



# Olympia Heritage Register Application

## Property Identification and Legal Description:

(Historical) Property Name: Belsito - Worthington House  
 Street Address: 408 27<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
 City / State / Zip Code: Olympia WA 98501  
 Tax Number / Parcel Number: 58200000600

## Boundary Justification (for a proposed historic district):

For a proposed historic district, describe the proposed boundaries of the district (typically by street names) and provide reasoning for the boundaries proposed:

27<sup>th</sup> and ADAMS

## Property Owner(s) (attach additional details as required):

Name: Sean & Rebecca Kirby  
 Address: 408 27<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
 City / State / Zip Code: Oly WA 98501  
 Phone Number: (360) 789-3694 Email Address: Sean.Kirby@msn.com

## Type of Property (choose one):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Historic Building or Cluster of Buildings at the Same Address                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Object (e.g., statue, grave marker, or other non-functioning built element, or vessel)                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic District   | <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeological Site  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Cemetery / Burial Site  | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional Cultural Landscape (e.g., agricultural, horticultural, industrial, recreational, maritime, or other built landscape) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Site (location of an important event)   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Structure (e.g., irrigation system, bridge, or other "uninhabitable" functioning built element) |   |

**Significance of Property** (check all that apply):

The Olympia Heritage Register recognizes significant properties which are at least 50 years old, or of lesser age if of exceptional importance. This property is important for one or more of the following reasons:

- Historical Importance** – A property which falls under this category is the site of a historic event which has had an effect upon society, is identified with a person or group who had an influence on society, or exemplifies the cultural, social, religious, economic, political, aesthetic, or engineering history of Olympia.
- Architectural Importance** – This property is either an **individual** building that embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, person, style or method of design or construction, or is the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Olympia, or a **group** of buildings that may lack distinction individually but together are easily distinguished as a unit and characterize an earlier era, way of living, or construction method.
- Archaeological Importance** – A property of archaeological importance has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.
- Birthplace, Grave or Cemetery** – The birthplace or grave of a person of outstanding historical importance or a cemetery significant for its age, distinctive design features, or association with historic events or cultural patterns.

NOTE: Register properties must have material and design “**integrity**”, which means that they have not undergone changes which substantially affect their historical character. The level of integrity required is determined by the type of significance, e.g., those of architectural importance require higher integrity than archaeological sites.

**Statement of Significance:**

Please **attach** a brief description of why this property is important to the history and/or prehistory of Olympia.

Describe:

1. **Significant historical information** related to the property, such as people and/or events which have had an impact on society.
2. **The property itself**, such as the style(s) of architecture, original features and material, later additions and restoration work, and any other information relevant to the physical appearance of the building(s), structure, object, or space.

**Documentation:**

1. **Photographs and Maps:** Attach current photographs of the property, showing all elevations (sides) and details that you consider to be important illustrations of the building’s special historical character. If available, include copies of historical maps and photographs.
2. **Historical Information:** Include a bibliography or photocopies of evidence that supports the property’s historical or prehistoric significance. Sources include but are not limited to books, newspaper articles, birth and death records, deeds, census documents, and oral histories.

**Submission:**

Send all requested materials to:

**Michelle Sadlier**, Historic Preservation Officer • Community Planning and Development,  
City of Olympia, Box 1967, Olympia, WA 98507-1967 • [msadlier@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:msadlier@ci.olympia.wa.us) • 360-753-8031

**Dear Michelle,**

**Enclosed is the Olympia Heritage Register Application. I also included before and now pictures! We remodeled the home inside and kept the finishes correct for the period and style of the home! As you can see from the pictures we did not change anything on the outside except the landscaping! We added some brick light posts and wrought iron fencing! It has been a fun project all in all! I'm not sure if you were able to tour our home during the Holiday tour when it was under construction but it looks quite different now! My neighbor had the Historical info letter Mrs. Worthington wrote about the home and it's history! An interesting read in my opinion! Please let me know what else you need from me to help us move closer to receiving a Plaque and official Heritage approval!**

**Regards**

**Sean Kirby**

**RECEIVED**

**JUL 23 2015**

**CP&D**  
City of Olympia



**408 SE 27TH AVE OLYMPIA, WA 98501**







Structure information  
Property: 5820000600

Use these buttons to display different information for this property

- [New Search](#)
- [Basic Info](#)
- [Structures](#)
- [Land](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Map Info](#)
- [Owner History](#)
- [Values](#)
- [Sales](#)
- [Value Report](#)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Appraisal Quality Standards](#)
- [Useful Links](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Printable](#)

**Residential Structures**

<b>Year Built</b>	1948	<b>Fireplaces/Wood Stoves</b>	5
<b>Construction</b>	1 1/2 STORY	<b>Heat Type</b>	<del>FORCED-AIR</del> <i>radiant</i>
<b>Construction Quality</b>	VERY-GOOD	<b>Fuel Type</b>	GAS
<b>Physical Condition</b>	VERY-GOOD	<b>Foundation Type</b>	CONCRETE
<b>Number of Bedrooms</b>	3	<b>Exterior Wall Type</b>	BRICK-VENEER
<b>Full Baths</b>	3	<b>Roofing Material</b>	COMPOSITION
<b>Partial Baths</b>	2		
<b>Residence Square Footage</b>			
Main Finished Area		2748	
Upper Finished Area		662	
<b>Basement Square Footage</b>			
Basement Area		2748	
<b>Attached Garage Square Footage</b>			
Attached Garage Sqft		525	
<b>Misc Structures</b>			
Covered Porch		205	
Wood Deck		320	
Patio		599	
Balcony		108	

**Office of the Assessor**  
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW - Olympia, WA 98502  
Customer Service (360)867-2200 -- Fax (360)867-2201 -- TDD (360)754-2933



**Basic information**  
Property: 5820000600

Use these buttons to display different information for this property

- 
- 

**Owner/Taxpayer Information**

Role	Pct	Name\Street	City	State	Country	Zip
Owner	100%	KIRBY, SEAN L & REBECCA 408 27TH AVE SE	OLYMPIA	WA		98501-3344
Taxpayer	100%	KIRBY, SEAN L & REBECCA 408 27TH AVE SE	OLYMPIA	WA		98501-3344

**Parcel Information**

**Situs Address:** 408 SE 27TH AVE, OLYMPIA  
**Abbreviated Legal:** Section 26 Township 18 Range 2W Plat LACKEYS REPLAT PTN LT 5 E 42.5F & ALL LT 6 Document 011/042 & VAC ST ADJ S OF E 40F LT 6  
**Sect/Town/Range:** 26 18 2W  
**Size:** 0.57  
**Use Code:** 11 Single Unit  
**TCA Number:** 110  
**Taxable:** Yes  
**Neighborhood:** 15R2  
**Property Type:** RES  
**Total Living Units:** 1  
**School District:** OLYMPIA S.D. #111  
**Water Source:** PUBLIC  
**Sewer Type:** SEWER

Searching for Sales

For your convenience, and for greater transparency, the Assessor's office offers three separate sales listings:

- **Owner History** displays all transfers of ownership for the selected parcel.
- **Sales** returns a list of all sales within the subject neighborhood that carry a sale price greater than \$0. Many of these sales have not been verified and are not considered valid, arms length sales for assessment purposes. They include transfers between banks, sales between relatives and business partners, estate sales, etc. that do not typically represent market prices.
- **Value Report** includes a list of valid, arms length sales that were used in determining values for assessment purposes. They include bank sales of foreclosed properties that may have been discounted in price and that have a weighted influence on other market transactions.

**Office of the Assessor**  
 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW - Olympia, WA 98502  
**Customer Service (360)867-2200 -- Fax (360)867-2201 -- TDD (360)754-2933**



Land Characteristics  
Property: 5820000600

Use these buttons to display different information for this property

- [New Search](#)
- [Basic Info](#)
- [Structures](#)
- [Land](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Map Info](#)
- [Owner History](#)
- [Values](#)
- [Sales](#)
- [Value Report](#)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Appraisal Quality Standards](#)
- [Useful Links](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Printable](#)

**Land Characteristics**

<b>Land Flag</b>	1100	<b>Land Influence(s)</b>	No Influences Listed
<b>Lot Square Footage</b>	24706		
<b>Lot Acreage</b>	0.57		
<b>Effective Frontage</b>	Not Listed		
<b>Effective Depth</b>	Not Listed		
<b>Water Source</b>	Public		
<b>Sewer Source</b>	Public		

**Office of the Assessor**  
 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW - Olympia, WA 98502  
 Customer Service (360)867-2200 -- Fax (360)867-2201 -- TDD (360)754-2933

# HOLIDAY TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES 2013



**Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Noon to 4pm**

**Olympia, Washington**

**Conducted by friends and supporters of  
BIGELOW HOUSE MUSEUM  
[WWW.BIGELOWHOUSE.ORG](http://WWW.BIGELOWHOUSE.ORG)**

Ticket No.



**Yantis House  
212 19th Ave SW**

Owners: Anne Kilgannon and  
Gary Robinson

Robert G. Yantis was a young printer, soon to marry Pearl Duby, when he bought this lot in 1910. Robert and Pearl

chose an up-and-coming Olympia-born architect Samuel Ward to design a "modern" home of the new Craftsman bungalow style just coming into fashion. They lived there for twenty years, and the house then passed to several families until 1984 when the present owners purchased the home. Much of the historic fabric was still present but some features had been lost. The owners set about repairing where possible and replicating where necessary. They built an addition in the early 1990s and have completely remodeled the interior in the Craftsman spirit and aesthetic.

**Belsito-Worthington  
House**

**408 27th Ave SE**

Owners: Sean and Rebecca Kirby



Built by Leo and Trena Belsito, it was later the home of Trena and Norman Worthington. Trena

Worthington was a local attorney who built several classically designed homes in this area. She was the managing contractor for the house which features Georgian Revival detailing with her signature wrought iron railings.

*Our Home was  
ON the  
Holiday Tour  
2013*

TRENA BELSITO-WORTHINGTON RECOLLECTIONS  
SEPTEMBER 23, 1991

**COPY**

I'm glad you're here...so much to remember, I'm sure...it was quite the style...the roads...cars weren't plentiful like they are now a days and they had a number of...to be out where they could see the cars...In 1927, my husband had, prior to our marriage, built a house out on the Pacific Hwy because that was the smart thing to do...One of the heads of the savings and loan had built...anybody who wanted to be in was out on the Pacific Hwy. My husband prior to our marriage built a Spanish style stucco house out there on Pacific Hwy. He was a little Italian fellow and he liked the Spanish style and the stucco and all that sort of thing. And he liked the idea too of watching the cars go by so he built this house prior to our marriage, in fact he built it before I got pregnant with him and we lived out there. I despised the place very much so we had hardwood floors, and a bathtub without any legs on it, which was unheard of in those days, that was very modern and very quaint. Everybody but us had a bathtub with legs on it in those days. We lived there for about 3 years, but I despised it so because beggars kept coming by and asking for something to eat and I'd always been a coward. And I was afraid to open the door when one of them came but I'd been taught a good Christian person always gives them something to eat, so I always made them a sandwich. No matter, sometimes I'd be trembling so hard I could hardly open the door, when they came to the door...I just hated the place. I'm just ashamed of myself when I think about it, because my husband just loved it. He thought that was the only place in the world. He had built it himself and expected to have his wife and family living there. But I just hated it from the beginning...I didn't like the traffic; I didn't like the beggars who stopped in every once in a while.

So I went out and purchased this little \$1800 house with 2 ½ or 3 acres of land on the corner of Hillside Drive and O'Farrell. And we came in there. It had been a chicken house I think. I moved all my furniture in there, and we had quite nice furniture for this larger house out on the Pacific Hwy and put all that furniture in this little house which used to be a chicken house; it was a 3 bedroom house. We lived there for several years; and then we moved it back about half way down Hillside Drive and that's the only house I didn't build on that side of Hillside Drive. I started at the corner where the little house was and built every house on the west side of Hillside Drive from the corner down and I remembered there were the Martins, Olympia Sand and Gravel at that time. We started building this house on the corner there; you'll see it, it's a beautiful house down there, sort of Cape Cod colonial style house with very beautiful shakes on it. I started building this house and we came home one day I got the phone number. We had some savings and loan stock, about \$500 and Roosevelt had called a moratorium on the bank account, and we couldn't get any money out of the bank. So we traded \$500 of the Capitol Savings and Loan stock for the framing of this house on the corner of Hillside Drive and O'Farrell. And then one day when we came home there were a pile of bricks in the yard, a great big pile of new bricks; we couldn't imagine where they came from...was left with no bill...my husband called up this was about 1930 I believe. My husband called up the sand and gravel and said there's some bricks in our yard. We didn't order any bricks. We don't have any \$ to pay for any bricks. We already spent our last \$500 in framing the house. And that's as far as we got. The owner, Don Martin, who had gone to school with me; he was in my grade at school said, "Well, the receivers are coming any day to pick up that brick; I thought they'd be better in your yard than they would in mine." Everybody was going under. We finally found enough money to get somebody to build the fireplace and we used Don Martin's brick worker to put the brick in and eventually we got that house finished...that house on the corner of Hillside Drive and O'Farrell. You should drop by and see it. It has a lovely shape and it has a central hall, and a living room on one side and dining room in the back and a study on the other side, and 3 bedrooms and a bath upstairs, and a bath downstairs. We built that house for \$3500.

Then, we built the next one, which was the only one, I don't know who lives there now. Andy Elderson, who was the AAG here for some years, bought it from us. We built that house for \$2200. It's quite a nice colonial house with an open stairway and 2 bedrooms and a small room

upstairs. That's the only house I ever built for sale. We built that specifically for sale because we had the lot there and somebody came along who was willing to build the house for us for \$2200 and we thought that was a pretty good deal. We built that for \$2200 and sold it for \$5500.

And we built the another house the other side of it and the little shack had been moved back on the other side of that house by that time, so we could build a house on the corner. A house has always been the main thing for me by the material things. The house has been the most important. I think it was because as a child my parents were Ozark mountaineers. They came out here from Missouri, shortly before I was born and left sisters of mine back there who had children, before I was ever born. I have nephews and nieces who are much old than I am. I learned in those days that all the good Christian people just let anybody come into their home, and so my father was the first one who came out here to go to work in the logging camps; he was a blacksmith. Then everybody who came from the Ozark Mountains came to my father who was working up at Bordeaux Logging Company and wanted a place to live and my father: "Oh yes, just go up to the house and the old lady will set you up."

In the house, as far as I can remember, I never had a bedroom to call my own; I never had a dresser drawer to call my own. Accepted it...but I hated it; I just simply hated it! And if there were children sleeping on the floor on what they call pallets you know because they would come out from MO and they had to have a place to stay until they got a job. If I had a good dress I had to wear it to school; I guess there were times that I just thought I would give my life for a little privacy, so I began to dream about a house. I had a house down in the basement. We had an old wooden basement, in the house where I grew up, right down on Union St where the Capitol Plaza Bldg is today. My old home was there; that's where we lived, and it had a big wooden basement under it because that was a deep lot there. I just had to have some privacy. And so I began to dream, I had this house down in the basement that I used to go down there and play house in that basement. When other little girls were playing with dolls, I was building myself a house. House, house, house is all I had on the brain.

As I say, I'll get back now to the houses down on Hillside Drive, and as I said that then that was the only one I built for sale. The others I built for myself, and it was to be my ideal home each time, and each time I got an idea that I could improve it. I was always able to sell them for a little more at least than I paid for it and I'd sell that and build myself another one and began to find fault with that one and see how I could improve it. And then in 1938 or thereabouts, there was a magazine Architectural Digest or House Beautiful, I don't remember which one, that used to have an architectural contest every year. And the architects would submit the plan for the houses and this basic plan that I started in with was taken from that magazine. I don't even have a copy of it now, and I don't know what year, not even which magazine it was really. But it won a prize, the basic plan of all the houses that I built, except that one I build specifically for sale, were taken from this original plan and just varied a little bit according to my own ideas of what it should be. I just building on a little more, and a little more, a little bigger, a little bigger, a little bigger, until I came to the one I have now. I like that basic plan and they're about the same basic plan that I built.

When I built this house over here where I am now, I had the one where you live, I believe; my second husband and I lived there and I was very well-satisfied with that house plan. He had come from a different family than I and he had been raised in a large home similar to this one and he thought the rooms were all too small in that house. He wanted a bigger house. That's where I was living; my first husband I lost with a heart attack. I married my second husband I was living in this house over there where, this lady, I forgot her name already, was living. He thought the rooms were too small.

We didn't call it a ballroom...that's what people call it now. Yes, I don't know why though, because, it was just a big room that I built to house the overflow of my antique collection. I built that room to house some of the overflow; but I was perfectly happy with that house. I liked it.

When I married my second husband, he thought the rooms were too small; He lived up in Dr. Partlow's house on the west side and used to pass the Judge Beedle house on the way to work. He very much liked the Judge Beedle house. So he said right after we were married, "You've got see if you can buy that house, because, he said, I like that house. I don't think I care to live here where you lived with your first husband: if somebody comes to the door and I go to the door, they'll say, Out of the way boy, I want to see Trina. I went up to see Mrs. Beedle and visited with her for a while. She didn't want to sell. So, I told her that if she ever wanted to sell it to let me know. She never did. But the house came up for sale under guardianship. And so I bought it then without saying anything to my husband about it. And I bought it and he said: well what did you do that for, now I've got used to this house, so he just refused to move. He just didn't want to move. Well I knew if I'd move up there he would follow me, but he just rebelled at moving. He'd gotten used to it over here and he liked it. But I was ready...but at that time I'd gotten to the point where I thought I had to have a house with a view. I'd gotten that idea from my first little Italian husband, he liked a house with a view. He was always talking about a house with a view. After I got that Beedle place, I was so fond of the view that I thought I couldn't get along without a view. So I went up there and remodeled that house and made a beautiful house of it...just a beautiful house. And my husband would come up there to deliver some papers for me to sign sometimes when I was up there watching... And he wouldn't look to the left or the right, he wanted nothing to do with it at all. We worked there for about six months remodeling that house and it was filthy because the Beedles had let it run down. She was elderly and they had a Filipino fellow there who supposed to be taking care of it, but it was in terrible shape, just terrible shape, and when I remodeled, I opened the stairway, it was closed.

I painted the walls a nice gold color, white woodwork; it was all gray inside, nothing lively at all. But my husband wouldn't have anything to do with it. He came up one day to get me to sign some papers and walked over to get me to sign papers and walked right out. The contractor and I had become quite friendly because we worked there together for six months on this house and when my husband came in and got me to sign the papers, he walked right out and wouldn't even look one way or the other at the house. The carpenter said, Why wouldn't you think he would have said something even if it was only what the hell did you do that for. But he didn't say one word. So I...he loved to walk and I thought well maybe he doesn't like to climb that hill. It's quite a hill to get up to the Beedle house...

~~And so I just sold it and came down here and bought the lot that had to do with the~~ sisters at the hospital. Everybody told me I should never build a house back there behind the railroad tracks. All the real estate people in town told me that I'd never get my money out of it. And so I thought I have to have a view, I just have to have the view. And if my husband should go up to the Beedle house and climb the hill and have a heart attack I'd never forgive myself. So I sold the Beedle house and built this house down below. So we'd have the view, and it was nice as long as I had him and he could walk, and he did walk down every day to the office and came back and forth on the level...about 2 ½ miles down to the office. And he'd walk both ways everyday. And it was built from that same original plan, 1938 or thereabouts. I changed them too, to my own satisfaction. But it was the same basic plan. And I have an article by an architect.

You can't get an architect to build a house on this plan today. Architects won't build a house like this today. They say that everything has to be functional. And what they mean by functional, if you build a house so the inside is just what you want and then if the outside turns out to be something that looks like a place to store cattle feed that's just too bad. And that's what they call functional. I like the old Thomas Jefferson style better; it does hamper you quite a bit that's true. If you have a window on one side today, you have to one on the other side. Everything has to be balanced and that is some drawback in a way all right to some things. I think it's well worth it because you do have a nice. I do have an article at home in one of the magazines, when it was done...It was written by an architect from New York City or some place...came up with a plan that was as satisfactory as that is, including the privacy and the convenience of the central hall and the rooms on either side and the upstairs so that you can go there and have your privacy...I had a good article on that. They've never been able to devise a plan that was any better.

to...there wasn't much point in getting rid of a bathroom, but I did get rid of one of them and moved it down into the basement and put a closet in there.

Q: Tonight the basis of this meeting is the Olympia Heritage Commission. We're primarily concerned in protecting, restoring anything about the Olympia Heritage. And as you know the wrecking ball moves in and tears down these different buildings and things like that, and I think this commission of which there's four of us tonight, I'm disappointed in the turn out. What advise if any would you have to our commission in trying to preserve and protect the heritage of Olympia. Not necessarily naming any particular landmarks, what do you think that we can do? Should we be more aggressive in trying to get houses and buildings that still remain? Do you have any thoughts on that?

I don't know what powers this commission has. I certainly am in favor of trying to preserve because I don't think that the new ones-for instance, this house, if this were to be wrecked, and there wouldn't be anything new to compare with it and then I don't think people need to worry either. Architects and people who want to make money off of a building are continually trying to get people to wreck things. But I don't know why the other people allow them to do it and why people worry so much about buildings. For instance the old Mottman Building, everybody said nothing could be done with that and I told Mottman at the time: I wish I'd live as long as that building; they go out and tear down things that are meant to last indefinitely. This house will be here when we're all gone.

Q: Trena, I had a question about when you were saying that you got this load of bricks from Mr. Martin for your fireplace, what encouraged you then to build the rest of your homes that you built in brick? Did you find that you liked that material the best?

Yes, I found that they looked better longer than any other material. And one thing, of course, that encouraged me to build them was you didn't have to paint them. Of course there's a lot of paint around the trimming to do, that's quite expensive too, but my sister was saying some time ago that she and her daughter were riding up around Tacoma among the old homes. She said: the brick ones look better than the others; You know, after the others have gone out of date, she said the brick ones just look newer than the others do after the same amount of time.

Q: Did you tell David and I that you had a sister who was in a school of architecture?

Sister-in-law, you probably heard of Elizabeth Ayre. My sister-in-law and Elizabeth Ayre were in the same class. Eliz Ayre was the first woman graduate in the state of Washington, and by the way, she designed my stairway in my house before she left there. The workman just couldn't get the stairway to go into place in the space that I had there, and she had already retired. When I first asked her to do it she said: No and then she changed her mind and did...

But my sister-in-law was in her class. They were the two first women architects in the State of Washington. That was my husband's brother's wife; her name is Doris Worthington. Elizabeth Ayre was the first woman architect, I believe, in the state of Washington. She was from Olympia; her family lived here in Olympia, but she was very well known in Seattle. The other architects sent people to her if they wanted a colonial design, like I liked. The other architects would send their clients to her.

Q: I think the Beedle house which you purchased from the Beedles, was designed by her partner, Edwin Ivy.

Yes, she worked for him for a long time, and then she branched out on her own after he died. The Beedle house is up on Percival.

Q: How about the wrought iron on the houses on Hillside.

Q: Where's the Beedle house?

On Percival...It's a shingled roof...Normandy style house.

Q: Mrs. Worthington, did you always use contractors ? Did you use the same contractors?

No, I contracted my own houses. I thought I saved a lot of money that way. I just got my own permit and then I hired one contractor for the basement, and I hired another one to do the framing, and another for the plumbing and one for the electrical work, and one for the finish work. It's a big headache but you can build a house a lot cheaper that way.

And I find that the small contractor is frightened to death when he faces taking care of a whole building. But if it was separated into parts like it is, and you get somebody to do each stage of the house, you can build a house much cheaper, because somebody would go out and pour a basement for \$10K it isn't such a risk and...mason's going to have to run the risk of \$200K house thererabouts, more or less, he's afraid. You can get a house built a lot cheaper that way.

Q: The home you live in now...tell us a little bit about it. How is that house designed?

We have a central hall like you have here with a living room on one side and a dining room in the back rather than on the other side of the hall... the study was built for the study on the end...

Q: Each side it looks like you have a breakfast room. What are those little rooms on each side of your house?

The round rooms? The round room, the circular one,...that was built to connect the stairway to a room that I built in the basement to take care of some of my other antique collection. That's all there is in there, just the stairway, a rounded stairway to the basement. Then on the other side I found that, I thought when I built that house that I have friends who design their houses and they have a place to put every stick of furniture. But I thought when I built this house that it was big enough to take anything I'd ever have but I found it wasn't. The basement over here where this lady is, and there's a full basement over there, almost a full basement anyway, and I had so many things over there that I thought this house is big enough to take care of everything, but I didn't have enough room. That's the reason I had to build that addition that goes over the creek there, where the little stream comes down, that's a garden room, I call that a garden room. You step down from the living room there and go into that room. I call it the garden room for want of a better name. It's just a place to house my extra things...that I don't have any room for anymore. Otherwise it's just the same, really, as ...house.

Q: On this house here...you come into the entry and to the left past the bathroom, you have what I thought was a master bedroom suite, with a little sitting room with a fireplace, then the bedroom behind it. Is that how you used that? Or did you use the rooms upstairs as a bedroom suite? I'm curious how you used the rooms here?

We slept in the downstairs bedroom and then the upstairs rooms we just left them.

Q: In the basement of the new addition that everyone calls the ballroom, there's a chimney.

Oh, I have a Franklin stove there. I like to have a stove in the basement.

Q: You moved before using that...  
You could have a bathroom down there too. It looks like there's plumbing...

We had eight..we didn't need them or didn't want that many either but we changed around...every time we changed it around the bathroom wasn't in the right place. We didn't want

two bathrooms right up against it and then the other 4 bedrooms down the hall here didn't have any bathroom at all. That one extra bathroom was just useless. And I said...well, heavens sake, I can't imagine an architect doing anything like that in those days. It wouldn't have cost \$25 for the pipe to pipe that down and put a bathroom in the other end of the hall.

Q: Are you saying that the master bedroom had like a his and hers separate bathrooms?

Yes, and one bathroom for all the four bedrooms down at the other end of the hall. But every time I mentioned that Elizabeth Ayre and my sister-in-law looked sour and they didn't laugh over that. I thought, I bet Mr. Ivy turned that over to you gals that time.

And there's another thing about that house; there's no guest closet in the hall, in the front hall. I complained about that when I owned it, although I loved that house. Every house has got something wrong with it and those 2 things was what was wrong.

...never charged you anything. And Mr. Price said that's why you don't have any money.

It was so ridiculous because he'd been going down there getting his papers verified all the time.

Q: Trena, what do you think about the city of Olympia in the way it's evolved. What do you think about the city today?

Oh, I think it's just ruined. It was such a nice pretty little quiet town, you know, and now it's just full of all kinds of riff raff.

Well that's my Ozark mountain blood coming out. My husband who was a very intelligent man. His whole family was blue-blooded people, all Phi Beta Kappas. Every once in a while I let my Ozark mountaineer traits come out, you know. Always when I would go to court he would say to me: if I had a trial coming up he would say to me: keep it on a high plain, honey.

Q: Trena, how were you encouraged to be a lawyer? Did your father encourage you?

No

Q: It seems interesting that your sister was an architect and you became a lawyer.

My sister-in-law, that was my husband's brother's wife.

Q: Had you ever considered being an architect?

No, Elizabeth Ayre...I have a letter from Elizabeth Ayre and she said: you may have been a good attorney but you certainly would have made a wonderful architect.

Q: I would like to share a statement you made to me a couple of years ago that I think, reflects some what of your background. When I first moved out here in 1971 and started working for the Dept. of Social and Health Services, Trena very quickly developed a reputation in our office and was quite well known. Boy, if you were involved in divorce and you were the woman you had it made and if you were a man you were in trouble. She was very good at what she did, particularly representing the woman. And I had mentioned this to Trena a couple of years ago when she came by our house and her face kind of fell and she said: but you know, she said, I always hated doing divorces. That was never what I liked; nobody wins. It was a terrible thing and I don't like doing them. Which I think speaks a lot for her character.

You and June Fowls and Evelyn probably had most of the divorces.

Well, they had more than I did, because I had other things. And Evelyn had most of the divorces.

But you had the reputation.

Oliver Ingersoll said that, when I first got in the practice...that he and June had a case together and that Oliver was too busy that he just couldn't handle it, so he turned over his side of it to me. And so June phoned him up and tried to make a plan. And June said: she wanted to settle with him. And he said: well, June, I think I'd take it to Trena. And she said: Well, what did you do that for?

Well, he said: I was figuring I wanted this man to have good representation. And June said: Well, now all hell will break loose.

Q: You were representing the man in that case?

I wasn't keeping it on a high plane. I didn't favor either one. I tried to do what I thought was right. ....

Q: Trena, what are your plans for the future now?

Well, I just don't have any. I've lost my husband and don't have any particular desire for living, really.

Q: How about building more houses?

I've been wondering about that. I couldn't build another house, it's pretty hard to do.

My husband and I were just knitted together. Before he worked for the government, he came into my office and he did research for me. And we worked there together for the last 15 years. And without him I just don't have any particular desire for living. And I don't care about anything anymore, really.

Q: Trena, what did your husband do?

...he did research for them...the United States Dept. of Forestry. They have a Puget Sound Research Center here. And he was the head of that for 22 years. And he took an early retirement and he came into my office and did my research for me. And he studied law in there; he took all the courses under the law clerkship and was eligible to take the bar. But he didn't want to be a lawyer. After he'd been in my office for a while and saw how the lawyers operate, he said: I couldn't do that. I belong to a profession where people respect each other.

Q: He was living in Olympia when you met him?

Yes and he said: I couldn't go up to that courthouse and cry around and make like a bunch of little kiddies because they can't have their share of the candy. He just couldn't see it.

Q: What would you like to see happen to your house on Capital Lake?

Oh, I'd like to have somebody really enjoy it...I have a man right now...he brings me a bouquet of flowers and a box of candy two or three times a month. He likes my house so well, if I could sell, I'd sell it to him....I'd never part with it.

Q: Trena, all of your antiques you have, did you collect those in travels, in Washington?

The only traveling I ever did was that little traveling I did on business; when I'd get through with my business I'd go to antique stores and second-hand stores. I haven't done much traveling; we

unless I'd go to business college and learn to be a stenographer. But I finally found one who would take me in. And my husband said, Go up to the University of Washington, do it right if you're going to do it right.

I didn't want to leave my husband because he was just about as devastated as I was over losing the children. And I didn't want to leave him. And I said, Oh we'll make it through somehow. So I served a 4-year law clerkship with Oliver Ingersoll; and I managed to pass the bar. I always believed the examiners wanted work that weekend. I never would have passed it because it wasn't complicated at all.

I started my law office down in the bank building. Every time I went to court if somebody looked a little funny I thought, well, I wonder if they know something that I don't. They had a law degree and I didn't have a law degree. So I closed my, uh, I didn't close my law office. But I went down to Willamette and went to school down to Willamette. I had a hard time getting anyone to take me into a law school. I couldn't understand that at all because my grades were higher than the people they were taking in. But I was told afterwards when I went down to Willamette that they didn't want to take anybody who'd already passed the bar, into the law school, because they had had one there once before and he was always quarreling with the teachers. But finally they took me in anyway. And I was down to Willamette, down in Salem, so when I came home on my sick leave days, I came home and had my trials. And then of course I had to go to school when I was sick. Many a time I went. So you can imagine what a poor job I did with my schoolwork, because I would go home and have my trials on my sick leave days and then on my sick days I'd go to class. Because you had to be there so many days to graduate and that's how I happened to be a lawyer. I just had to live up to my reputation. They went ahead of me and kept saying she's already a lawyer.

And after you once get into law school, they just make you believe that being a lawyer's the most wonderful thing in the world. Why anybody would ever want to be anything but a lawyer is just more than you can feature.

Mr. Sutherland and the others they know how to treat you and how to act. So you get so you just have to do it. And I can't say after I graduated from law school that I knew any more than I did after I first was with the law firm. At least it got rid of that mental hazard. When I went to court, well I knew when somebody looked kind of funny it wasn't because they knew anything that I hadn't been at least exposed to. So that helped my in that way, got the law degree down at Willamette.

Q: I'm Terry Cooper. I first came to Olympia in 1958; I worked for a title insurance company downtown. When ...first...one of the customers I got to know was Trena Belsito at that time. And June Falls were in practice in town among a lot of other attorneys at that time in Olympia. Thurston County at that time only had 2 judges too, by the way,

Those were the good old days.

Q: And how long did you practice law here?

40 years

Q: Were you one of the few women attorneys in Olympia when you started your practice?

At the time I started the practice there were two others here. This gentleman here said June Falls and Evelyn Foster. But Evelyn didn't take anything but divorces. And she seldom contested those, but she had her hands full. She had all kinds of divorces, sometimes as many as all the rest of us put together.

Q: One thing you might be interested in today, at the University... for the first time in the history of the law school there are 52 % women in the law school. That's a change that I don't think you'll ever see reversed.

No, I don't suppose so. Now the year that I passed the bar, I was sworn in up at Seattle and I was the only woman there. That was in 1950. I was the only woman there. There were only 2 or 3 women in the law school, and I took some special courses up there.

Q: Is that also the year you built this house? Were you going through all that at the same time you were building this house?

1956

Q: The owners of the houses here, you must have questions you'd like to ask.

Q: I do. We're the first brick house on Hillside...is that the one you said you built to sell?

No, no, I built five houses. The first brick house? No, no. We lived there for a while in that house. That's the one with the two dormers. We lived there and I built that house out of used brick and intended to whitewash it, but after I got it built, I just didn't have the nerve to whitewash it.

Q: Was that the one you got the brick from Don Martin?

No, no that was just the brick to build the fireplace for the one on the corner.

Q: It's all Chehalis brick isn't it?

All except this one.

Q: I've heard two stories about you. Number one, that you built one of the houses for your sister and number two that you always had to build near a railroad track.

No, all those houses I built initially for myself. Just that one where the little house was, that little house was torn down after I left that neighborhood and somebody built a house there on the lot where they tore down the little house. All those brick houses I built to live in myself and did live in all of them except one. That was the one...my little girl died at the time we built that house and we just never could stand to live there. We built a bedroom especially for her and she had designed the fireplace. We had a round opening in the fireplace and we just thought we just couldn't move in there. After she died, right about in the middle of it, we were just about ready to move in when she died.

Q: What was her name?

Juliet

Q: How old was she?

She was eleven. We sold that house. That was the only brick house that we built that we never lived in.

Q: Well, I could see how the story may have gotten turned around.

Q: I believe it's the south bedroom that you had built for the daughter, with the bathroom. You look at this and it's enormous, I think it's got to be 28 by 15, it's an enormous room. And that's not the master bedroom. The master bedroom is at the other end with no bath and it's got a walk-in closet that we found later originally had a laundry hamper that isn't there any more. We