

**Ellen Scott
Narrator**

**Deborah Locke
Interviewer**

**Redwood Falls, Minnesota
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**AL = Aimee LaBree
Minnesota Historical Society**

**DL = Deborah Locke
Minnesota Historical Society**

ES = Ellen Scott

AL: This is Aimee LaBree on March 9, 2011 at the home of Ellen Scott, 802 South Wake Court, Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Interviewer: Deborah Locke.

DL: Ellen, could you spell your name?

ES: Yes, it's E-L-L-E-N S-C-O-T-T.

DL: Where and when were you born?

ES: I was born in Redwood Falls, Minnesota on April 21, 1949.

DL: Do you have a nickname?

ES: My sister's girls named me Lollie. And then I have some other nicknames that are silly, but yes, I have two other nicknames.

DL: Do you have any that were given to you when you were real little, by relatives?

ES: No.

DL: Who are, or were your parents?

ES: My parents were Margie Ann Bluestone and Richard Guy Goodthunder.

DL: Were they from here too?

ES: Yes.

DL: Who are, or were your siblings?

ES: My oldest brother was Richard Goodthunder, Beverly Goodthunder, Ken Goodthunder, Janice Goodthunder, Wayne, and then myself. And there was one older one, but he died when he was two years old, so he would have been older than all of them.

DL: Who were your grandparents on both sides?

ES: Charles Goodthunder was my father's father, and then Emma Wells Goodthunder, that was his wife, my grandma. And then Samuel Bluestone was my mother's father, and Marie Bluestone was my grandmother.

DL: How long have you lived in this area?

ES: I would say 16 or 17 years.

DL: Where did you live before that?

ES: We lived in Reno, Nevada.

DL: You were there for how long?

ES: I would say two years.

DL: Let me start from the beginning. Where did you live when you were a little girl?

ES: When I was born we moved to Arizona and I lived there until I was 18. And then I married an Air Force man, and I don't know if I can remember all the places we've been, but we had quite a few moves because of his Air Force career. So, we ended up back here, where I'm from, and my family is all here.

DL: Your husband then, Scotty, was in the Air Force.

ES: Yes.

DL: You had children?

ES: Yes, I had three children, two boys and a girl. The boys are in their 40's and my daughter, Susan, she's about 35. Two live here and one lives in Arizona.

DL: What are the boys' names?

ES: The oldest one is Robert and the middle one is Richard.

DL: We could say you've lived many places because of your husband's job.

ES: Many places. Alaska, Germany, quite a few places.

DL: Was that hard, that life of moving so much?

ES: Kind of in a way, with changing schools with the kids, but other than that, I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the moving and seeing different places.

DL: Did you get back home very often?

ES: Not real often, no.

DL: What did your husband do in the Air Force?

ES: He was in Intelligence when I married him, so he went a lot of TDY's and things.

DL: What's a TDY?

ES: Oh, Temporary Duty, like you'd go away for six weeks or six months. He was also in the Vietnam War and gone for a year.

DL: Are you an enrolled member of a Dakota reservation or community?

ES: Yes.

DL: That would be right here at Lower Sioux?

ES: Yes.

DL: Do you have family members in other reservations or Indian communities?

ES: I have had; a lot of them have passed away.

DL: How about your parents, which communities were they from?

ES: The Lower Sioux.

DL: So Goodthunder is a Lower Sioux name, then?

ES: Goodthunder, yes, and Bluestone. There's another Goodthunder here, but they're not related to us.

DL: Where did you go to school?

ES: I went to school in Arizona, mostly.

DL: Which city in Arizona?

ES: In Phoenix.

DL: And what were your favorite subjects?

ES: I wasn't real good in school, but I learned to like science. I wasn't a good student, anyway.

DL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

ES: When I went to bed at night, I listened to "The Whistler" and radio shows my mom used to listen to on the radio. Being with my mom.

DL: So your parents had a radio and your mom listened to the radio shows.

ES: Yes.

DL: Like serials, or...

ES: I can't remember the names of them, but one of them was "The Whistler." We did that faithfully every day, or every night.

DL: As a child, did you ever think of the future and what you wanted to be?

ES: Not really. This is crazy, but I wanted to be Tarzan when I was little.

DL: You wanted to be Tarzan? You must have watched the Tarzan movies, then.

ES: Yes.

DL: Do you remember any of them?

ES: Oh yes.

DL: Which ones?

ES: With Johnny Weissmuller, and I don't know the names of them, but that's what we watched too, on TV in my time.

DL: What did you do after school when you were a little girl?

ES: We just played. We had a big house and a big yard and we played ball and actually climbed trees. All the neighbors got together in the big field and played kickball or baseball or something.

DL: You spent time outside, then.

ES: A lot of time, yes.

DL: Part of that was due to the mild climate in Arizona.

ES: Yes.

DL: Do you remember neighbors?

ES: Yes, my mother had a lot of friends. She had one elderly lady that used to come over and watch Lawrence Welk with her. There was trailer park on both sides, and they used to have picnics and gatherings, and we'd show pictures and eat and visit. It was fun. We never owned a car or anything, so we never really got out much, but we had a lot of neighbors and friends.

DL: Did you ever get home [to Minnesota]?

ES: Yes and no. I had family here, a sister here, uncles, aunts that we came to visit; grandmas. So he [her husband] came here too, he liked it here. We still have some family in Arizona. They come and go; they're actually living here also, and they go down there because of the climate. They're elders and they don't like the cold, and don't like the heat either, so they come back here in the summer.

DL: You and your siblings and your parents were new to Arizona. Did the neighbors think of you as an Indian family? And did that change your relationship with your friends, or with any of the neighbors in any way?

ES: I don't think so. Maybe as far as school, because I had a real Indian name: Goodthunder was my last name, so everybody knew I was Native, but I think to a lot of the kids, it didn't matter. I don't know with the adults; I never really felt prejudice down there so much. I don't know if my mother had any problems.

DL: Tell me some of the games you played as a little girl.

ES: Kickball in the yard, baseball. We played checkers, Parcheesi, tag, hide-and-seek.

DL: Was TV around yet?

ES: Yes, we had a TV also. And we watched cartoons and stuff when we were little.

DL: Did you ever watch the Lone Ranger?

ES: Yes, we did.

DL: Who did you identify with when you watched that?

ES: The Indians. Tonto, yes.

DL: What did your parents do for a living?

ES: Well, my dad died the year I was born, I think I was three months old. And my mom, we moved to Arizona from Minnesota because she had arthritis and asthma. Actually, they both had chronic asthma, so we moved there. He worked for the Railroad here in Morton, and he went to Arizona and got a house and a job, and then he had a heart attack and died. So we eventually we all moved down there after his funeral and stuff. They moved us down there and I was raised there.

DL: How did your mom support the family?

ES: Dad had a Railroad retirement check. Of course Mom wasn't as bad when we got there, but she progressively got bad because of her rheumatoid arthritis. Her asthma went away. In that climate it went away. But her arthritis progressively got worse.

DL: Which relative had the most influence on you?

ES: My mother, I guess, because she was always there for us. And then an older sister; she was always there for us.

DL: Why is it that your mother had the most influence, in what way? What did she teach you?

ES: I mean, a brother and sister stayed here in Minnesota when we moved down there, and I had a brother down there that went in the Army, and a sister that worked, and another brother close to my age, and I just didn't have anybody else. So that's why I say my mother.

DL: Did your family celebrate the Holidays?

ES: Yes.

DL: How?

ES: Christmas and Easter, all the holidays like normal, I guess.

DL: Did you belong to a church?

ES: No, because again, we didn't have a car. But I did go to church; I went to a

Presbyterian church, a Baptist church, I went to church with my friends. My mom put me in Bible school. The closest one was a Presbyterian church.

DL: Did you learn of Dakota spirituality, or Dakota religion as a child or as an adult?

ES: More as an adult.

DL: Who from?

ES: My family here—going to church, funerals, weddings. I didn't have that down there because my family was here.

DL: Are the two at odds with each other, the Dakota thought and then the Christian thought? Is it an either/or, or can you blend them?

ES: I guess you could blend them.

DL: Do you have a Dakota name?

ES: No.

DL: What did you learn about Dakota history while you were growing up?

ES: It really wasn't talked about much, other than when we came back here and saw our family. The powwows. And like I said, funerals, weddings, and just to be our reservation with our people.

DL: When did you and your husband move back to Minnesota more permanently?

ES: The 80's, Scotty?

Scotty: '91 [Ellen's husband was present].

DL: So you're 20 years back here, then?

ES: Yes.

DL: And by this time were the kids grown?

ES: Yes.

DL: I asked you about the Dakota history and who may have told you about it. How did you learn that?

ES: I talked to somebody and they said that they never were taught it. They talked more about cookies, or visiting, or Grandpa, or whatever – what you did. That stuff wasn't talked about really.

DL: Did any of your family members speak the Dakota language that you know of?

ES: Yes, my mother, when we moved to Arizona, she still talked it, and then when people here called her from here to Arizona and talked to her on the phone. And then eventually she said she couldn't talk anymore. Then she said that she could understand it, but she couldn't talk it anymore.

DL: Did you learn any of it as you were growing up?

ES: No. I know a few words, but no, I have not.

DL: Did you ever hear of the 1862 US-Dakota War during your growing up years, or perhaps later?

ES: Later on; not while I was growing up.

DL: Was that after you returned here?

ES: Yes.

DL: What did you hear about it?

ES: Just that land was taken and some of them were killed, the ones that were hung, a lot of our land was taken from us and we were not accepted by a lot of the whites, and they didn't want us to talk Indian and whatnot in the schools, and they cut our hair if it was in braids or long.

DL: Did you have family members who lived through that time, the 1850's, '60s, '70s?

ES: I don't know.

DL: Are you related to any of the chiefs or the other important people from that time?

ES: I've never heard, and I've asked who they were, like the ones that were hung, and nobody has ever given any names, but I was curious to know that.

DL: Can you tell us anything about the aftermath of the war and the scattering of the Dakota people?

ES: Just from what I hear that a lot of them left here after the war, and some stayed here.

DL: Did the war have a direct impact on you and your family?

ES: I don't know. I imagine if they let us have our land, a lot of people would have been financially better off.

DL: Have you ever been to Mankato, to the execution site?

ES: Well, I've been there, yes.

DL: And did you experience any particular emotion at that time?

ES: Just sadness about what had to happen to those that were hung, how they must have felt and that it shouldn't have had to happen.

DL: Is there any sort of marker or something that commemorates what happened?

ES: You know, they were doing their march where they walk down there every December, and the weather's always so bad the time they go. But no, it was just all snowy, and I couldn't tell you too much. I'd like to go there myself, when it's not so cold and winter, and see more.

DL: Have you ever been to any of these places – I'm going to list a few of them and tell me if you have any thoughts about any of these places. Fort Ridgely.

ES: Yes.

DL: Why were you there?

ES: Truthfully, it had to do with a lawsuit I'm involved with, and we all met there.

DL: Is that the Wolfchild lawsuit?

ES: Yes.

DL: Birch Coulee?

ES: Yes.

DL: You've been there?

ES: Yes, to powwows. It's just really beautiful. It's sort of like Redwood Park, it's all trees, and I think it's a great place to have a pow-wow.

DL: Do you ever feel an importance as if something significant had happened historically in that place, or do you relate to it as it is today, mostly?

ES: Mostly as it is today.

DL: Lower Sioux Agency, have you been there?

ES: Yes.

DL: How about the Upper Sioux Agency?

ES: I've been there also, and I think it's just beautiful too. And again, I don't know how those people lived, so cold and kind of treacherous for the weather.

DL: How about, getting back to the Twin Cities, like the Sibley House, or where the Mendota Community is located, Fort Snelling- have you ever been there?

ES: Yes, I've been to Fort Snelling.

DL: What were your thoughts about Fort Snelling?

ES: I don't really know what to say about that.

DL: What about Camp Release?

ES: I don't think I've heard about that.

DL: Or Wood Lake, that was where one of the battles was held.

ES: Wood Lake, I've been by, yes.

DL: New Ulm?

ES: Yes, I've been to New Ulm.

DL: Any thoughts about any of those places?

ES: No.

DL: What is your opinion of the war?

ES: Wars are senseless. I don't know how to explain it. Just all the lives, probably, that were lost. Probably fighting over land.

DL: And what about the treaties from that time?

ES: I just know that they weren't honored. The government didn't do a lot of what they were supposed to do with the treaties. They didn't honor them.

DL: Do you think it's a good idea to commemorate the events of the mid-1800's?

ES: Yes, I do. For what those people went through at that time, and families, and- yes.

DL: What would you say to someone who'd say, "That's the past. We can't spend a lot of energy worrying about the past; we've got enough in front of us today. So just let's forget all of that and move on."

ES: No. A lot of it's our history, and no. I don't know if today so many of the younger ones hear about it. I don't think it should be forgotten.

DL: What are the best ways to commemorate the events of the 1860's?

ES: Just getting together like we do.

DL: Is there anything that you plan to attend, or you know anything about yet?

ES: Just go to the pow-wows.

DL: Where did you go to high school and/or college?

ES: I went to high school in Phoenix, Arizona. And I didn't finish high school because my mother was very ill and I had to take care of her, because I was the youngest and the only one at home. My brother was in the Army, my other brother was in school, and then my sister was married, and it was just my mother and myself that was pretty much home. I think when I was ten, she couldn't walk anymore due to her arthritis. So I missed a lot of school with having to help my mom.

DL: Did you have an occupation outside the home?

ES: No. We had no car and no transportation and everything seemed far. No.

DL: How about after you were married?

ES: No, I was just a housewife and took care of my three kids.

DL: How about grandchildren?

ES: I have six grandchildren, four of them are living in Arizona, and then two of them are living here in Minnesota.

DL: Were you able to raise your children to know anything about their Indian heritage?

ES: They did. We came back, I brought them back here to our reservation and they attended pow-wows and danced. My daughter danced, and my sons. And they

enjoyed meeting their grandparents. I had one grandmother that didn't talk English, so that was interesting, but we could understand her.

DL: So she spoke Dakota?

ES: I think she said the word, "heavy" one time to my son. She was holding my son and she gave him back to me and said he was heavy.

DL: What do you do in your free time?

ES: I go to baseball games, I go to Bingo.

DL: What TV shows do you watch?

ES: I watch "Survivor," and "Ellen," and the news. I love to watch the Minnesota Twins; I'm really a Twins fan. We go to the games in the summer.

DL: How do you like that new Twins stadium?

ES: I haven't been to the new one; I was to the last one. I'm planning on going this summer.

DL: What got you started on baseball?

ES: I guess because there was nothing on TV and I liked baseball all my life. I just learned who the Twins were. They're a great team and I enjoy watching them. I had an uncle that played baseball when he was young, and we played baseball when we were young.

DL: That will probably remain a life-long interest.

ES: Oh, I think so, yes.

DL: Who are your heroes?

ES: I guess I'd have to say my mom, again, because she was always there for us and wasn't well, and it just seemed like when I was growing up there wasn't anybody because relatives were here, and we were down there.

DL: What is a typical day like for you today?

ES: I get up every morning and run errands and come back, clean house. I walk with a neighbor, weather permitting. After dinner time we relax in the evening. I still go to some games for the grandkids.

DL: Do you think you would ever return to Arizona for the warm weather in the winter?

ES: I really wouldn't mind going to Arizona. It would be nice, because it's so cold here.

DL: Do you hear that, Scotty?

Scotty: Oh, in a second! I'm ready right now. I've been ready for 20 years.

DL: What contributions have the Dakota people made to Minnesota and the country?

ES: Well, with the casino – jobs, I guess I'd have to say.

DL: If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for Dakota people today?

ES: I guess for them to all have schooling, a good education, college.

DL: Did any of your children go on to college?

ES: No. My oldest son took some courses. He's got a really good job today.

DL: Did any of your kids go into the military like their dad?

ES: No, but my oldest son kind of followed his footsteps. He became a U.S. Air Marshal and he travels. I think he's in Rome this week. He's always gone and he likes that, and I think he got that from our being in the Air Force.

DL: Is there anything else you want to add?

Scotty: You went up north to a Hopi reservation.

ES: Oh, I went to a Hopi reservation when I was younger. A neighbor, she was from the Hopi reservation. It was so interesting because they lived out in the plains and they had the dirt floors, an adobe type home, and they cooked one meal in a big pot. They cooked lamb, and I never thought I would eat it, and it was delicious. My brother, Wayne, played basketball at the Phoenix Indian School. We lived close to the Phoenix Indian School and my mother would tell me to go get him for dinner and so I would go down. I couldn't tell which one he was with all the boys; they all looked alike. There were a lot of Navajos, a lot of Hopis that were there from the reservations and I learned a lot about their tribes and pow-wows.

DL: So you may have been in an urban environment, but you still had access to Indian country.

ES: Yes.

DL: And you still knew Indian people, even if they weren't Dakota.

ES: Right.

DL: Did any of them become your friends? Did you have any Indian friends in school?

ES: Yes, I had plenty; a lot of friends that we knew who each other were. I got teased a lot by my name, though. The boys used to call me Badthunder. But they basically treated me good. I think some of the teachers might have been indifferent to me.

DL: Thank you for your time.

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society