

Gathering Our Voice

Interview with Charlotte Massey

Date: July 22, 2011

Interview by Dominick Bonny & Nancy Warner

Transcribed by Nancy Warner

DB: This is Dominick Bonny interviewing Charlotte Massey for the Foodways & Byways project of Gathering Our Voice on July 22, 2011. So Charlotte, how old are you? And where do you go to school?

CM: I'm 15 and I go to Cascade High School in Leavenworth.

DB: Cool, cool. And what are some of your hobbies? What do you like to do for fun?

CM: I'm on the cross country team at school and I also cross country ski competitively. I'm getting into photography a little bit. I love arts and crafts. And I'm trying to start an international club and an environmental club at school.

DB: Cool, cool. So you're into international issues and stuff like that? Are you going to try to travel? What are your plans for the future?

CM: Um well we've had two exchange students in the past one from the Czech Republic and one from Afghanistan. We're having a girl come from Spain this year. She comes in two weeks. I'm really excited. And I don't know that I'll ever go anywhere but it's cool to meet people who have.

DB: Cool, that's cool.

NW: I was just going to ask one question that I think you'd enjoy listening to or hearing about. A couple of years ago your mom [Amy] told me you were some sort of correspondent for Time Magazine.

CM: Oh yeah.

NW: Tell us about that.

CM: I was a "Time for Kids" kid reporter. So I had to send in an article I'd written. And mine was about the Cool School Challenge that the Middle School did. Umm. I got in the finals and had to make a movie about myself and write an article about my local hero who is Torin Koos. And then I won! So I think there was twelve of us and I got to do reporting for Time Magazine, the kid version. They sent me to the Olympics. I was in the main press center in the middle of the reporters from all the big magazines. Um. I got to go up to the Olympic Village and tour it and meet lots of people there. Every person that we passed was an Olympic athlete and then we watched them on the TV screens in the main press center. And it was - my favorite part was we

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were watching ice skating and there must have been 200 TVs cause everyone was watching the Olympics. And the ice skater fell and you could just hear this collective ohhhhhh around the whole huge building. It was pretty amazing.

DB: Wow, what a great story and what an amazing experience. Well ok, cool. Let's get into some of these questions here. Where is your family from originally and how long have they lived in North Central Washington?

CM: Well, I was born in Arlington and we lived in Darrington. My dad lived in Texas and Malaysia and Germany. They moved all over the place. And my mom was from Chicago.

DB: So what brought your parents and your family here?

CM: Um, well, they both went to the University of Washington and they were really into kayaking. My dad broke both his arms and because he was hit by a car they got some money. So they bought a broom business in Darrington cause there are lots of rivers there and they like kayaking. And we were driving through Leavenworth and my dad wanted to be a high school science teacher and a science teacher job opened up in Leavenworth and he got the job and we moved here.

DB: So you've grown up in Leavenworth. What is one of the things you proudly share with outsiders about the Leavenworth – Wenatchee Valley?

CM: Well I love telling people that I live in a German tourist town. But they're all jealous of the mountains and the rivers. We have such beautiful scenery around here and there's so much to do especially being a tourist town. There is never nothing to do. There's always some activity. Hiking, biking, kayaking.

4:45

DB: Ok, so where do you get most of your food? [break to install new batteries]. So we were talking about harvesting and growing food. Do you or your family have a garden or anything like that?

CM: We do we have a really small yard but we try to grow as much as we can.

DB: What are some of the things you grow?

CM: We have raspberries, strawberries and we freeze if we have too many but we mostly just eat them. And we have lettuce, tomatoes, basil. Um, last year we had a honeydew – we had one honeydew. It was about that big but it was delicious.

DB: Nice. Do you and your family shop at farmer's markets or local food places like that?

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CM: Yeah. We go to the farmer's market every Thursday and we get our eggs from a friend who has chickens. And we get our meat from a local farm. And we used to get goat milk from some neighbors like a few miles away. My dad would bike over and get the big glass containers of goat milk. But the guy who was doing it got sick so they don't do that anymore.

DB: Do you like goat milk?

CM: Yes, its actually quite good and you can make cheese out of it too.

DB: Um, so how are some ways you learned to grow or gather your food through these experiences?

CM: Well my mom. We used to have a really big garden at our old house. My mom would teach me. We would go out and garden together. And I would help hoeing. I had my own little plot where I put a little bit of lettuce and a little bit of carrots and I had my own little section and then we had the big garden where we had all the food. And I would say I'm hungry and my mom would say go out to the garden and eat whatever you want. So, that was pretty cool.

DB: So you'd go rooting through the garden for your snacks?

CM: Yes, I had lots of salad.

DB: Um, ok. So let's talk a little bit about processing and distributing food. What are some of your favorite foods from our region?

CM: I love apples and pears strawberries. One of my favorite things is to go up to Stevens Pass and pick blueberries. They're so good. Just sitting down and picking those blueberries off bushes.

DB: Where do you usually pick?

CM: If you just go up to the ski area the slope to the left is just covered in huckleberry bushes.

DB: Cool. Um, I had something I was going to ask but lost my train of thought. Um. Oh yeah, what are some of the favorite varieties of apples?

CM: Granny Smith apples. I like tart.

DB: That not one you often hear. How about from outside of our region, what are some of your favorite foods?

CM: I like grapefruit, but my favorite food is blueberries. I eat way too many of them.

DB: Does your family share harvesting and processing activities with others? Like CSAs [Community Supported Agriculture] or like that?

CM: No, I don't think so.

DB: Other than the goat milk.

8:29

CM: No, we trade garden. We try to put our zucchinis on people.

DB: How does that work?

CM Nobody wants them. Everybody has some already. There are just too many zucchinis in the world.

DB: So if the stores closed tomorrow and you had to eat where would you go to get your food?

CM: To the garden or to the farmer's market. There's a farmer's market. Or my frig but I don't think that counts.

DB: Ok, um. So what are, you know, some traditions in your family around food. Are there any special dishes, recipes or practices at different times of the year that are special to your family?

CM: Well we always have our big Thanksgiving dinner. The main thing right now is that we're trying this new diet – the Paleolithic diet and you're not supposed to eat any grains or starches like potatoes. It's really hard

DB: What can you eat

CM: Meats, vegetables, fruits, nuts, berries. It's supposed to be you're supposed to eat how people ate before the farming revolution. So what we evolved to eat as humans. What you could go out and find in nature. Because you couldn't go out and find bread in nature – you'd have to cook it. But obviously we cook our meat and our vegetables. It's really challenging. One of the main things is that instead of [pause to check camera] Ok, sorry.

DB: I was just checking the camera. Go ahead.

CM: Um. We eat the meat locally grown, locally raised instead of the grains where big companies go out and plow down acres and acres and acres of land and harvest it and replot it down. So it's trying to eat more locally cause it's hard to eat local grain.

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DB: So it's more sustainable. Um, but you don't eat your meat raw do you?

CM: No, no. Gross. I used to be a vegetarian.

DB: And so are you totally a meat eater now or do you shy away from red meat? How's that work?

CM: I was really sick. I kept getting sick a lot when I was a vegetarian. So I tired this switchover to be more healthy and get more protein. And it's worked. I'm a lot healthier now.

DB: So how long has your family been doing this Paleolithic diet?

CM: It must be like six or seven months now. It's really hard. Well we're not really doing the Paleolithic diet because that is really pure. We're doing something called the primal diet which has this wonderful things called the 80% rule where it's healthier to if you really want to eat something eat it rather than deprive yourself of it cause you really really want it. Also the primal diet lets you eat dairy products. Well Paleolithic does not include cheese or milk which is really hard.

DB: That sounds tough. Well that's good. Let's see. What are some traditions and how will they be passed on? Do you think this diet will be a sustainable part of the rest of your life? What's the plan?

12:52

CM: Well it's not like a diet to lose weight. It's supposed to be a diet you stay with it your entire life and I probably will cause if I stop I'm afraid I'll get sick. I've eaten some wheat cause that's what everyone was eating on the river trip and I felt sick afterwards. Especially being off of it for awhile – you really notice it. I don't think I'll go back. It's tempting cause you see all of this delicious food and I love pasta. But it makes me so sick.

DB: Is it an allergy?

CM: No, I'm not entirely sure. It's kind of like just when you don't eat something for a long time that's maybe not something that's super good for you. It just feels like it hurts your whole body, at least for me.

DB: So what is comfort food to you?

CM: Comfort food. Chili. Chili is warm and cheesy.

DB: Is it one of those mom recipes?

14:00

CM: More of a dad recipe. My dad calls it his famous chili. It's good. Got all the vegetables and meat.

DB: What's unique about your father's chili.

CM: Probably the most unique thing is that it doesn't have beans in it.

DB: What, really?

CM: Beans are kind of like a grain so we cut beans out too.

DB: So what does he substitute?

CM: Nothing.

DB: Oh really.

CM: It's like ground beef and vegetables and he also puts lots of hot sauce in it which I love hot sauce.

DB: Do you share foods you harvest or gather with other families? We talked a little about this with the zucchini. But is there anything else besides that you try to share?

CM: Sometimes when we got pick blueberries we'll go with another family which is fun. So we share that. Me and my friend will go down to the river and pick blackberries and we'll get together and make a pie sometimes. But we don't do too much. We should do more.

DB: The next few questions are about the land. So can you tell me something that you learned from your family or others in the community about how you care for the land?

CM: Um, yeah well one of the things about the Paleolithic diet is trying to conserve the land instead of plowing it up to plant. And we hike, we do lots of outdoor activities and try not to pollute and destroy resources. Um. We used to live out Icicle in a big house with woods in the back and it was wonderful. But we moved to a little house in town so we could walk to school. And we don't hardly drive at all now.

DB: Is there one practice that you're particularly proud of and plan to pass on to future generations?

CM: I'd say not driving. We walk to school. My parents walk to work. We walk to the grocery store. We walk to farmer's market. My parents drive maybe one or twice a week. We try really

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hard to not drive as much as possible, biking and walking instead. It's a lot easier because we made the choice to live right in town. There's hardly anywhere that you have to drive to now.

DB: That's something you value?

CM: Yes

DB: When you think about the food we harvest and eat what is your hope for the future of this region and what are some advantages to obtaining your food from nearby sources?

17:00

CM: Well one of the biggest advantages is travel cause when foods travel long distances they have to be picked when they're not very ripe so they end up not tasting as good. And also they use up so much gas so much wasted resources from carrying the food all the way over here. I went to Hawaii and got to eat fresh bananas and there's such a huge difference. I mean I love food that comes from other places but food that comes from here is just tastes better because it hasn't had to be in the truck for miles and miles and miles. You can get it straight when it still has dirt on it. You can pick it right out of the ground and it just tastes sweeter cause you got it right when its ripe. You know all the - that there haven't been so many chemicals going into it. You know what's happened to the food. It's not some mystery that you hope they didn't dump chemicals on it. And when the people like at the farmer's market when you see the people who made it they don't want to put lots of chemicals and do that stuff to the food because they know the people it's going to. But the big companies they don't think about the people who are eating it – they just think about making money off of it. Trying to get it to as many places as possible.

DB: Um, yeah well I think that's pretty much all the questions we had other than . . .

NW: I've got a couple little follow-ups if we can go back here. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about gardening. They lived right across from Sleeping Lady, like you said, and you said you had a pretty big garden. And I liked what Amy said about you foraging in the garden when you were hungry. How did that make you feel when you had a big garden and you could go out and you could actually get some food out of your yard?

CM: Well the house by Icicle that was a different house. We tried to have a garden but there was forest so there wasn't much sun. It was the house on Wilson Street where we lived when we first moved to Leavenworth. We had an acre of just grass. So we dug up a lot of it and put in a garden. We also had apple trees in the back and I loved them when they were still little and sour. But it was it was really cool. I was always a little bit annoyed that my mom would make me go outside to eat it but it was really fun going outside and trying to find my own food. Find the little strawberries and pick all the raspberries – we had so many raspberries. And picking the apples you got to watch them become ripe, and ok. It was really fun helping garden, helping to weed. It's kind of satisfying planting the seeds and watching them grown and then getting to enjoy

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them.

NW: So how does it make you feel in terms of being about to take care of yourself? Say if the stores did close for some reason or the deliveries didn't come into Dan's or Safeway. Could you talk a little bit about that?

CM: Yeah, it's nice to know that we don't rely entirely on outside forces to feed us. We don't go out to eat a lot so we feed ourselves. We can we can definitely survive off of our garden and our friend's gardens and farmer's market gardens, the meat that we get from local families. I'm not sure that the rest of the world could say that. What would happen for everyone if that happened. We wouldn't have quite as diverse a diet as we have now. We might survive mostly off of zucchini.

NW: One more thing on gardening I was wondering about. I kind of did like you did when I was growing up – I had my little space so I could do my own thing. What did you learn from your folks and from your neighbors about how to care for the soil and water needed?

21:47

CM: Well one of the big things we do is water either in the morning or in late afternoon cause if you water in the middle of the day the water will evaporate and the water won't sink in. We don't have very good soil cause big trucks drove on it and it's really hard packed. We always used to get manure from people we knew that had animals and we would put it in. I thought it was kind of gross but it really made the soil a lot better a lot darker, a lot richer. You know, all the worms in it. We used to compost but we don't any more because our garden isn't really big enough – we have way too much stuff in it. But it's good to know that our soil is healthy it was good it wasn't like - we never poured the chemicals on it that are supposed to make the plants grow. And so we tried to put nutrients in the soil so the plants grow from being healthy not from being genetically modified.

NW: Let's see there was one more thought I had. It has to do with your grandparents and traditions passed down through your mom and dad and that you picked up on at family gatherings. Your dad's chili sounds good and we'd like to have that recipe. But are there other food traditions that mirror your family's culture?

CM: I'm not sure but I know my mom has this recipe that her grandmother taught her about how to make gravy so it's not lumpy. Every Thanksgiving she shows me and I always forget it but I will remember it eventually and teach it to my Also we have this stuffing recipe that I'm not sure we're going to make without the bread crumbs but we make it every year and my grandparents will come and help me with it. It's always my thing to make the stuffing.

NW: It'll be interesting to make stuffing without bread.

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CM: I can use coconut flour to make muffins and sweet breads, like banana breads. We can do that but I don't know if it would taste very good in stuffing. Coconut is more towards sweetness. But I'm going to find a way to make it taste delicious.

NW: Is Massey German or is it English.

CM: I'm not sure. We have German, Irish, Scottish. My brother's middle name is Graham because we're part of the Graham clan of Scotland. We don't have one very large link.

NW: A little bit of everything.

CM: There are a few other Masseys in Quincy and people always ask if we're related to them. We're not as far as we go.

NW: Well ok. I just wanted to explore that a little bit more. Did you have anything more?

DB: No

25.34

NW: Good. Thank you.