

Key Information

Name: Kelly Raynolds

Age: ?

Cabin Number: 99

Date of Interview: October 2014

Interviewer:Carolynn Hammen (Puget Sound)

Ethnographic Preface

Kelly is a self-described old-timer of Salmon Beach, having lived there for roughly 40 years. I actually had the privilege of having two interviews with Kelly because, unfortunately, our first interview did not get recorded. The second interview is what is transcribed here. We discussed many stories about the residents (past and present) of Salmon Beach as well as its origins. Kelly was an integral negotiator in the negotiations that allowed the residents of Salmon Beach to eventually buy the land, and the interview is particularly illuminating on that topic.

Transcription:

C: So I guess the best way to start would be going over the origins of Salmon Beach again, as a fishing community. It was started by the Foss family, right?

Kelly: You know, I don't think it was started by the Foss family. Henry Foss loved Salmon Beach. And he had become, I think, a wealthy—not industrialist—a wealthy boat person. A tugboat person and they wrote books about it. Henry Foss came down here and just liked to hang out with the people. A lot of the types of houses, the old ones like the one next door, that's all that were down here. They were fishing communities and I guess they drank and so forth, but I guess for some reason the Foss family...Henry Foss thought he owned this property.

C: That's interesting.

Kelly: Well, they owned lots of property. And of course, a lot of this old beachfront property a lot of it were logging rights. And in fact [at] Salmon Beach, we own the beach. And that's somewhat unusual.

This is my understanding, Carolynn. I might be off a little bit but in general I don't think I'm off. This property—in fact this came out in the litigation between the Foss and the Baker family. This would have been in the late 40's or '50's. Foss thought he owned it, and the Baker family [thought they owned it]. The Baker family was the big family associated with Tacoma General Hospital. They owned the newspaper—the Tacoma New Tribune. They thought they owned the land.

What came out of that litigation, as I remember, was the question as to the title of this land. This land passed under a very short-lived federal law whose purpose was to combine the tidelands

with the land so that boats could come up, log the land, and take the logs and take off. That's what this land was really for—lumber, I believe.

In my recollection, Salmon Beach was founded around the 1900's. I believe that cabin next door is built in 1908. A lot of cabins were built when the tunnel was built. A lot of the people who worked on the tunnel, I believe a lot of Chinese maybe...they built their cabins here. That cabin next door I'd say was Chinese or Asian construction. It wasn't a 2 by 4 framing like we know; the walls were just a good inch, inch and a half thick. So it was around the 1900's. I believe the Foss...well I guess I don't know why they claimed ownership. But they claimed ownership and in the 1950's they found out they didn't own it [laughs]. The Baker family owned it. Everybody was worried, I guess, but the Baker family said "oh hell, stay there! We'll lease it to you!" And then the Bakers sold it to a person named Wiborg. This portion. The north portion—which I'd say is two thirds and this is one third—the north portion was owned by the city parks. The park department of the city.

C: Is that what became Owen's beach at Point Defiance?

Kelly: It was owned as part of the land at Point Defiance, yes. Now I'm getting a little confused!

The south end, the two-thirds that I'm on, was privately owned. Baker sold it to Wiborg. But I believe the park department always owned the north end. In any event, it was owned between Baker and the park department. Baker sold it to Wiborg, and then Wiborg sold it to us. That is what happened. The park department...the history of their [the north end of Salmon Beach] title is something I am not 100% sure of. But eventually some years after we bought ours, they then sold it to the North End. We were all one community; one organization. Prior to buying the land. Before the purchase of the land.

C: Wasn't the purchase of the land kind of what separated Salmon Beach into two different organizations?

Kelly: it was definitely.

C: At a very basic level.

Kelly: Yes. Before, we were all tenants. We were tenants of the Metropolitan Park Board of Tacoma. We were tenants of James Wiborg. Then James Wiborg decided to sell it to us. Now, I was here then and active during that period. That would have been in the 1970's, when Wiborg sold it to us.

Following that, I was active in the park selling it to the north end. The park board had to unanimously agree to sell it. And they couldn't sell it; they could simply trade property. The big search was on what property that they could find that they wanted, that Salmon Beach could find and then trade with the park service. I think they found some property down on the water front...Ruston Way. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure. But that was the legality of it; they sold it to us, but in reality it was a land swap because they weren't allowed to [sell it]. It's one of those things that's kind of silly, almost.

C: Yeah, bureaucracy almost.

Kelly: Well a park department isn't meant to sell its land. So it gets land and it's pretty sacred. So if the park department started selling their land...who knows who they would be selling it to? Developers and so forth. So they had this rule that they couldn't sell their land, but they could trade it for more desirable property and such. And this property would not be desirable to the public—this is the big issue. The public can't use this; we're living here! So them trading it off for a more desirable piece of land makes sense. And that's what they did. I just can't remember what piece of property they traded it for.

C: I would imagine, probably, the park down on Ruston Way...

Kelly: Possibly. Yes, I believe possibly along Ruston Way because they own a long stretch of land there. And they were buying that stuff up, you see, which cost them money! So to take this money and buy up that land did make sense because the public can use that. And they walk along that land...it has a great walkway whereas Salmon Beach has nothing like that for the public. So it made sense. And that's how that was done.

Wiborg was just an entrepreneurial ... individual, wealthy person. He really decided Salmon Beach was more of a liability. The money was insignificant to him; we paid him almost nothing. In his process, he served notices to vacate the land to like, six people. And the people just blew him off, saying "well we're not moving, see if you can get rid of us!" And I think he no doubt had an attorney—I'm pretty sure he did—who said to him "You better just sell [the land] to them because these are the type of people who aren't going to leave".

Salmon Beach by that time, you see ... it was here before the city of Tacoma! In some ways, it was an old established community. It had a boat house, it had a fishing house that rented poles to the public; it had been here a long time. So, you're not going to have a very sympathetic judge, or jury. So his [Wiborg's] attorney just said his goal was to unload it get the land for as much money as he could. And he did!

C: Was this the story you told me about where you'd go to the gas station and talk to the—

Kelly: The negotiation story? That was done through a kid at the gas station?

C: Yeah! Why don't you tell me that one again. I really did enjoy that one; that would be fun to have [in the Salmon Beach archives].

Kelly: Well my involvement in it [the negotiations between Salmon Beach residents and Wiborg about selling the land] at the time was I would go to the same gas station on 51st and Pearl. Back then we didn't have as many gas stations; they didn't have gas stations at every 7-11. And so it was a gas station for the area. He [Wiborg] would fill his car up there and I would fill mine up. He had known me through previous work I had done years ago. I was also one of the people he tried to evict! And I called him up and said "Well Jim, I'm not leaving and those other six people you tried to evict well they're really not leaving! You might be best just selling it to us!"

Shortly thereafter he decided to sell it. Not from my advice but from the advice from his own attorney. As I recall, he said he wanted \$450,000...\$420,000-\$450,000 which is really just more than the property was worth at that time.

When I went in to get gas, the gas attendant said "You know when I was here, Mr. Wiborg told me..."—that was back when the gas guy washed your windows and filled your gas and all that stuff... "he told me he wasn't afraid to evict the people on Salmon Beach, just so you know". And I said, "Well you should let Jim know this: Salmon Beachers aren't worried about an eviction clause. We've got an argument that we own that land by adverse possession. He may own the title to it, but our adverse possession will take the title from him!" Which was an argument! [laughs]. What he needs to do is become reasonable in selling it. The adverse possession probably didn't have much status to it but it was clearly an argument. Hell we'd been here since,Carolynn—we'd been here since the late 1800's-1900's. So the fact is we did have some rights to it, probably. In some form.

The next time I go up, this kid comes running out and he says "Now I talked to Mr. Wiborg and he said to let you know that he's made an offer for \$450,000 and he thinks that reasonable". And then we started this negotiation to the point where I'd stop for gas every other day, and Wiborg did too! Wiborg drove a great big Continental, that's what it was, and he drove to Seattle every day...he was always going to Seattle for some reason. I think he was president of what was then Seifers Bank, which later became Bank of America. Bank of America bought it up at one time for some reason.

The negotiations went on and on down to the point to where he and I agreed that I would support—and he knew I would! I don't think I was even on the Board of Directors at the time, but we were all kind...everyone was all one community...basically it was the hippie generation that saved Salmon Beach the truth be known. And I think the price was...I said "you know I would recommend \$280,000". And we got down to the method of payment. He didn't want to take more than 30% because then he would have to pay tax on the whole sum any one year but he wanted a big down payment. And we negotiated through that gas station kid! We really did! Finally 'til I went to Sandra who was the president at the time, I said "Sandra, we decided on \$280,000. If we do that, this deal is good". And then we proceeded then...then it became very difficult for us. Not the money we had decided that. We had decided we would pay \$280,000 for it [the land]. But then, the property lines. No one knows where the property lines are! Everyone was kind and they just built the houses and there they were. We even paid a surveyor to survey each individual lot. But people would go out and pull the surveyor's sticks up! The surveyor said "You have to put the sticks down". We handed out rebar with red flags on it for the surveyor 'cause he has something to know what he's surveying...we could never agree upon that. Then we had to have an agreement amongst ourselves! You know...as to the maintenance of the trail...the millions of things that come from jointly owning property. We have 47 of us owning property together.

Then ... the North end leaves us. They said "you guys are on your own. You're a bunch of knuckleheads who can't agree on anything so we're leaving you". So we were here trying to figure out what to do ourselves. We hired an attorney...Gilman was his name. He legitimately

drew up what looked like a great agreement to any attorney. It was a condominium-type agreement of joint-ownership thing that made some sense, but no one would agree to anything.

Well the time is coming where Wiborg is selling this land and he's wanting his agreement. And we can't agree amongst ourselves! We can't agree as to property lines, we can't agree as to the terms, we can't agree as to...[trails off]. Wiborg also wanted every one of us to be jointly and separately liable for the contract and guaranteed the whole payment. So everyone started getting paranoid and thinking "I'll have to pay the whole \$280,000 on my own if everyone flaked out". Well yeah...but that's what he wanted it. And it was a pretty short contract if I remember correctly.

Finally, we had the agreement, and he wanted everyone to sign it and no one would and no one had agreed amongst ourselves. You see, we had to agree with him but amongst ourselves we couldn't agree about what was going on. And the meetings would be shouting matches! [laughs]. Yep, it was really bad! "I'm not going to do this! No one is going to tell me what to do!" and it went on and on and on...and Richard Turner stood up and says "I make a motion that we never discuss this again. We never discuss covenant again, we never discuss this again. And that we sign that contract, and we all go sign it, and Tom tell us how much we owe each month". We unanimously passed it. So we passed it around and we all signed it. We never agreed to any covenant, we never agreed to anything.

C: I guess it solves some of the problems.

Kelly: Yeah. We had a corporation. We bought it [the land] under the name of the corporation. We all individually had to sign it. We had bylaws and so-forth but we don't have a condominium agreement, we don't have it. And so that's what we ended up with. But, Carolyn, we had ownership against the rest of the world. So the worst-case scenario we would have to get busy and make some really hard decisions if we had to. And we have since that time—that was a long time ago that was in the 70's...since that time we've had a way to sign leases. If someone wants to sell property Salmon Beach will sign the lease with them. That way they can sell property which banks are willing to loan money on. We still don't really have an agreement amongst ourselves. But if you sell property, people are going into the standard lease agreement that an attorney up the hill drew up so that banks will accept the sale of the property. To tell you the truth I would probably have to sit down a while and figure it all out...because when we bought it, it was as much up in the air except for one thing: we owned the title against the rest of the world.

The one...another thing that happened on the title is when we put the service system in, the city wanted us to sign a hold-harmless agreement.

CH: What's that?

Kelly: If the hill slid—'cause we have this kind of unstable hill behind us—if the hill slid they wouldn't be responsible because they put a sewer line in. They came down the hill and along the beach... in other words, they wanted to be held harmless.

CH: So they would want to be blameless even if their sewer line caused the instability?

Kelly: Yes, that's what they wanted. Which is, you know...that's kind of what everyone wants: to be free of liability. What the final agreement was, though...we ended up...we gave them a grape and took the grape tree, really. We gave them a hold harmless, except for any act of negligence, [even] if they were negligent. Which really you can't waive your negligence, in a way. So in a way, that's all we really had anyway. If they were negligent that's really all we could hold them for. So we came out clear, but we negotiated with them. And boy, I tell you, it was right up to the edge 'cause I was doing the negotiations with the guy next door—his name was Hal Eggers, he was a professor at your dear UPS—and he was a piece of work for sure. He would be the bad guy and I would be the good guy, believe it or not! We negotiated up to finally saying “we won't sign it!” And they said, “Well you won't have a sewer because of you”. And I said, “Well, that's not how we look at it. We won't have a sewer because of you”. And it was over one little clause: for us to let them off, except for negligence, they would have to agree that the city cannot use the instability of the hill against the interest of Salmon Beach in any way, including the issuance of permits. So they couldn't stop issuing permits because it's unsafe; they couldn't say “we want to evict you because of the hill”. They couldn't use the instability of the hill against our interests.

CH: That's clever!

Kelly: It was.

CH: And is that still in place today?

Kelly: Oh yeah, it's the covenant that runs with the land. Now, this is an interesting thing from an anthropologist standpoint...not anthropology...what are you studying?

CH: I'm a student of anthropology, yes.

Kelly: Oh, anthropology. Now this is interesting. I could go back the 40 years I've been here, and I know vividly the history that has taken place and that type of stuff. We are replaced. When that agreement was signed, from Wiborg for instance, we just became aware that out of 45 houses, there are only 7 signators left to that original contact. What happens is that the laws, the decisions that are made, are not passed on down the line. Well, very few people might even know about that clause. Right? Remember when, just recently in the past couple years, they had that horrible slide up north? People said “oh my God they're going to try and close us down!” And I said, “well we have that clause so they can't use that reasoning”. No one knew about it! There might be 10 of us that know about it. So one of the things is in these communities, how do you carry on the legalities or the laws or the reasoning? What if I were to ask you, what is the reason for unlawful search and seizure of your house without a warrant? What's the reasoning for the cops not being able to just walk in your house with out a search warrant? You know, some young person may not even really know the answer to that! Whereas that's a reason people almost went to war for—to preserve that right against the police state or abusive behavior. It's the same thing, these laws, as time goes by, and the thing you find is that no one knows they are there! That's a thing I have seen in my time here that is very evident. The

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reasoning for a lot of stuff we did when we bought the land and when we built up the community...time has passed, and the new generation of people don't even know about it. I wouldn't even be able to tell you what's in the bylaws! We had some bylaws, but if no one knows what's in them or don't refer to them...and I think that's probably just part of what happens to society, you know? The older generation passes..

I remember during the civil rights movement a lot of us at the time said "you know, the old bigots that were such a problem in racial discrimination, they just have to die off". They just have to die off. And I don't mean that in a cruel way, because they forget. So when it passes from generation to generation, how you pass on the thing...I think one of the ways you do is you pass it on through history. And that's one of the big values to pass it on through history. I think that's one of the big values of having history classes in school systems and so forth. That's one of the values...anyway, from an anthropologist standpoint...that clause which is so critically important, how many people on Salmon Beach even know it?

[Kelly's cell phone rings, stops to check if it's a call he is expecting. He explains that it is not and puts it away, and continues to speak.]

So anyway, that's another thing that legally happened. So we own the land, we got that covenant, and among ourselves we simply had developed a way that people can sell their land. So legally...however, beyond that, we don't have a condominium agreement. We own it against the rest of the world.

CH: So then what do you think will happen when it comes to the point where all the original signators either die or leave Salmon Beach? Would that make the original title irrelevant?

Kelly: No no no. The reason I mentioned those original signators, I think everything I can talk about... [trails off]

We had an issue come up about how to use common spaces. You see, there's these open spaces along the beach. When we bought that, we were very specific those spaces could not be sold, they could not be used...they would be left untouched. Now, people are wanting to do things with those spaces. They had no idea the history that went into those spaces. You know what I mean? They might say "well lets build a boat dock there", or something—not that they're doing that. I'm just saying, it became evident that they're not used to it. That's why I say there's only 7 signators left, but that became a very key part. Because so much of intent and purpose...if you go into law, in a piece of legislation...the courts—when you have an ambiguity in a piece of legislation, the courts go back and look at what is the intent? They'll go back to legislative hearings, speeches on the floor in the senate. And the purpose of this is that if there's an ambiguity, it's not clear what they meant. And that's what I was thinking about it. There's really only 7 of us could tell you that was the purpose [behind the way the covenant was written]. Then the big thing is, what difference does it make because now there's 40 others who don't care about that! You know what I mean? That's just the progression of life...of society.

When I was in Micronesia, there was an island that was [name of island], and it was a big, tall island—looked like some Fiji... waterfalls coming off on it, and I spent some time there.

CH: Sounds pretty.

Kelly: It was gorgeous. They think that in the 1800's, it had a population of maybe 40 or 50,000 on this island...it was a big high island. And the Boston whalers came in and smallpox hit, and it reduced the population down to 200 people. That 200 people—when I was there, it was up to about 10,000. That's 200 people that pass on their biggest burden, which was carrying on the history. All of their history, all of their laws, all came into something they called their customs. This is "our custom". This is how it's done. You get to live on the land if you take care of the coconut trees or if you grow the crops. When you stop planting crops you no longer have the right to the land. Those are customs, we call them laws. Keeping those customs was their biggest thing and so much of that was just oral history. That's what it was. And they just had to pass it on...they were under this enormous pressure to pass it on. Everyone was really in tune to grabbing on to everything in that oral history because it was almost all wiped out because of smallpox.

I think, in a place like Salmon Beach, the practical problems that arise can be taken care of on a day-by-day basis; you might not need established laws, so long as you own the land against the rest of the world and the city can't kick you off of it. Then you're just taking care of your stuff by the seat of your pants because back when we bought the land our attorneys said, "this is crazy! You don't have any agreement, this is nuts. You guys can't do this...there's 47 people there and you have no agreement amongst yourselves?" And hey, it's worked just fine! We meet once a year, and we get in there...its worked just fine.

A big problem for us here on Salmon Beach is houses moving in front of other houses; people building in front of your house.

CH: As in...this person decides to expand their house out this way [gestures towards the water]?

Kelly: Yeah, and blocks my view. That's a big issue, and that's one that can cause fights between neighbors, almost. You know what I mean? Real disagreements...those things come up.

CH: Yeah that kind of relates to something I was thinking of after our last interview. Are there specific building codes? Do you run into any issues with that because so many of these cabins are so old and have historical relevance?

Kelly: We have had a traditional...well not traditional but over a long period of time we've had standoffs with the building department.

CH: I can imagine.

Kelly: Almost all these houses were built without permits.

CH: [Laughs] Well, I mean, back in the 1890's you probably didn't need one, so...

Kelly: Well you might have needed them but they were just done without it. Salmon Beachers are made up of a lot of...gamblers at heart, I think. It's a little more difficult to take those gambles

when you're buying expensive houses, than when you're buying one for \$2,000 versus \$200,000 or \$300,000. But they still do it, so most of that stuff was done without permits. We've always had a touch and go relationship with the building department. People build the houses quick over the weekend, you know. This house next door, he piled up great big piles of firewood so you couldn't get through on the path for 3 days. Because he didn't want inspectors to be able to get in. Yeah that type of thing. Its extreme but that's what he did! But most people do it pretty quickly...they gather all the materials and suddenly its torn down, and there's a structure there.

In this day and age, no one would really mind getting a permit. But they've made the permit process on water so extremely difficult, you almost have to give up. I don't know what to say. Its done without permits to a large extent, although have been quite a few permits. Thought that's been quite recently but over the history a lot was done without permits. It's been kind of a community of bandits, in that regard. In regard to permits, for sure. They've snuck around...no one really minds building according to code. But there is a certain amount of it that is unreasonable from the standpoint of the person here. From the standpoint of the city, you need building codes but they have a problem with [that] the houses were there! They existed before the building codes even existed! So the arguments go both ways...but we've been a headache to the building department, and they've been a headache to us.

But you take somebody like the electrical department, they don't have to worry about the building. They come down and inspect the electrical independent of the building department. Recently, there was an exception to that, that is kind of raw on people...their only deal was that we want the electrical to be safe. Some people would give you a permit, and whereas someone else wouldn't give you a permit. Then you can get a permit for remodel but not something new, but what's a remodel—it's not over 50%. Then ecology, they don't want you to shade the sound. That means they don't want you to make dark areas because predators that go after the little salmon can hide underneath...they get into some almost ridiculous arguments, it seems. Building out over the water, is something you just can't do anymore. We are preexisting, so we can do it, but the development is touch and go. But it makes for...[trails off].

And the steepness of the hill; walking down the hill every day—you've walked down it. You walk down, you raise kids and so forth. Going down 250 stairs every day plus additional path going up...it makes for a certain type of person down here. That I will say, that commonality of somebody who is a bit of a gambler—I don't know if that's the right term—but who is willing to do that and take that chance, there is something in common. Whether they be an attorney or a welder. A professor or a surgeon. We've had all those people live down here. There's a common thread in their personalities that brings about that they would buy a place over the water—subject to winter storms; every day coming down steep hills; with a steep, unstable hill behind you; with building departments that aren't particularly friendly... it creates a certain type of people. And living in on the water and so forth is a return to them in itself. Living in a place where you don't have to lock your doors, you know what I mean? Living among a certain degree of characters, so to speak. Someone that...interesting people. There's interesting people. I'm not explaining this well but its just stuff I'm feeling.

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CH: No it's true. Even in the two ... maybe three times I've been down here, it's definitely a very specific community of people. It definitely has an entirely different feel than the rest of the Tacoma area.

Kelly: Well look how close we live. Look at that house right there! You have to live with [them].. and you can have someone you don't care for [next door]. But I tell you, in a storm if you knock out a piling your neighbors have to help you put it back. If your neighbor gets in a pinch you have to help them, you know what I mean?

CH: You look out for each other.

Kelly: You kind of have to. So, you can let disagreements go only so far. And then you just have to stop because the fact is you are kind of interdependent to a certain degree. But that's also the kind of thing that makes for a community. No one will turn you over for, you know, making moonshine down here [laughs]. Or growing marijuana! They're not the type of people that ask someone else to take care of their problems. So that makes them an interesting group.

CH: Live and let live but they also take care of each other.

Kelly: Well they won't call the policemen on you. They won't call the authorities; they take care of the issues face to face. Also if you have children, everyone kind of watches them. They truly do. It'd be a good place to raise kids.

By the way, what was I going to ask you? [Asks about the goal of the Salmon Beach Oral History Project, Carolyn explains the parameters of the project and its intent].

Kelly: Well the place is run by customs and deals. It's not run by a rigid enforcement of a set of laws—it never has been...even, who knows if you looked at our—not our articles of incorporation those are pretty standard but our bylaws. Oh hell, at any meeting they might pass a bylaw as to building a bulkhead in a certain gap that can just be irrelevant and doesn't apply anymore. One time they had a bylaw about how wide the path had to be. You never know what might be there. But it's just run as the need requires.

[Kelly answers a phone call from his son. Kelly's son Steven invited him to view a Seahawks game, we have a short discussion about the Seahawks and football]

CH: What I was saying is the houses themselves and their very existence has some relevance but what I see is that you cannot understand this place it without trying to understand the people and listening to what they have to say. And that's why I view this project as significant, because it is such a specific community and it is such a certain group of people who come here.

Kelly: Well when I came in...earl 1970's. 1973-1974.

CH: Yeah, I think you told me it was '73.

Kelly: '73. Well when I came here a lot of the houses were used as weekend places by people who liked to fish. Some of the houses were inhabited by the "old timers" who lived here...a lot of people lived here because it was cheap. I bought my house from those people for \$1,250 in 1973 or whenever it was. So it was a cheap place to live. A lot of them liked to be able to sit, fish, sit by a wood fire, and drink, and not have anybody bother them. So I think a lot of them were loaners...[sighs] the majority, I believe, of those people, by the time I was here for some decade before were heavy on men—single men. When I bought my cabin, the cabin was full of these old fishing lures—god, I wish I'd saved them—and little jiggers for drinking hard booze out of. And what I did see was there would always be overstuffed furniture and there would always be a stove, and there would always be firewood. Firewood was easier to gather back then because it just came off the Sound.

One of the things I noticed is I didn't see any girly magazines, I didn't see anything related to sex and so on and so forth. The liberated hippies that had come in, right following the discovery of birth control pills, I think a lot of that changes the very young group but there was an older group of these fishermen who liked to sit around and drink and tell stories, and keep their houses together and go out in boats ... and they often had jobs. Some of them had jobs at the smelter, where they were. A lot of the wood and so forth was built from old smelted Timbers...a lot of those guys worked there. The guy I bought this house from, he worked at the smelter. And a lot of the places were just for the weekend for fishing, just a place to get away. Then there were a lot of people...a lot of men who had been injured in the heart, so to speak, by divorce. OR by women, or by, you know...and then there were those who were just loaners. And the community has been an attraction, and still is, for people with a kind of an artistic bend. There's a lot of artists.

And then, I think there's just a lot of people who like a community—a small community, which is hard to find elsewhere. Where you know your neighbor and just have to put up with them whether you like it or not...you know your neighbors. Believe it or not—because it's at the bottom of the hill, no cars come down—it's a safe community. You know, the parking lots have had a history before where kids have broken into the cars and so forth but the community is safe. So that's an attraction. There's been a lot of professors that lived here, a lot of artists that lived here. It would have to be someone who has to think it through more than I, to describe the people who live here. But clearly, it's an interesting group. You can almost guarantee that if someone lives here, in their personality or something, there is something that would be a little bit out of the ordinary, if there is such a thing as a norm for people. And I'm not sure there is much of a norm. But, this is a good outlet; you don't have to conform quite as much as you might up the hill, down here. People don't report you; you can be any way you want. We have a few people, over the years, that have been down here that ... a couple of cases, I'm sure if they had to live up the hill they'd probably be institutionalized. But they can make it down here because people who just...there'd be a certain tolerance.

You can tell a normal Salmon Beacher—a normal Salmon Beacher I say whatever this means, it may be kind of silly—but a normal Salmon Beacher, if a young woman came down and she was pregnant and she had been taking drugs and she was 18 years old and she had been beat up and so forth ... they wouldn't be surprised. They'd advise her, talk to her, ask her in, maybe help her find...they wouldn't be startled by the stuff that happens to somebody. If you're ever in

desperate shape to talk to someone about a deep secret, this would be a good place to come because most people down here would have no problem. What brings that out? That kind of lack of being judgment? I don't know. But it's something I noticed. So when you say you're interested in the concept of people...yeah, houses are just houses, in a way. They're unique, in a way, but I think it is the people.

CH: You did say this...the way you phrased it interested me you said 'the hippie generation saved Salmon Beach', and I was just wondering why you feel that way?

Kelly: I think Wiborg and the park thought Salmon Beach was just going to disappear. Literally the storm—when I came down here, the path...I mean, I came down and a storm had wiped out the path one time so you had to climb down a ladder on the path, walk across the beach and up another ladder on the other side. Not uncommon to come out on someone's deck, walk down three decks and then come back because the path was so bad. And the houses were crumbling and so forth. And I think the city and Wiborg and everyone just thought Salmon Beach was going to wash—literally, going to wash into the bay. And it was almost gone and would be gone, and there were very few inhabitants.

Well, the hippy generation found Salmon Beach and it was like throwing bear into the rabbit patch. My God! We can make this building work; we don't have to spend any money; some of us can grow marijuana on the back there and no one cares; and it was this movement of going back to nature. A very common thing was the Whole Earth catalog, and there was another book or two...so what they were doing is they were young, they didn't have any money, they were idealistic—extremely idealistic—you could buy a place for \$1000, \$2000, \$3000, and then you had a home. And you had all these other people like themselves buying these places up. And that was what was attractive to hippies, whatever that definition is. I'm thinking of what I think of hippies. It's just when I moved out here there were a lot of what we call hippies living here. And they mingled right in with the fishermen. They mingled with Louie... who went 2 houses down who had a carpet company. And that group of people did save Salmon Beach. They literally went out on the Sound, found wood...you can't believe how much of this house [Kelly's house] is wood that floated up off the Sound! It's true! And so many of these houses And so many of these houses were; they just went out there and for nothing they gathered wood, they heated them with fire, they paid very little in rent ... and then they brought in the bulkhead so the path stayed.

Then, Wiborg, when he made us buy it and we started having to pay him, a lot of people had to go get real jobs! A lot of people said this will ruin Salmon Beach forever. We have to work, you know? I remember...I lived here for, I believe, \$20 a month. That's what I paid Salmon Beach!

CH: I can't even pay my groceries for \$20 a month; I can't even pay my electricity bill for \$20 a month!

Kelly: You can hardly get in your car and drive to Seattle! You can't do either! I'm just saying it was cheap and that was very attractive...and so the hippies were going back to nature. They were dissatisfied with the bureaucracy and the social life their parents had built up, and all the

pressures. They were all very well educated; they were all very much opposed to the war in Vietnam—they thought it was a sin. And I wonder if I could bring that back to you but probably not...but the huge dissatisfaction with the American government because of Vietnam, and they were for the civil rights movement and for the women's rights movement. The thing that perplexes me today is that the equal rights amendment for women did not pass, and it was never brought up again. Because that was a big movement first the hippie generation; as well as the civil rights movement; as well as opposition to the war in Vietnam. They were willing to live just on just idealism. They studied Buddhism and they studied all sorts of different religious and meditations...they tried to cook natural.

That is the one that Salmon Beach is crumbling into the sea. Literally disappearing. The park didn't care where it went! Wiborg didn't care where it went! That would be just fine for the place to disappear. The city of Tacoma...more power to them! Let it get washed off by the sound! But they came in and fell in love with an idea of a community on the water. And my understanding is these communities like this—on the water, residential—were all up and down the west coast. Salmon Beach is really the last one left in the continental United States.

CH: Yeah, I can't think of any and I've lived here my entire life.

Kelly: I understand there are in Alaska and Mexico — they still exist.

CH: I'd imagine so.

Kelly: Some places like Sausalito are still in place but they've become commercial places. The reason I think Salmon Beach stayed is because of the hill.

CH: Yeah! And it doesn't have an elevator or anything.

Kelly: Well you see little remnants. There's houses over in Gig Harbor but this place actually had a store, a boathouse. That's my understanding—in the continental United States this is about it. It's a state historical site, I believe.

CH: I'm pretty sure it is. I know you can buy, like, the books on Tacoma—the touristy books—they always include a spiel about Salmon Beach. Why was the boat house...why is it not here anymore? Was it torn down? Was it burnt down?

Kelly: It was torn down and the guy built a house in its place. He bought the boathouse for nothing. That boathouse one time...well, I think the Point Defiance boathouse simply overcame it, but, it had a boathouse and a store here. People would take the trolley out to 51st and Pearl, rent a boat, and go out fishing. Back then you could catch a 20 lb. fish...they'd walk on the trolley car with all these fish, and go home. And that was...that boathouse was torn down, I believe, in the late '60's. But I believe it had gone into total disrepair. Someone bought it, tore it down, and built a house. And the house that was built, was great, big, way out of character for a the little houses. Now there's more houses like that. It's at the bottom the first path now.

CH: Like the very bottom one?

Kelly: Yeah, the very bottom.

CH: Okay, I'll look at it on my way out.

Kelly: Well now there are so many big houses around that you might not recognize it. Back in 1972 it was the only big house around on Salmon Beach. And that has come, I believe in all honesty, its just because families are living here again and need more space. The real truth about it is you see these big houses—and there are a few that are big—but most of them you see...for instance, this [Kelly's house] may seem like a really big house but it really is a small house.

CH: Yeah, in the grand scheme of things.

Kelly: it really is a small house. These houses really...there are a couple that have some size to them, but—

CH: Well compared to what you would get up the hill...

Kelly: They're not really [that big]. There are some that are that are stretching' the size of the lot trying to be that, but, I think the size of the houses has expanded simply because people need more room for families.

They started off, in my understanding...you can check this out but I think I'm right, as weekend cabins. And at the end of the Second World War...the First World War. 1920 whenever that was, that's the first time families moved in. And what they did is they added an addition. And what they did is they added an addition. And when they were all here, you could see where the addition was put on. Sometime they'd put on to the side if there's room to the side. Soften they're put on the back. Very common, the front deck would be covered and they'd build another deck out to the front. That was most common. And what that room was for was for the kids to sleep in.

[We take a break from the interview so Kelly can refill my water glass, and offer me other drinks, and use the bathroom. Kelly also offered suggestions for how to collect stories of the people who lived on Salmon Beach. He then launches into stories about his time in the Peace Corps, when he was stationed in Micronesia]

Kelly: My wife and I split up in... '72 or '73. And the first time I had heard of Salmon Beach was Nancy and I, my wife and I, were driving through Point Defiance Park. An old Swedish guy...his name was Abe Christianson. Abe Christianson flags us down on the 5 mile drive, this is in the '60's, and said "Can you give me a ride back to Salmon Beach?" We said yes, and he said "My boat broke down, its tied up, and I came up the hill...I can't row it in the waters its too rough so I'll have to get the boat tomorrow. Can you take me back to Salmon Beach?" I said okay, where is Salmon Beach? So he took us him down this road and let him off. So I ask around this firm that I work at about Salmon Beach [and they say] "oh, yeah Salmon Beach got a bunch of fishermen living down there ". A bunch of drunk fishermen who knows what they said? I was just kind of curious.

Then an old friend of mine came through...he found out about Salmon Beach and bought a house for \$350. He was looking around, I don't know where he found out about it. He asked me to confirm the title for it and I said [laughs] I would draw you up a contract with the guy, you know what I mean, but I won't do more than that. But anyway I came down with him and saw it. Then when Nancy and I broke up, I just needed some place to live because I decided to change what I was doing. I started teaching, but I needed a place to live. And [my friend] said "well, there's Tiny Mally's place" and it was \$90 a month. That was all utilities included! Everyone thought I was a fool to rent it for that. Way too high!

I came down...it wasn't well lit. Remember now, place that path as barely walkable. But its okay, and little tiny houses with no one in them. There weren't very many people. Literally this is why I said the hippies saved the place; there was hardly anyone living here. You'd walk...I could probably recollect walking all the way from the stairs down here and pass only one or two places that were inhabited. Every place is inhabited now. The second night I came down, I bought a bottle bourbon. Cheap bourbon. I think I saw someone, introduced myself, kept going, went into Tiny Mally's house...cold as hell; it was November or something. Colder than hell in that place. I hear a knock on the door, and there's some old timers. They say "we heard you moved in" and I say, "oh yeah, good to meet you", so on and so forth and then I said "would you like a drink of bourbon" to which they said, "we would". I'm telling you, they drank that bottle of bourbon then they left! [laughs] Gone! Just left! So I'm left wondering, boy, I wonder what this place is like!

I lived here and built this house pretty much myself. At the bottom of the stairs is a house built by Napier Wright, and he was a true tradesman. Its still there, pretty much like it is. So many of the houses built by the hippies are still here and in tact. I never knew a thing about building a house when I built this, and there are a lot of houses left like this. [Proceeds to describe to me the dimensions of his first house on Salmon Beach, Tiny Mally's. The entire house was less than half the size of Kelly's living room].

For my own personal experience, I had been here...maybe 5 years. And this artist Napier Wright, he's living at the bottom of the stairs. He's married to this woman Ginger. Well I like Salmon Beach and I just like observing what people do. Here, you really get to watch people, you live so close to them! There's not very many secrets. You can have your own personal secrets if you want and people will leave you alone if you want to be left alone. But you just see people...well, this particular morning it was cold. I was going to work, and I thought to myself "what am I doing here", you know? I said "this place is absolutely nuts". And I'm walking down early in the morning...Napier's girlfriend is this woman named Ginger. Quite a strong woman—most of the women down here are strong women. The women who come down...hey, they've been on the boards of directors; there's some powerful, strong, wonderful women who live here.

I get down to the gap right behind the stairs and I hear her yelling at Napier, "Napier, I want heat!". It was cold. To the point where I stop, because, you know you kind of get embarrassed when you think you hear two people arguing. [She yells] "You promised me heat last year and I want heat it is cold!" She was, you know. Pretty soon it kind of lets up...I don't ever hear Napier but I assume he must be in there talking. She's really mad—but if you ever knew Ginger that's just

her personality. So I start walking, and I get close to their house and out comes Napier in his bathrobe, with a chainsaw. And he starts cutting up his two by fours—that's the building! He starts cutting up the lumber to build the house with!

CH: Wait, why?

Kelly: To get Ginger heat! [laughs]. He was cutting up the 2 by 4's to burn! That's how desperate he is! And I said, "You know, if I live up the hill, I won't ever see this! I'll never see a guy cutting up his building materials, with a chainsaw, in his bathrobe, because his girlfriend is yelling at him I want heat!" I said, "Where will I go? I won't see someone go by in a boat with a piano, and the boat turn over!" I'll miss all that.

CH: Wait what's that story, the piano?

Kelly: That's George Jay —that's where Andrew lives right now! Oh he was a character. He was a character. To show you...okay, I have children by then, right? George Jay has a boat built by a boat builder, who doesn't do a very good job. This boat ... George designed it, so I don't know who to blame, but this boat kind of went like this [tilted his hands to the side to indicate the boat did not float upright in the water] and it was unstable this way. It was the worst boat you could possibly imagine! But George put some money into this and, you know, he's not going to admit failure. So he uses this boat. Well, they have a piano in that house—in Andrew's house. What's his last name? You call him Professor ... Gardner. Well anyway he has a piano.

Now George is always high on marijuana. He's been a stock broker...everything. He could sell you ... the Brooklyn Bridge. This guy could sell you anything. So George has these two young girls, and his wife is ... an earth mother [briefly describes George J's wife]

They have a Montessori school, over in Gig Harbor. And this piano has been in this damn house for a long time...I don't think it had much value. But it was an upright piano. George was going to donate this, and then have a guy from the beach who claimed to tune pianos go tune it. George was going to trade him some marijuana, you know. One of these deals. So he gets in this boat, they lower it down, this piano...George Jay takes off, and this boat ... the boat goes off and turns and just turns over, right in front! Floating! Someone get's a pike pole—you know what a pike pole is? A huge pole used to pull logs in—pike poles the piano and pulls it in! George is in the water and says—dead serious—"Linda! Linda! Call the Montessori school and tell them I won't be able to deliver the piano today!"

They pull this in. It so happens that my son, his friend and his brother (my step son) see this whole thing. And tells people, "oh, well a piano fell in the water but they got it back". And I thought "god this kid's going to be warped. This kid believes this is actually how things are done!"

His mother—bless her soul...did I tell you any of these stories? Because if I'm repeating just let me know. Well his mother comes down for the first time, and she's pretty prim and proper. She and I are still good friends, we divorced 40 years ago...We had joint custody, back then when it wasn't really common but we did. So Steven [Kelly's son] and I lived in this little shack, and Steven said "we need to ask mom to dinner". So I said okay, we'll fix dinner.

So she's coming down to Salmon Beach for the first time. I've lived here for a year, and Steven's lived with me. Out from Paul Skillingstad's house comes this woman—I'd tell you her name but she's actually pretty well known in the community and I don't know if she'd want me to! But—as I won't name her—she says "Steven!" Nancy said she's stark naked. She says, "Steven? Have you seen George Jay?" and Steven said "well, I think he's probably at his house go down there" and she says "well I will!" Nancy is, of course, just stunned. Just stunned! She said "well Steven, what do you think that's about?" He said "I think she just wants to borrow George's shower".

Another time, they did a raid on this person's marijuana patches on the hill. And Steven said, "The police are stealing this guy's livelihood!" And Nancy would always call me and say "Kelly, I just want you to know you're a wonderful father and I am completely confident, but I thought I would tell you this". That's how she would set it up! She [unidentified lady] was naked, asking Steven where George was, and later Steven was accusing the police of stealing this guy's livelihood! Which was unheard of, at the time.

CH: That's too funny.

Kelly: Well that's the piano floating, and Steven's like, "oh yeah, they got it back". Just like this happens every day.

CH: Did the piano work again?

Kelly: I don't know. We put the piano up inside Andrew's house, in that side area, and everyone brought a fan down. And we had all sorts of fans...thinking it might do anything! No, I think that screwed it up. George tried to unload it on the Montessori school—he was that type. I don't think so, I think that lamination on the outside stuff just came undone. And I know...you know the big bar they have in a piano? Well, there's one that's been on a bulkhead for years and years and years. I think that probably came from that piano.

CH: Well we got through everything that I had wanted to talk about, is there anything we haven't talked about that you think is significant and should be included?

Kelly: Well, I don't know. It doesn't even seem like we've gotten a start on Salmon Beach, in a way. The community, and the structures, is one thing. How it fits historically within the city of Tacoma ... you know that, probably. It's the people. And the stories that develop, you know... someone getting drunk and catching their mattress on fire. I told you this, didn't I?

CH: No, but I've heard it. It was apparently brought up in a couple other interviews.

Kelly: So the mattress lands in a guy's boat. Burns up his boat. And these stories go on and on and on...and some of them are pretty subtle and others are magnificent. Anyway, that's why I suggest the other thing [a group interview]. I can't think of...Salmon Beach could be changing some. I think old timers worry about that...but old timers always worry about that. The young people moving down here seem like a really good group of people. I don't know them very well. And when I say they're new, I'm talking about the last 5 years; it seems that there's an

influx. I think they're attracted to the beach because of the community. Not just because it's on the water but because of the community. They like to know their neighbors, for better and for worse. They like to know their neighbors' kids, and that type of thing. There's a new group moving in... and they seem like a very fine group of people. Mostly because they've been here for a short period of time. And I think when you get older you tend to ... I'm not a recluse by any means, but it's like you've seen a lot of stuff and so forth. I think young people gather, and in a lot of communities, the energy and the current stuff going on is through the young people. And the old people like to think that they advise and such, or maybe they do a little bit, but basically they just create a bit of stability for the young if something comes up.

Salmon Beach, I think, has probably been a young persons' community, to some degree. But that's not entirely true, either; there are a lot of people that age down here, too. It's a gambler's community, and I think people when they're young gamble a little more than when they get older. That old saying my grandpa used to tell me in Tulsa, Oklahoma... "never trust a young person who isn't liberal, and never trust an old person who is" [laughs]. I think his point is that you get a little more reserved. But the action is going to take place by the younger group of people. I'm not saying that as a problem.

When the hippies were here, during that period of time...there was a Salmon Beach party every weekend. Sometimes two! Every weekend...there were parties just all the time. To what degree that continues today with the young people, I'm not sure. In the summer...I look and it sure looks like they're gathering a lot. I gather with a lot of Salmon Beachers and we play bridge. I mean, we're old timers. And I have grand children and they take off on their paddleboards...but there's a lot of activity with the new generation coming in. And I think it's evolving right in line. I say to myself the difference is they have big mortgages that we never had.

[Briefly discussed how the banking industry has changed, and how the cost of living has risen since Kelly moved to Salmon Beach].

Kelly: You know, for a long, long time...and I'm sure this is not the case now, it was unusual to find a house with a television on Salmon Beach. Now mine doesn't have one, Hugh doesn't have one, that one doesn't have one...the next two don't have one...that's 5 houses adjacent to one another with no television.

CH: That's impressive now.

Kelly: That is impressive now! Now how that is repeated on the rest of the beach, I don't know. I would assume...but it used to be one of the reasons is we didn't get very good reception. And when they put in Click, the cable, what Salmon Beach did sounds awful. The guy at the one end paid for it, so they ran a line out to him, and the guy at the other end paid for it so they ran the line all the way out to him. And no one in the middle paid for it—they just tapped in.

I went to a party one time and some Click guy was badmouthing Salmon Beach, saying "Salmon Beach, our service is the best in the world and they can't get reception? We thought we had a gold mine!" He wasn't really badmouthing he was just like, "those people". I didn't even tell him I was from Salmon Beach I just figured I would keep quiet here. So we didn't have

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televisions at one time just because we didn't have very good reception. But the people who live here, they wouldn't claim to be couch potatoes who lay in front of a TV.

CH: Well you wouldn't be if you had to climb 200 stairs every day!

Kelly: Yeah, they wouldn't be the type to just hang out and watch TV much.

So I guess, basically, it's a gamblers' community and it's just a fun place to live. And it seems to me that's still the case; that's not changing. You're still walking down the same steps; still living out front; watching the same seals; the seagulls squawking when it gets too cold; the kids are out on the paddleboards. So it's a fun place, and you live that every day. You take a walk down it, and every time—when you walk by those houses you see what's happening. Maybe you don't see Ginger yelling at Napier to get firewood, but you see something! You know your neighbors. You walk up the steps with them...and you know them. You know if their parents are staying with them, you know if their kid is in the hospital. It's really open that way. It's a really fun place to live. Its close...there's a lot of interpersonal stuff that happens just from living that close together. Then you're living with just the water, the waves, and the people.

[End interview]