

Norma and I met in her back yard. She was moving wood when I walked in. For 81 years old, she is in great shape. She is a petite woman with curly gray hair and wore pants that looked like pajamas and a bright pink shirt – work clothes I imagine. We saw in chairs under the shade of a bog tree in her backyard. Her flower and vegetable beds are really well cared for, and she seems to really love gardening. She laughed easily and smiled a lot during our interview – seemed like a very sincere person.

Norma Gumser: I mean to go to Klamath and back is a day's trip. We are so glad every time we turn the care around. We are coming! What did we ever want to go there for in the first place?

Carly Johnson: So how often do you go to Klamath?

NG: Oh, I like to go maybe every month or so. I mean, I like to look at things and I like to eat that wonderful Chinese place. But we just, you know, it takes a lot of gas to go over and back.

CJ: Do you stock up on certain foods?

NG: Yeah, I do. I go to that new place called the food outlet. But you know, it doesn't take that much food for one person, so anyway...and Klamath is so torn up. You know, when you are from, I 'm not from a little city, but when you are from LV and you go to Klamath, it is tiring. We come home exhausted, and then we don't ever want to go again, ever. And then next month [laughs]

CJ: So have you always lived in LV?

NG: No, this is my grandfather's house. My mother lived here after my father died, with my grandmother. My grandmother died and my mother stayed on, then she had to go live with my sister in Phoenix over near Medford. And my sister said, what are we going to do with the house, and I said, we are going to give it to me aren't we? [laughs] She said, you mean you want to live in LV?! I said, ever since I left here I have been wanting to come back.

CJ: So how old were you when you left?

NG: I left in the 2nd grade and we went to Phoenix.

CJ: And how old were you when you moved back?

NG: Let's see, I have been here 20 years now, and I am 81, so [laughs]

CJ: So do you live by yourself in the house?

NG: Um um. You know, sometimes we have people come, friends that come along the way, and they stay over night. Kind of fun.

CJ: And what did you do while you were in Phoenix?

NG: O, that I was just a school child, and then I went to art center in Las Angeles. Then I moved to San Francisco and I loved SF – such a beautiful, wonderful town, and the people are wonderful. It is not like Bend or anything [laughs] It is a lovely town. They people that love SF love it. Very nice place. I love to go there.

CJ: Do you get back pretty often?

NG: No, I haven't been there for, what 40 years! But it is such a small place [really crowded I think] there is no place to change. Oh, to cross the Golden Gate bridge with the wind blowing, that would be fun.

CJ: When you are here in LV, do you get support or anything from friends or family?

NG: Oh, yes. I have lots of cousins, they have stayed here. They are ranchers and they just stayed here because they wouldn't go to the big city. And Dee, she is my special friend. I

take care of her [laughs] She needs somebody. If I can just find her a house and somehow get her in there. I think it would be wonderful. She could start over [with the gardens]. And Ginger, who delivers the mail, she said, we will go and dig up her plants, and we will deliver them [laughs] in the dark. We just leave them there wrapped up in newspaper or something. She would say, where did these come from! How could she get us in trouble? The land lady how lives next door would say, somebody is taking Dee's plants! [laughs] That is fun.

CJ: So what do you have planted here?

NG: Well, I just some vegetables that is gonna be pole bean and then in the front are just bush beans. I love string beans, they are really good. And those are Yukon gold and down here are the Irish Red, and last year I got about 50 pounds out of there. And you know, I have the cellar and it keeps all winter. It is really nice to have your own potatoes.

CJ: Do those potatoes get you through winter?

NG: Um hum, ya. And I grow sweet peas. They are going to be on the string lattice. They really do something for you, but do you know they have gotten so expensive. Unbelievable. I bought different colors, and one package had 6 seeds in it. And I tore it open to be sure I got 6 seeds, and it was something like \$5.95. Well, it will be the last time that I ever have them. I just made up my mind that I would like to have sweet peas one more time. And they do grow well here, but not at that price. I would rather have bush beans I guess. [?] And I freeze them too. And the tomatoes. My friend Charlie and I, we put up 100 quarts last year with his garden and mine. We made spaghetti sauce and Minestrone soup with tomatoes – 100 quarts.

CJ: So that is plenty to get you through.

NG: Everybody's gets tomatoes for Christmas [laughs] And then I have lettuce over there [in a small raised bed] You know, I just go out and pick it. It is going to bolt, so I have to, you know, I give it away to the neighbors too. I don't know why people don't have lettuce. Just in a little box like that. You can't buy that nice lettuce. I mean, one person could grow a box like that, and it would be all you could eat [for the summer]. You know, for something different, you shred it and put a little olive oil and butter and toss it in there [in the pan] and then a little vinegar on top. That is old fashioned, but, oh, it is so good. That one on the end is bolting. I have tow over there, but they turned out to be bitter. It was a new kind of curly lettuce. It was so bitter – like medicine.

CJ: So where do you get your seeds from?

NG: True Value has seeds and some of them I send away for Territorial Seeds. Some of their sweet peas were outrageous. Oh, I have to tell anybody that I spent money like that. They will be beautiful. I will take a big bouquet to the library. It is nice to give away sweet peas. You never see sweet peas [here]. And I think you will see less of them now [laughs]. That is just, you now, you got to splurge once in a while.

CJ: So what are your favorite things to eat?

NG: Greens, ya, I like greens and tomatoes. And potatoes and string beans. I love sting beans and broccoli freezes so nicely.

CJ: You just freeze it fresh?

NG: first I make a big pot of boiling water and I put it in a colander and then I put it in the boiling water. I think it is incase you have bacteria. I don't know, I guess, but that is the way you do it, and then you put it in ice water. You get cold water, a big pot of water with ice cubes so it chills it. And then you put it on a couple of tea towels and you kind of dry it off, and then put it in little plastic bags. I don't ever get sick of broccoli. And it freezes nicely. You know, if

you get a big head, you can't do that. You have to cut it from the stem on down so that you have got pieces. Other wise it just doesn't freeze well in a big – you know, it is beautiful, but. It is just so nice, you can put it in soup if you don't like the greeny taste. Broccoli is wonderful frozen, and sting beans are wonderful frozen.

CJ: So what do you usually cook for dinner?

NG: Oh, I don't eat dinner, I just eat lunch. Well, usually, some soup from the freezer. I don't eat

Much bread either because they don't have decent bread, and you can't even buy decent flower. You know, like ground flower. I guess I could find a place to send away for it. But it would be, you now, that grainy bread is what I like.

CJ: Dee said she makes bread. Do you do that sometimes too/

NG: Um um, I love homemade bread, and I used to have a big crock of sourdough, and somebody through it was something spoiled in the refrigerator and filled it full of water. And I had had it for something like 25 years. I had it when I lived in SF. I can't believe it [laughs] I mean, they said it was bubbling, it was so rotten it was bubbling. I said, Oh no! I could start some, but you know, for just one person or two, it is not worth it really. I just don't eat very much bread. If I had some sour dough from SF, I would eat a while loaf by myself. [...] And down there in that Italian district, you can eat soup every day. I mean, that is the way they live. Italians eat good. [short conversation about Italians]

CJ: So where do you shop in town for the stuff that you don't grow?

NG: I like Stewards. Just a little homey place. They other place, god, you stand in line and you see different people all the time. I just, I don't know, I don't go over there very often. But they have string beans, 10 pounds for \$10, which is \$1.lb, pretty good. And I think I might get a couple pounds. Go early in the morning when I don't have to stand in line. I like Stewards. I like everybody there and you know, everybody I know by their first name. And they have been there a long time. They are going to sell that store though. They don't advertise it around here, but I know that they have it up for sale. The family just doesn't want to do it anymore. They will find somebody. I don't know.

CJ: Oh, I hope they find somebody local to buy it.

NG: that isn't likely though. It would be somebody from out of town that wants to go to a little town [laughs – a humming bird flies by] And that chestnut tree my grandfather planted when he built this house. And it is just the most, it is the mother of all chestnut trees here in town.

CJ: Do you harvest those?

NG: No, they are horse chestnuts. They are poisonous. I harvested 900 pounds of chestnuts to the bump. I mean, every day. I had boxes, bags, you name it. And they are so beautiful. But they are surrounded by a bur, and when it dries it is deadly.

CJ: So what are your favorite things about the food system in LV?

NG: Well, if you can grow your own, what you like, that is the best way, but I don't think you know, we used to have an Indian Village Café that was just everybody's favorite. Everybody knew everybody. The food was, you know, like any little town, but it was good. And they finally just said that they were sick of it, and they closed it up and the building wasn't any good. No chance that anybody is going to move in there. And ah, that was the end of it, the end of an era. I don't think old people understand.

[I tell her about having dinner at Sally's]

NG: They just got to the point where they couldn't handle it. But I am sure that over the years they have gone through a lot of trouble and they managed. You know the younger generation just...but anyway. There really isn't anyplace you can eat here. Mario's it too expensive and they are you know, the prime rib. [we talk about them not having anything for vegetarians]

CJ: I have had so many grilled cheese sandwiches. Every restaurant we go to... [we both have a good laugh about it]

NG: And then we got this one little Chinese food restaurant up in Redmond and my daughter when there lots and she said it was just wonderful. It was such a disappointment [when it came here]. It was not wonderful. So, that is why you eat at home I guess.

CJ: So if you could see some things changed here, what would you like to see here in Lakeview?

NG: The whether. It is either too hot or too snowy. But the snow, you know, you get things done in the house that you wouldn't do because it is so nice to be out there.

CJ: Do you have a little greenhouse space or a cold frame?

NG: No, things grow so fast that you just put them out, and if it gets cold at night, you bring them in. I plant most of them right in the dirt. And things are really dry, but I have a good sprinkler out front that my friend Charlie made. It is tube and it has a sprinkler thing on the top of it, and I can water a big area or a small areas. And it has got a pointed rod at the end of it and you have to stab it into the end...I can water this whole grass with one sprinkler. It is wonderful.

CJ: That is one of the big challenges is getting the right sprinkler.

NG: Do you think you might live here sometime?

CJ: Who knows...?

NG: Bend used to be a little town too, but this town will never grow because it is so far from anything and the whether is miserable. You know, you go 100 miles to Klamath and it is no better, and it is icy. You would have to be crazy to drive there...

CJ: I heard people don't do it in the winter.

NG: I don't get out because I fall down a lot and it is scary. My luck has just about worn out.

CJ: How do you think being here when you were a kid, and then your family being here this whole time, how do you think the ranchers are doing now?

NG: Well, you know, my cousins are a little bit older than me, and they are doing alright. They wouldn't trade it for anything. They still live on the ranch that they had. The Garrets and those are cousins. They, I mean, they love this country, and they raise beautiful, I guess, beautiful cows. If you are looking at things for that reason. I said to Charlie, you know, they [the cows] wouldn't be eating like that if they knew what was coming. [laughs really hard ☺]. I don't talk to them about that, but they say, you know, how come you don't like steak? They were going to give me some steak. I don't even have a dog. You are kidding! Don't give me streak! [laughs] They do toward the end, whenever they get new steaks they give away the old streaks. My cousin up on the hill says that they taste like sage, and she didn't know what to do with them either. [...] But you know they turn them out in the dessert and that is what they eat – sage. They like sage. [laughs]

CJ: So what about people that are low-income or disabled or seniors who can't do everything on their own anymore, do you know where they can get food in LV?

NG: I don't know what the senior center did, but they used to deliver every day a meal and you know, they could eat what they wanted. And I, you know, I had some cousins that were getting it, but they are all gone now, so I don't know what it is like. I don't even know if they deliver any meals.

CJ: I think they are still delivering, but I don't know how often.

NG: Mostly it isn't what you really want to feed your grandmother, you know. And there is no reason for that. It is called mismanagement. That is what it is called. And I don't know who manages it. When it was good when I first came here there were lines. You had to get in line. Hoping that they would leave something. They had this salad bar that was wonderful. You know, fresh green salads. If you like macaroni salad and that kind, but it was all together in a very commercial kind of thing with a hood over it. It was wonderful.

CJ: And do you know where the food comes from in this community. Like the things that you buy at Safeway or Stewarts?

NG: No I don't. Well, like Hermiston, they get their watermelon in Hermiston. And I think that the stewards get their meat from a local maybe local place. I am not sure about that, but everybody says that their meat is really nice.

CJ: Do you know any other local foods that are sold here?

NG: Safeway is the same. You'd get the same thing if you went to Boise I think Safeway is pretty much the same.

CJ: Yes, I think they have pretty much a central.

NG: So, I don't have to worry about the meat.

CJ: You are the rare LV resident who doesn't. So is there anything else you think we should know about?

NG: Yes, I think you should come back. You should think about living here.

CJ: It is always on the list of possibilities.

NG: And I would be you that when you come to the big city, you would say, o, my God, let me out of here! It is just everyone going. And they can't be bothered by you. Everybody is so busy and they have to go so far. When I lived in SF I moved to Marin, and all of my kids were born in Marin County.

[She tells me about Mill Valley in the Bay area and tells me to visit there someday if I can]

CJ: So how many kids do you have?

NG: four.

CJ: Do they come visit sometimes?

NG: Oh, sometimes, but they don't like it here. Except the girl, my girl that lived in Bend and Pall Butte. [Tells me about how she moved to Missouri when her husband retired and how depressed she is there.] I sent her seeds from Lakota Squash – this will make you, when you see these squash, it will just make you so happy, you know. She said she is just so depressed, and I never thought she would get depressed. Because she just can't hardly stand it. [Talks about places her daughter should move, but she doesn't mention Lakeview. Goes on to talk about depression and how it affects asthma.]

CJ: So what do you think Lakeview is going to be like 20 years from now?

NG: Oh, I hope it...it is changing a little bit. There is a lot more crime here.

CJ: What kind of crime? What is changing?

NG: Somebody went out to the hills to the west side. I think they were two law men, and they had a, I think somebody had it from the air, but it was a marijuana growing thing. 7,000 plants or something. I mean, and two Mexicans disappeared into the woods. But you know. I mean really a big out fit.

CJ: I saw the picture in the paper this morning.

NG: And people can't believe it. There is a lot of that stuff going around. And the kids get mixed up with that. It is a fun kind of a place. A family thing, but everybody says, oh it is changing, and I know it is. I see people going up and down the streets that I have never seen before. And that never happened.

CJ: Do you think they new people that are coming in, do they get integrated into the community?

NG: I don't know any new people, but I wonder if they even like it. There is nothing going on here except you know, things that have to do...well the round up. That comes in September. They have a big parade and they have a fare. And that everybody is just so happy [laughs] and then it isn't long after that the snow starts. And then everybody holes up. You know, the round up has always been a good thing. The kids are happy and it is a wonderful event, but you know, I wonder how they stand it. Killing. I can't even, I don't even go in the barns or anything. I mean, I would be the ones who would unlock the doors and say, shush. Get out while you can, come to my backyard! [laughs] Oh, I can't stand that. And you know, some of my little third, fourth cousins go in there. They know good and well, but I never say anything. But I let them come to their own conclusions. Leading one of those lambs around. They hold their head up like that, and I thought, oh my God. The auction. Could you stand that? I couldn't!

CJ: That is why it has been interesting to be here.

NG: I just couldn't stand it. I just couldn't stand to be in there. Of course, they groom them so beautifully and led them around, and they have had them since they were babies, and I thought, oh, you have got to be – you have a hard heart to do that.

CJ: And that is what they are teaching them when they are really young.

NG: Yes, their parents do and they can't understand why I am that way, and I can't understand why they are that way. And I can't understand how they could be related to me! [laughs] Isn't it funny! I think I was 6 years old, maybe I wasn't in school, so 4 or 5. And my granddad, he owned the property where the golf course is. He has lots, 5 or 7 Jersey Guernsey cows and then the bull came over and they had a little calf, and it was a little boy calf. And we had to kill him. And that was it. I said, that is it. I can't, I don't even want to eat at the table with any of you. And then, that was the time, I remember, I couldn't even look across the table and see them eating. But you know, there are very few people like that. The cow situation would be a lot different I'll tell you. But the people up in Christmas Valley raise hay, the best hay. They deliver it to the dairies – Tillamook. Lots of it. It is so rich, perfect milk. You know, I think they take some to CA. Oh, it is wonderful.. But the sad part about Christmas Valley is you cannot dig anymore wells.

CJ: Really?

NG: So people had bought land that was cheap, but you know, 1,000 acres with no water on it. What earthly good is it? Is no good. It is desert. And the wind blows like the devil out there. It dries everything out. As long as, you know, the water holes out in those fields are going

to be alright. Those are millionaires out there. And the hay around Lakeview is very wonderful hay I suppose.

CJ: Do you eat dairy?

NG: Oh ya, I love cheese, don't you?! [laughs]

CJ: I do...I live with an Italian...

NG: Oh, I love cheese. I think, oh, I'll just get something special and then I just take a little piece, and then I am looking for it. I can't believe I did that! It is good, it is good calcium too.

[End.]