

Frank Blair Interview for Vanport Placemarking Project

Tue, Dec 12, 2022 1:29PM

SUMMARY

Franklin (Frank) V. Blair was interviewed by Christina Felix and Dave Hedberg for the Vanport Placemarking Project. Christina had previously conducted a couple hours of pre interview with Frank over the phone. All three participants were practicing social distancing and masking for COVID-19 protocols. In the interview Mr. Blair discusses his childhood memories of growing up in Vanport and witnessing the flood. He also discusses in detail places and activities of his youth directly following the Vanport flood and his return to Portland after military service. Mr. Blair also speaks to his work in the urban Native American Indian community and his studies in eastern medicine and religion.

TRANSCRIPTION NOTES

This transcript was auto generated using Otter AI software. An 8 hour edit was conducted by Dave Hedberg to correct details and language incorrectly transcribed by the AI. Many proper names have not been verified for correct spelling. A 5 hour audit was conducted by James Krzmarzick to check for inaccuracies and to add in nonverbal contexts which are indicated in parenthesis such as (laugh). Words that were partially dropped from speech were added in brackets to [the] best ability of the auditor.

SPEAKERS

Frank Blair, Christina Felix, Dave Hedberg

Christina Felix 00:00

Some recordings and put them to

Frank Blair 00:01

whatever. You can edit that anywhere you want.

Dave Hedberg 00:05

I can do that.

Frank Blair 00:09

good so you need to test?

Christina Felix 00:09

Okay,

Dave Hedberg 00:18

That's pretty good. Yeah I can hear everything.

Frank Blair 00:21

Oh good

Dave Hedberg 00:22

Um, so we're in the Momook Tokotee Apartments. How long have you lived here?

Frank Blair 00:33

About going on five months...

Dave Hedberg 00:37

Yeh seems like a new place.

Frank Blair 00:39

Yeah, just opened up recently. I don't think they still haven't had it filled up to the brim yet. There's still people coming in and applying

Christina Felix 00:53

I applied here too. I wanted to get one of the artist's lofts. But they got filled up.

Frank Blair 00:58

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, they get going on over there. Now they're making ornaments. And they got a class over there.

Christina Felix 01:08

Yeh what's that called?

Frank Blair 01:10

What's that? art room?

Christina Felix 01:12

Art room; They have an art room there.

Frank Blair 01:15

That's a community art room.

Dave Hedberg 01:19

Nice. Yeah, well, I think we can, we can...

Frank Blair 01:23

So you want me to give you my name and how I arrived at this point in life?

Dave Hedberg 01:29

Sure, that's a great place to start.

Frank Blair 01:32

All right. Well, I My name is Franklin V. Blair. I'm a tribal elder from the Anishinaabe tribe in White Earth, Minnesota, from the Mississippi band. I'm 87 years old. I'll be 88 next month. And the reason I'm out here is after the Second World War, there was no work to be had on reservations. So we migrated out here where we had some relation. And we ended up in Vanport, that was our home. That was in 1946. There's three sisters, my younger brother and then my older brother. When he came back from the service, he moved in with us. So there's my mother, the person she was married to, my three sisters and two brothers and myself, all in this one Vanport unit. (laughs) And then my brother finally found another place and he moved out and my sister got married. She met a gentleman, she got married. And so she just moved... stayed in Vanport moved down on Victory. Victory Circle where they had a circle there with a flag, they'd raise a flag, there called Victory Circle. She lived in that area. And we lived on the furthest, southern end of the Vanport where there was a ramp that led up to Denver [Ave] into Kenton. And we lived right below that ramp on Denver Court; Denver Court and Cottonwood. And that's where we lived. And the day of the flood, the engineers send a flier out with the Sunday paper stating that if there was going to be any kind of a flood, it would be just a foot or so of water. So knowing that, my parents... my mother and I forget, my auntie and whoever went up to Celilo, there's a celebration going up there. A Memorial Day celebration up there. And then I had to play a baseball game over in Vancouver that afternoon, so she left me with my kid brother in the apartment. And my older brother, he was gone somewhere, my sisters were all going with their boyfriends to celebrate. So it was just the two of us left in the apartment. And earlier that day, we played a baseball game right where the flood broke, where the levee broke. There's a field there, a school and a field. And then the theater was right in that area and there was a store. And so we played a baseball game there, a seven inning ball game. Kind of a warm up for the game that we were gonna play that afternoon over in McLoughlin Heights, Washington. And so my kid brother and I are just playing catch, and we heard this boom. And I looked down Cottonwood, [and] here come the water. (laughs) So I grabbed him. We run up on the ramp there up on Denver, and we watched it all unfold right in front of us. And it was just mayhem. People were, you know, scratching to get out of there. And it was, you know, at a time like that, you wouldn't think that you would remember too much. Because I had a kid brother with me that was crying, (laughs) you know, and but I remember these... (laughs) these Black people, they had grabbed a car and ran it right up the hill (laughs) and saved their car. There was like three or four guys on each side of a big Buick. (laughs) And they just ran it right up the hill, the dike there, and they got it up on Denver because the... the off ramp... on ramp was just packed with people trying to get out of there. And then we saw a bus go down... the water just went right over a gray bus. I don't know how many people were on it, but it was disappeared quickly. And then people just floating by us screaming and yelling. It was mayhem for hours. And then my mother and she finally arrived. And we spent the rest of that weekend in... [the] Salvation Army, found some halls in schools and set up some cots. And

that's where we stayed for several days until they found permanent housing for us in a place called Guild's Lake.

Dave Hedberg 06:48

How did you get out with your with your brother?

Frank Blair 06:53

I said we were right there, right below the ramp. Well, I just grabbed him by the scruff and just... because I saw the water coming and we had plenty of time to..

Dave Hedberg 07:01

Were there alot of people walking?

Frank Blair 07:02

Well, no the... like I said... no the... at that time there was... there was no warning or anything and most of the people were gone that day, they were on... different ways to celebrate so that the city was basically quiet, really quiet. It was Sunday. And some of them were still sleeping in, I imagine. They worked different shifts back in the days; three shifts. And so there was no people walking, nobody hardly ever walked around Vanport. Streets were always empty, other than kids playing.

Christina Felix 07:36

Yeah, I heard that people were; as people were finding this out they were coming to see the floods and they were getting in everyone's way.

Frank Blair 07:45

Yeah, they... the traffic, that's yeah, the traffic. Yeah, the traffic just, you know, got plugged in. People wanted to see what was going on.

Christina Felix 07:59

Coming in and getting in everyone's way that was trying to get out.

Frank Blair 08:01

Yeah, that's true there. Yeah, I remember that. That people were coming here and taking pictures and everything. They thought it was just like a tourist site or something. (laughs) Everybody else that lived there, you know... state of panic. I never seen so many people yelling and screaming in my life.

Christina Felix 08:24

Crazy. So what do you remember of any of your neighbors that you lived by?

Frank Blair 08:29

Well, I... there was one family... there was... where we lived... I don't know if you heard that pamphlet.

Christina Felix 08:36

Oh, I should have brought it.

Frank Blair 08:36

Oh, I left mine upstairs.

Anyway, there's Cottonwood and Denver. And then here's the ramp that led up on to Denver. And there's like three units here (gestures to his right). And then the rest of the Vanport was over here (gestures to his left). And Madras family lived in one of those units and they had two boys and so we hung out together. Below us there was the Paulson family and the Cox family, they had boys my age who used to hang. And down oh, maybe three or four units down was the Coopers they were another family that I ran around with. And past them were black families that I hung out with, you know. The Alexanders. I remember the Alexanders, the Cherries, the Kellers; they were all black families that lived there. And we were all, you know, wild, you know. (laughs) Because the schools... I think the one school that I went to was called Marshall. I think they named it after General Marshall. And it... the school was so crowded that we only had to go half a day. You could choose which half of the day you wanted to go to school to. (laughs) We ran the streets all night long so we slept in. (laughs) Nobody learned anything. (laughs) Nobody learned anything. Yeah, that was the one school I went to, then I went to the junior high school also which was further back north and there was a big recreation hall there and the junior high school so we spent a lot of time there at the recreation hall.

Christina Felix 09:33

A lot of them? What were the places that you visited or hung out at in Vanport?

Frank Blair 10:47

Well the theater was like the big draw. So like every weekend we were down here watching movies and... and then the grocery store it was like one of Fred Meyer's first stores I think... And uh, it was there. And uh... it was just, you know, mostly just running around wild, nobody... because everybody... all the parents are always working, so the kids like my age were just... (chuffs)

Christina Felix 11:14

Oh really? Interesting. Wild, running around.

Frank Blair 11:21

Yeah, like a wild bunch of Indians. (laughs) So you know, we just uh, get in fistfights, you know, and one side would be against the other side always. And so we'd have little dust ups every now and then, wanting territory. (laughs)

Christina Felix 11:45

Tell me about the Bicycles.

Frank Blair 11:46

Oh yeah. (laughs) And then there's a slough where the racetrack is now, you know, the PIR. There's a slough right back there. And (pause) they had found one body in the other part of this slough and they were dragging the slough looking for another body. And all of a sudden upcoming one bike upcoming another bike, and they pulled over 100 bikes out of there. (laughs) That over the years, if you didn't

want to walk home, you just see you bike, jump on it, ride it home, and then the next day either paint it or throw it in the slough. (laugh)

Christina Felix 12:30

Well besides the movies...

Frank Blair 12:38

Well, then we used to make rafts. Yeah, we'd make rafts and... we took these M-90 firecrackers and roll them up, light 'em... light 'em, and go... and pull over behind... There was a rendering plant there. And so we'd get behind there in the slough and then we toss the firecrackers... lit, light it up, toss it in the water and sit there... BOOM. And sit there little more, about 30 seconds; [and] up come carp. (laughs) We had gunny sacks and gather them up. And then we get one of the older guys to drive us to Chinatown.

Christina Felix 13:23

Oh, yeah?

Frank Blair 13:24

We sold those carps. Sold the carp to the restaurants down in Chinatown. (laughs) That's how we made some... and that's how we made some bucks. (laughs)

Christina Felix 13:36

Did you go to any of the restaurants that were at Vanport?

Frank Blair 13:41

Well, you know, there was like... like... what do you call them? They weren't like restaurants. They were like cafeterias or something like that. You know, you go in and eat. Yeah, we went in and out of them. Like I said, most of the times and thoughts are always planning or getting into mischief. And the older guys were, you know, always chasing us... and they were down there. But it was like the United Nations. There was... there was Chinese there was Japanese, there was German. We were all thrown in there together, you know. (laughs) The internment camps turn the Japanese loose, and that's where they ended up. Also with the Germans... they had the German camp also, people don't hardly mention that. They had locked up Germans and they were down in there too.

Christina Felix 14:38

So were there different little sections for each different...

Frank Blair 14:41

No, they just threw all the... uh, breeds? The whiter people were over North but then the blacks and the...

Christina Felix 14:52

so there were little neighborhoods?

Dave Hedberg 14:53

How did you connect with people there?

Frank Blair 14:53

Yeah, little pockets like, everybody... The most notorious street was Cottonwood. (laughs) It was like Portland's Harlem, mostly densely black people, were mostly on that street. And then there was Filipinos, I ran around Filipinos. I think I met maybe one Indian family, that I remember... But we were separated too much... We always went to Celilo too, for gatherings up there. Because we were new to this area at the time. So we didn't know hardly any natives other than our own relations. So we connected with people up in Celilo and that's where we hung out. Well, you know, people working in a boat yards. There's a lot of natives that work there. And, and so my uncles and them and they... already went up there and then and everybody told us how they fished up there. So we had to find out. Stand on these built, uh, racks out over the river with a big old net. (laughs)

Christina Felix 16:14

They still do that.

Frank Blair 16:15

Yeah, my oldest boy that I raised, he's a traditional fisherman.

Christina Felix 16:22

Oh, is he?

Frank Blair 16:23

Yeah, he fishes out of, where is that place... its just this side of Hood River?

Christina Felix 16:32

Cascade Locks?

Frank Blair 16:33

Cascade Yeah. It lives out that way with his mother. And the three boys that I raised, they bought a Boston Whaler. That's what they fish out of there on the Columbia.

Christina Felix 16:50

Oh neat!

Dave Hedberg 16:50

So you had family that would go into Celilo quite a bit then?

Frank Blair 16:53

Back then, in the day... Yeah, it was like... a way of eating fish all the time. (laughs) You wanted fish that's where you went, you didn't go to the store. And then... then we got turned on to a fish called smelt. And the Sandy River and then there was another River in Washington that had... had them, and so a bunch of us would all pile in a rig and go there and take these "number 10" tin cans, poke holes in

them and tie a string to them... a line and then just throw them out in a river the and the cans would fill up with these smelt. Dump'em out there, build a fire, start eating them right away and then... and then had a gunny sack that we used to throw the rest that we couldn't eat in there and then take it around to the relations and feed... and feed them the smelt.

Dave Hedberg 17:54

Was that the first time you'd ever had smelt before?

Frank Blair 17:56

Yeah, back home it was... it's walleye. (laughs)

Christina Felix 18:01

Oh yeah, I've never had it.

Frank Blair 18:04

Yeah, Walleye, and so yeah, it was like just a big sardine, them smelt man, they were really tasty too. (laughs)

Christina Felix 18:13

Did you just eat them raw?

Frank Blair 18:14

Yeah, we just right there just yeah,

Christina Felix 18:17

Eat them raw?

Frank Blair 18:18

Just, no... just we had a fire going and some lard and just throw 'em in the big ol' pan there and... and fry 'em up right on the spot and eat him right there just... It was the best that way. Right out of the water into your tummy.

Christina Felix 18:35

So have you been back to the site?

Frank Blair 18:38

Well, you know, I haven't seen or heard of any smelt come up this way, [in] I don't know how long. Yeah, yeah. It's... it's, you know, they're... they're migratory I guess, and they found a better place to go rather than up here because of the waters. And then the sea otters and it's not not too many... I was reading a book recently, called We Are in the Middle of Forever. And a tribe up in Washington... fish for this certain Sockeye. They call 'em "blues". Have you ever read about 'em? The best Sockeye ever?

Christina Felix 19:22

Yeah?

Frank Blair 19:23

Anyway, they... a few years back, they harvested 50,000 of 'em.

Christina Felix 19:28

Wow.

Frank Blair 19:30

Two years ago, it was less than a dozen. Because they have these ships out at sea now. They're like factories; canning factories. They catch 'em; every fish in the ocean flash freeze 'em and ship them to all parts of the world. And so they never get here where they're supposed to be. Because the people in this area, they're called salmon people.

Christina Felix 19:56

Yeah.

Frank Blair 19:56

Yeah, you know. And so you're taking their lives away from them by shipping it all around. I was up in Seattle a couple of years back. And there's a Copper River salmon. You ever eat one of them?

Christina Felix 20:10

Maybe?

Frank Blair 20:11

Yeah, sockeye is at best in the world; Copper River. So I asked a friend up there. I said, "Have they got any Copper River?" He goes, (laughs) "You don't even want to talk about them." I said, "Why is that?" He says, "\$79 a pound." Because tourists come from all over the world and they'll pay anything. And so, you know, the people that live in this area, you know, they're being starved out from the fish.

Christina Felix 20:43

Yeah, that's really sad.

Frank Blair 20:46

My oldest boy, he just has enough to pay for the gas and his equipment. Hardly makes a living out there.

Christina Felix 21:00

So have you gone back to Vanport?

Frank Blair 21:04

Yeah, I went there and watched a guy play golf. (laughs)

Christina Felix 21:08

Oh watched the guys play golf there?

Frank Blair 21:09

And then I went there and watched them race right over the... my house. (laughs) That track is right there where I lived. Yeah. (laughs)

Christina Felix 21:18

Oh that's pretty funny.

Frank Blair 21:20

I told... I told the kids, you know, they're racing right over my old house right now. (laughs) So yeah, it's a speedway now. Back then there was... when I lived here, there was... the racetrack was across... Portland Meadows was across the what you call, Vancouver over by Vancouver Boulevard. And then there was the amphitheater... Portland amphitheater, which on the weekends, they would have race cars, go around that amphitheater there. And what else? Oh, and then this guy came back from his service and start buying up all kinds of military gear and there was a GI Joes. [surplus store]

Christina Felix 22:11

Oh, yeah GI Joes

Frank Blair 22:12

It was a tent. Yeah, it was a tent. And he started peddling stuff there. So we used to go across, you know, and hot walk the horses for a buck an hour, or whatever it was, in the morning and then go back in the afternoon when the races started on the weekend and to get people to make bets for us.

Christina Felix 22:34

Oh really? You were too young?

Frank Blair 22:37

We'd listen, you know, to them jockeys and trainers who, you know, "I think this horse is about ready to pay the feed bill." You know, that meant they'd messed with that horse. So we go back there and bet on that horse. (laughs) So we should do that, go over there and fool around at that racetrack all the time.

Christina Felix 23:00

So you lived there until you were...How old? How old were you?

Frank Blair 23:04

Well, I was 13 when the flood came. So I was like 12. 11 - 12 years old. I was old enough to get in trouble. (laughs) In fact... In fact, we'd stay out past the curfew and the police down in Vanport, they were county police, and they drove green Buicks. And they wore green uniforms. And we used to call them the 'Green Hornets.' "Oh, look out! Here comes the Green Hornets!" We'd run, you know. And every now and then they round us all up and they would... go down [the line], "I know you... Get home. I know you, you get home" and they'd see me and they go, "What's this little guy doing here? Whose little brother is this?" And I was as old as the rest of 'em. (laughs) But my size, you know... and so I'd always get sent home. They never bothered me.

Christina Felix 23:58

Did your mom find out?

Frank Blair 24:00

Oh, she didn't care. She didn't care. My mother was alcoholic.

Christina Felix 24:06

Oh yeah, I'm sorry.

Frank Blair 24:08

Yeah, in fact, one of the policemen down there, his name was Matt Dishman.

Christina Felix 24:14

Oh, wow.

Frank Blair 24:15

And that's the place over on Knott Street... Matt Dishman.

Dave Hedberg 24:21

Yeah, the community center?

Frank Blair 24:21

Yeah, community center. Yeah, he was one of the policemen down there. So when I came, I used to fight down there. They had a boxing team, and I'd box. And I came over here, and uh... to Knott Street... They didn't call it Matt Dishman then, just Knott Street, because I knew all of the black guys from Vanport and so went over there and sparred all the time at the recreation [center].

Christina Felix 24:49

So you didn't go to school there, though. Did you at Vanport or did you go to another?

Frank Blair 24:57

Yeah, I went there to sixth grade. Like I said, there was only... there are so many of us that we only went half a day. (laughs) And then they pushed us forward to... I went to sixth and seventh grade there. And then I graduated. And then they pushed us, like, to Guild's Lake and then they rounded us all up and gave us bus tickets and sent us to Linnton, and a bunch of us refugees ended up in Linnton.

Christina Felix 25:09

To live there, not school?

Frank Blair 25:33

No, just went to school there and come back on the buses. Go there in the morning, come back in the afternoon on the buses. They gave us little bus tickets. We were the first students that ever got bused anywhere. (laughs) Long before it was in vogue. Yeah, so they didn't want... they put us in a school to

begin with, uh, over the Willamette River; a school called Failing. But when they found out where we were from; all refugees from the flood, you know, they didn't want anything to do with us. And so they shipped us to Linnton, because those people didn't know any better there.

Christina Felix 26:15

So you were treated a little bit differently then? They kinda want you to leave?

Frank Blair 26:18

Yeah. Oh, yeah. We're looked down upon. We were from the projects, you were looked down upon, you know, that meant you're really poor. When you're in the projects, you're poor. You know, and... and, "You live with black people... you live with... You live with oriental people. And you're Indian," you know, and all this, you know, because it was... Portland, it always has been really white. And so, then, after we got settled in, then we found out what they called Williams Avenue, and Vancouver (ave.) They called that "The Ave." Williams Avenue was called "The Ave." It was... most of the people I grew up with in Vanport all ended up in that area. So then I hung out over there. Because you couldn't go downtown. If you weren't white you were not welcome downtown. In Portland back then. They didn't want anybody but white people. (laughs)

Christina Felix 27:15

Oh no, that's sad. So what were, like, the evenings like?

Frank Blair 27:26

In Vanport? Well, you know, we used to play games, you know, just street games. Kick the Can was one of them.

Christina Felix 27:39

Yeah, kick the can.

Frank Blair 27:40

Yeah. And well, there was several other games, "Annie Annie I Over"? That's when one team would be on one side of the unit and another team on the other side, you have a softball and you throw it over the unit and the guy caught it he could come running around the thing and throw it and whoever it hit would end up on their team now.

Christina Felix 28:04

Oh I've never heard of that game, have you?

Frank Blair 28:06

Yeah. "Annie Annie I Over" you yell that before you throw... You go, "Annie Annie I Over!" Yeah. And then they'd yell back, "Well, Come over. Come over!" and the ball would fly over the... the unit and if you caught it in the air, well then you could run around the other side of the unit and hit him with the ball.

Dave Hedberg 28:06

No, I haven't.

Christina Felix 28:32

Kind of like dodgeball with out the the house in the middle.

Frank Blair 28:35

Yeah, it was like dodge.... except you had a ball that you could throw. Not... not a big balloon ball. It was... it was like a softball. So if you got to hit, you knew you got hit. You couldn't hit him above the waist that was... you had to hit 'em below. So we played like that for hours, until the Green Hornets would chase us home.

Christina Felix 29:00

Chase you home. Those Green Hornets did they know you called them Green Hornets?

Frank Blair 29:05

Oh, everybody called them The Green Hornets. You know, "Here comes the Hornets." They had these green uniforms on and that was like one of the big radio programs; the Green Hornet and Kato, you know. And then there was a... down by Victory Circle there was an entertainment place. I don't know if they drank in there or not, but young people couldn't go in the building. And they would play music at night. And so we, you know the places that are, you know, paper thin, so we just sat there with our ears to the wall and listening to music until they ran us off.

Dave Hedberg 29:44

What kind of music were they playing?

Frank Blair 29:45

It was jazz. Yeah, it was... they were big on jazz. And then we also hiked out of Vanport and go to Jansen beach. They had a amusement park there and there was a roller coaster, a big wooden roller coaster and a swimming pool, a Olympic swimming pool there... diving boards, high dive and all that. So we used to go out of Vanport, a bunch of us would hike over there. Hang out.

Christina Felix 30:19

I've seen pictures and some videos about it.

Frank Blair 30:21

Yeah. And there was a racetrack also back there also, where they raised midget autos.

Christina Felix 30:28

oh, fun.

Frank Blair 30:29

Yeah. And so that was some of the entertainment that we'd do, you know, I always ran with the older crowd. Because I was real athletic and they liked that, that i could handle myself that way. And so they were always three or four years older than me. And so we'd always head over like there. And then hike

into Kenton. There was a bar in Kenton called Tiny's. Right there on the main street there, and they had a ring set up down below. And so for five bucks, (laughs) I used to fight there all the time. Box for five bucks. (laughs) For entertainment, you know, for the tavern people. The drinkers. Yeah, they go down here and watch us beat on each other. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, so that was another way to earn a couple of bucks, like that. Yeah. And then there was a theater right there also, Kenton Theater. You could go there also.

Christina Felix 31:22

It would be just guys boxing? So you... when you left Vanport you guys, your your family was placed at Guild's. Lake?

Frank Blair 31:52

Guild's Lake. Yeah. And then after I think a year there, they... my mother, she was a real strong native woman. She didn't like to back down from nobody. And she always make whoever's in charge feel guilty. (laughs) - "Oh you just doing it because I'm Indian, huh?" She put that on 'em all the time. (laughs) And they'd go, "Oh, no, no, no, no, Mrs... What do you want? What do you want?" just to get her out of their hair. (laughs) So she talked us into a duplex on North Washburn just out of University Homes, and Columbia Villa. And there was a University Homes Recreation Hall there. And so we had a duplex. We lived in a duplex. By then my sisters are all married, and it was just my younger brother and me. And my mother and her person that she was married to. And I went from there to the service, when I turned 17. Yeah. Well, that was a tradition in my family.

Christina Felix 31:57

To join the service?

Frank Blair 33:08

You had to go to... go to service when it was your time to go.

Christina Felix 33:13

Wow. It seems to me it's so young?

Frank Blair 33:17

Well, I had, uh... when I was still living back on the rez and the war broke out; one day I had all my uncles and cousins and the next day, they were all gone. They were all in the Navy and Army... And there were just aunties left a few older cousins that you know, that weren't old enough to fight yet. And that was all that was... that was left. So all during the war, there was just women and children; the men were off fighting the wars. I had six uncles, four cousins, and my older brother; there was... I think there was almost 13 of them that left. You know, and so that's like a big hole in your life, when you don't have that, you know, around you anymore, just like that. (snaps fingers)

Christina Felix 34:10

And they're gone.

Frank Blair 34:11

Yeah, And then when they did come back, they were all... All messed up. (laughs) And they didn't want to stick around that place anymore; where we were at, on the rez. There was nothing there and so they all started going in different directions. (pauses) Because you know, when we lived back there, and we had... you could... there was a railroad tracks that went through a place called Detroit Lakes. So when we come off the rez with our allotment money, we had to stay north of the tracks you couldn't go over the tracks into town. We had to stay north side. There's a couple of stores there and bars. And so, that's where all the government money went. (laughs)

Christina Felix 34:21

Kinda messed up? And so, they'd just kinda give it to you and it came right back.

Frank Blair 35:02

Well, they'd shop... There was this big flatbed truck, I remember. That's as long as I remember. That's how you went in and out of White Earth; in the back of this flatbed truck. I told everybody, I said, "If I write my life story, I'm gonna say it's hard to look cool on the back of a flatbed truck."

Christina Felix 35:21

Oh, I like that!

Frank Blair 35:22

That's gonna be my title for my book. (laughs)

Christina Felix 35:25

Yeah, you'd better get busy Frank!

Frank Blair 35:27

Because we'd sit there all bundled up, you know, and it was snowing, you know, and just drive into town that way. To shop for groceries or commodities or whatever.

Christina Felix 35:39

Yeah. Well, do we have any more questions for Frank?

Dave Hedberg 35:46

I was just curious, like, how, how it's felt as a Native person living in Portland? You found, did you develop a Native community here?

Frank Blair 36:00

Well, back then, you know, like I said, I only knew... when I went to school, they put me in Roosevelt High School. And there was only one other Indian family there, the Maupins and they were from K Falls. So that was the only ones that I mingled with. And other than that, not there... it hadn't... they hadn't... they hadn't migrated into the cities, the Natives. And years later, when they did, they were mostly the ones that got kicked off the rez. (laughs) And ended up in his cities because they were raising too much hell on rez. And we used to go down to a place, just to watch it every weekend called Valhalla. It's where Dante's is now, that building was called Valhalla back then. 49-50s. And we'd go

there on the weekends, because in the parking lot they'd come out of that, all the Indians... it was a Indian bar, and they'd come out of there (laughs) punching one another, and the cops knew it, and they had a paddy wagon sitting right there. And they'd watch 'em fight for a while and then they'd throw them on... (laughs)

Christina Felix 37:17

Did they have the wagon ready?

Frank Blair 37:19

Every weekend because it was the same thing every weekend. You know like... like a Warm Springs Indian didn't like a Modoc Indian and things like that, you know, because they go way back, bad... bad medicine between the Warm Springs and the Modocs. I don't know if you know the history of between them...

Christina Felix 37:35

I don't.

Frank Blair 37:36

Well, you ever heard of Captain Jack?

Christina Felix 37:39

Oh, yeah.

Frank Blair 37:40

Yeah, that was one of the most expensive wars ever. Them trying to capture Captain Jack. And the only reason they got him was the Warm Springs Indians used... they use them for scouts to track him down. And so there was always bad blood. There's bad blood between the Modocs and the Klamath. So there was always friction. If you're not from this rez or that rez, you're at odds most of the time back in them days. Most of them are all drunked up. Yeah. Booze.

Christina Felix 38:24

It's a little different now.

Frank Blair 38:25

Oh, quite a bit different. You know, because we have, you know, a community in the cities now where there was never anything like that then.

Dave Hedberg 38:37

When do you think... when did you feel like that community in the city developed?

Frank Blair 38:41

Well, over the years. Over the years, people start understanding one another a little better, you know, and you realize that it was us against them. (laughs) That's when we started coming together a little better.

Dave Hedberg 39:00

Like 60s 50s?

Frank Blair 39:02

Well, I was gone most of the 50s in the service. And then I traveled around. I didn't come back here until mid 70s. And I stayed around for a while and then I took off again. And then I went to Seattle, and there's a community up there and I hung out up there. And then one lady, she... she says, "You ought to go to the Sundance." I say, "Well, where in the hell is that at?" So she told me where it was at: Mount Hood. Have you heard of that one?

Christina Felix 39:40

Yeah.

Frank Blair 39:40

Yeah, so I went there for quite a while. And uh...

Christina Felix 39:46

There's a couple of different ones nowadays I think.

Frank Blair 39:48

Yeah, that was that was the beginning of the Sundance. That was right after they passed Freedom of Religion. You know, because up until then, everything was hidden; all the ceremonies. You couldn't even have a sweat lodge.

Christina Felix 40:05

Yeah, it was very restricted.

Frank Blair 40:06

Yeah. Because they had a fear...

Christina Felix 40:10

Afraid of the medicine

Frank Blair 40:11

That we'd start raising war again. (laughs) You know, they didn't want to hear that drum. Drums scared 'em. So anyway, I went there, you know, and then, you know, start connecting with other people like that.

Christina Felix 40:34

I don't know when NARA started?

Frank Blair 40:35

Well NARA started, I think in the 70s or the early 80s. I remember when it was... first it was over on Burnside. And then over on Morris. And now it's on uh...

Christina Felix 40:43

I probably do, I'm just bad with names.

Frank Blair 40:50

The last rebirth of that. And yeah, the lady that has been looking after me for 30 some years; she is now running the place. Ruth Anne McGovern, you know, you know her?

Christina Felix 40:53

Colum... no, uh... Williams and, no...

Frank Blair 40:57

There's one way out on 122nd and Burnside. And then... and then that... the one they just opened up on the Hancock. Yeah, so that's the last rebirth...

Christina Felix 41:13

The newest one.

Frank Blair 41:19

Yeah, she's a little, tiny Irish woman, you know. She's feisty as hell. She's been like my mother forever. (laughs) She said that I'm an enigma. Yeah, because I won't take white man's medicine. And yet I'm never sick. (laughs) She can't figure out what's going on with me. (laughs)

Christina Felix 41:19

Yeah, you're special.

Frank Blair 41:27

(laughs) They run all these tests on me and they just can't figure it out.

Christina Felix 42:00

Well, don't you...

Frank Blair 42:02

Well, it's tea.

Christina Felix 42:02

... attribute that to your Chinese Medicine?

Frank Blair 42:04

Yeah, and the... the in the medicine... the Chinese medicine. I take acupuncture, cupping... all that.

Christina Felix 42:11

How did you learn... start doing that?

Frank Blair 42:14

Well, you know, I saw a movie one time. And uh, here's this young man moving real slow. Like this and that, you know. And the guy said, "That's Tai Chi." And I said, "Well, what's it supposed to do?" You know, you can't fight like that. So... (laughs) And he says, "No, it's for your health... for your health," you know, "...but it can be used as a weapon." So I get interested in that. And I got a teacher in Seattle. His name is John Neil. He's a grandmaster now. So I've studied with him for six years. And he was the first one that imported the Shaolin Monks to the states. So we had a gathering up in Seattle. And, and I got to meet the monks up there. There was amazing people. There were some of them, like 38th generation. And there was just amazing feats of strength and everything. And so after that, there was another gathering, called Five Willow. And they gathered all these different masters from different forms. And they were... we were sitting at this table and this little Chinese guy from Portland came out. And he just blew me away. And I went, "Phoo, where'd this guy come from?" (laughs) His name is Gregory Fong. And so I... people that are other students were sitting with me at the table; I said, "I'm leaving." They said, "Where are you going?" [Frank] "Moving to Portland." They said, "What are you talking about?" I said "I'm gonna go study with that other guy." And they said, "Well, you can't leave your master to go. He won't like it." You know? I said, "I don't care." (laughs) "I can't stay here anymore. I gotta go study with that other man." And so I came down here and I connected with Gregory and 20 something years later, you know, he passed and... but I was... I was with him that long. Studying different martial arts from him. He... [was an] amazing person. And he was younger than me also. He was like 10 years younger. So all my teachers were younger than me in that Chinese way. And he showed me you know, different teas and everything and it was all about breathing. And a thing called Sung; how to be relaxed but still be at attention. And like there's only two ways to move: either muscular or skeletal. But if you go beyond muscular and skeletal, then you realize there's a thing called Sung, which is deals with your tendons and stuff. So that... now you see these old masters just because they're not skeletal or muscular. They're just moving with the tendons and sinew... so it's... it's... it's like a dance. But it's a very strong dance. It looks really weak, but it's full, really full.

Christina Felix 45:50

Wow.

Frank Blair 45:51

And so I studied with him and then taught for him. In fact, I just met a lady here that lives next door to me upstairs. And we were talking and she goes, "I know you, Frank." I go, "How do you know me?" She says, "You're Cedars teacher aren't you?" And I say, "Yeah, I raised that boy." (laughs)

Christina Felix 46:12

Oh well, that's really cool then that somebody moved in and remembered you.

Frank Blair 46:15

Yeah, him and his brother both, yeah. And three brothers. They come along really good. They are from a broken up family. And they were all over the place. I said, "No, come here." And yeah, they turned out really well. Cedar now... he manages a berry farm out in Wilsonville. And is also very prominent in

American Church; he sings and drums. His younger brother is... works with... well he worked for NAYA. Working with disenfranchised youth... youth at risk.

Christina Felix 46:37

So he's still doing that now?

Frank Blair 46:57

Yeah, yeah, Gary's still doing that. And then the older brother is a traditional fisherman. So all three of them turned out really good. They know their own way on the red road. (laughs)

Christina Felix 47:16

Well that's great.

Frank Blair 47:22

So it's been a long funny journey from Vanport to where I'm at sitting here.

Christina Felix 47:26

Yeah, I was talking to another lady and she was telling me that they moved to Vanport with a bunch of siblings too. They are Cherokee. So we might get to interview her and her family next, just waiting on big brother's approval. not "Big Brother," but their big brother.

Frank Blair 48:02

Back in them days, it was not good to be in a Native I tell you, a hard hard road to go. Because there were so few of us that we didn't have a strong block of people. Like you take the Spanish people now that come here. They usually send the educated ones over and then they start forming coalitions, and then the workers they migrate. And we said they're like, ants, you see one, you turn around, and it's 100.

Christina Felix 48:37

There's a 100 of them.

Frank Blair 48:39

All over the place. But they're smart that way to send educated ones here to form you know, whatever they needed to get ahead. And... and I always tell the boys, I says, "You know what's wrong?" I says, "There's every kind of ethnic food going, but we don't have not one Native restaurant." I can't understand that. To this day.

Christina Felix 49:05

I think there is one now but it's like a food stand.

Frank Blair 49:08

Yeah, we'll see... That's not a restaurant. It's... there's a guy up in Seattle has been selling tacos up there forever. You know, out of one of those trucks. Yeah. But I'm talking about a restaurant, you

know? There's every kind of restaurant... ethnic restaurant you can think of. Except we don't not have one Native restaurant.

Christina Felix 49:30

Well I think here is one in Portland?

Frank Blair 49:31

No, there isn't. Hasn't been. I'm waiting for somebody to go, "Hey, all our traditional meals. There's people from all over the world would pay big bucks to sit down and have a Native traditional meal." Because there was a place on the island outside of Seattle. That they have fish banquets up there for tourists. They had this big pit with all the... you know, how they dry... they cook the fish that way. And they're a big tourist attraction. In fact, we took the monks over there, and they just couldn't believe it, those monks, Shaolin monks, God, they were funny. We took a we took them up to the Seattle tower.

Dave Hedberg 50:25

Space Needle?

Frank Blair 50:26

Space Needle. Yeah, they were up there doing their poses and taking... we gave them these little cameras... throw away cameras and they're up there posing because they've been, you know, locked up in the mountains all their lives. They were like children, you know. (laughs)

Christina Felix 50:41

All these new experiences in the city, huh?

Frank Blair 50:44

The first time they've ever been in an elevator, you know, going up to the top of that needle. It was just hilarious.

Christina Felix 50:52

Yeh I can imagine. I was at Multnomah Falls and there was a group of the monks. Oh, yeah. Well, of course, they... these... They wore the orange, you know...

Frank Blair 51:06

Oh, that... Yeah. The orange and saffron. Yeah.

Christina Felix 51:09

And I think there was maybe 15 or so. Right? So I was up there taking pictures and I waited and I waited and there was one straggler. And he stayed behind. And I waited for him for like, a half an hour to get in the middle of waterfall so I can take his picture. I don't have to show you that picture. It's really cool. And then he took off before I could talk to him. Meanwhile, I look up and then on the falls, the bridge, there's all the monks right there. Yeah, it was really... they were were like children.

Frank Blair 51:45

Yeah. Oh yeah, they are. I was in Hong Kong with my teacher, we were visiting other martial artists and... and so then I got wind of this place called the Temple of 1000. Buddhas. So I says, "I gotta go there." So you had to take a train. And so, I rode this train to there, got out and there was this temple and there was little Buddhas; 1000 of them all lined the walls, 1000, or 10,000 I think it was. And so they said, All right, no, if you go in, you kneel. You know, you say... you pray in your own way. And... and then come back out. I thought alright, so I kneeled down on this pad they gave me and... and and I looked this way, and there's a monk next to me, on another pad and he looked back at me. I swear I was looking in a mirror. (laughs) He jumped, and I jumped. (laughs) I swear it was my doppelganger. And then he got this big grin. And then we both came out and he goes, come with me, you know. And he took me to their little temple behind the temple; where they lived... their quarters, and I spent the rest of the afternoon, and everybody was jumping every time they'd see him. They'd look at me, we were like twins. (laughs)

Christina Felix 53:17

You found your twin!

Frank Blair 53:18

Because back then I had my hair shaved and everything because in the martial arts, you can't stand taller than your teacher and you can't have hair.

Christina Felix 53:26

Oh interesting.

Frank Blair 53:28

If you're really into it, yeah. And so had my head shaved and everything. And so I spent the afternoon with them and they fed me and everything and then told me of this other place and then they gave me this big jar of Queen Bee jelly. That was one of the things that they... and then the one a guy says, "If you need more..." you know, he gave me his name, "call me and I'll come to the hotel where you're at if you need more." (laughs)

Christina Felix 53:57

Is that also like Royal V Jelly?

Frank Blair 54:00

Yeah, Queen Bee jelly. Yeah, royal jelly and it was pure. It was the finest that you could get, you know, just a couple of drops on the tongue and you'd feel it right away. I spent like a month there in Hong Kong. Training with other teachers there.

Christina Felix 54:17

Well, Frank, you got to write your memoirs. You gotta write your book.

Frank Blair 54:20

Oh, no, no, no. No, you had to be there. (laughs)

Christina Felix 54:28

Do you have any pictures of that?

Frank Blair 54:30

I gave all the pictures away. I got one picture of my teacher and he sits... I have a little altar up in my room and he sits there next to... I have a praying Buddha and him and then a gong and a bell. And so my morning salutations are fed into that area. I think Cedar, the older... or middle boy, I think he's got most of the photos from. Yeah, because it's just extra baggage and you shouldn't carry extra baggage. It weighs you down.

Christina Felix 55:10

Yeah, I know, still trying to get rid of my baggage. I moved three times in a year. Lightening my load...

Dave Hedberg 55:24

So much of the places that you went to... when you lived; when you first moved to Portland have changed. Do you ever see a spot or see anything that reminds you of that time in Vanport? Or has it all just changed?

Frank Blair 55:36

It's all changed. Yeah. Yeah. Well, one of the things that we did when we finally start growing up around town here was... they had streetcars back then. Yeah. And we would hop on them behind and get a free ride. (laughs) You're hanging on there, and then when they'd go around a curve, we'd just jump off, you know. (laughs) You get as close and you could to 'em.

Christina Felix 56:06

Frank and his gang of hooligans.

Frank Blair 56:08

But there was the ballpark on Vaughn Street. We used to go there because I always loved baseball. It was on 25th and Vaughn and Montgomery Ward's, which is now just... what is it? Montgomery Park or something. That was Montgomery Ward's, the big... That was the biggest store in town.

Christina Felix 56:27

Isn't that that building has all that beautiful marble in it now.

Frank Blair 56:31

I don't know. It's way out there and...

Dave Hedberg 56:35

Its got the big sign?

Frank Blair 56:36

Yeah, big Yeah, it's got Montgomery Park. Yeah, that was Montgomery Ward's, it was a big department store; it probably was the place that hired most of the people here in town you know, retail wise. And

because we live right below the hill in Guild's Lake. So we used to come up out of there and jump on those streetcars and ride around. (laughs) And then they had a big log cabin up in that area also; it was for the Lewis and Clark Exhibition. They had it in there until it caught on fire. I remember that place. And then of course they tore the old ballpark down. But then when we found out where all the best 'this' was, 'that' was, you know, like... there was a place called Besaws. It had the best ham sandwich in town (laughs) and this guy, he really knew how to cook ham... and so we'd always go there... [we] loved ham. And that was right in that area also.

Dave Hedberg 57:51

What about Williams and the Avenue? did you hangout there a lot?

Frank Blair 57:53

Oh, Williams? Oh well, now... Oh, yeah. Shit, yeah, almost grew up there. You know, there was... that was where all the nightlife... the best nightlife in town. There was a place called McClendon's, Little Sandy's, Benny's Frat House.

Christina Felix 58:12

Wow.

Frank Blair 58:13

Let me see, there's two that I'm missing. They're really important. I can't think of them right now. But that's where all the live music was. Every night there was live music in those places. And then right behind McClendon's there was a barbecue place; I can't recall that one either but it was right behind McClendon's which was right on the corner. And then there was... and then there was a pool hall and then Little Sandy's and up the street was Benny's Frat House. And then on Russell... there was at a place that right on Russell; I can't recall the name of that place but it was a really big time. And then there was a place called... I think it was the Gray Stone? It was a kind of a hotel for all the black guys that were going in and out and there was a restaurant there. Yeah, we'd go there and... and since they couldn't go anywhere in town, they would just go down Vancouver and up Williams on... and just all these... you know, in their pimp looking cars. (laughs) "Nightlife" and they'd just go round and round all night long 'cause they couldn't go anywhere else. And we'd just stand there on the corners watching them waving at some of the guys we knew.

Christina Felix 59:38

They ever go like cruising into Vanport...?

Frank Blair 59:40

But... well, they were all from Vanport. Yeah, they were all, most of them, from Vanport. But now they've moved into this area here.

Dave Hedberg 59:50

Did you ever run into other boys from your old crew in Vanport?

Frank Blair 59:55

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. They... We hung out... hung out, you know. And... until they all started dying, in different ways or going to jail and things like that. Right where the Coliseum is; that used to be Madrona Hill. Madrona. And there was a record shop there that was famous. All the jazz people were always in that record store. In fact, there was a musician, his name is Tom Grant, his... his father ran that record store; Madrona Record shop. And... they had little booths; you can take like two or three albums in there and sit in the booth and listen to them before you bought them; make sure that you liked it.

Christina Felix 1:00:49

That's pretty cool; have a listen to it.

Frank Blair 1:00:54

And then there was... let's see...

Christina Felix 1:01:02

You have a great memory.

Frank Blair 1:01:03

(laughs) I can't think of that... Paul Knauls... see he ran the place. I can't think of the... the... this famous black nightclub and all the hot musicians, black musicians, would go there. I saw Louis Armstrong. I saw Stan Getz. I saw all the... all the hot jazz musicians that went by here, you know, that's where they'd end up because nobody in downtown understood jazz. They were into Benny Goodman and things like that; but... "swing"... "swing" music but they didn't know, you know, like Charlie Parker or Dizz or any of them. They were... they was a little bit above their pay grade (laughs) when it come to music. (laughs) Cotton Club, that was... that was it... that was Paul Knauls. A friend of mine was the bouncer there; that I grew up in Vanport with, he was a bouncer so, when I'd go there he was the one; my savior in case they got in any trouble. (laughs)

Dave Hedberg 1:02:00

Yeah, so he was working the door?

Christina Felix 1:02:32

Great memories.

Dave Hedberg 1:02:34

Thank you so much for sharing your memories.

Frank Blair 1:02:37

Well, you know, when you're young, that was the first exposure you have to life on your own, so it really is a big imprint on you. And to see all the guys that you grew up with in Vanport are now grown men and have families, and everything like that, and still living in that area. And they'd still be living in that area if they hadn't killed it. Just to put a... that Coliseum there, they killed the whole vibe over there. And then that hospital got the rest of it and then they didn't even develop it. They ran all those people out there and in develop it, you know. It was funny... years later here I was on Morris there, [at] NARA, I'm going, "God I remember when this place was just jump'n." (laughs) And now it's a Indian Health.

Christina Felix 1:03:35

Yeah Indian Health building. Wow. I wanted to ask you Do you remember a family named Nelson?

Frank Blair 1:03:44

I knew some Nelsons,

Christina Felix 1:03:46

Or Culbertson?

Frank Blair 1:03:48

Culbertsons. I know Culbertsons, Yeah.

Christina Felix 1:03:50

So, I just watched a video; I've been watching her videos for a while. her name is Joyce Nelson...

Frank Blair 1:03:59

Probably a Joyce sounds familiar, and then the Nelsons. I knew Nelsons. Yeh, I knew more than one Nelson family.

Christina Felix 1:04:06

Yeah. His name is Buzz. He has a nickname buzz.

Frank Blair 1:04:11

Buzz. I knew some Buzz Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. One of the Nelsons was a fighter also. I can't remember his first name but he was a boxer also.

Christina Felix 1:04:23

Was it Bob? I want to say his name was Robert or something like that.

Frank Blair 1:04:29

Might have been a cousin or something to the other Nelson. Because if I remember the Nelson... if I hear his name, I'd know that was the one i'm thinking of.

Christina Felix 1:04:40

But I wanted to also ask you the names of the other families that you; the native families lived at Vanport?

Frank Blair 1:04:51

Well, like I said, I only met one other family that was there. Because I think a lot of times in... back in them days you didn't want to be known as a native.

Christina Felix 1:05:02

Right.

Frank Blair 1:05:03

Because like... I remember, they had this old boxing coach, he asked me, "Well, what the hell are you?" I said, "I'm a Indian." He said, "Shit, that's just a fancy word for nigger."

Christina Felix 1:05:16

Oh No!

Frank Blair 1:05:18

So that's what they thought of the Indians, right there. That's just a fancy word for nigger.

Christina Felix 1:05:23

Who said that?

Frank Blair 1:05:24

This black coach that I had.

Christina Felix 1:05:25

Oh No!

Frank Blair 1:05:25

Yeah. Yeah. So you didn't want to be known, as you know, because a lot of those people, you know, you get called... I remember being called "blanket ass" was one of the names used to call me, "chief," "blacky," "war whoop," "Hey war whoop!" you know, shit like that all the time. So it was kind of... you kind of shied away from being what you were just because, you know, they were always picking on you for being that. They talk about nowadays, being, what do you call it, racist? Well, I... that's all we've ever known. Racism. (laughs) You know, they came over here. They came over here. If people don't know that, you know, like, they say that there's been two world wars, because they write the history, but actually been three world wars. The First World War was when those three brothers came over here. They were like the spearhead, those Columbus brothers. There was three of them. Anyway, when... they were like the spearhead. The minute word got out over in Europe with what was over here... Here they come, first... first the bandits you know, the pirates. And they make fun of them, you know, like, oh jolly, good, old fellow pirates, you know, but no, they called us savages while they savaged us, you know. And so that was the first World War; they come over here and destroyed our people. Southern part is the land of the Condor. We are in the land of the Eagle. So when those two were separated, then they conquered us. At one time, the war... we were together and you could travel anywhere you want. Because the Condor and Eagle were related, except when it was in the southern part of the this area. We were in the northern. And then they separated us. And then the prophecy says if we ever get back together, the Condor and the Eagle, then that'll be the end of the invader's power. And you can see it; I've been all over South America. Yeah, I've been up the Amazon. I've lived with the Quechuans. I've been to Manchu Pichu.

Christina Felix 1:08:10

Oh you've been there? Yeah. Oh, I want to go there.

Frank Blair 1:08:16

Because I'm from the Mississippi band. So you travel that River all the way from the north, all the way to the south. So you have that wanderlust in you; you never set roots down until you're ready to pass. (laughs) I've been... I've been in New Orleans and I look at people, and they look just like me, and I go, "whoa." (laughs) Because they come from that part of the world. Yeah, even all those people that dress up like Indians down there; it's because of us. The Wild Tchoupitoulas the Big Mamou who all them Indian tribes down there. They are just copying us. Yeah, black people, they were Chumuckla; what they call Chumuckla Indians, black and Indian. So we've contributed more to this country than we get credit for. So what we are is a shadow nation. And I prefer that.

Christina Felix 1:09:22

Shadow nation?

Frank Blair 1:09:23

[To] Be in the shadow nation. That way I'm not involved in any of their shenanigans. Like they... They said, We are the United States of America. But now we have "blue states", "red states", "purple states". (laughs) There's nothing United about them. You know, so you can see their way is starting to chip away; getting weaker and weaker, not getting stronger, getting weaker, you know. So we always have to depend on seventh generation which are now off going running around the earth; the seventh generation. These little kids here; my granddaughter, she's a seventh generation. And she don't look down at the ground like we did when we were walking around. (laughs) She's standing there right toe to toe with you. (laughs) Now they have their own way. And they're very smart, too.

Christina Felix 1:10:22

It's like they... they're born with it. You could see...

Frank Blair 1:10:25

Well see, the land we walk on; that's our ancestors bones. You know, and that's us. What separates us from any people on the world, is we've never left our land. Everybody else comes here. We could have went and start... you know, getting dec... decimated by the invaders. We could have ran to the Queen or the King of France and said, "Take us in, man. They're beating us up." No, we stood here and took everything there was. And we're still here getting stronger by the minute. At one time there was only 800,000 of us. My cousin was the one that started reopening my eyes. Was ah... you ever heard of Clyde Bellecourt and Vern? Them were my cousin's from Minnesota; St. Paul. They started...

Christina Felix 1:10:25

Well did you know the Robideaus from Portland?

Frank Blair 1:11:15

Oh all the... all the... Yeah, yeah. So they... they're the ones that opened our eyes, you know. And they come out of prisons. And... and most people who come from a very hard way that become leaders.

Christina Felix 1:11:45

One of his grandchildren... great grandchildren. She's a really great artist now. You don't do social media. So you're... you're a hardcopy kind of person and we will have to mail you some pictures of her work. It's just beautiful. Yeah, I am in the AIM. I'm a member here. We have a chapter. And we're trying to Oh, that's awesome. That's an AIM Tatoo. Yeah.

Frank Blair 1:12:25

You're what? Yeah. (laughs)

Christina Felix 1:12:28

What are you showing me? So you knew Robert?

Frank Blair 1:12:33

I, you know, was always... always in the background. I never... I never wanted to be out front with anything. Because any kind of movement needs workers; there's too many leaders. You know, and so I'd rather just do what little bit I did. What my contribution was, was taking youth and keeping them from ending up in a bad way. And so I taught martial arts for 30 years, you know. And those kids that I taught now are all clean, they have families, respectable. Had one... one nephew, he graduated with a Master's just a while back. And the middle boy, he's finishing college, he'll be a have his Master's [in] a while there. His woman is going back to school. Cedar, he ended up with a BA and then, now he is into farming; berry farming anything like that. So... it's like, a raindrop (pause) doesn't know the part it plays in the flood. And that's the way that I like to be; a raindrop. Yeah, I don't need any more recognition. And just watching those... the one becomes two, the two becomes three. And so where it starts, who knows?

Christina Felix 1:13:11

One time the presence was larger here for AIM. What is it; the 70's?

Frank Blair 1:14:19

Oh, yeah. Well, you know, when we had the Sundance up on Mount Hood, it was really strong. You know, Lone Wolf; he was like my... my mentor. And he's the one that told me, "You don't have to pierce."

Christina Felix 1:14:37

You don't have to what?

Frank Blair 1:14:38

"You don't have to pierce."

Christina Felix 1:14:39

Oh, yeah.

Frank Blair 1:14:40

Let the ones that want to pierce, pierce. Yeah. All you have to do is learn how to pray in your own way.

Christina Felix 1:14:48

Right. You're familiar with the Sundance? Have you heard of that? (Asking DBH who nodded yes).

Frank Blair 1:14:52

So... I spent 20 years up there. Watched these little kids, now are grown men with piercing.

Christina Felix 1:14:59

I don't know if they have that Sundance anymore, do they?

Frank Blair 1:15:00

No, since the epidemic hit, you know, it was... it was kind of working its way out. Because [the] people that started [it] were dying off. And then people that at one time allowed white people come up there. And they were taking the knowledge and going starting up their own, you know.

Christina Felix 1:15:06

Yeah, that's what I heard.

Frank Blair 1:15:16

And so it just kind of... But down in... in Nevada, there's a big one down there. I can't... I can't remember the place, [I] only went through a couple times. It's still... it's a strong one still. But they took the pipe back South Dakota and I think broke it up. And the Chinoku went back to South Dakota; where it started.

Christina Felix 1:15:57

I knew one of the pipe holders.

Frank Blair 1:16:02

Yeah, I was a road man, I was a pipe holder. I was a fireman. And we used to go help elders out like, down in Nevada, there. We used to go down there once a year. There was a gathering of all these people that were involved in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, there in Yucca Flats. They would go there and protest once a year. And so we'd go down there and help Corbin, he was a Shoshone elder. He was the one that started it, and then go down there and build sweat lodges and tend fires. And then he always tell the natives that were involved, "Don't get involved." But these other people do. (laughs) "You just stay back, and tend the fires and watch out and let everybody else do their thing." Because they would build like a cage across the highway leading into the Yucca Flats where they'd deposit all that nuclear waste. And these people would charge them, right, these Japanese people. And there was this one guy. (laughing) Every time we went down, he was the first one to go. (laughing) He'd dress up like a sumo wrestler or whatever, and he'd run across, yelling, "Bonzai!" and they'd just sit there and wait until he got there, and they'd gather him up. He was the first one in the cage every time! (laughs)

Christina Felix 1:17:34

They got used to him after a while?

Frank Blair 1:17:40

Yeah, and they'd just, you know... it was like a funny act, you know, "Here he comes." "Bonzai! Bonzai!" and then the rest of the people would start, you know, going there [and] lighting fires and everything. All we did was feed 'em and and sweat 'em up. That's all we did.

Christina Felix 1:18:02

Wow, such interesting stories you have.

Frank Blair 1:18:05

Well, you know, things... you know, if you don't seek it will find you. You know, that's the way I've always looked... I've never sought out anything. It has always found me. And then... and then it's how you act upon that. So, I just tried to do everything in a good way. Now I'm... now I'm approaching 88 next month. And now I can reflect.

Christina Felix 1:18:36

Yeah. You don't want a party here at Mamook?

Frank Blair 1:18:40

No, no, no. I... no, no. And then, like my brother when he passed, they had a gathering at NAYA for him, a memorial and that's the first thing they asked me, "Well, you want your memorial there too?" And I go, "I don't want no memorial. I don't want nothing. I just want to pass away." And that's it. I don't want anybody standing over me. I don't need that.

Christina Felix 1:19:07

Yeah, I don't know how I feel about that. About myself either, you know. Well, do we have any more questions for him?

Dave Hedberg 1:19:17

Well, I do have a permission form.

Christina Felix 1:19:22

Oh, we need your permission.

Frank Blair 1:19:23

Oh, yeah. I gotta sign a... All right, I'll forge a signature on there.

Christina Felix 1:19:32

But thank you so much for spending time with us. And um, I think, Dave, you'll be doing some editing?

Dave Hedberg 1:22:11

Yeah. So, I'll... I'll edit this up and I'll give you a... I'll give you a copy. So it's on here, and I'll give you a copy. And anything that we're gonna use, we'll send to you first to make sure you're ok with it.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

Ok, alright. Well, anything I said, is okay. You know, so anything you use... I said it, so then the property is yours now. 'Cause I handed... it's like the Indian way; I handed the story to you. And now what you do with that story is your responsibility. See, that's... that's the way I grew up.

Christina Felix 1:22:11

Yeah.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

So, you always said, "You had to be there." (laughs)

Dave Hedberg 1:22:11

(laughs)

Frank Blair 1:22:11

Alright, so where do I sign?

Dave Hedberg 1:22:11

So, you can sign there, and I can fill in your address for you.

Christina Felix 1:22:11

What is your apartment number?

Frank Blair 1:22:11

317

Christina Felix 1:22:11

317

Frank Blair 1:22:11

They're inspecting it. Right now, as we speak, they're in my apartment, inspecting. Every three months, I think, they inspect the apartments to make sure you're not up to no good. (laughs)

Christina Felix 1:22:11

Not up to too much mischief.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

I feel like... I feel like I'm in a, what do you call it, a halfway house. (laughs) Make sure it's clean... (laughs) I'm in minimum security with street privileges. (laughing)

Christina Felix 1:22:11

(laughs) Right. You get to go out once in a while. That's funny. Well, it was good to see you yesterday at the market. We're going to have it again next weekend.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

Yeah, I see that. And then... then the big one down at the Convention Center. On the 31st. The sobriety...

Christina Felix 1:22:11

The sobriety powwow, yeah.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

They haven't had that [in] forever.

Christina Felix 1:22:11

A couple years.

Frank Blair 1:22:11

Ever since the pandemic. Always, when we're there, everybody's going up [and saying], "I've been sober this long... blah, blah, blah..." I always... we were sitting there and I go, you know, one of these days... times, I'm gonna walk up there and say, "I've been sober one hour. (laughs) Where's my medal?" (laughs)

Christina Felix 1:22:11

You get a ring.