gets a budget. So those things are taken care of but it's the school system, they don't have money, it's not there.

**Samuels:** Yeah, and that's been a problem.

**Harman:** And the social programs. When it gets right down, you notice, you read the budget at the end of a year and you'll see the city of Seattle is how many hundreds of thousands of dollars short of their budget. Most of that budget has to do with the social things they do. And they're cutting them out. I noticed that we used to have a nurse who came around to the county, or came around to the senior center and would help out, be there and talk to people and help them. But that program is not available now, if it is it's very limited.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** That, those things have been cut out because there's no money for it. And I imagine that the library, is it closed one week a year?

**Samuels:** I think so, yeah.

**Harman:** Yes. Jane went up there and said it's closed for this week.

**Jane:** They passed a bond issue for the future, so it won't be closed next year, but I don't live here so I don't know the ins and outs of how long the bond issue is for.

**Harman:** Well, some of these programs going and I'm sure it's the library that's closed one week a year.

**Jane:** I'm unclear how many years funding is included in that bond issue.

**Harman:** Oh, I don't know either to tell you the truth.

**Samuels:** I do know that in Olympia the library used to be open every day of the week and now we're closed on Sunday and they cut back a bunch of hours. And it is, you know, one of the only free places that people can go, use the internet, get information.

**Harman:** And people come just to read.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Enormous amount of people. And I also realize that there are people that came there in the morning and read the papers and things as they had no place to go during the day.

**Samuels:** Yeah. There's very few places where you can go without having to buy something.

**Harman:** That's right.

**Samuels:** Even at a café, you know, a cup of coffee is three or four dollars.

**Harman:** Yes. And you're not gonna sit there all day with it either.

**Samuels:** And if you try to, they're gonna kick you out!

**Harman:** (laughing) That's right.

**Samuels:** They don't want you sitting there all day.

**Harman:** But you can go to the library and read the books and be in out of the cold and warm and even if you got a room, you don't have to heat that room as long. You know, you see all these fine social programs that are being wiped out by lack of funds.

**Samuels:** Yeah, it's really—

**Harman:** It's very, very hard to see. It's hard to see these things happening.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Or the schools are going, teachers are going to teach three days or five days or something without pay. Now I cannot see the need of it myself. It seems to me that the library could be open all day long, five days, seven days a week, it's necessary. For one thing, a person that's working can't get into the library if it's closed. How do you do it if they're closed on Saturdays or Sundays or a week a year or whatever? So that's, that's shortsighted.

**Samuels:** Yeah, that's really disappointing.

**Harman:** But, we know really in this country it's been a tremendous military budget, that everything is not sifting down from above, and they collect the income tax. And this state does not have an income tax, lots of states do, Idaho has income tax even though the people are not wealthy there either, they have an income tax.

**Samuels:** Just not in Washington. Is that something that they still talk about?

**Harman:** It's been voted down so many times in this state, people just do not see the need for them. I talk to people I think ought to know better, they're still not for an income tax, I don't know why.

**Samuels:** Well, they're probably thinking just about themselves and not about what all that money can do together.

**Harman:** That's right.

**Samuels:** So let's see, in 1942 you were still in the Legislature. You were in the Legislature for two sessions, is that right?

**Harman:** Two sessions and they lasted for two years, I think we were in for. The senate was in for four years, we were in for two years, yes, two sessions, '41 and '43.

**Samuels:** Okay, so four years altogether you were on there?

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** Each session was two years.

**Harman:** Two years for House members.

**Samuels:** And you just decided after the first session that you definitely wanted to run again?

**Harman:** Yes, I ran again after the first session. But then WWII came, and then I got married, and I had the responsibilities of a husband and children. And so I didn't run the third I decided, and of course my husband helped me decide, that someone had to look after the children, they couldn't just be taking care of themselves.

**Samuels:** Jane laughs.

**Harman:** It's the truth! He said either I, he said very simply, "Either you can work and I can stay home and take care of the children, or I'll work and you stay home and take care of the children. Which is the best for us and where do we get the most money?" Well that settled it because I didn't make anywhere near as an office worker what he made as a carpenter, that's what it amounts to. And actually in my last job, I was telling them at the—I go to a coffee drinking group and we talk about all kinds of things and I said there one day, "You know, my last job I worked on full time was a typing job for an aircraft company in California. And I was down there because my husband was in the service, San Diego. And my job there paid me 89 cents an hour."

**Samuels:** Oh my god.

**Harman:** Now you're typing eight hours a day, and no break.

**Samuels:** That's not easy.

**Harman:** And six days a week we worked. It was money and it helped us pay the rent because he was in the service. And when we decided to have children that one of us was going to raise them, they weren't going be raised on the street. That was all there was to it. Now they have all kinds of social services for children, maybe I would think it over a long time before I went to work in their real formative years, but there's a lot of people do and it's successful. So I don't condemn it, but it wasn't for me. When I had my son I quit working.

**Samuels:** Yeah. Well and he got to grow up with a mom at home, I think that's great.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right. Well that's what he wanted, someone at home.

**Samuels:** So did you meet your husband while you were still serving your first term?

**Harman:** Yes. I married him at the end of my first session, during my second session, '42. And I was in the session, I was still running, I was still a member of the Legislature when

we were married. But the thing was that then when we decided to have a child I think that you can't be a good legislator.

**Samuels:** That's a lot going on.

**Harman:** Yes, it's a lot of responsibility if you're a good one. And I just didn't want to have my son here or there and everywhere, then I had the daughter too. And we decided definitely to have children, we wanted children.

**Samuels:** Mmmhmm. How did you meet your husband?

**Harman:** Uh, political.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay, he was—

**Harman:** Yeah, he'd drop into the Democratic Party office or the Commonwealth Office once in a while and that's where I met him, yeah. I knew him, but then a friend of ours said, "Why don't you go out with him, he's a nice guy." You know that, they encourage you!

**Samuels:** So he was probably impressed that you were involved in politics? Do you think that impressed him?

**Harman:** Well he was involved in politics too, just as a voter. Yeah, so we agreed on politics, there was no question. I've always wondered how these people, she's a Republican, I'm a Democrat, manage in the household.

**Samuels:** What do they talk about?

**Jane:** They could maybe stay married, but what would they talk about?

**Samuels:** They better not watch TV together.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right. Or, they'd even be complaining about what kind of a TV program.

**Samuels:** Yeah, exactly. What news station you're going to watch.

**Harman:** That's right.

**Samuels:** So you married at the end of your first session.

**Harman:** 194- sometimes I forget these dates! It's been so long ago.

**Samuels:** Well that's okay, I wrote them down.

**Jane:** It was '42, right?

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** February.

**Harman:** February '42. And then I gave up. He didn't want me to work after we had children, as long as we didn't have children its fine. But once we had children he said one of us has to raise his children. Because he'd had friends who'd had mothers who were motherless and they were just wandering around at the neighbors. There weren't many social programs for children, either. So it meant that they were just wandering around, that's what it amounts to.

**Samuels:** So when was he in San Diego?

**Harman:** He signed up for the service at the beginning of the war, in January? No February of '42, and he was there for 39 months. And he was in the Navy, signed up for the Navy.

**Jane:** Until like May of '45?

**Harman:** He came home October 1, 1945.

**Jane:** So after he signed up then he didn't go immediately perhaps.

**Harman:** No, that's right. Well, see there was a draft, and you have a draft number and he was called up immediately. War broke out the 7<sup>th</sup> of December and he was called up 1<sup>st</sup> of February. Soon as they could get the offices in shape to sign up these people he was, but they didn't actually take him out to the service, they said, "Stick around." I remember this, "Stay right around," because we're going to be called up any day. And they didn't call him up to the service until July. So we had about four months in there where we were waiting, "But don't go anywhere, just stay, you're not supposed to go anywhere because we could call you up and you gotta be ready to go in one day."

**Samuels:** So he's on the edge of his seat.

**Harman:** Yes, both of us were on the edge of our seat because we knew we had to break up our housekeeping and everything because I couldn't afford to live alone on only my salary, how would we manage it? He didn't get much money, the actual drafted person in WWII got very little money.

**Samuels:** So did you move into a different place when he left or were you living in San Diego for part of the time with him?

**Harman:** Yes, I went. Then when he was through his boot camp, is what they called them, he was in San Diego and he says, "Come down because I can be shipped out any time, and let's have as much time as we can together." So I went down there and I was there until January or February of '45, and then he was shipped out. So then '45 until he came home in October. So really we just lived, we had a regular home life, except he was in the Navy, you know, we had a regular home life in San Diego until he left there. And then we felt we couldn't afford to stay there, I couldn't afford to keep the place on my money, the money I made took more than that.

**Samuels:** So you moved back?

**Harman:** So I came home to Seattle and lived at my folks'. And literally every girl, young woman, I knew that's what she did, that had children. They just came back to their homeland and stayed there until their husbands came back.

**Samuels:** Your son was born in San Diego, though?

**Harman:** No, he was born in San Diego in the Navy hospital.

**Samuels:** Okay. And what's his name?

**Harman:** Tom. Thomas Harman.

**Samuels:** Okay. Thomas. So, did you—

**Harman:** (Pointing to Jane) And this is the daughter.

**Samuels:** And that was okay, you just said, "I need to leave now and be with my husband before he is shipped out?" Like, did it matter that you were in the Legislature?

**Harman:** No, I didn't run again then.

**Jane:** But you completed your term.

**Harman:** I completed my term. I stayed in the Legislature until it was over and then I did not run for another term because our life was too unstable.

**Samuels:** Okay, I get it now. So, when was your term finished?

**Harman:** My term finished in, the new person is probably elected in November and they're sworn in in January, so my term ended in January.

**Samuels:** Of what year? Do you remember?

**Harman:** '42 or '43, something like that. War broke out in '41, wasn't that right, Elmer went in '42 and came home end of '45. Most of them, he served three years and so many months.

**Jane:** So what's the question? When her term ended?

**Samuels:** I was just trying to figure out, if each session was two years, and your first, your first session was '41, right? Correct?

**Harman:** Then '43.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Jane:** So when did that '43 session complete? When was it over?

**Harman:** It was over in, uh, '44.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Jane:** And Tom was born June 1944.

**Samuels:** Alright. So after the session ended in '44, you moved down to San Diego and your son was born.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** And then you moved back to Seattle, and then Elmer came back in—

**Harman:** Well he came back to Seattle, I didn't run for office or anything anymore.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Harman:** I was politically active, but didn't want to be in office because I had two small children.

**Samuels:** When was Jane born?

**Jane:** '48.

**Harman:** '48.

**Samuels:** So you're living in Seattle and settled.

**Harman:** And my son was born in '44, so he was born down in San Diego, yeah.

**Samuels:** Where in Seattle did you live? Did you move back to be near your parents? Or were you in the city?

**Harman:** Well I stayed with my parents, there was no housing. You couldn't find a place to live. So I came back to Seattle and in fact we were living in housing in California that was in demand, you know, people were just looking for housing everywhere. And so I came back to Seattle because he was going overseas and I stayed with my parents until he came home, and we signed up for High Point and we were so happy when we got High Point and could get back together.

**Jane:** You know High Point?

**Samuels:** No, what's High Point?

**Jane:** It's public housing.

**Harman:** Public housing up there in...

**Jane:** Off of 35<sup>th</sup>.

**Harman:** Off of 35<sup>th</sup>.

**Samuels:** So you and your family signed up and then everybody moved?

**Jane:** No, no, just my parents.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Jane:** And Tom.

**Harman:** Yeah, she wasn't born yet.

**Jane:** Now you mentioned in the last couple days how many people were looking for work when dad was looking for work when he came home.

**Harman:** Well, that's the other thing. When the war ended there was 1,000,000 people out of the service and related things that were all out there looking for work. And there was nothing for them, your job had disappeared. You were supposed to come back to your job, but both my husband and my brother didn't have a job!

**Samuels:** Oh, did your brother serve in the—

**Harman:** Served in the Army. They both served 39 months in the service, and when you came home you were discharged, they talked about that. They were both discharged, like, on the last day of the month, and the next morning they didn't have a salary at all or a job. You go out and look for one. And there's a million people looking for jobs.

**Samuels:** Yeah. So what did he end up doing?

**Harman:** Well, we...what did he do?

**Jane:** Well, he couldn't—

**Harman:** He made a job for himself.

**Jane:** Yeah.

**Harman:** He had to, he said all we could do was just make a job for ourselves, so he said we'd build our own house down here.

**Jane:** This house.

**Samuels:** Oh, really?

**Harman:** We were living in High Point housing. Yeah, that's what we did, we built this house as far as we could go on what money we could raise. And then, he started building a house across the street!

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** And we bought and sold that one, he built and sold that one, and he built 17 houses.

**Samuels:** Did he, did he just kind of teach himself, or did he have a carpentry background?

**Jane:** Wait a minute, can I butt in? After dad finished high school there weren't any jobs. And he actually, I think this is correct, spent another year in high school, and during that time he built a sailboat, right?

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** So I think he learned his carpentry skills, or part of them, at that time.

**Harman:** Well, the other thing is, his dad was a carpenter and built one house at a time. See, that wasn't big carpentry that was when you built a house at a time, and sold it, and when that one sold you got your money, you built another one. Well, he worked for his dad off and on, not being employed but his father would need some help on the job, like he's got some little job that can't handle one man, his dad was a one-man carpenter too, well then he'd get his son to help him. And Elmer worked at other things, but he'd help his dad kind of frame up something, or do work that way. That's what he did too.

**Samuels:** And did he grow up in Seattle? In the area?

**Harman:** We built houses in Seattle, and his dad built houses in Seattle.

**Samuels:** Okay.

**Jane:** West Seattle. Here's a cough drop if you want it. They lived on West Willow Street, which is right before you come to Morgan.

**Harman:** Just two miles away.

**Samuels:** So he built, your husband built this house and a house across the street.

**Harman:** And the house next door.

**Samuels:** Oh, wow.

**Jane:** He built five houses on this street.

**Harman:** Yeah. And then he built all together 17 houses around here before he started working for another carpenter. And we did that because we didn't mind getting a loan for 7, 9, 10 thousand dollars, but when the house, costs of building a house went skyrocketing, we were afraid to sign a contract for, to borrow \$20,000.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Now people think nothing of it, but we were afraid to do that for fear we wouldn't be able to sell the house, and what were we going to do then? So then he went to work for other carpenters.

**Samuels:** And is that what he kept doing? Did he do that until he retired?

**Harman:** Pretty much, he was doing building. Other things he did too, he built, in the meantime, he built a fourplex for which we owned in Alki, and we only sold maybe 10 years ago? No, 15? Wasn't that long.

**Jane:** 13 years ago.

**Harman:** Yeah, we owned that, and managed it, and rented it. And then he'd build for other contractors, too, they worked together.

**Jane:** He worked on the Alpine Inn.

**Harman:** Up in the ski area.

**Samuels:** Oh, very cool.

**Harman:** Yeah, and he worked, where else did he work? And all kinds of construction work.

**Samuels:** So he was a good carpenter.

**Harman:** Carpentry. Carpentry's a good term. You know, good way to work.

**Jane:** And then for a number of years he and Claude, that's mom's brother that served in the army for 39 months, they had a cabinet shop and they built cabinets for remodeling kitchens, or for new houses. And then only quit that when they started mass producing cabinets in big shops. So then those were cheaper for people to buy I think.

**Harman:** Yeah, he didn't want to compete with mass produced things.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And technology changes. And when they build a cabinet they would instead of paint it they would just dip it in a vat and then it was painted, you know, that kind of thing. It was beyond our means. That was a good way to earn a living, and with the apartment house and with working in this inn which we built and had a part of interest in it, we made a living for ourselves. He made the living for us, I didn't work.

**Samuels:** Well, you raised the kids.

**Harman:** Yeah, I raised the kids. Did pretty good, too!

**Jane:** We're all still speaking!

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** So, when did he build this house?

**Harman:** 1946.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay, so [Jane] grew up in this house.

**Jane:** Right, yeah.

**Harman:** Yeah. And I also was lucky enough to realize that, I don't think I just thought there would be a demand for housing, but I was able to buy up lots, there was all kinds of lots in Seattle that had gone back for taxes. And they'd have these tax sales. So I started going down and buying these lots up at, you get them in, not the one I'm living [in] here, not ours, but I bought 2, 3, 4, 5, I bought 5 lots around here for, on tax title, and paid \$100 for them.

**Samuels:** Wow. So you were kind of working, you were helping him out.

**Harman:** That's right, that's right. So we were having, oh I helped him always building, like we'd build the house and sell it. Well, I'd wash the windows and polish the floor and clean up the thing and make it presentable for sale and then we'd sell, he'd sell the house. So I worked that way, but I didn't go out and get an independent job.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And then we owned the fourplex and we managed that for many years. And that was a good investment, yeah. And he died 16 years ago of Parkinson's.

**Samuels:** Oh, I'm sorry. That's just so great that this is the house that he built and you guys lived here and raised your family here, and you're still here! And it's in great condition, it's a good house.

**Harman:** Yeah. I think it makes a tremendous difference. I don't wanna move, of course this is my own personal thinking, but I don't wanna move away from my community. If I moved away from here I would feel lost because I've lived here all these years, all of our married life after WWII. I know every, I can recognize every tree.

**Samuels:** And you've been very connected, in a lot of different ways, to your community.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** Well, this is a good segue into, we can talk about all the political things you've been involved with since you left the Legislature. Because you're saying, well you didn't go back to work and get an independent job, I think you did work with a lot of different groups, is that right?

**Harman:** Yes, I did. I worked, well I've been always active in the political campaigns. Someone was running for office, I was willing to go out and campaign for them and work in the office and help with sending out mailings and that sort of thing.

**Samuels:** What sorts of politicians did you help?

**Harman:** I worked for the Legislature, the one's running for the Legislature. Governor, I know I walked for miles for the governor, who was it we were working for? Lowry! He didn't get elected.

**Jane:** He was elected, he was governor.

**Harman:** Governor, yeah. He was one that we didn't make it with, but always I was working for some candidate or another who I felt was superior. And in the Democratic programs at the end, you know after the, you choose your candidate in the primaries that you'd like to get in, but if he doesn't make it, you work with the next Democrat candidate.

**Jane:** And then both you and dad, I know dad was precinct committee person.

**Harman:** Yeah, in this district right here.

**Jane:** And then did you also do that, or did you just assist dad?

**Harman:** Well, first I did and then I thought, "Gee, I shouldn't be the only political person in the family." And the kids were growing up, so I just said, "You should take some political action too." So he ran for precinct committee man.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** And I didn't. After that I let him be it. I went to the meetings, and I've always been active. With the community club I was vice president of the community club for ten years.

**Samuels:** Wow.

**Harman:** We did some good things, the community club. We got this restricted parking.

**Jane:** Wait a minute, that's the Fauntleroy Environmental Association.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay, and that's because of the ferry?

**Jane:** Right, to keep the ferry, well the ferry kind of wanted to expand, is that correct?

**Harman:** The ferry, there was talk and plans for the ferry to become much broader and bigger.

**Jane:** The dock, yeah.

**Harman:** And so, you know, it would take roads at that point, you go up and look at the one going to Whidbey.

**Jane:** Anacortes is an example, it's huge.

**Harman:** And parking everywhere, that presents a real problem, when you get a transportation center. So we managed to keep this down to a minimum.

**Samuels:** Well, these roads are so narrow, this is a small, private neighborhood here, and it's right there! So that's why it says you can't park overnight, or is that what it is?

**Harman:** That was a real struggle when we got that. We worked for that. I was vice president of the community association and a friend of mine was president of it, and she did the great work of keeping this in a community rather than a big transportation hub. Yeah.

**Samuels:** Well, I'm sure lots of people are very grateful. I bet your neighbors are glad.

**Harman:** That's right, yeah. And it did keep the parking down here, you know, whenever you go somewhere where there's something, cars are parked everywhere. And it just frightens you to think what happens when whole communities are real problems. And right now they're having quite a lot of worry and concern and talking, and I'm not part of it, but that's to keep—a lot of people are sending their people to Vashon school.

**Samuels:** Ohhh.

**Harman:** And so cars come here with their child and let them out here and they have to park here until the child gets out, and then goes and gets on the ferry and goes to school, and they have to pick them up at the end of it! And the older ones that can drive a car, they're parking over here, during the day. Well, I'm not part of that cause, my neighbors been working on it.

**Samuels:** To try to get that—

**Harman:** Well, try to keep this from becoming such a congestion of cars, that's the problem, what are you gonna do? They're working on trying to solve the congestion of problems of people during the school year sending their children to Vashon. They think Vashon schools are better than the Seattle schools. I have a big question about that one.

**Samuels:** Yeah, that's pretty far out of the way to avoid Seattle public school.

**Harman:** It is. Yeah, that's right. And it's more costly, costs you to go over there to school, and you're removed from their school and their community, as a parent you don't go over there very much. I can't imagine them having much activity with schools, and the schools are really no better. But you have to realize that in Seattle we have a

race problem, too. Whole city. And that's, some people unfortunately want their children to be—

**Jane:** Well, didn't sound right. What you mean is we have many people in the city that don't have as many advantages as other people, so there's a lot of challenges in the schools because the students are impoverished. I don't know what it's like here because I've lived in Los Angeles so many years, but there's African American people and they're lower incomes, and that's what you meant, right?

**Harman:** Yeah, that's what I mean. They're disadvantaged, and then some people would rather their children went to a school over there.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** So they bring them here and they go, I don't know what they do over there, but I question that the school is one bit better.

**Samuels:** Is it a public school?

**Harman:** It's a public school!

**Samuels:** Probably exactly the same.

**Harman:** I think they're about the same. I know someone who lives over there and sends their children to school there, I don't think they have one bigger step than my two who went to school in Seattle. They're just ordinary students, too. My daughter was a teacher in Los Angeles.

**Jane:** I was, but this is outside of your spectrum.

**Samuels:** That's okay! Let's talk about [Jane] growing up. Did you raise your children in a politically aware household? I mean you must have, if both your parents were—

**Jane:** Right. I remember when Eisenhower was elected, I felt terrible that Stevenson had lost. That's my first memory, I don't know if that was like '56, right?

**Harman:** You were born in '48.

**Jane:** What else? My mom and her friend would want to get people elected that were from, like, the Peace and Freedom Party. So we would be going around, where would we be, knocking on doors and passing out literature? Not here, in maybe different areas. We used to do that.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** So you took the whole family with you campaigning?

**Harman:** Yeah, take the children on a walk.

**Jane:** Somehow I don't think Tom went.

**Harman:** No, he didn't.

**Samuels:** No?

**Jane:** Um, what else? Well, that's a side issue, but the Vietnam War came along and right away our whole family here was against it because, first of all, my brother was going to be drafted. And fortunately, or unfortunately, he had a medical issue so they wouldn't draft him. But then, you know that was 1966, we were already standing out on the street corners protesting against the war in Vietnam. And that went on until 1973, so that was seven years.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** Were there a lot of protests happening in the community, in West Seattle, for Vietnam?

**Harman:** There was a group, quite a few groups that worked against the—and a lot of personal feeling against the Vietnam War. You know it wasn't a popular war at the end, at the beginning people supported it, I'm sure, but it didn't take long for people to see that, well, for one thing, when the local children started getting, sons and daughters died, getting killed there. That's when people began to feel really strongly against it. It isn't our war, why are we there?

**Jane:** Like in '68 I was still at Western. We went to a big rally downtown and you were there, and I was there with some friends from Western.

**Harman:** Yeah, there was rallies against the war, the Vietnam War, here and in all the schools. The schools, the students really contributed to our getting out of that war. Because we didn't win it, we just got out. And that's what helped get us out, the students in the school system. She was in rallies, Tom was in, and his wife, were going to the University of Montana, they were walking down the streets too, against the war in

Vietnam. Which did not take place in WWII, you know, everybody was supporting the war.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** So let's see...

**Harman:** I hope I've been coherent.

**Samuels:** Oh, you've been wonderfully coherent. You have a very sharp memory.

**Jane:** You've got a fruit fly there, flying around. We put all the fruit outside but it still hasn't...

**Harman:** I didn't hear that, hum.

**Jane:** There's a fruit fly flying around your head.

**Harman:** Oh. We're battling the fruit flies here now.

**Samuels:** Yeah, we have them too.

**Harman:** Well, this is the time of year, and I have a few little fruit trees and things and I bring the fruit in and set it down on the kitchen counter, pretty soon we got fruit flies.

**Samuels:** Yeah, they go crazy for that.

**Harman:** But they go quick after you corral the fruit.

**Jane:** He's very persistent. Let's see here, I can see him better from over there. Oh, he's still here, this will be a first.

**Harman:** He provably smells my cough drop. We've had them in the kitchen, we've been fighting them today.

**Samuels:** Yeah, it's a summer thing.

**Harman:** Yeah, bugs in the summer.

**Samuels:** You get nice weather you have to put up with fruit flies. Speaking about— Oh, look, it's raining! I haven't seen that in so long.

**Harman:** What was that?

**Jane:** It's raining.

**Samuels:** It's raining finally.

**Harman:** [Jane], you should bring your clothes in. I saw it getting dark out there.

**Samuels:** Yeah, it's been kind of stormy. It's interesting that you said the younger generations were so, you know, critical in stopping the Vietnam War. And they were out there and talking and it's not really something that I've noticed—

**Harman:** Oh, you didn't notice that?

**Samuels:** Well, right now, you know. I guess when Obama was first elected there was a lot of activity with the younger generation, and I noticed that with my friends, but now it seems like people are just not very politically active, right?

**Harman:** They're not involved in it.

**Samuels:** Why...you've noticed that, too?

**Harman:** I worked against going into the Middle East and I started out by going up to West Seattle every Saturday morning and picketing there. And we had the right to go around with our posters, our placards, and we did that for a long time. When they were starting into the Middle East. But it kind of drizzled down and there never was a draft that sent them there, that was one thing, the draft was over. And that's what kept us from having bigger wars, bigger commitments to war, is that there's no draft and if they don't want to sign up, then you can't get the young people to sign. Well then you can't go have a full scale war, that's all there is to it.

**Jane:** It's an odd one because like before we went into Iraq, and you know that was ten years ago, right? There were huge rallies in Los Angeles, and I remember going to one, and my husband didn't go that day for whatever reason. I think it rained five inches, cause we have that kind of weather where you get tremendous amount of rain, and I was just so wet, but there were lots of people, I don't know, probably hundreds of thousands. And then once the war started there was never much, it just disappeared.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Jane:** For whatever reason. You'd see people, and I was also not standing on the street corner, but you'd see just a few people and that was it.

**Samuels:** Yeah, I noticed that. And then it kind of turned into, like, we were there for so long, people kind of forgot even.

**Jane:** It was the longest war, I think.

**Samuels:** Oh yeah, that's still happening. So, what, do you have any advice for the younger generations? The people that don't really seem to be very politically aware right now?

**Harman:** I think about that quite a bit. I think the younger people need to be involved in government. I think that the way to get them involved in government is, and what the results of their action in government, has to be taking history in school. I think that it isn't a required subject, and therefore they don't see the importance, or know the importance of people's actions.

**Jane:** I think they have to take history.

**Harman:** Yeah, I think you have to take history.

**Jane:** But I think students do have to take history.

**Samuels:** Well, they probably have to take, I think I took one, maybe I had to take two history classes in high school. But I didn't have to take any in college, and it was kind of a joke, the ones I took, it was like nobody really paid attention and people weren't interested. So, it should be a priority, like math, math and science and history should be up there.

**Harman:** That's right. But I think history makes you an all-rounded person for your lifetime. It gives you a base for understanding where we came from and how they did it.

**Samuels:** Yeah, and what our actions led to.

**Harman:** That's right. And unless you do have that, you're almost estranged from it, and I think young people today are too preoccupied with all these gadgets that they have, that's what I think. And I know that they love them and want them, but it keeps you from thinking about things.

**Samuels:** I think you're absolutely right.

**Harman:** I think they have too many gadgets. They're always listening to some pop star or, it isn't all that, it's just they're listening to something and they don't really—I don't even know if they talk to each other, I'm beginning to think.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** I think there's no social reaction between groups.

**Samuels:** I've been thinking about that, too, where we're so used to now sending emails and texting where it's, like, very rarely do you sit down and talk to somebody, or just have a conversation. And never, like, in passing. You would never talk to somebody on the street now because they're either listening to music or they're, you know, it's just a very different time.

**Harman:** Yes it is. I know that after the last, was it the last election, I came home on the bus, or maybe it was the one before, and I sat down and the lady next to me said, "Do you mind talking about..." it was our involvement in Afghanistan. She said, "Do you mind talking to me about that?" And I said, "No, I'd like to talk about it." And she was against it, too. And she said, "Nobody talks about that anymore." And also I was having coffee in a shop, I'd been to the doctor and was having myself a cup of coffee before I came home. The lady next to me said to me, "Do you mind talking about this war, isn't this awful?" Well, it's there, it's just not organized.

**Samuels:** Yeah, people are feeling it, but there's very little organization.

**Harman:** To bring them together. Now that's part of, I think part of that is that our political, our social organizations aren't taking any actions, what is it?

**Samuels:** I think people feel pretty helpless.

**Harman:** Do they?

**Samuels:** I think people feel like they're not heard, and maybe it's because there's not enough people saying anything.

**Harman:** Well there isn't enough community get together on it. You don't get together and talk about it. I don't know if there's too much people talking to each other about anything really. I really don't know.

**Jane:** Now, this is a good street because people know each other and they do get together, on occasion. So it's more a community than, say, my street where I live.

**Harman:** It's more community-related than most streets.

**Jane:** It might not be political, but it's certainly got a community basis.

**Samuels:** Any sort of community is important.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Samuels:** And you say you have a coffee club.

**Harman:** Yes.

**Samuels:** And you meet with people and talk?

**Harman:** It's purely voluntary. On Tuesday mornings the bakery has a room where people can come and, they sell coffee and they also have a room, and it was the nicest thing that could have been done for us. This room is available for anyone to come in and sit in there and drink coffee. Well, so we have a group together of about anywhere from eight to twelve people, six to twelve people that get together on Tuesday mornings. This is voluntarily. And we talk about everything, we talk about the government's debt, and how they're gonna pay it off, and all kinds of things. We talk about how much a new car costs, just everything. And it's really good, we've gotten to hear, I would never meet these people otherwise.

**Samuels:** Is it all different ages? Is it mostly older people?

**Harman:** We're all retired, of course, cause it's on a Tuesday morning.

**Samuels:** Oh, that's true.

**Harman:** There is about three women that come, and the rest are men. But there doesn't seem to be any resentment toward us women that come. And we have some that are Republicans, and once in a while they'll stalk out of there and say, "I'm going out and get some support!" You can have your own opinion, but we really have some good discussions. And the other thing that's interesting about this group is they're all retired and so many of them were not born in the United States. Now for this community and these times it's surprising that we would have one person that was in Hitler's army, and he never says anything against Germany, you know, he doesn't say Hitler was right. But he doesn't tell that Germany was—he thinks Germany's a good country, and they're a smart country. And they are, they've done a lot of wonderful things. But then we have, I think it's three that were born in England, we call it the International Club. Everybody was born somewhere else, the International Club. And we have, let's see, those three, and we have one that was a pilot in WWII, he comes and talks about things there, he comes every week, every Tuesday he's there. And he brings

somebody else with him. And I don't know what the other man's connections ever were. But, you know, it's a good discussion group. I don't care what the cost of a new car is, but we discuss that too. But there's no, everybody can say what they want, and bring up whatever subject they want, and we have some real differences of opinion, that's the truth. It just hit and miss, we accidentally got together. I used to go up there and sit alone by myself at that table, and nobody else, and people keep coming in and we finally got a good group together.

**Samuels:** That's great.

**Harman:** Yeah, it's good. It's really good.

**Samuels:** I think conversation is really important and something that people don't understand the value of anymore.

**Harman:** Yeah, and you don't know the background of any of these people. They do give us hints now and again about what they did, or they tell us where they were born. We all know where they were born, and what political party they belong to. And I was there a long time before one of the men said, he was discussing with me about the terrible conditions we're in now, this national debt and how're we gonna get out of it, and how're we gonna manage the unemployment thing. But before that I had no idea what he thought, you know. So it's a great thing, it's a thing that we need everywhere, but where do people meet? And we don't care who comes, anybody can come that wants to, this turns out to be—there's no connection, it's not organized, it's completely disorganized.

**Samuels:** That's really cool.

**Harman:** (Laughing) It's like a town meeting, but no president. We have great discussions. And it's not always about that, it's about all kinds of things.

**Samuels:** Yeah, it sounds like you can bring up anything.

**Harman:** Yeah, whatever is going on in the world, and what's happening, and how much the garbage costs, all kinds of things.

**Samuels:** So, you are a member of the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library.

**Harman:** Yes. I really didn't start at first, I've just been in there less than a year.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay. And what do you do through them? They have, I saw with the last gentleman I talked to that he has a thing where he can listen to audio books. Do you use that?

**Harman:** Well that's pretty much what mine is. I just listen to books on tape, and you choose what you want, and I've been, I thought I'd start and take them on. I wanted them on the period from the Civil War up to about 1900. I thought I'd like to, we don't know much about that, it would be nice to know. So, I said to begin with, "I'd like to have books on tape that are from the Civil War afterwards up to WWI, it would be a gap in my history, and I don't want a million of them, but I just wanna get some." But I've been given good ones, they sent me one on when the United States was still part of, the whole country wasn't a country, that was really a good one. And these people were out surveying for England, and it was really, really interesting about how they would, these surveyors were hired by England to come and survey Kentucky and all these places, and there wasn't even a country here yet. Isn't that amazing?

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Yeah, I didn't have the slightest idea about that. And I'm sure that surveying might not have been too good.

**Samuels:** So you're brushing up on all your history.

**Harman:** That's what I'm doing. I liked history, I took all the history I could take in school. And partly because I had a very good history teacher and she encouraged our reading, so I took all the history that my high school offered, and I took social studies and economic studies. So those things all tie in together, really. And instead of just being reading novels or studying poetry I was doing that in high school. And so that was a good base for these books I'm reading now because I can ask for some things. So far I read one about 15something or other, England was over here. Now, they didn't do much over here before, what, 1776 when we established the government.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And so, all before that was England and, I don't see how we got to be a country (laughing). There was so little organization. Really! And I read about the, uh...

**Jane:** Well you read one about Daniel Boone.

**Harman:** Oh yeah, I read about Daniel, I didn't have any idea what Daniel Boone was all about! But Daniel Boone was over here surveying for England. He and his family were surveying for England, they were employed by the government of England to survey east of the Appalachian mountains and to, not as far as the Mississippi River, they were, you know, just Kentucky, they were going through the gap in Kentucky and finding that gap was a hard job.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** So, it was, you know, you'd get lost and there was no trails and no roads. It was very interesting, I had a great time on that one. I thought about poor Mrs. Boone. He was gone all the time and she's raising...

**Samuels:** All the kids?

**Harman:** The children.

**Jane:** Weren't there a lot of kids?

**Harman:** Ten!

**Samuels:** Whoa!

**Harman:** She had ten children! My next door neighbor, I was telling her about this, I said something about, "She had ten children." She said, "Fortunately he was gone all day or otherwise she might have had fourteen!" Oh boy.

**Samuels:** That is a lot of kids to take care of. She probably didn't sleep very much.

**Harman:** I don't see how they did it, that's an eye opener for me. How did these people go there where they didn't have a store they could buy clothes, they had to make them out of reindeer, or deer? And they had to get that...leather or whatever, the skin of the deer, soft enough to work. And I'm sure they didn't have a sewing machine, I know they didn't, they had to sew that together on their own. For heaven's sakes. And have ten children, what did you dress them in?

**Samuels:** Burlap sacks. I know, it really makes you think about all the things we take for granted.

**Jane:** Right.

**Samuels:** Clothes, and food, going to the store and buying a frozen pizza.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right. And they ground the flour themselves, and they raised the wheat in the little place, and I don't see how they kept the animals out of it.

**Samuels:** Oh, I don't know.

**Harman:** You know. It was really, it's educational, and it opens your mind to what the pioneers went through. They talk about the pioneers were cold and they didn't have good houses, this is worse, they didn't have clothes and they had to make their own shoes.

**Jane:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Yeah. And how did they get bedding? Just think about that. What did they use for bedding? There's no stores.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** It's amazing.

**Samuels:** Makes me feel a little lazy.

**Harman:** Yeah, it makes me feel a little ...lack of intelligence or something. I couldn't do any of these things.

**Samuels:** Like what if you were stuck with nothing at all, what would you do? I wouldn't even know what to do.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right. And no way to keep, what did they do for flour? They had to grind it, and then they didn't have any yeast, how did they manage to raise the bread? And every day you'd have to cook, no, not a decent oven, you just cooked. It's, we have to take our hats off to our forefathers, or the foremothers.

**Samuels:** Well yeah, it's another good reason why it's important to learn about history.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** So you feel grateful for what you have and think about how far we've come, even though there are some things happening today that we might not like.

**Harman:** Now, I was amazed too that these people that would be out settling the country and surveying, be running for the United States Senate and the serving Senate.

**Samuels:** Really?

**Harman:** Yeah. I don't see how they knew what was going on.

**Samuels:** I know!

**Harman:** It's really, really amazing if we look at our background.

**Samuels:** It is.

**Harman:** And I always thought of Daniel Boone as being in Kentucky in maybe 1780, well its way back in the 1500s!

**Samuels:** Yeah, I need to brush up on my history.

**Harman:** It's really, those talking tapes are wonderful things, because the people like me who can't read anymore, and maybe you can't even find books on these things, you know, you don't know for sure.

**Jane:** It's like on a little flash drive.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Jane:** Have you seen them?

**Samuels:** Well I saw what the other gentleman had, but it looked just like a tape recorder thing, kind of. Maybe you have a fancier one?

**Jane:** Well, when I was talking to the woman I asked her, cause they said before, "Oh you can download it." And I'm not good with the computer and so I thought, "How am I gonna do that?" But she explained, she said she would talk me through it, and then she said it's kind of like on a little flash drive, and I know what that is. So, I thought, "Oh, okay, it's not that complicated." So this is the little machine, you've seen it before, right?

**Samuels:** Yeah, okay. And then you can just stick in a little—

**Harman:** Those little, well bring one of those over, Jane.

**Jane:** Whoever invented this was a genius because here it comes to my mom, right, when she's ready she just pulls this out, turns it over, with the other side is their address.

**Samuels:** Wow, and then you just send it back like that?

**Harman:** Out in the mailbox, no stamps, not a thing.

**Jane:** I mean, it's wonderful. We tried it a few years earlier and I wasn't very proactive I don't think. But you know we had a tape recorder from the neighbor and the book had, like, 16 tapes. Well, if you can't see, it's complicated to figure out which tape to use. So, I think this is the flash drive right there.

**Samuels:** Wow, I didn't know it was so small. I thought it was this whole thing.

**Jane:** Yeah, this is the shipping. So my hat's off to whoever came up with that.

**Harman:** It's a wonderful thing.

**Samuels:** It's a great program.

**Harman:** I happened to do it because I had heard about it a lot, and I knew someone who had used it before, a lot. But I didn't pay any attention because I could read, so no problem. But when I could no longer read because of my eyesight, I heard about this, I went to a senior center meeting, and the man was there was this, talking to people, asking if they want to sign up for them. And boy I talked to him and right away I got, it started coming. Not complicated at all. They send it to you, the tape comes in a box, the machine comes in a box, and the tapes, and you just tell them what kind of tapes you want, and they send you something. And if I don't tell them enough, they sent me one of how to make a...it's a funny thing, I think they think all I wanna do is read history, so they sent me one on how to build a terrarium. I had built a terrarium once when I was living at home, you know, before I got married, so I know all about building terrariums, and they're a headache!

**Samuels:** Well, I'll just ask you a few more questions, if that's okay.

**Harman:** Sure, if I can answer them.

**Samuels:** Oh, I'm sure you can. We're down to the broad questions now. Do you, is there anything that you would have done differently? Do you have any regrets?

**Harman:** In my life? It's hard to say, to me. I have been happy, and I think you have regrets when you're unhappy. I'm not sorry I didn't become a professional worker, you know or I would have liked to taught school. But you come to this point where it's not available to you, you're either going to be unhappy or you're going to find something else. So I don't have a great deal of feeling that I wasted my life, I don't have that feeling

at all. I wouldn't have wanted to go back to Olympia with two children, but I still wanted my children. It would be not much if I didn't have a family and a supporting daughter now to take care of me. I better not say that out loud, she doesn't have one, I don't know what she's gonna do. I think I'd do what I'm doing now.

**Samuels:** Well good, that's a good answer.

**Harman:** Whadya say?

**Samuels:** I said that's a good answer.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** I'm not, I was happily married. I didn't think, "Oh, I wish I had never gotten married and monkeyed with all this," you know, I never had that feeling. I have lots of opinions about what's going on, and sometimes very unhappy about the way things are going, but I really am not, and I have never missed the need to get together with people because I always do it. You know, on a bus you can talk to someone, somebody's there who's gonna talk to you. I've got my little social group up at the bakery, the bakery is open from Tuesday to Monday, Monday is closed. And he doesn't care what we're doing in there, he pays no attention to us, but we always buy coffee, and a little, I always get a little round thing or other to eat, and we sit there and talk. And I go about, always get there at ten, and nobody's ruled out, anybody can come that wants to. And there's, it's big enough that there's three or four other tables, and they'll have people talking at them too, and they can be just a bunch, four or five women that decided to come down to the bakery and have a cup of coffee and talk about whatever they're talking about, I don't know. You know, friends.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** It's kind of amazing how we've gotten together, somebody just wandered in and started it. First I was by myself, but all of sudden we got all these people.

**Samuels:** How long has that been going on?

**Harman:** Oh how long have I been doing that, Jane?

**Jane:** Well, did you guys go up there when dad was alive?

**Harman:** No.

**Jane:** Oh, okay.

**Harman:** So it wasn't—

**Jane:** Maybe ten years? I'm guessing.

**Harman:** Yeah, probably ten years.

**Samuels:** And every Tuesday?

**Harman:** Yeah. He died 16 years ago, and he and I went up there all the time and drank coffee, except for a few years when he was too ill to do it.

**Jane:** Was there a big group then, or you guys were just drinking coffee?

**Harman:** Oh, there were people came in, but it wasn't a group of anyone meeting for any reason.

**Samuels:** Yeah, not like now.

**Harman:** No, not like now. This is kind of unique, I think.

**Samuels:** Yeah! Well I read about it in, there's an article about your 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** Oh, I'm gonna give you one of those, we've got a whole stack of those.

**Samuels:** Yeah, and it said you celebrated up at the café and the whole group was there. I think that's just great. I'd like to be doing something like that, it's so hard to find people that, you know, want to come together like that.

**Harman:** Yeah. I was even thinking to myself, I was kind of tired of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday thing.

**Jane:** Oh, it was nice.

**Samuels:** Did they throw a big party for you?

**Jane:** Yeah, it was great. I spent two weeks here, so I got here early enough so that I was here on the day of the party. And there were 25 people, the regular people, and then a good friend of my mom's, Laura came, my dad's brother and his wife and his son and wife. So it was nice.

**Harman:** It was a nice group.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And then we had, then we had, uh...

**Jane:** We had a big party here on the actual day of her birthday which turned out to be a Saturday. The weather was kind of like this, though.

**Harman:** Yeah, but it was okay.

**Jane:** But it was good enough people could sit outside, because there were like 50 people. My cousin next door has got a lot of kids and grandkids, so they made a big bunch. And then there were a lot of friends and some neighbors.

**Harman:** And the people on the street. I was really starting out to have it just be the people on the street to celebrate my birthday.

**Samuels:** Oh, but you have too many friends, that's what it sounds like.

**Harman:** (Laughing) That's right.

**Samuels:** Everybody wanted to come.

**Harman:** Yeah. Turned out to be nice, yeah.

**Samuels:** Good. Let's see, who has been one of the most influential people for you?

**Harman:** Who is?

**Samuels:** Or has been, in your life.

**Jane:** Who influenced you?

**Harman:** Whadya say?

**Jane:** Who would have influenced you the most?

**Harman:** Well, I'm thinking about that. Well a lot of people influence you. My mother was very supportive, she was a political person too.

**Samuels:** And she sounds like a really strong, strong woman.

**Harman:** Yeah, she was interested in what I was doing and she'd talk about it, and she encouraged me to go out to meetings and things, you know I used to go. Well she didn't encourage me, they went to meetings and I'd go too! But that's part of it. And I've had a lot of good friends that have been supportive, and there's always been enough people. The Democratic Party always met and you knew people in that, but actually we had other things that were just as much important as that, yeah. I worked in most every group, I worked in the community group. And what was it that supported me the most?

And then I had quite a few personal friends that were political too, and we'd get together and talk, yeah.

**Samuels:** Sounds like you've been surrounded by people that, you know, that you can talk to, that have been strong role models and...

**Harman:** That's it, yeah. And maybe I came at the right time, I think it's hard in some areas to get people together, but this seemed to be a street that likes to get together.

**Samuels:** That's good!

**Harman:** Yeah, because we have, you know the Mayor has his Tuesday Night Out.

**Samuels:** Oh, I don't know about that.

**Jane:** Well, it's like once a year, isn't it?

**Harman:** Once a year, Tuesday Out, no it's one week out, and it's a Tuesday night for the first or second Tuesday of the month, and he'll close the street if you want to. And so this street has 54 people show up for the Tuesday night out.

**Jane:** So, like, all the people on this street, you'll usually see them because I've been here a few times. But also people on surrounding areas that maybe know people on this street and there street doesn't close off so.

**Harman:** Yeah, you have to, if we want to they'll close it, and I haven't taken an active part in this except to go and take food. So we have, we have tables and they close the street and you bring, we just bring what we want, and we got three long tables and this year we even had tablecloths and flowers!

**Samuels:** And then does the Mayor come here?

**Harman:** Well, no, the Mayor doesn't come here, it's all over the city. Any city can do, any street in the city can do them. The Mayor will close the street.

**Samuels:** Oh, okay.

**Jane:** Now one thing I noticed is there were a couple policemen that came.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** So, they're trying to get the, maybe the community workers that are in this area?

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Jane:** Is that correct?

**Samuels:** Involved.

**Jane:** Yeah.

**Harman:** Always someone in the neighborhood takes an active interest in getting it started when it's starting, you know, it's, there's no plan. They put out a leaflet to the people on this street that, "On this Tuesday at six o'clock we'll have Tuesday Night Out and bring something to eat and your family and come." And it's very informal. Some of us bring our own chairs and, you know, they put the tablecloths on, and it's really gotten to be very nice. And you bring your own, you put your whatever you want, and we don't ask, we don't care what they bring, maybe we'll have all cakes. We have something. And it starts at six o'clock and it ends at dark. And it's a really good thing, you talk to everybody. There are, not everyone on the street comes, there are a few that don't come, or they'll be some away, for vacation or something. Every Tuesday night that they've had this, the first week of August, it's a Tuesday Night Out, and it's good. It's too bad every city, every street don't do this because they've asked them to make people aware that they belong. Who dreamed this up? I don't know, but it's a good idea.

**Jane:** I think it's the Mayor.

**Samuels:** It's a really good idea.

**Harman:** Yeah, it's a good idea because we all get together, and we meet somebody, and we talk awhile, and we eat and share food, and that's a good way.

**Samuels:** Make sure you know your neighbors.

**Harman:** No one has to go to a tremendous amount of work. We had, I told Jane we had so many children this year. I know these children don't all live on this street, I know literally everyone that lives on the street, and a lot of dogs!

**Samuels:** Yeah? Are the dogs invited?

**Harman:** No, they just come. Or somebody brings their dog, or whatever. So, it's first week of August.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** First Tuesday in August.

**Samuels:** Last month.

**Harman:** And I look forward to it, too. Get out there and talk to people. Take your car, or your chair and your own plate and knife, fork, spoon, and a dish, something to serve.

**Samuels:** That sounds like fun, like a big block party.

**Harman:** Yeah, it is fun. And it's been a success, real success.

**Samuels:** Well, it sounds like you have a good street for it.

**Harman:** That's right, we have a very good street, and everybody wants to do it. There's a few that don't, but that's okay.

**Samuels:** Yeah, they're everywhere.

**Harman:** Yeah. Our newest neighbors hardly got moved in before they came, so that's good.

**Samuels:** What's one of the greatest challenges you've faced?

**Harman:** That I've had?

**Samuels:** Mmmhmm.

**Harman:** I think the greatest challenge has been that there's lots of challenges, or worries, but what you want to do is what you can't do. I wanted to go to school and be a teacher, but it turned out I couldn't afford to go to school, there was no money. I couldn't pay the money to do it, I couldn't have gone there, I couldn't have gotten the money together to get a bus ride there. And even though it wasn't as expensive then as it is now, you have to buy books, and you have to pay a tuition. It was not free. And I think that was a real challenge and I didn't meet, I couldn't do it.

**Samuels:** But you did something else that was pretty amazing.

**Harman:** And I don't think that schools prepare students for opportunities. Now I'm deciding this on my own about what my life was like, when we went through high school, we graduated in 1931 and there was nobody working, nobody, no jobs anywhere. Well no one in the school, of course maybe they weren't prepared for it, said to us, "What are you going to do?" You know, you gotta say, you gotta kind of challenge people to say, "What is gonna happen now?" That we just went out cold, all of us, and I walked everywhere looking for a job. I went in every store in the city of Seattle and put in an application for work, and there wasn't one single reply.

**Samuels:** Oh my god.

**Jane:** Also, when my dad became ill, my mom took care of my dad until she could absolutely not do it any longer. That was a big challenge in a different way.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's a different kind of a challenge, though. That's a responsibility that came to me, and I did it. That's what I wanted to do, I wanted to take care of him, I wanted to keep him at home. And I wanted him to be here and be happy as he could be. And I could tell people that you can do it if you want to, and you're capable, if you're healthy enough to do it. But it's a lot of work. But not only do you take care of them physically, but you've gotta provide some kind of a stimulation.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** And you don't want them to be so discouraged that life is miserable for them. But you see you don't know, sometimes these challenges you don't know they're coming. Like when he was sick, he had Parkinson's. Well first you have to convince the doctor they have Parkinson's, they don't see it. Not a bad doctor, nothing wrong, but sometimes people's symptoms are so different from what really it should be. And then I decided that we would do what he could do. And that's what we did. I used to wheel him up to the bakery and, you know, to the coffee drinking group.

**Jane:** Man, that's a steep hill.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Jane:** It seems like a challenge.

**Harman:** Well it was hard work, but I did it. And he was a tiny, not a heavy person, if he'd have been a big man I wouldn't, but he was a tall man, but not. And he was easy to do, some people could be hard, but he wasn't, he wasn't depressed or anything. Only thing was he wouldn't talk much, well I suppose he couldn't talk much and I didn't realize it.

**Samuels:** Mmmhmm.

**Harman:** But it was good and then finally I couldn't lift him anymore, so I had to, he couldn't do anything so I had to put him in a nursing home. And I went over there every day.

**Jane:** Every day. Two days she didn't go. It snowed, right?

**Harman:** Yeah, otherwise I went every day. And got there about 10:30 and stayed 'til they went to sleep at 3 in the afternoon. So I gave him his lunch every day.

**Samuels:** Wow.

**Harman:** We sat and had lunch together in a table in the front window. So that was, it was a challenge. But when you have a disease you're not going to recover from you face it, you do something about it, and that's all you can do. And I kept him at home as long as I could.

**Samuels:** Well, yeah, it sounds like you did an amazing job.

**Harman:** Well, it's what I wanted to do, that's what it amounts to. I wanted him to have as good a life as he could have. And he was a non-complainer, if he'd have complained a little bit it would have helped because I would know something about what's going on.

Now, it's different, too, I was raised in family where we coped with whatever came along. And it was known my mother was not a complainer. She always was cheerful about everything, and we could manage it and do something. And she'd tell me, she'd say, "I don't know what I'm gonna do, but we gotta do something," you know, that kind of thing.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** I think having parents at home is a good thing. My mother was home all the time, and she went to the ladies' club and to meetings and things, and she had the ladies of the neighborhood over. And things like, she'd organize this, every Tuesday a month the ladies would all bring a sandwich and come over and eat it at our house, and that kind of thing. And she'd serve coffee and cake, but that's the kind of person she was. And I was raised in a mixed community; this is one of the things that I think was the best thing about my life. The people in my neighborhood spoke, were born, lots of them were born in Italy, Sweden, and Finland.

**Samuels:** Wow.

**Harman:** So you really adapted to that. They didn't speak English as we speak English, you had to think about what they were telling you, you had to listen! And you

sometimes thought, “Wonder what is it they?” you know, you wouldn’t tell them that, but, “What’s she trying to tell me?” And I think that’s good, I really do. If you’re raised with everybody being exactly like you it doesn’t make a good country because we’re a lot of different people.

**Samuels:** Yeah, sounds like you had to really actively listen, and even, like you were saying at the coffee club, that there’s some Democrats and there’s some Republicans, but everyone’s allowed to talk. And everybody stops and listens, you might not agree.

**Harman:** (Laughing) One of the funny things is that one time one of the Republicans said, “I’m going out to get some reinforcements!”

**Samuels:** He probably felt a little overpowered.

**Harman:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

**Samuels:** Well, do you have anything else that you want to throw in here? Can you think of anything that...

**Harman:** Not really, I’m just going to go with the rest of my life the way I am, so long as I can live in my house I’m going to stay here. I think the hardest thing is if you get disrupted from your routine community. I think if I were to, I’m not against places for other people to live, but I think I’ve been here so long that just moving into a retirement home would be very difficult. I can get by here, Jane comes often and helps, and I hire someone to clean my house. And someone else we get groceries so that I can keep doing this. Now if I got downright sick in bed I couldn’t but I’ve been able to keep on going.

**Samuels:** Yeah, what do you think it is? I realized I did have one more thing to ask you, you’re 100, not a lot of people make it that far and are still so sharp, you know. Do you think it’s this community probably has something to do with it, just being a member of a supportive community?

**Harman:** I think that’s a part of it. I’ve been lucky with good health, so that just means I can manage that one. And I’m willing to talk to anyone. Now if you really need help, I often think about this, across the street from me there was a neighbor and she was older. Not old, but older. And she became less capable and her husband was gone. I

would, I was thinking it the other day, I'd helped her a little bit with her garden, you know, keep her garden. Then I would take, when she really got sick and bad, we'd take over food to her, another woman and I, we'd take over a meal. It wasn't organized as such, we didn't say, "Every Tuesday I've got to take that down." But we did, and I'd buy things that she could cook for herself, occasionally, not expecting her to pay back, you know little pieces of meat or something. I think that's community service, and I think that helps. I think that helps you get the idea that you can stay in your own house and do it. I had a friend who decided to move out of her home and she was telling, when I had my birthday she was sitting by my son, she was saying, "I wish I hadn't of moved away." She moved into a retirement home. And she wished she weren't there. Well, isn't it terrible to get old and then wish you weren't doing what you want to do? I think that's hard.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** You know, you hope that you're going to be, you're leaving behind what you know in a small way, because she knew every neighbor. Maybe you don't go visit them, but you know them, and that's hard. I think that's the hardest part. And these people I have, my son and daughter don't say, "Mom, you've gotta go!" (Laughing)

**Samuels:** No, you're doing good.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** Well yeah, you have your son and your daughter and then the whole street I'm sure takes care of you, and you all take of each other.

**Harman:** Yeah. And I have a couple of other people who come in. I have a young woman who comes, young woman, she's 59! She and I, we'll decide to go to coffee, we'll go to coffee, and I go to coffee with her, and I'll get groceries and things, and we'll talk about this kind of thing. So, I have an outlet there, and I have a girl who comes and helps me clean the house, I hire her. She's a nice woman, and she's a big help, you know she keeps my house going and that type of thing is wonderful, you know, you can't overcome that. Of course Jane comes home and helps me, and my son was here over

the weekend and he was fixing things that needed to be fixed. Yeah, I haven't, I'm happy, I hope I'm here as long as I can. And I think I can.

**Samuels:** Yeah, I do too, just from sitting and talking to you for two hours.

**Harman:** Yeah, that's right.

**Jane:** I think my mom has always been very positive about her outlook of everything. Now maybe exceedingly negative about politics or, you know, those kind of things, or maybe not negative, but critical. But her thoughts about life in general is extremely positive, and I think that might help for your well-being.

**Samuels:** Yeah, I think so too.

**Harman:** Yeah. Well I think the kind of neighborhood I live in, too, is good. What if it was a neighborhood where everyone just got up and went out in the morning and you didn't see anybody 'til night?

**Jane:** Not good.

**Samuels:** No.

**Harman:** And the other thing is, what if it's beyond, completely beyond your means, then whadya do?

**Jane:** You mean like financial means?

**Harman:** Yeah, yeah. And physical means, then it's a different story. But basically I think you're better off, unless you're way overextended, to stay in what you're in than to move into something that you don't, the unknown is there. And it's costing a lot of money, and I just shudder when I think of \$2,000 a month to \$2,600 or \$22,000 a month to live in one of these places.

**Samuels:** They are expensive.

**Harman:** That's a lot of money, how are you gonna get that out of a social security check? It's just completely unrealistic, I haven't wanted to go. Now this friend of mine is in one, she wasn't happy, she told my son she wasn't happy there and she wished she hadn't gone. And the other thing is she happens to have two pensions coming in, her social security and a pension from a job. I don't have a job pension, my husband didn't have a pension from a job, all we had was social security. That's a wonderful help, it's

really a wonderful help. We had, I think the best statement I made at my social group was someone was saying, "What's that social security? It doesn't amount to anything!" And I said, "Well, I'm glad I get my social security check, it's mine, I can spend it." And I said, "If you think it isn't worth anything, send it back." Just send it back, they need it. So that's the way you look at things. And because Jane and Tom grew up on this street, maybe it makes it easier to do these things. It's a friendly neighborhood, you know everybody.

**Samuels:** Yeah, it seems really, just from seeing people walking around when I came up.

**Harman:** Yeah.

**Samuels:** Everyone's out working, it seems friendly. Pretty gardens, pretty houses.

**Harman:** Of course we have the usual diverse people, we have some people that work all day, we don't see them hardly ever, and there are other people that their lives are entirely different, not many, but one or two, they don't do what we do, so that's alright.

**Samuels:** Yeah.

**Harman:** It's a good neighborhood.

**Samuels:** Good. Well I think I'm gonna stop this, unless you wanna throw anything else in there. You good?

**Harman:** Yes, I'm done. I can't think of anything else!

**Samuels:** I got everything out of your head, you're all talked out.

END OF INTERVIEW