

UPHILL - BOTH WAYS



Volume 5 - Seward 1941

James R. Jensen ©

5324 SW 153rd Avenue
Beaverton, OR 97007

- Dedicated to Rachel Beissner -



"Aunt" Rachel Beissner 1945
Without her generous kindness
and varied efforts James A. Jensen
and Marie Merrill would never
have been married on May 17, 1941.

Contents

(THE NAMES PRINTED IN PARENTHESES IDENTIFY THE AUTHOR OF THE TEXT WHICH FOLLOWS, UP TO THE POINT THAT THE NEXT WRITER STEPS IN.)

Introduction (RONDO)	<u>5</u>
Seward 1940	<u>7</u>
Dad arrives	<u>11</u>
Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe	<u>13</u>
Panama Plan and Les Rafter	<u>15</u>
Dad alone in Seward (Rondo)	<u>16</u>
Rachel Puckett	<u>18</u>
Alaska Shop	<u>19</u>
The 1940 IOU	<u>20</u>
Alaska Railroad, Department of the Interior	<u>21</u>
The Great Clam Digging Expedition	<u>24</u>
Downtown Seward	<u>31</u>
Docks	<u>32</u>
Tharyel's Investigation	<u>34</u>
Mom arrives on SS Alaska	<u>37</u>
Wedding at Rachel's Place	<u>39</u>
An Encounter With a Seagoing River Otter	<u>40</u>
Steam Engines	<u>43</u>
Seward Draft Board	<u>44</u>
Fishing	<u>45</u>
Wedding	<u>47</u>
Kenai Lodge Honeymoon	<u>53</u>
Dad built a house	<u>54</u>
Picnic up Lowell Canyon	<u>57</u>
Homestead Site	<u>58</u>
1941 Seward Fire	<u>61</u>
World War II	<u>65</u>

EDITOR: Before getting up a head of steam here, I need to remind you about the naming convention used in previous volumes and will introduce another actor.

To identify the source of the information/text, a name (in RED) appears after the subheading where that source (re-)appears: Alvin, Rondo and here, Blaine Sampson. You can keep track of the players by watching for the names after the headings; when it changes, the source has also changed at that point. Note that middle names are used for father and son since their first names are the same. Blaine is the sole survivor of a threesome formed in Delta High School. Let me introduce him.

Blaine Sampson (RONDO)

Blaine Sampson, the only survivor of the threesome -Bud Hegyesey, Alvin and Blaine- is hungry to talk. He has severe macular degeneration so uses a large button telephone to call people to chat with him. His wife died in July 2004 so he is very lonely and needs company, any company. His son lives in Utah and Susan of the ham-juice-hair lives on Montana so he has few visitors.

Blaine managed to dig up my phone number in December 2004 and called to ask how mom was doing. He didn't know if she was even alive but it was a topic to start a conversation with the son on one of his best friends. He left two messages in December which I didn't return until after Christmas. It was a pleasant surprise and was the beginning of what has turned into a weekly conversation during which he congratulates me on the excellence of UBW and urges me to publish .

I mailed him Volumes 2, 3, 4 of UBW last month. A week or so later, he called again and exclaimed that it was excellent "use of the language", superior to the writing in his own autobiography. He said, "My son I want to congratulate you. I am very very proud of you.", as if we had known each other for years. I did meet him one time that I remember, 1953 on our way back to Seward from Naples, we went through Seattle and spent some time with him. He apparently spent time with dad and mom and me when I was a baby but I can't seem to remember those visits.

He talks about dad as one of the most extraordinary people in his life and can't say enough good things about him. Dad has become a sort of demi-urge, scarcely human, who rose from the humble setting of the arid central Utah desert to international prominence. His wish would be that "Dinosaur Jim" be enshrined in

some eternal manner. That's how it came to pass that I sent him those volumes. He asked me if anyone was writing his biography. Well, I just happened to have some inside information about this topic which excited him, but not as much as the volumes themselves did.

He had decided that he should adopt me, now that he likes me and my writing. On two occasions he has asked me if it's ok for him to adopt me. Sure, I said, that's great. I love talking to him because he reveals more nuggets about Alvin's childhood which will also find their way into Volume 2. He has even made the point several times that his (other) children both call him every day, son in the AM, daughter in the PM, hinting broadly that he would be pleased if I, too, would favor him with regular phone calls -as if it were a sort of an obligation on my part. He's lonely and I should call him but I can count on hearing from him at least once a week. Today he called with his son Reid on the line to instruct me how to deposit UBW in the "Special Collections" at the BYU library, with email instructions to follow.

I will call him for both of us. It's apparent that he quickly runs out of things to talk about when he calls and since I want to collect as many nuggets as I can, I will call him as well. I have a recorder so I can tape our conversations and make them available on a CD with the text and images. I'll cut and paste his stories into the appropriate places in these volumes.

Introduction

At this point we are joining mom's and dad's stories into a single volume. From here on out, UBW tells the story of their lives together. I appear in the next volume so my personal story starts at that point. UBW continues to tell their story until their deaths and will continue telling mine until I'm gone. There is a posthumous volume for you that will be made available at my death. I'll provide you digital copies of these volumes so you can print them and add your own stories at the appropriate points.

Start with two extracts from dad's Work Chronology that I published in Volume 2 - Leamington:

1940 to 1941

[Note from his Work Chronology]

Spring: Got job at Toole smelter, then met Marie, went to Alaska in August, worked on Alaska Rail Road till freeze up, went on to Anchorage, worked at Elmendorf Air Base till late winter.

Late winter: Went to Seward and began longshoring for Alaska Railroad with Les Rafter as time keeper. Marie came up in May, we were married by Judge Bryant, US Commissioner. Nov. 1941.

He covers a lot of territory in those six lines. I've put this information together with some other data from various sources and summarize it here. These items are discussed in detail below but this synopsis gives you an overview of what is in this volume:

Date	Event
8-1940	Thumbed to Seattle, took SS Mt. McKinley with Dick and Lavon Lynch, the ones who persuaded him to go homestead in Alaska
8-14-1940	Hired by the Alaska Railroad in Seward
	Worked for Alaska Railroad (out of Seward) till freeze up (probably early October)
Early 1941	Went to Anchorage, worked on Elmendorf Air Base till late winter
	Back to Seward, longshored for Alaska Railroad
1-22-1941	Signed up with Seward Draft Board - tried to join Seabees but rejected because he was married
5-1941	Mom went to Seward with Mable on SS Alaska
05-17-1941	Married by US Commissioner Bryant
06-30-1941	US Grant arrived with first garrison for Fort Raymond
07-02-1941	Fort Raymond activated by Army
7-13-1941	Furloughed by Alaska Railroad
8-21-1941	Purchased two lots in Seward to build house
11-23-1941	Downtown fire, mom still in Seward
12-??-1941	Mom left Seward alone for Naples; dad stays to finish and sell house
12-07-1941	Dad goes to Fairbanks to buy a box of mammoth ivory
12-25-1941	Dad arrived in Naples

The bookends are August 1940 and Dec. 1941, a little less than a year and a half that dad was there. Mom met him in May 1941 so spent less than a year in Seward, being ousted by the forces of World War II.

Seward 1940

As usual, I want to place this volume geographically. You know where Alaska is but do you comprehend its size? It is three times larger than Texas, the largest of the lower 48 state, and is one fifth the size of the 48 continental states. It is huge. In 1940, there were less than half a million people in the territory. Anchorage the largest city was on the order of 30,000 people with few paved streets. The map on the following page is excerpted from Map 182 of the old Britannica Atlas that I conned out of "James", the slightly disreputable, disheveled encyclopedia salesman, for you kids back in 1982. He said, 'I'm not supposed to do this so don't tell anyone. I'll sell you my demo volume for \$40. That way you get a good deal and I can buy a new demo.' Great deal. I took him up on the offer and still consult the volume. To this day, I don't know who conned whom.

I selected the mid-section of the map, from the Gulf of Alaska up past Mt. McKinley to Fairbanks to show you my old stomping grounds.. Nenana is there on the Tanana River, the place we put our 18 foot freight canoe into the river in 1956 and floated 650 miles - 6-5-0 MILES- down the river. In 3 weeks, alone, no one with us, just the four of us. We got to Nenana from Seward on the Alaska Rail Road that goes straight north from Seward. We saw Denali as McKinley is called and could scarcely take in its size. Too immense. 18,000 feet free standing. Just enormous.

Seward is on the Kenai Peninsula and is a gorgeous location. Resurrection Bay is a fjord with a deep bay, 3,600 feet deep, lined by vertical cliffs and craggy mountains topped with glaciers. The bay is 3-5 miles across and just stunning. Some rare days in the summer a miracle happens. The bay become still, absolutely still, no waves, no wind, nothing moving. At that time, it becomes a flawless, flat mirror and you see absolutely perfect upside-down images of the mountains and joined to the feet of the real ones. Just breath-taking as if you were seeing a 4 mile wide silver-backed mirror. Boats that streak out into the bay make a stain that disappears in a short time in the brilliant sun light.





Dad took this photo in 1940 from Big Bear Mountain. This is what the town looked like, not much different than it did when I went there 10 years later.

I can pick out the house we lived in on Home Brew Alley, the left-most alley in this photo. Our house was dug part way into the mountain.

The large dock in the front is the City Dock, the one where most of the shipping was handled. Behind it is a small Tank Farm with a boat moored off-shore a ways. That was the Chevron Dock. The Army dock was later build between the Chevron Dock and San Juan Dock which is a long, whitish structure north on the shore. The tall white building on the left, in the center of the building is William H. Seward School where I attended school when I was there 10 years later.

Along the north end of the bay was a road called Nash Road. Resurrection River enters in about the middle of the bay and has created a low alluvial fan such that the bay is shallow. So when the tide goes out, it goes out a quarter mile. That is the place to troll for salmon as the school before migrating up the Resurrection River.

The town underwent cataclysmic changes in 1964 as a result of the Easter Day Earthquake. Here's a photo looking at the town from the north, showing how it looks after earthquake. When we lived there the town relied on the docks and railroad, neither of which play a role today in the economy. Instead, the town has been discovered by yuppies who hike and fish and canoe. This has stimulated the growth of a large number of businesses that prey on them. That's OK I guess but it seems a sad end for an authentic frontier town that had real men and real women. But typical after all is said and done. *Get over it, Jim.*

This image astounds me. It shows that absolutely every dock, the small boat harbor and the breakwater that existed back then are gone. Kaput. Nothing of them was left after the tsunami created by the enormous quake of 1964 had swept through and wreaked havoc -barring a few pilings where the Army Dock was that I saw in 2003. I've read reports that 30 people in this tiny town were drowned in that disaster. 60 foot boats in the harbor were shoved half a mile to the left of the bay in these photos by the enormous waves. The town looks foreign to me today, though it is obviously recognizable, because it looks so different now. The



Figure 5 Joe Luman Photo©

familiar landmarks of the Cannery, the City Dock, the Standard Oil Dock, the San Juan Dock, the Army Dock and the Small Boat Harbor are all missing. We fished on the Cannery Dock, hung out fishing for herring on City Dock, etc. Even the "lagoon" region was re-shaped by the massive wave.

Dad arrives

So Dad went up to Seward, Alaska first. Here's another extract from Dad's history. Note that it is sort of contradictory to the fragments I quoted above.

TO ALASKA

Dick Lanyon

The Mount McKinley, Alaska Steamship ship, the Lynches
Les Rafter and hopeful pioneers

Mile 20, Seward, Alaska, Alaska railroad. Mountain Goats

Anchorage. Bob Couchers cousin puts me up then I stay
at pig farm to help out. To Mantanuska for pigs.

Going to Panama, at Seward Les Rafter diverts me, I stay

Money sent, Marie comes to Alaska on the SS Alaska.

Our wedding, and honeymoon at Lake Kenai Lodge.

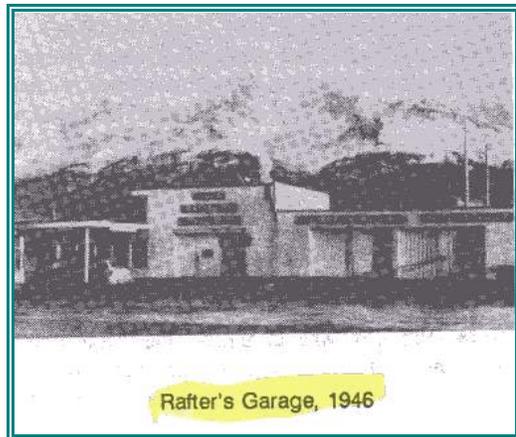
Defense industry reaches Seward. I start building home.

Marie expecting, goes to Utah, I remain to finish and sell
house. In Fairbanks for fossil ivory on Dec.7, 1941

One of the most interesting things to me in this fragment is the reference to Panama. I don't recall ever hearing him talk about almost going to Panama, but in his writings late in his life this topic came up several times. He thanks Les Rafter for stopping him from throwing over those plans. Les had this garage when I lived in Seward. The photo is from Mary Barry's book. Sorry about the quality but this Les was a real man.

When I asked mom about this Panama near-miss, her memory had failed such that she couldn't help me. But I think that the fact that he tells the story in great detail means he really did decide to skip the Alaska homestead adventure and go to Panama. The Panama Canal was being built about then so there was good money - and short lives.

As you know, their plan was that he would go up first and work to save the money for mom's passage. Then when he had enough saved to purchase her ticket, she would follow. This meant that she would take a trip by Greyhound Bus from Vernal to Seattle, the same trip that I took 10 years later with mom, after which



Rafter's Garage, 1946

she would take a boat through the Inland Passage to Seward. My trip 10 years later was different because I lived in the modern era of commercial airlines, on a DC-3. <grin> We took the same Greyhound bus ride, but instead of taking a 4 day ship trip to Seward from Seattle, I took a 13 hour flight by DC-3 from Seattle to Anchorage, after which we got on a train powered by a steam engine to drive down to Seward. and they would seek their fortune there.

In the year that mom and dad lived there, Lowell Creek still flowed straight out of the canyon through a flume to control it, to a hydroelectric generator on the bay that was later destroyed before I went there in 1951. The remnant of the "river" that I saw when I lived there was a 5-foot diameter wooden flume that we walked along on our way to school each day. The creek was diverted after 1941 by the Army Corps of Engineers -bored with wartime surveillance, I suppose- bored through Little Bear Mountain, the hump of dark mountain standing directly behind the town. The exit is a water fall nearly at the left most edge of then next figure.

See the small bright white spot just to the left of the center of the town in Figure 2 above the "k" in "Alaska"? I don't know what that structure is, but it is almost exactly where our house was on 2nd Avenue. If you follow the mountain line up from the left-side of the narrow canyon along the hard-to-differentiate peak of Little Bear Mountain, you will find the top of Big Bear Mountain. On one mountain-climbing expedition to Big Bear, I agonized over taking a pee up there above timber-line. Because I was afraid that the townspeople would see me.

The narrow canyon on the right half of the image that cuts between Mount Marathon on the right and the Bear Mountains on the left was carved by Lowell



Figure 8 Seward below Little Bear and Mt. Marathon

http://www.inalaska.com/images.html?image_id=338&display=1

Creek. That is the creek that actually deposited the delta over millennia on which the town was built. All of the land you see here under the town that is now covered by trees and buildings was deposited by Lowell Creek. An alluvial fan. There are no flat spots on the fan. Any point in the town has a downward slope.

The story starts here....

Seattle stop (BLAINE)

(This story is created from a brief description from Blaine. Every time Blaine appears, I will do this with his facts. I'll write a half-fiction, half-factual short story based on the basic facts about time and events. I use some good guesses to make an interesting story.)

In 1950 someone came unexpectedly to my house. It was 2:00 in the morning and I was sound asleep. I didn't expect any visitors. I was awakened by knocking on my front door. My wife was now awake and we asked each other who that might be. In those days, there was little crime, even in Seattle, so we didn't think that there was a robbery or something bad happening, but it bothered us a bit. One never knows what's happening when there's a surprise in the middle of the night.

I was elected to go to the door. I got up, pulled on a robe, put some slippers on my feet because it was cold, and left the bedroom. I turned on lights as I made my way to the front door. But before I opened it, I looked through the peephole just to be sure there wasn't trouble on the other side of the door.

It turned out that the guy standing there, looking cold and tired, holding a suitcase in each hand, actually was trouble sometimes. It was my best friend Alvin from Leamington. I had no idea he was in the area so I was glad to let him in. We shook hands, clapped each other on the back and sat down to jaw. My wife came out to say hello but she could see that this was a bull session so she went back to bed. Alvin said that he had taken a cab up to my house to spend a few days because he was waiting for a ship that was going to take him to Seward.

I asked him if he was hungry and, predictably, he was. He could always eat. I made us sandwiches in the kitchen while he started to tell me about what had been going on in his life. I did the same, the two of us trying to talk in the same space. We settled down in a bit, got some things straightened out and decided to go to bed since I had to go to work early. I made a bed for him on the davenport in the living room with a couple of blankets and a pillow and said goodnight.

We had a good few days until he had to cast off and I didn't see him again for about 2 or 3 more years when I saw him in SLC with his wife and children.

Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe (ALVIN)

Dick, Lavon and I came together in front of Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe where they have a desiccated "mermaid" and other rare novelties. Dick had some business with a Frank North whose office was over the Curiosity Shop. Frank wrote for the Alaska Sportsman and was the source of all of Dick's Alaska information. Dick talked about him a lot.¹

I bought a steerage ticket for \$47.00 and we sailed at 10:00 p.m.. Seattle's lights threw patterned reflections across the sound like a watery picket fence and a giant, red neon, Phillips 66 horse continued to flash on and off for an hour as it diminished to a point of red light and the city was gone into the night. I was on my way into an unforgettable adventure in Alaska, with little Marie in it somewhere up there.



Figure 9 Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe - 2002
Taken with Nathan

¹ I made you kids part of this cycle - on purpose. Here's the same shop (in a new location). I took all of you kids to see it when we visited Seattle in the mid '80's. . I did it because I loved the place when I saw it on my way through Seattle in 1951. I did not know dad, too, had been there 12 years previously.

Steerage is the cheapest fare and the quarters are all the way forward and



below the winch deck. I awoke to the sound of excited winches pounding away. Looking out I saw we were docked at a cannery, loading on canned salmon. We were in a narrow channel between towering rocky walls covered with dark spruce cut in several places by cascading waterfalls. Thin mist hung shoulder high on the mountains like puffs from an aerosol can. And again the enchanting marine smells without even the slightest hint of cows, chickens and pigs. Small Filipino cannery workers were lounging around, on their way to northern canneries. They all looked alike. Steerage passengers messed with the crew just forward of #1 hatch. The food was even different, not at all like Mexican fare. I liked it. That forenoon I got acquainted with fellow steerage passengers.

It was late October after the freeze-up and Anchorage was a madhouse of people needing a place to live. The attorney cousin of Bob Coucher asked me if I had a place to stay, which I didn't, just having arrived in town. He and his wife made some space in their basement, among a lot of sporting equipment, for me to stay. They had a plan for more permanent accommodations.

The cousin and a brother-in-law were just starting a hog farm. The pens were built and a cabin had been erected on the property. They had a contract with Elmendorf Air force base to haul away all meat and bone scraps from their mess halls to feed the pigs. The plan for me was, I would stay at the pig cabin with the brother-in-law and help him collect the bones and do other chores as needed and I would get my room and board free. Wow! I still marvel at how lucky I was.

A few days after I moved to the pig cabin we went to the Mantanuska valley to get the first load of pigs. It was a great trip. I had never been to Palmer before so I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The entire arrangement was a pleasant one but eventually came to an end. After a month construction at the base ended and everyone was laid off. Knowing the end was near the men I worked with had talked a great deal about where to go next for work.

Panama Plan and Les Rafter

Panama seemed to be everyone's favorite; a lot of construction, big wages, and so forth.² I decided to go to Panama and boarded a train for Seward. I found very pleasant weather for early December because Seward is on the ocean.

I got a ticket and went aboard the SS Alaska, then at dock, and stowed my gear in the forward steerage compartment. I put my camera up behind a beam where it would not get thrown around in case of a violent storm across the Gulf of Alaska. It was an hour before sailing time so I decided to go ashore for one last look at Alaska. I happened to come across Les Rafter, a fellow passenger in steerage on the SS Mount McKinley when we were on our way to Alaska.

Meeting him at that time changed the course of my life from what it would have been, had I gone to Panama, to a completely different one which resulted in my marriage--as Marie and I had previously planned. I was about to give that dream up for a very uncertain one in an unknown world. Now, thirteen grandchildren and five great grand children later I am extremely grateful to Les.

He said he was a timekeeper on the dock and said he would see that I got hired all the time, from the group of men waiting to be hired each day to longshore (which he did). While we were talking the "all aboard" whistle blew causing me to erupt in panic.

² This was during the construction of the Panama Canal.

I dashed up the gangplank, ran forward, slid down the handrails to the steerage compartment, grabbed my sleeping bag loped up the stairs to find the gang plank had already been taken in. I threw my sleeping bag over onto the dock and went down the cargo-save net just before they untied it. As the Alaska backed away from the dock I suddenly realized I had forgotten my camera. I guess it is still there behind that beam.

Les told me the Alaska Steamship Co would refund my ticket so to put all my money in the bank the next day, but tonight go the Seward Hotel and tell them I just hired on at the dock; then to the Model Café and get a meal ticket on credit and tomorrow go to Brown and Hawkins, outfitters, and get myself a complete set of foul weather gear—all on my word only. This was before the war when in Alaska

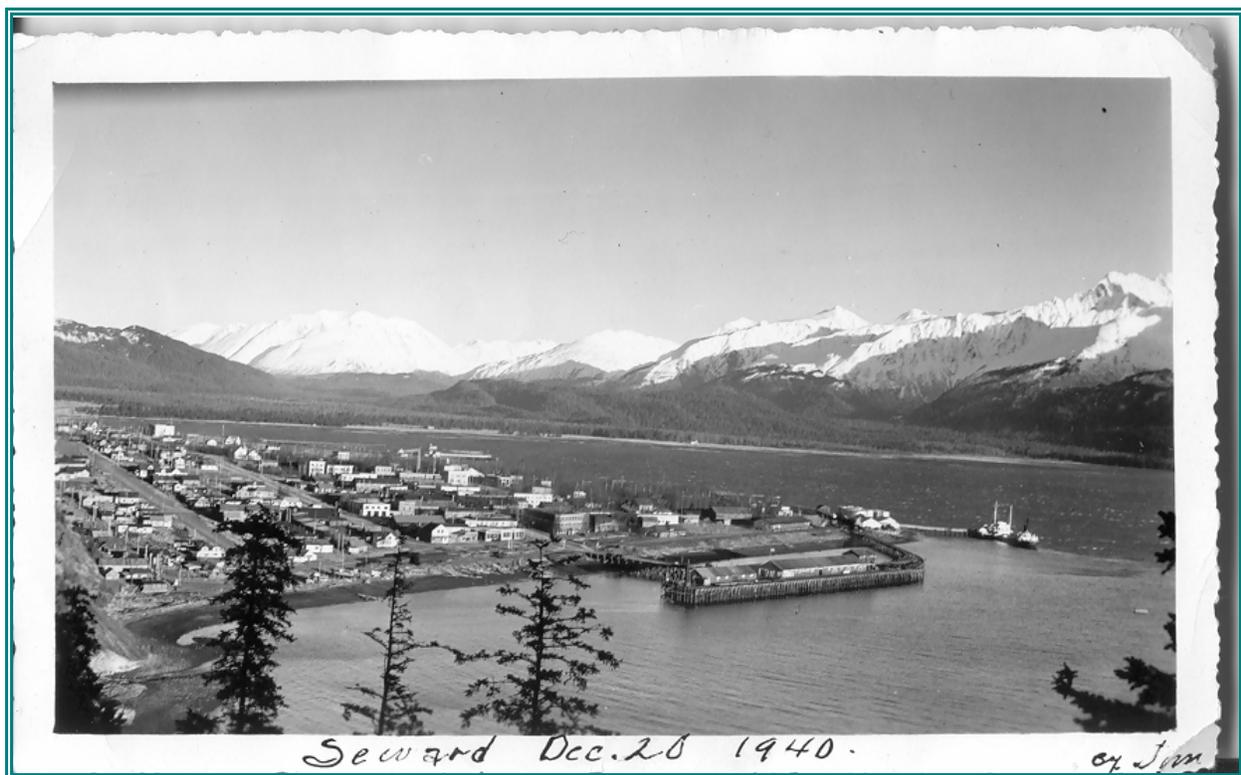


Figure 11 Dad's 1940 photo of Seward 5 months before mom arrived

a man's word was as good as his bond. All that changed when construction of an army base got underway bringing construction workers to Seward. So I saw the end of a wonderful period of human trust and kindness in Alaska.

Dad alone in Seward (Rondo)

Dad was alone in Seward for a period of time that I still haven't figured out. Some evidence suggests he went there almost two years before mom went up but other evidence suggests he went to Seward August 1940. Part of the confusion I have is that his version as stated above is that he and mom had agreed she would return to Naples and finish high school which was at least two grades so I can't reconcile that with one school year as would be the case from August 1940 to May 1941. Whatever happened, mom didn't finish high school, so I am not sure what the delay was or why the money was sent when it was.

In addition to working on the docks with Les Rafter's assistance, dad worked at odd jobs at the Alaska Shop, the only drugstore, soda fountain in town. Rachel Beissner -the one to whom this volume is dedicated- was his boss and you'll hear more about her in Volume 2. She took Alvin in hand and made him give money to save. When Marie arrived in Seward under the chaperonage of Mabel, Rachel put them up at here place and even made the wedding arrangements. The wedding was performed in her front room and a few months later World War II forced them to leave Alaska.

If you look carefully in dad's 1940 photo of Seward you can see our house on Home Brew Alley. Home Brew Alley is the left most alley in the photo, barely visible because the houses on the left side are sitting at the foot of Bear Mountain. Our house is the sixth from the bottom of the picture, on the left side of the alley. We lived there for 2 years. It is hard to pick out but right across the alley is a vacant lot and on the north side of that lot is a longish whitish low building.

NINILCHIK

The Great Clam Digging Expedition featuring THE T-BONE HANDY STANDOFF

I had heard many stories about digging razor clams on Cook's Inlet and developed a strong desire to try the sport. Clams are dug there with a Clam Gun, which is a short handled shovel with a long narrow blade. Shortly after I went to Alaska I went with Dave Carlson on a trip from Seward to Cook's Inlet over the new highway. We stopped in Cooper's Landing at the bottom of Kenai Lake and

talked with an old timer called "Clam Gun Moore". He was full of Alaska stories but was best known for his skill as a clam digger. I thought of going clam digging with him but it would be hard to arrange because I had no car. I realized I would have to get with someone in Seward who had a vehicle. An idea about a possible candidate came to me on the way home.

An old timer, Nels Hagen, operated a small salmon cannery near the Seward City Dock and occasionally worked as a longshoreman between salmon runs. Being fascinated by "old-timers" and Alaska history I often talked with him when we happened to be working on the same gang.

He spoke with a Norwegian accent and always wore a large patch on the right side of his nose. Cancer, I suppose, but he was a colorful character and I learned much about the early days in the territory. I made him an offer? if he would take me clam digging on Cook's Inlet with his pickup truck, I would pay all expenses and furnish a lunch. I agreed to drive, and also that a friend of his, Walter Johnston, could go with us. Nels assured me that we could stay with a dear old friend of his, T-Bone Handy, who had a cabin near Ninilchik, which had a beach famous for giant razor clams.

Nels said he had packboards and clam guns for himself and Walter but I would have to furnish my own. I borrowed a clam gun, packboard, and a square five gallon can with the top cut out. The can would be lashed to the packboard and filled with giant razor clams, many of which would be over 10 inches long.

We loaded our gear in the pickup and left town before daybreak. Nels insisted that we stop and rest every 50 miles. The pickup was old and traveled best on the rough gravel roads at 40 miles an hour so our progress was slow. At each stop we all got out and squatted on the ground, or a rock, log, or bridge railing. The trip took all day one way, the trip with Carlson lasted less than three hours.

As we traveled along the conversation between Nels and Walter began to focus on T-Bone Handy, an old timer of sterling character and a wonderful friend. He was always ready, they said, to even help strangers out. No need was too great



for him to cheerfully take care of. He sounded to me like a saint; exactly the sort of friend I would like to have waiting at the end of a long hard trip. The vehicle seats were hard and lumpy but not to worry, they agreed, we'd soon be drifting off to sleep with our stomachs full of moose meat, on wild-goose down-filled bunks in T-Bone's hospitable cabin. They both knew and admired him.

As the day wore on we crept slowly down the Kenai peninsula. My two companions so eloquently sang the praises of their waiting friend that the sole purpose of our arduous journey gradually became the delightful pleasures to be showered upon us in the luxurious cabin of T-Bone Handy. Clams were completely forgotten. Delicious two inch thick moose steaks would doubtless be pressed on us, no matter what time we arrived. I was assured that, though a stranger, I would be welcomed as a long lost brother. T-Bone would surely insist we stay with him a week and would no doubt take us to special places where no human foot had ever trod. The two of them were completely hypnotized by their persistent recitals of T-Bone's long history of hospitality to all wanderers, and succor for the destitute, no matter how desperate the situation. I realized I was watching a process of self brain-washing and even began to wonder if there really could be such a princely

human being as they described; he was hospitality personified; he wrote the book on hospitality.

We eventually reached the little village of Soldotna, a tiny village on the shore of Cook's Inlet. The graveled highway forked; right fork to Kenai, left fork Ninilchik, Anchor River, Homer and Seldovia. The day was over and we were tired and hungry after our wearisome travel. The sun set before we reached Soldotna, but not to worry, a hot meal and a warm soft bed awaited us at the good ole T-Bone Handy Emporium of Hospitality, and Friendship. I began to believe we were doing T-Bone a favor by dropping in on him and allowing him to take care of our needs.

The night was moonless and black before we rounded a curve and saw a random collection of weak lights. They were the kerosene lamps of Ninilchik, one of the oldest villages established by the Russians, before the U.S. practically won Alaska in a crap game. The village was primitive. Its people still lived without electricity.

The village was located in a cove cut out of a hundred foot high bluff paralleling the ocean. The cove was formed by a creek providing the village with non-salty water. I was instructed to slow down (from 40 to 20 mph) so we could enjoy the view (?) after which we continued for another half mile to T-Bone Handy "s driveway. And a curious "driveway" it turned out to be.

The road was scarcely two lanes wide so it was with some anxiety that I had to park with two wheels beginning to slide off into bottomless glacial muck. Glowing with expectation Nels and Walter began a 150 yard hike up a swampy path to T-Bone's cabin. I was puzzled by the fact that such a grand benefactor would force all of his weary visitors and destitute travelers to struggle across what appeared (side-lit by our headlights) to be a hip-deep quagmire, to be succored. I had a premonition.

After they disappeared into the inky blackness I turned the headlights off and waited. I kept my window rolled down enough to enjoy the loud shouts of joy and happiness, occasioned by the reunion of old buddies. I was somewhat concerned, however, that in his enthusiastic welcome T-Bone might knock one of the bone-weary travelers down with an over vigorous back slap. But the inky blackness swallowed up more than just my companions. Something in it blasted away an illusion as delicate as an overripe raspberry: presumptuous expectations. Ten sticks of dynamite couldn't have done a more complete job. But let us return to our weary travelers going toward the cabin.

No traffic, or other source of light broke the monotony of the black void in which I waited. It was a long wait, and for shouts of happiness and joy, I waited in

vain. Eventually my aching eyes made out two dim figures staggering down the narrow path. They came up onto the road and stood there. I opened my door, waiting for some kind of explanation, but they just stood there. I climbed out, not knowing what they had planned for overnight parking off the very narrow road; but they simply stood there like bags of sawdust. I said; "Well?" Still they stood there. I began to sense disaster.

Finally they moved toward me and Nels mumbled; "He said, 'go away'." I then realized the "good old buddy" tape I had been hearing all day had been ripped off its spindles and scattered all over the Kenai peninsula. They climbed slowly back into the cab and though I waited for instructions, they sat there dumb.

I finally realized they were in deep shock, incapable of decision making because they had not previously discussed alternate ideas to work with. All day long they had praised and believed in a Santa Claus, never once thinking about what they would do if Santa rejected them. Their bubble of childish confidence had burst. Their minds were now like the night; pitch black, completely devoid of any spark of creativity.

Fortunately some car lights appeared in the distance. I took a chance, stood out and hailed them. It turned out to be a young couple in a jeep. I asked if they knew of anyone who might take in three travelers. I was surprised when they replied; "Sure. Mrs. Kvasnikoff takes in people now and then. Her cabin is the big two storied one, third cabin down on the left side of the road. There is only one road going through the village", and off they went into the night.

Hooray! Suddenly here was hope for our weary bodies. I crawled back in the truck with the good news but I might as well have tried to get two clams to jump up and down and clap their valves with glee. My companions were emotionally washed out, incapable of responding to any exterior stimulus. I realized I would have to be in charge of their bodies.

Worrying the truck back and forth several times I managed to turn it around and we rattled back to the dim lights. Coasting down a hill into the village I easily found the two storied log building. It was completely dark. Under a gabled end I saw a door and knocked loudly, not knowing what to expect. In a few minutes I heard the upstairs window above me open. Looking up I could faintly make out ahead in a night cap. "Yes?" it said.

"Sorry to disturb you Mam, but would it be possible for you to kindly take in three weary travelers for the night?" "Wait", in a woman's voice. In a short time the door opened to reveal a substantial woman in nightgown and cap, holding a kerosene lamp. "Come in". Her manner was warm and friendly. I didn't detect any

Russian accent. She fixed us a light supper and took us upstairs to three ample beds, the kind old T-Bone Handy was supposed to be tucking us into.

Throughout this coming-in and getting-settled experience my companions uttered not a single word. I was in charge of two bags of sawdust, which fortunately could undress themselves. Knowing there was only one reason for us to be in Ninilchik our hostess gave us some very important information before she went downstairs: "Low tide is at 10:AM. I'll get you up in time to have breakfast. Good night." I don't know about Nels and Walter but I fell into a joyous slumber. Everything had worked out well

I awoke in the morning to the smell of breakfast on the I stove and was glad to see my companions were still alive. Nels sat on the edge of his bed, looked around and even smiled briefly. Breakfast was very good and very ample. She charged each of us \$1.50 for board and breakfast. A great bargain even in those times.

As I walked out the front door I almost gasped in disbelief. A huge husky was tethered to an overhead wire running past the door. A ferocious looking beast, I couldn't believe the three of us had stumbled through the door without stepping on him. As a watchdog he was a true Christian, missing a good chance to polish his canines on three foreigners—which he was supposed to do. A great bluff ran parallel to a straight coastline. The creek emerged from the cove, and confronted by the great barrier bar, turned to the right, running a quarter of a mile along the base of the bluff before turning to the ocean to fan out onto the tideflats. The barrier bar was thrown high by storm tides, and capped by a deep layer of loose, shale-like shingle. I crossed a bridge and parked our front wheels on the loose shingle—which was impossible for a two-wheeled vehicle to cross. To attempt to do so would be very much like trying to ride a bicycle through a ten foot deep pile of grain.

Many clam diggers were already spread out along the wet sand. The beach looked like a vast tilting floor running a quarter of a mile out from the barrier bar. We shouldered our packs and hiked across the now shallow stream. Huge chunks of lignite coal lay randomly along high tide zone. The source was an eight foot thick vein of lignite about three fourths of the way up the bluff. This lignite was young, not yet completely coalified. As slabs of it were reduced by wave action, sections of freed tree limbs were still wood and soft enough to be carved with a knife.

We worked our way out into the area exposed only during the mean tides. I watched Nels select spots to dig. He hunted for a small hole marking the open end of the clams siphuncle, or breathing neck. Quietly placing the tip of his "clam gun"

beside the hole he would suddenly shove it deep into the sand and pulling the handle backward, scoop out a deep narrow hole very close to where he calculated the clam's neck went down. He was careful to miss the neck with his blade.

Throwing the shovel and its chunk of sand aside he quickly reached down with one hand and grabbed into the sand a few inches down from the surface to get a grip on the clam's neck. The trick was to squeeze the neck tight, shutting off the clam's ability to suck in air and push itself deeper into the sand. Nels then held on, squeezing the neck tightly and exerting a gentle pull. In a few moments the clam choked down (or something) and up it came.

The Alaskan razor clam is an elongate bivalve. The shells (valves) are not very thick and if one aims poorly the blade will easily chop the clam up, making a real mess. The Ninilchik beach at that time was producing clams nearly a foot long and four inches wide. Two of them are a good meal for four persons. Further up the coast at Clam Gulch the maximum size was barely half as large as those we were getting. The big clams would not go into the five gallon can, held level between opposite sides. It was necessary to hold them diagonally, that is from corner one to corner three, or corner two to corner four. Of course they could be put in endways. It didn't take long to fill a five gallon can with such monsters.

It was a beautiful sunny day. Also there was action and some excitement along the beach. Two small planes landed on the hard packed sand, and a large four wheel drive vehicle had bogged down while crossing the stream. While we were there it appeared to be abandoned. We saw noone worrying about it, or trying to get it out as the tide came back in. When we hoisted our packboards to leave, a third of the vehicle was under the incoming tide. On the whole, the day was a marvelous experience. I was well satisfied. However, a very interesting sequel to the T-Bone Handy thing developed as we rattled up the Kenai Peninsula on our way home. T-Bone was turned inside-out and pulverized with the cold, hard stones of truth and reality. No punches were pulled.

The tape of friendliness and loving good will was nowhere to be seen on the peninsula; gone, evaporated, it never did exist! T-Bone was, and always had been, according to them now, a son-uva-bitch of the first water. The kind of person who catches mice, cuts two legs off and turns them loose. When he was a baby he caught flies and pulled their legs off.

T-Bone was a barbarian and a first rate rascal. He was a fish thief. Once he raided a fishtrap owned by a widow with ten kids. He took every last fish leaving her deep in debt and penniless to face a cold Alaskan winter. He would follow an old trapper's lines in winter, taking all the choice pelts, leaving only sick and crippled

animals behind. He was worse than that devilish outlaw the Wolverine.

This revelation of the depths of depravity the wretched T- Bone had sank to began as our homeward trip began; a few turns of the wheels and we were on our way. Nels said; "funny thing about last night". "Who would have thought he was like that", was Walter's response, and they were off. By the time I had the old pickup wound up to 40 mph they had old T-Bone running over dogs and when I swung through the curve at Soldotna he had burned down two cabins and stole his best friend's moose. What a scoundrel. I was really glad, by that time, that T-Bone hadn't taken us in last night. He would doubtless have burned his cabin down with us asleep inside it and then run our truck off the Ninilchik bluff.

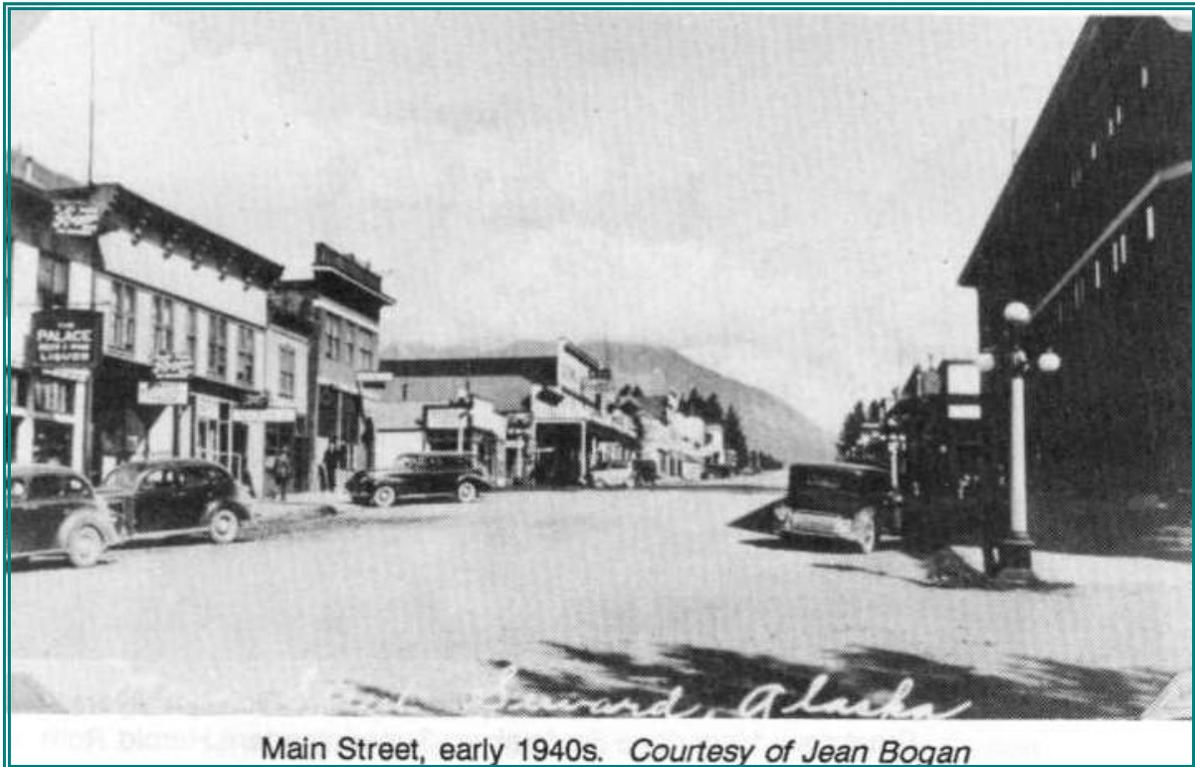
The farther I went, the more my companions got worked up into a full head of steam until they forgot about the 50 mile stops for resting. Nor did they notice I pushed the old pickup up to 55 miles an hour which made our return home much shorter. When we reached Seward their castigation had reached the state of a full blown wrath, and had we gone on out to Lowell Point they would have been ready to go back to Ninilchik and kill T-Bone.

What a pity. He was once their good buddy. But a man's point of view can change for the worse. Suppose he had maliciously taken us in, pretending to be what they first thought he was, and then trashed his cabin over our sleeping bodies. Whew!

When I got home I told my wife what a narrow escape we had, almost being done in by a fiend named T-Bone Handy.

Downtown Seward

In 1940-41, Seward had a busy downtown with businesses of all kinds, and men of all kinds. The place had far fewer women than men, which had certain



predictable consequences. This is from Mary Barry's book again, and she credits Jean Bogan in the photo. Those cars on the left side of the road are the vintage of the first car we owned in Alaska in 1951.

Somewhere along this street there was a bench that men sat on and fed pigeons. Dad took several shots of them. Nice photo.

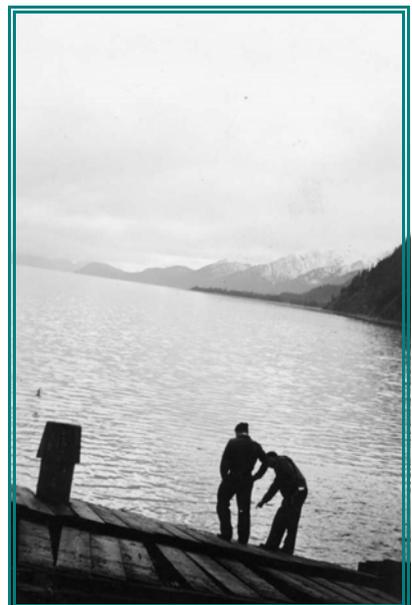


Dad was in Seward for Christmas in 1940. The town celebrated the occasion with a decorated Christmas Tree, something it didn't do when I lived there. One of dad's achievements in school in Leamington was learning calligraphy. He gave Julie the book that he used to learn this art. He excelled and won first prize in a competition. During the first years of his marriage, he would inscribe things for mom with this scrolled writing.



Docks

On account of some kind of severe weather in 1940, the warehouses on the City Dock were severely damaged. Dad took a shot of two men checking it out, but note that he did not compose a documentary photo recording the extent of the damage. He skillfully composed an image that took the background into account.



Snow cover always drew dad's attention. The beauty of black and white images attracted his eye and he used his camera to record what impressed him. A steamship is obviously getting up a head of steam to depart. The man walking toward the camera carries a snow shovel for some reason. He's on the railroad access to the City Dock, a much smaller City Dock prior to WW II than it was when I went to Seward. There are four box cars waiting to be loaded with cargo from ships. The mountain in the background is Big Bear.



In the bottom, right corner of the picture is a white spot. That's where the Diversion Tunnel exited Little Bear Mountain. Lowell Creek ran through the center of town but caused havoc every spring so the Army Corps of Engineers constructed a diversion tunnel to make the river bypass town. This tunnel was opened on Sept. 8, 1940.



Tharyel's Investigation

Mom's parents finally agreed to let her go to Alaska. I don't think their initial reaction was positive. Grandma Merrell was as unhappy about this match as she was about anything in mom's life. July, 2002 mom revealed things I had never heard. My problem, which is more academic than real, is trying to figure out how much of this candor results from her brain damage and how much results from a new maturity wherein she regards me as a human being worthy of her confidence, as an adult who won't be somehow critical of her if I hear the "truth", the facts. My inner child, poor needy little smiling kid that he is, would like to believe he had finally entered Valhalla. But he knows better.

Whatever, I am pleased with her revelations that sort of rock my foundation sometimes, e.g. "That's when you dad kicked me out of the house!" Man alive, I had no clue. "Kicked" out? I wanted to do that a time or to but I had no rank. Nor do I understand today what some of these revelations even means. But somehow they enrich my understanding of them, and endear her and him to me. They are human, after all, as troubled and confused and frustrated and tentative and frightened as I am. Good for them. I'll give them license to screw up if they'll reciprocate.

Back to grandma Merrell. You've heard how mild she was? Mom says to this day that her mother never, n-e-v-e-r, hear raised her voice for anything That sort of puts her in the ranks of Saint Augustine, or perhaps Paul. But listen, my hearties, to the rest of the tale. When good ol' peaceful quiet grandma discovered that her 16 year old Marie had been sparking with this James Alvin from foreign territory, i.e. Leamington, and that they two of them, in 5 or 6 weeks decided they would get married, something snapped. She hatched a plan to figure out for herself whether or not this rascal was worthy of her Marie. So get this. As you know, Marie was living with sister Pearl, who was having a baby. Pearl was married to a man named Tharyel, the most god-awful male name I've ever heard. [He ticked -that's the nice word- mom off mightily until he died. Every time he visited her in Provo, the first thing he did, according to her, was head straight for the kitchen whereupon he rifled the cupboards and refrigerator and satisfied his hunger. Repeatedly. No asking for permission, or other politenesses, just pure gluttony, with intermittent burps and sighs and grins, and other signs of happiness and satisfaction. She wanted to slap the beggar, but didn't.]

What grandma did was find her self a telephone there in Naples and she did the extraordinary thing -you kids simply can't grasp how momentous this event was

- of making a long distance telephone call to Mercur. Mom suggested that this phone call was mediated in some manner by her brother Ross' wife Nelma who had been a telephone operator for the Uintah Railroad being based in Watson. That's where Ross met Nelma. Pearl and Tharyel lived in their little store and apparently had the luxury of a telephone for business reasons or some arrangement was made by mail or messenger such that this portentous phone call could take place at such-and-such time. Whereupon, grandma, over the scratchy, hard-to-understand noise, asked for Tharyel.

"Tharyel," she said, "Marie has lost her mind. She says she wants to marry this guy named Alvin Jensen. Do you by any chance know the bouncer?" Tharyel, the honest man he was, said, "Yeah, mom, I know him. Why, he hangs out 'round my store most every night. Ya' see, he comes over here and gives ol' Mable rides on his motorsicle." Grandma didn't know whether or not to be relieved about that information, the motorsicle not having too good of a reputation in them parts. "Would," asked the gentle woman, "you please do some discreet inquiries in the environs about the bonafides of this Alvin and call me back? Specifically, ask if is he a good man, a reliable man, a man worthy of Marie, a man who can be trusted, one who is true to the faith?" Well, ol' Tharyel was cornered like a cat up a tree. What could he say except, "Yeah," which he said, whereupon he did in fact query Alvin's co-workers and friends.

That investigation must have been interesting from Alvin's perspective. Some of the guys who talked to Tharyel doubtless commented about it to Alvin. After completing this FBI background check -of course, I'm assuming her did it without a shred of evidence either way- Tharyel called grandma back and gave his report. He said that no one had any reservations about this Alvin, other than that he rode motorcycles. This allayed grandma's anxieties. She had a pow-wow with Fuller and shared the report. They decided, on the basis of Tharyel's report, to allow Marie to marry Alvin, sight unseen. Remember that part: they never met Alvin until 2 years later.

But anxiety persisted. When the time came for Little Marie to make her virginal trip up to Seward, Alaska, which was on the edge of the map in those days where sea monsters were drawn in next to vacant, vaguely drawn continents, good ol' grandma allowed as how it was ok for Marie to make that trip with one little proviso. Mabel had to accompany her as a chaperone. Well, now we see the truth. Grandma didn't really trust Alvin in spite of Tharyel's heroic investigation of the character of the man. So Mabel, to her eternal delight, since she met her husband there, journeyed to Seward, on Alvin's nickel. More of this later.

The most telling fact I've heard the reveals the extent of grandma Merrell's anxiety about allowing her last daughter to venture alone up to Seward is this: Mom told me this summer that her mom cried more about this than she cried in the rest of her life. When you understand that more than one of grandma's sons found himself afoul of the law, and in jail, etc., you get some perspective on this admission. Poor grandma. But Marie was absolutely determined to follow this vagabond on her own adventure, which she did for the remainder of her life. Will you let your 17 year old kids leave home for good on an adventure to no-man's land?

Mom arrives on SS Alaska

I found this negative in dad's hodge-podge of photos from Alaska. I like to think it is the SS Alaska. Probably isn't, but don't let the truth deflect you from appreciating what her arrival looked to this guy who hung out in Seward for a year working and waiting for his wife-to-be to arrive:



Interestingly, there are no other photos in dad's collection of ships steaming quietly up the bay. This was mom's ship, both of them at their wit's end in anticipation, her steaming up the bay, snow in April still on the tier of mountains lining the bay. What a day.

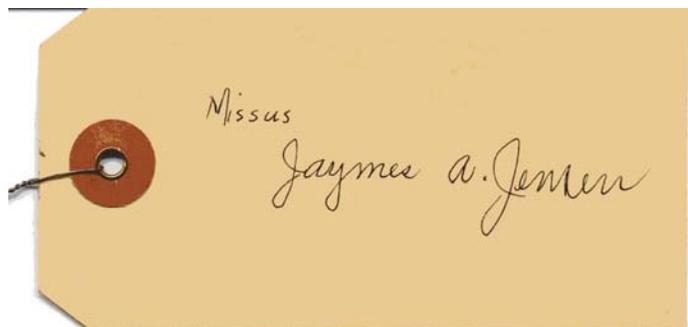
The fact that Seward was a tiny town without much in the way of entertainment meant that anything unusual was a reason for people to show up to watch. When mom arrived in Seward there was doubtless a cluster of people like

these who stood around, some searching for someone they were waiting to meet, others just observing and enjoying the entertainment. I loved watching these events when mom let us go watch, which wasn't as often as I wanted. When the ship arrived, everyone the ship and the dock waited anxiously for the gang plank to be placed so people could debark. It was doubtless this way when mom arrived for dad. (This is from Mary Barry)



Passengers debarking at Seward dock. Alaska Railroad Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.

Amongst the oddities squirreled away by dad was this tag that seems to relate to this trip. It looks to me to be a luggage tag that was attached to mom's trunk that she took with her when she shipped to Seward. I love the spellings.



Wedding at Rachel's Place

Rachel is really the reason that Jim's and Marie's plans to get married were fulfilled. After she had forced dad to save the money to get mom to Seward, she also took the wedding plans in hand. She planned the whole thing and had it in her front room. Mom and Mabel even stayed in Rachel's house for the week or so before the wedding. On May 17, 1941, Jim and Marie were married by Judge Bryant, US Commissioner.

Uphill - Both Ways

Volume 5 Seward 1941

35

Rachel Puckett

Dad looked for any work he could find to make a living. He joined the longshoreman union and worked on the docks when there was work, a sporadic thing at the time because the demand for shipping in primitive Alaska was not great. There were few people in the interior and their needs could be satisfied with infrequent ships. He found a job part-time at the Alaska Shop where he worked for Rachel Puckett. She was a big-hearted woman who took him under her wing.



Rachel was married to a man, Dick something. I never knew him because he died before we went to Seward. Her second husband was a highway patrolman, about the only one in the area. Rachel knew Jim's plans and knew that Marie was waiting for the money for her fare. So she started either withholding money from his check from the Alaska Shop, or made him give her part of his pay. She held this money in a savings account for him, until there was enough to pay for her fare at which point it was wired to her. Then Marie, with her sister Mabel as chaperone, bought fares and went to Seward about a year later according to mom.

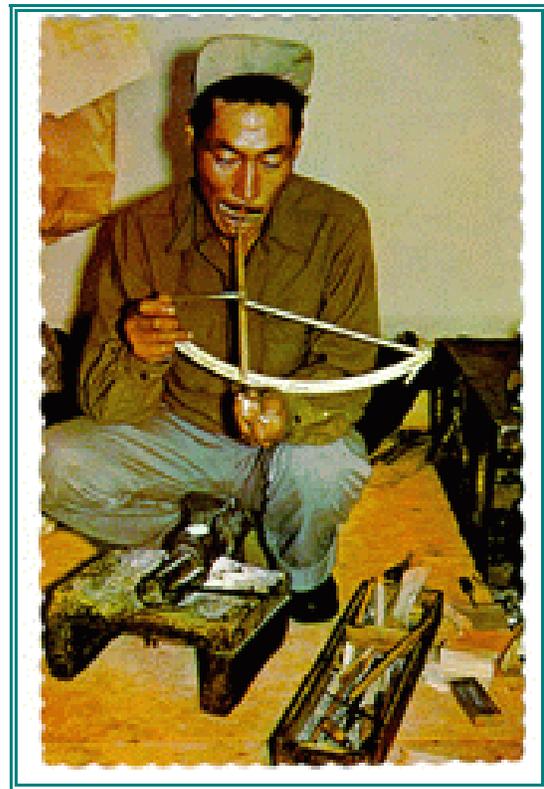
George Puckett was a highway patrolman who also served as a game warden. That's an odd mixing of jurisdictions and I may not remember accurately what his

duties were. But I remember his dark blue uniform, the title and the fact that he was involved in investigating poachers. Given the limited enforcement resources of the territory, it wouldn't be surprising if agencies shared duties. He was Rachel's second husband and was a quiet man. When I knew him in the '50's, he treated me well, the only measure I had for evaluating adults.

Alaska Shop

The Alaska Shop is difficult to classify, but it was representative of businesses that spring up in small communities. Out of the needs of the public, and the desire and necessity to make as much money as possible, a business that started out as a drugstore with a soda fountain might add a small menu and become both a drugstore and small restaurant. Books might be added, mementos might be added and so on. Through a process of accretion the original single objective was elaborated until there was a mixture of dry goods, medicinals, food, books and that is what the Alaska shop was. I don't think Rachel owned it and don't know who did. Under her management it was as successful as a business could be in a town of a thousand people. One of the more unusual things that was done under the auspices of the store was to hire an Eskimo who carved walrus ivory. I saw photographs of him at work, sitting cross-legged on the floor. I didn't pay much attention to the kind of tools he used except for one. His drill.

It was a traditional bow drill -I have learned since- that has used in pre-technological cultures around the world to create holes or to start fires. The drill consists of three parts: the bow itself that looks just like a bow used for shooting arrows except that this string hangs loosely, a shaft like the shaft of an arrow, and a wooden, bone or ivory mouthpiece. The shaft was the size of an arrow and by holding it against the bow string and twisting it in a particular way, it was held securely in the string. The lower end of the shaft held some sort of drill bit. The user placed the specially shaped block between his teeth and fitted it over the upper end of the rod. Then he placed the drill bit on the other end of the shaft onto the piece needing a hole. By leaning over the shaft and pressing down on it with the mouthpiece held between his teeth, he could



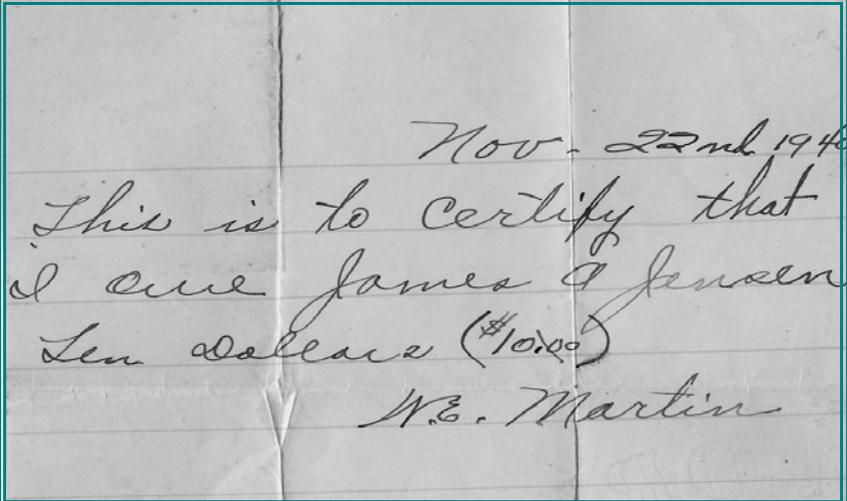
press the bit against the ivory and drill a hole in it. The way he made the drill bit spin, was to pull and push the bow back and forth. As the bow went back and forth, its string that was tightly wrapped around the drill shaft caused the shaft to spin one way and then the other. He'd cut holes to open a space in a 3-dimensional carving, or he would drill holes to make a cribbage board. Dad learned how to carve ivory from this man and made jewelry for mom.

Dad's artist side dominated his life. He and Rachel agreed that he would do charcoal drawings of huskies that she would have made into postcards for sale in the Shop. When I went to the Shop myself in the '50's, I saw them in the racks of postcards, signed in his flourishy "J.A. Jensen". They probably didn't net much, but they suited dad's interests and kept him occupied.

I found two stories in dad's writings that fit in this chapter. This one is about digging razor clams in Ninilchik which you can find it on the map above. I went there to dig clams as well and they were enormous.

The 1940 IOU

Amongst dad's miscellanea was an IOU from 1940. It was neatly folded in a celluloid sleeve along with his draft board registration and Alaska Driver's License. I suspect he tried to figure out how to take this thing with him just in case he saw this guy again. After all, ten dollars is ten dollars.



Nov. 22nd 1940
This is to certify that
I owe James A. Jensen
Ten Dollars (\$10.00)
W.E. Martin

Alaska Railroad, Department of the Interior

After getting settled down in the hotel, dad applied for work with the Alaska Railroad (ARR). In those days the ARR controlled the docks as well as the railroad. The government had taken them over in the 1920's because private ownership wasn't working out well. The ARR even owned the stern wheelers on the Yukon. On August 14, 1940, dad was hired on. He was Employee No. 21,211 which gives you a sense of how much turnover there was.

A.R.R. NO. 100

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
THE ALASKA RAILROAD

EMPLOYEE Jensen, James A. No. 21211

SIGNATURE James A. Jensen

WITNESS O. M. Fredericks

PLACE AND DATE Seward 8-14-40

Seattle P.O.—5-7-36—10M

Dad's notes are a bit unclear about dates. I can't figure out the specific dates for many things in his life but don't worry about it because it doesn't matter. We do have the events themselves and the general order in which they occurred. In terms of his working in Seward first, then going to Anchorage and then returning to Seward, it seems that's the right sequence of events. He gives particulars that make it so, but his dates are contradictory or overlap.

In any event, his employment -whatever it was- with the ARR, was short-

Form No. 1218 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

THE ALASKA RAILROAD

} Notice of Separation {
 } or Furlough {

Identification No. 21211

Seward - July 12, 1941
 (Place and Date)

James A Jensen
(Name of Employee)

You are hereby notified that your ¹ { Permanent }
² { Indefinite }
³ { Temporary } appointment will be terminated
 you will be furloughed
 (Strike out inapplicable terms)

as Lionshoreman at a rate of pay of \$ 1.50 per { hour } { month } effective
 (Designation)

July 12th, 1941, because of At own request
 (Reason for separation or furlough)

O. F. OHLSON,
General Manager.

NOTE:—This appointment is subject to review by the General Manager.

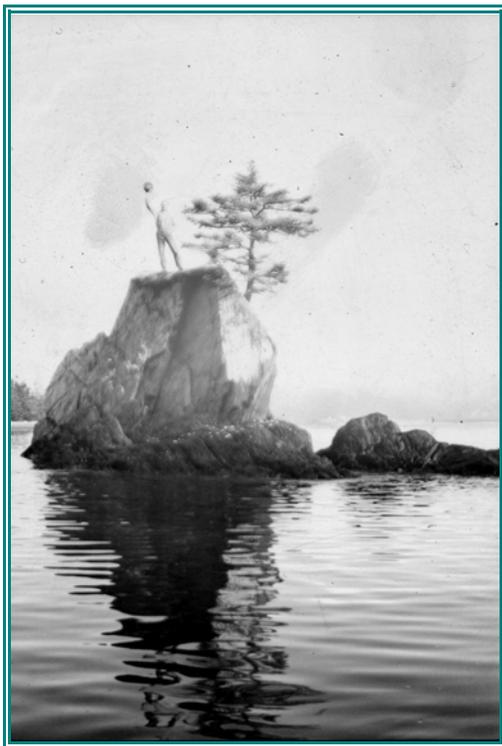
By St Elliott
Timekeeper
(Title)

Original to employee
Seattle P.O.—3-25-38—10M-trip.

lived. He was "furloughed" on July 13, 1941, two months after he got married. That must have been a shock. Notice the reason for separation: "At own request." So he actually terminated his employment. Why would he do that? My guess is that he hired on with the contractors who were constructing Fort Raymond. The construction started in June 1941, so it makes sense. There wasn't anything else going on in Seward so he must have worked in construction.

Rowing to Lowell Point

I don't know how far it is from Seward down the bay to Lowell Point beach but it is probably two miles or more. Dad and a couple of guys he worked with apparently decided they would borrow someone's boat and go down to some scenic rocks they'd heard about, at Tonsina. The rub was that the boat didn't have an outboard. In fact, outboard motors were basically something that hadn't happened yet, so these guys had to row that boat with oars. If you've ever rowed, you understand that it is hard work and requires skill to keep a boat going straight. In any event, these guys picked a nice day and made the trip as shown in these photos. I made this story up.



W
di

T
ac
al
re
on
wa
pe
or
ed



ed
ng

he
tu
ce
m
y
s
rf
m
by

US District Court Judge Bryant. There are no photos of the ceremony and that's par for the era. Camera didn't intrude into everything like they do now. But some one did take four photos of the bride and groom. They are embossed with the designation "Alaska Shop". Rachel ran the place then so she doubtless arranged for them. She arranged everything else for the wedding and honeymoon.



Note in the first photo the vertical marble elements that would be present in fancy buildings. The only fancy buildings in Seward at the time were the federal building where the post office was housed. There weren't even any large fancy hotels. The Van Guilders was there but I've been inside it and it didn't have a lobby this large. I like the flooring. Can't tell what it is but the pattern is a Frank Lloyd Wright sort of pattern.

On page 182 of Mary Barry's book I found this photo of the Federal Building. The white mountain is Big Bear and the dark on in front of it is Little Bear. The central door is the entry into the building. We'd take that one to get to the post office inside. It looked the same when I lived there. They may be where these photos are taken, in the lobby.



Both of them look like kids, which, of course, they were. Dad looks so serious. She had just turned 18 a month and a week before this photo was taken. Amazes me how brave she was. Also amazes me that her parents were able to let her cut loose and go that way. If one of you kids had decided at the ripe old age of 16 -which is how old Marie was when she met dad in Mercur and decided to marry him- to run off to Africa to get married I would have had a come-apart. I couldn't conceive of you doing that and would have had you involuntarily committed. No kidding, as you know. But would I have been doing the right thing? I don't know. I just don't know. But I do know that as you each become parents and wrestle with the choices of your teen age children, you'll be more able to appreciate the gift grandpa and grandma Merrell gave Marie when they allowed her to take off to the wilds of the Alaskan territory with her sister as a chaperone.

Dad shows the mild discomfort that grooms are supposed to show. He's got the high starched collar of the era and an appropriately flamboyant tie. The lapels of his jacket show that he couldn't decide whether to button the top of the three buttons. The sleeves of the jacket are a tad short so he was struggling to wear a borrowed jacket. The pants are also too long. They were rented or borrowed items to make him look appropriate for the situation.

The flowers were an extravagance. He wears a boutonniere and she wears a corsage. They appear to be roses. Roses don't bloom in Alaska in May so they had to be imported from a hothouse in Anchorage or cold storage from Seattle.

His shoes are probably borrowed. It doesn't seem likely that he'd have his own because he said that he hitch-hiked from Utah to Seattle to save money. He wouldn't have carried fancy shoes in his stuff.

The curtains hanging as the backdrop suggest a federal building. They may have hung in front of clerk's desks.



The dress was mom's own. She didn't say who made it. It's likely that Rachel helped, but it's also possible that mom made it. She was in Seward a week or so before the wedding staying with Rachel so she had time to have made it.

She struggled with her hair that day, probably doing it seven ways until she ended up with what she wears here. Her hair is obviously the same length as in the wedding announcement published in the "Vernal Express" shortly before she went to Seward.

Dad was a strange one. In 1953 when he went alone out to his dad's funeral, he also went to Naples to visit grandma and grandpa. While there, he checked on things that were stored. For reasons that I couldn't guess if I tried till I died, he made a fire and burned a wash tub full of personal history. And this dress.



This is my favorite of the set. Their expressions are more relaxed and they look like they are shyly proud. She's 18 and he's 23, out there in the wilderness.

Kenai
Lodge
Hone
ymoon
in
Lawin
g

After they were married, they borrowed a car and went for their honeymoon to the Lodge on Kenai Lake. It doesn't look like



ALASKA SHOP
SEWARD, ALASKA

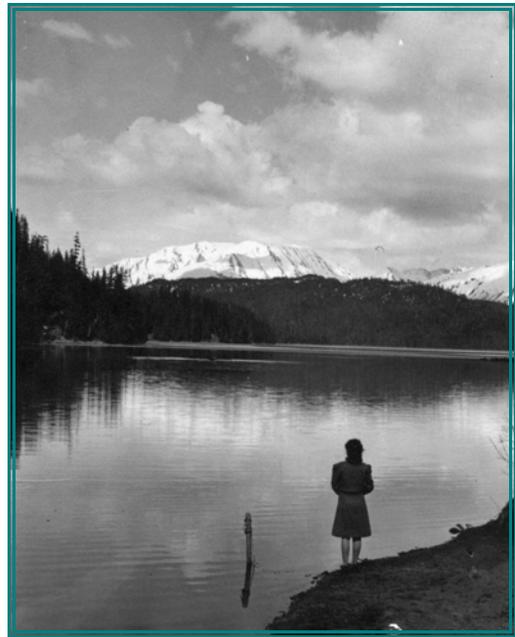
much of a place today, but there was nothing that was 'much' in those years in the Seward region. But Kenai Lake is spectacular. It must be about 15 miles long and perhaps a mile or so across and lies more or less north-south at the foot of a mountain that rises to 4,000 feet, a spectacular setting. The Lodge that was still there when I visited there in the 1950's, on the north shore of the lake. The story I'll tell you here about this honeymoon benefitted from finding a horde of photos of which I only had one that you've seen before:

The thirty images in that collection follow. They capture the quality of their honeymoon.

This is Kenai Lodge and cache backed by a snow-covered mountain. Dad took this photo during the winter but I put it in to give you a complete picture of the structures.



This photo is looking out from the Lodge at Kenai Lake. Dad's note indicated that this photo was taken the day before they were married. They must have gone out to take provisions and make sure they would have what they needed to live out there for the week or so they spent.



Mom and dad stand by Rachel (middle) and Mable, the two who made this marriage and wedding come to pass. Without those two women in there pitching, it wouldn't have happened.



This has the look of a prolonged good-by where Mable and Rachel are getting themselves on their way while Jim and Marie wait.



The two women decide to give him a good-by kiss before embarking on the trip back to town, leaving the two love birds in peace.



Here Rachel is starting to load her gear into the car for the trip home.

This is the same place as the first photo above that I've had for some time.



Before leaving Mable can't resist heckling dad about having married Marie instead of her while Rachel is methodically taking care of business - that Mable probably should be helping with.



Mable decides she'll try one more time for one last kiss before taking off. While Rachel is finishing up the loading.



I would like to know what Mable was plotting as she stood there on her way out.



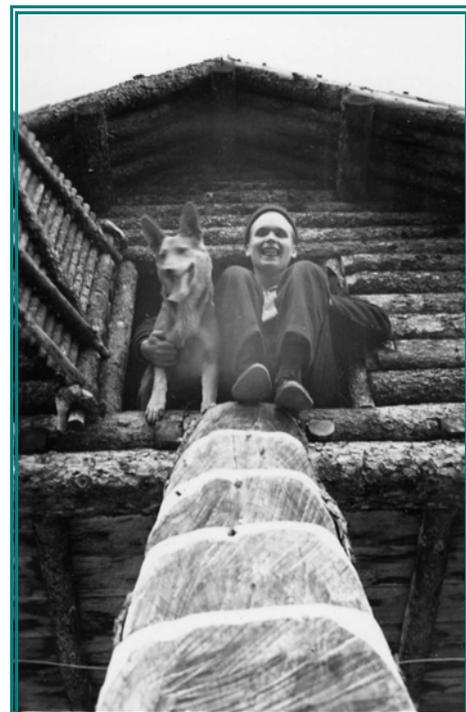
Whoever was running the camera had to get one more staged shot of Mable before Rachel drove away and Mable obliged.



The cache had a swing under it that the two of them played in. Dad is mugging the camera standing there in his fancy shoes for some reason.



He lifted the log ladder up for this shot, sitting there with someone's dog. The ladder is not left in place when no one is in the cache, for obvious reasons.



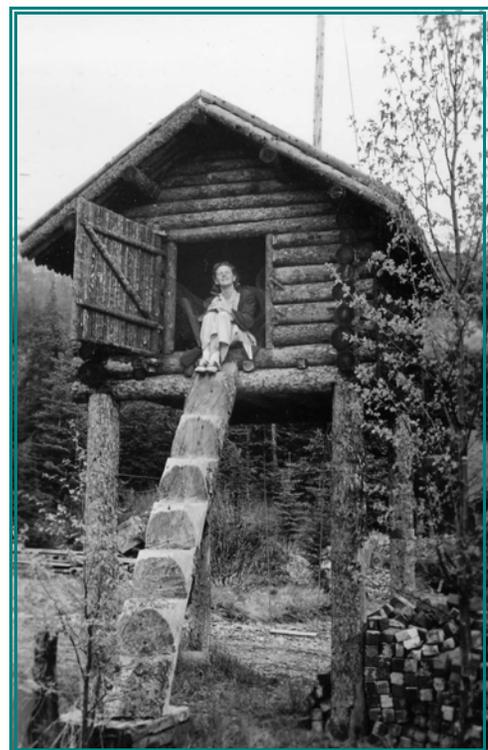
Mom sits in the swing, smiling and happy to be there. Notice this is the same jump suit that she wore while they were dating in Mercur.



Dad took a more artistic photo of her actually swinging. The marten bird house is in the background.



She sits up inside of the cache with the log ladder in place.



Dad took a close up of here inside the cache using an interesting angle to create a well-composed image.



On this outing they found an oddly shaped tree. It was probably bent by snow cover when it was young.



Alaska Nellie's place was not far away. These images confuse me. I have thought that the Lodge they stayed in was on the north end of the lake, but so many photos show the railroad or Lawing that I may be wrong. Whatever, they were all taken on Kenai lake. Nellie had a collection of stuffed animals, some from Africa.



Another of dad's interesting shots using an unusual angle to create an unusual effect. The uni-directional lighting adds to the effect.



You've noticed the chicken-wire fencing in other photos. That's obviously to keep small animals out of the gardens. Dad is harvesting potatoes. Whether he volunteered to do that or that was part of the payment for the lodge we'll never know.



He's feigning dissatisfaction at digging spuds - or the small return on the work. Too much like his childhood.



Mom was also drafted to work in the gardens.



Dad surprised her and caught her sleepy morning smile in this as she's doing something with a camera.



She got a couple more shots of dad showing off for the camera, something that he despised other people doing in later years. He was young here so it was OK.



More of the same. See the rails behind him? My memory of the Lodge was that it was on the north shore so there would be no rails there. Either this photo was taken on another outing from the Lodge or I have incorrectly remembered - not unusual.



They borrowed Mable's car for part of the time and went on an outing where they picked loads of wild flowers, appropriate since it was spring there.



He got another shot of her by the car with flowers.



The last image of this set is one of Rachel and mom fishing. Rachel has a different outfit on so this was apparently during another visit.



An Encounter With a Seagoing River Otter

(I don't really know where to make this story of dad's "fit" so I'm just dropping it in here. Dad)

Dear Joe [*Ed. Dad's best friend Joe O'Leary, naturally*]:

I received the two fine bows you sent today. That box was very obstinate. I was anxious to see what was within it but began with caution to pry it open. It wouldn't pry. In fact, it resisted everything in the mild language class and only after a vicious assault did it yield up its treasure. At present the room is strewn with wood splinters and fragments of cloth, but on the couch trimly poised are two bows with anxious muscles. I'm sure I will get great pleasure from their company and use. Thanks without end, for your generosity.

It is perhaps fortunate that they arrived no sooner than they did. Had one been in my possession a week ago I may have committed a crime against nature which, as it is, was attempted but not accomplished.

The ocean has a fascination for me I can't always resist. Proof of this is that the following incident occurred after 36 hours of activity and work, with no rest. I arose early the morning of the 25th and worked on an old salt water tackle, whose face I am lifting, until evening. I went to work and worked all night on the dock until noon the next day. Instead of relaxing as I should have done I followed my partner's deflated carcass home, ate, then hurried back down to the dock with some herring snagging gear. This consisted of some 20 fathoms of line, which is perpetually snarled up with a swarm of trident hooks. The herring were running!

Since I had learned from you that the way to enjoy one's self was not too long for bananas while lying under an apple tree, but instead to get up and eat apples, or, in short to enjoy what is available in your locality, I was determined I was going to snag herring. Herring snagging is a local sport, here in Seward, Alaska. However, fishing from the government owned dock is illegal, so I slyly took to the rat paths underneath it.

I quickly snagged piling, myself, old rotten lines, and an empty beer can. I did derive great pleasure, however, from the knowledge that I was defying the government as well as enjoying the act of doing something in secret—as we did when we dug up ancient human bones in an algeroba thicket in the Hawaiian Islands during the last year of the great war. I was also pleased by visions of a crisp-fried pan full of herring which vision was replaced by thoughts of the undesirable characteristics of herring: scales; they were abundant and come off readily all over ones clothes and in your hair Then too, they are oily and generally have worms. I was beginning to lose some of my enthusiasm for the dubious delights of piling snagging when I became involved in something much more interesting.

As I impatiently unsnarled hooks and line I gradually became aware of another living presence nearby. I looked over my shoulder and there was one of the most marvelous, creatures I've ever seen; a large ocean-going river otter about 20

yards away. This fellow was cleaning his face on a soggy old float. This float, made of huge timbers, was about six by eighteen feet, and was once used by repairmen under the dock.

His sleek fur was a grey-smoke brown with a cream-colored area under his chin, running down his throat and across his chest. His stiff whiskers pointed back from his dainty nose like barbs on an arrow head.

After a bit he roused himself and standing, poised broadside to me on the end of the raft. His body consisted of three symmetrical arches: neck, body, and tail. In a moment, these arches flowed into one as he looped noiselessly into the water. I was thrilled.

After an interval of about ten seconds he reappeared and flopped an Irish Lord onto the float and

effortlessly landed beside it. An Irish Lord is a small fish with a large bony head and an abundance of spines along its back and at its fin ends. The otter methodically placed the fish nose down, tail vertical, and proceeded to devour it. His powerful jaws and sharp teeth snipped off the bony fins and bit into the tail like fingernail clippers on tissue paper. I then noticed several bony heads strewn around on the raft. Apparently it was one of his feeding stations..



Figure 66

<http://www.unomaha.edu/~abls/images/Sea%20otter.jpg>

The Irish Lord flipped about vigorously at first, but as he was clipped down his energy vanished. I could hear his bones being ground up like the sound of potato chips underfoot. His serpentine grace and power chilled me with delight. He was truly a magnificent creature being about four feet long and streamlined in every detail. When he exerted himself power swept over his body like a flipped coil traveling along a rope. As I watched him a diabolical plan germinated in my mind.

There on the float I saw a beautiful fur for my wife and a skull for Joe. One was, of course, still wrapped in the other and I was totally unarmed for any capture plan. I noted that a series of large beams, bolted to the piling, ran parallel to the caters surface and about four feet above it. I also saw that by some cautious maneuvering I could work my way around and end up alongside the float. I began a

stalk. Barnacles occasionally crackled underfoot but the constant creaking and rustling common to an old dock covered up this noise. I managed to keep piling between us while I subtracted distance, pausing now and then to peer cautiously around a slimy pile to see if his radar had picked me up. Apparently he was totally unaware of my presence. He was a real glutton and was now lying on one side facing away from me, making my approach easier.

Finally my scratched and flushed face drifted from behind the last piling and there he was! I could now see his face as he relished every bite with his eyes closed. Not content I edged nearer and out on the last beam until I was at his side, but four feet above him. I struggled with two opposing feelings: I wanted him to be frightened away before he was harmed; I selfishly wanted to get him if at all possible. I watched him for sometime trying to decide the issue. One thing was certain; he really liked fish and closed his eyes during the passage of every savored mouthful down the arches. He was now nearing the end (or head) of his fish so I must act soon or risk discovery. I made some calculations.

I weighed over 200 pounds; I had on heavy logger boots so the force of my weight down from a height of four feet should be sufficient to stun a small ox, at least. I carefully prepared myself as I decided to leap on him cowboy style with one heavy, sharp heel between his shoulders and the other at the base of his skull.

I swallowed my heart for the last time and plummeted down like a burnt out rocket. I didn't mean to get my hands near him as I expected the dive to disable him. After falling a thousand feet in a split second I connected—ka-whump. All hell broke loose. Although he was totally unaware of my presence his magnificent faculties snapped his body into a great dynamo of vicious energy in a millisecond. It was like I had jumped onto a moving cannon ball. His head flicked back and his razor teeth laid open my boot heel. He was larger than I had thought. I had the distinct impression that I had encountered a terrifically spinning rocket full of steel springs. The damage I inflicted was all on myself. The float listed heavily, green water slopped on board. Everything seemed to spin around but I managed to stay on board. Picture this :

A big clumsy oaf draped over an old water-logged float like a collapsed parachute while alongside is a big exclamation mark in the water with ever widening circles dedicating the watery exit of one of nature's most magnificent creatures. I'm glad I lost.

As ever. Your Alaska correspondent, from Seward, Alaska
James A. Jensen

Steam Engines

This was the era of steam engines. Diesels existed but didn't arrive in Seward until after I went there in 1951. It was a momentous occasion when a ship off-loaded the first diesel locomotive. Meantime, the City Dock was serviced by steam locomotives. The dock was also known as the Railroad Dock.



Two sets of rails ran out to the dock and were serviced by engines that pulled box cars, flat cars or reefers [refrigerator cars]. Freight was generally being off-loaded to be hauled to the interior of the territory. There were two unions, one that worked inside ships and one that worked on the docks. Dad worked "dockside". The wind is blowing so hard that the plume of smoke is ahead of the engine - OR - the engine is going backwards?

Seward Draft Board

I don't know the particulars behind this fact, but dad had to register with his "local draft board". Since he lived in Seward when he decided it was time to get registered, he had

(Registrant must sign here)

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

James Alvin Jensen
 (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Seward Alaska
 (No. and street or R. F. D. No.; city or town, county and State)

has been duly registered this *22* day of *January*, 19*41*

Brian M. Malloy
 (Signature of registrar)

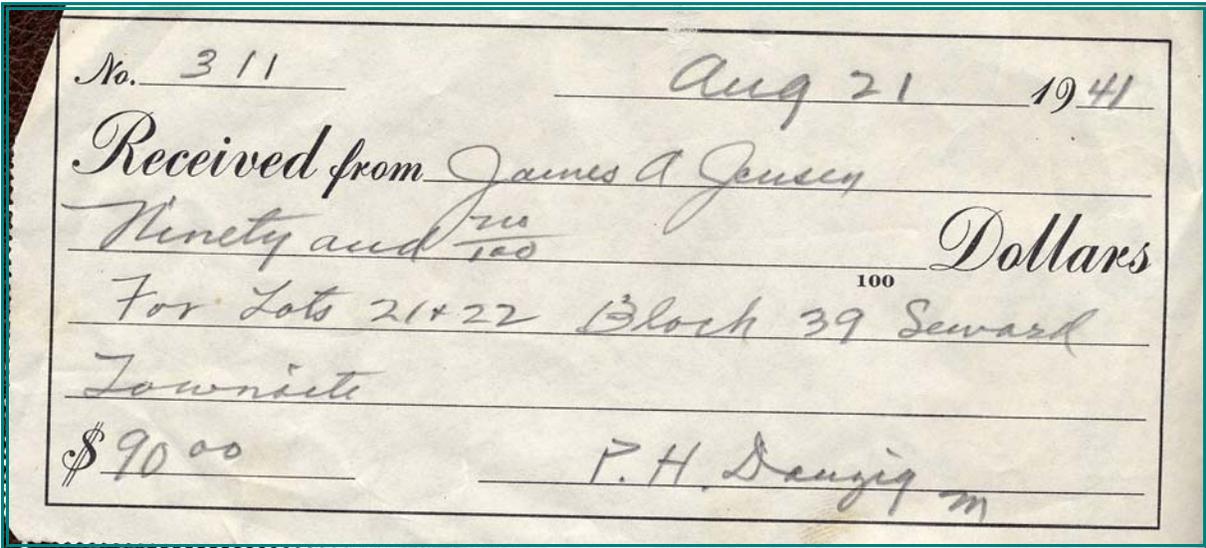
Registrar for *Seward Alaska*
 (Precinct) (Ward) (City or county) (State)

BE ALERT { Keep in touch with your Local Board.
 Notify Local Board immediately of change of address.
CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES

D. S. S. Form 2 16-17105

to go to the Seward Draft Board. It remained his Draft Board for the remainder of his life, just like a Boston Draft Board has been my own. On January 22, 1941 dad was registered.

got to Seward. I suppose I knew that before but it was a shock to hear that story again. I vividly remember the house because it was pointed out several times to us kids during walks as a family through Seward. Somehow I had not remembered the crucial fact that dad himself built that house for mom. Mom saved many things, one of them the receipt for the 2 lots they purchased for this little house:



He bought lots 21 and 22 in Block 39 of the Seward Townsite for \$90.00. They were located at the foot of Mt. Marathon on the north side of the town slope. There was a sawmill nearby so he was able to get his lumber easily.

Here it is, two rooms, looking out on Mt. Alice:



This was his love nest, the place he prepared for his lovely wife. Sure, he had a bunch of men help him built it but it was his own, a place that he could call "home", a place that his wife could tend and care for.

The fact that he built a house means he owned a piece of land. I remember generally where it was. Notice in this image that the slope of the land is down to the left. That means the land was north of where Lowell Creek used to run. The house was built in good Scandinavian fashion with an enclosed porch to enter the house. It's on this end of the house and is basically a lock that you enter, closing the door behind you, after which you open the inner door and go in to the house. The porch is unheated but its purpose isn't to keep you warm. It's to keep the winds from scouring the heat out of the house.

When I enlarged this grainy image I was struck with the sophistication of mom's attire so I cut a segment out to show it in more detail. There she is, a 17 year old girl who had enormous courage. She went up to the wild frontier, and believe me, it was wild frontier, to meet and marry her man. It was a long slow trip for a desert girl who had never seen the ocean.

Her appearance was always of paramount importance. She took care of her hair and make up and dressed carefully in clothing she picked for its beauty and fashionableness. This is a beautiful coat with a belt, full sleeves set in so that they flared upward, and a full skirt must have been a joy to twirl in, standing out like an umbrella. This girl knew how to dress and there she is in front of her tiny house in the wilds of Alaska. Tsk, Tsk. Such a woman.



The house set up high on the alluvial fan, close to the foot of Mount Marathon as shown in this image looking westward: **1941 Seward Fire**



On November 23, 1941, a short time before mom was to leave Seward there was a devastating fire down town. Mary Barry said: "Around eleven-thirty that evening, the proprietor of the Second Chance Barber Shop on Fourth Avenue tried to light his oil stove. Some fuel spilled on the floor and it ignited when he lit the match. He immediately called the fire departments. By midnight it appears that the fire was out, with little serious damage. The firemen and the group of



spectators that usually accompanied every alarm left for their homes and their belated sleep." (1995:142)

Mom remembers this fire. Dad took six photos and asked her what she remembered. She said that when they heard the commotion during the night, they went down town to see what was going on. It must have been around 2:00 a.m.

Mary Barry said that the temperature was 18 degrees above zero and there was the usual wind so it was bitterly cold. After the towns people and soldiers from Fort Raymond determined that there was a great risk that the fire would spread to the homes, people were told it would be wise to evacuate their homes. Mom and dad didn't.

You can see the stream of water from a firehose in this photo. Some brave soul climbed a ladder and tried to quell the blaze this way. Mary Barry reported that the water main broke during the firefighting operations so bucket brigades were set up to try to fight the fire, a pretty ineffectual action against fires that consumed three-story buildings.

Fort Raymond sent hundreds of soldiers to assist in the operation. These guys

were eager beavers and wanted to try out a fire-fighting technique that they'd learned in fire-fighting school. They decided that they would put the blaze out by dynamiting it. Mary reports that one soldier ran up to the blaze several times and threw a handful of dynamite into the blaze and "repeated this action several times during the night."

The results were mixed. In one case, the explosion blew burning embers across Fourth Street onto the three-story Arcade Building that was not burning at the time. The embers started a blaze the gutted the place.

The temperature dropped further, reaching 12 degrees above zero. That is cold. I remember it. My mouth would get so numb I could hardly move my lips and my tongue got cold. It burned like fire in my nostrils to take in a deep breath. No surprise that the hoses froze and that ice formation became another problem.



These guys are basically watching what's going on, pretty horrible thing for a tiny town. The aftermath was as bad as the blaze because there was no lumber to rebuilt, there was no money to do it with and so on. There was a land rush to get steamer tickets back to the "Lower 48" as soon as possible. That was a problem because the construction of Fort Raymond needed more, not less, workers.



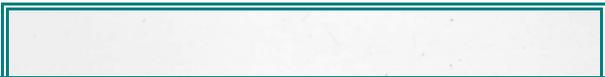
The next morning things were still smouldering but there was now a heavy layer of ice over everything. The long building in the background of this photo is the Seward train station. It was not harmed during the fire but the building in the foreground was destroyed and then buried in ice.



Odd how the building on the corner was totally destroyed with the building on the right survived. There must have been brick or concrete to preserve that building. Smoke hangs over the town because Mt. Marathon should have been visible in the background.



In addition to the devastation caused by the fire, the presence of armed soldiers stands out. He was making sure that no one looted the barber shop of ran off with the things pulled out during the fire. One of the many strays is checking things out.



Picnic up Lowell Canyon

One Saturday afternoon, dad and mom



decided to hike up Lowell Canyon. The objective was to get a good look at the Diversion Dam that the Army Corps of Engineers had constructed. Prior to having this diversion tunnel in place. Spring run-offs destroyed a great deal of property in Seward. Lowell River is the river that had created the alluvial fan on which Seward was built which means it was a powerful river in certain times of the year. Mom's standing on the dam built across the narrow canyon to force the water to enter the tunnel that was to her right.

Lowell Canyon wasn't very far from their new home. Nothing is really. Mt. Marathon is the mountain on the right and Big Bear is the mountain on the left, forming a narrow canyon that would create powerful currents. When I showed mom these photos last month, she remarked, "You're the reason my jacket didn't fit." I asked why and she said she was carrying me. The top photo shows that's true.



Homestead Site

Another memory I have that reaches back to mom's and dad's first stay in Seward involves a homestead. As already noted, Dick and Lavon Lynch of SLC enticed dad

into going to Alaska to homestead. He told Marie, his wife-to-be, that he was going to do that. She said that he didn't give her any choice, typical for their entire life together. But after he got up there, the idea didn't



seem so appealing so he never did anything about it. That's why they didn't file. Too much work but more importantly, it would have tied him down, something he hated.

Each time we drove out of Seward far enough north they would point out a plot of land that they called their "homestead". Mom said that they had planned on homesteading in Seward, and that WW II interrupted that plan because they had not gotten around to filing any papers with the proper agency to protect the land they were interested in.

The site was about Mile 13, a long way from the coast. But it was a property



on a river, overlooking beautiful mountains that rose steeply from their feet. The river was named Snowy River, I believe. Actually, this was the confluence of two rivers but I don't remember the name of either of them.

The amount of work required to homestead a piece of land is extraordinary. I understood that while we lived in Seward. Only tough, dedicated, single-minded people took the task on -though there were a few Cheechakos who had wild visions of getting rich quick who came up and tried it for a year. One round of seasons was sufficient for that type. The trees have to be felled, the roots have to be removed, the land must be leveled for whatever purpose one needed level land. A house had to be constructed and meantime water had to be arranged, a septic field had to be created, electricity would be a nice thing to have, a garden, storage sheds and so on. Monumental task. It was more than dad cared to take on. He had enough of that sort of stuff as a kid in Leamington so while Dick got him excited, he was clear-eyed enough to know he'd fail if he tried. But they held onto the dream anyway.

This is the view from another direction, showing how beautiful the region was that they identified as "their homestead site".



You can see how difficult it would be to clear and farm any land at all. No wonder he changed his mind.

World War II

Jim and Marie remained in Seward some months after their wedding. I used to



Figure 86 From *Mary Barry Seward, Alaska Vol. III*

think that the formal entry of the US into WW II was the point at which civilians were driven out of the town. I learned further, however, from mom that the militarization of Seward had been going on for some time before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This doubtless had to do with the fact that Seward was the only access to the interior of Alaska, and to the military bases already in place. To lose Seward as a deep water port would be to paralyze those critical bases in a region of the world that was closer to Japan than any other part of continental US. It was crucial that Seward be protected and kept open. If the Japanese ever tried to enter Alaska, Seward was alone as the key to the movement of munitions and supplies.

Later I discovered that Fort Raymond was started in June 1941, the month after they married. The plan was to create an installation that would house 3,000 men and women. Initially it was a tent camp which was a pretty miserable existence during the winter before framed housing was available.

As the size of the military increased, the presence of enlisted men also increased. The basis for mom's departure was the things that happened in the streets of little Seward, not the declaration of war in Washington D.C. The way mom put it, "It got so that a woman wasn't safe in the streets with all of the military around," and "That's when your dad kicked me out." So she and Rachel scraped enough money together to return to Naples to set up housekeeping with grandpa and grandma Merrell. Remember those words, "kicked me out of the house."

My original version of the story had them leaving Seward in Dec. 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, going directly to SLC where I was born in March 1942. But my mom says she left Seward earlier than I had imagined. Indeed, she must have because dad stayed behind "because he had a good paying job at the Alaska shop" [sure] after which he moved out to Naples to be with her. After a few months in Naples, they moved to SLC where he could take the government training program to become a machinist, which is where I was born 03-31-42.

Dad tried to join the military but he was refused. The Sea Bees was the group I remember him petitioning, but mom doesn't have that specific recall today. She said that the enlistment offices in Alaska had more than filled their quotas with unmarried men so were not interested in taking married men. At the point war was declared, the federal government converted the tiny town of Seward into a major military installation. That actually makes great sense.

Seward was the railhead for the Alaska Railroad which supplied all military bases with materials. It was doubtless to establish and maintain absolute control over the entire town to ensure that shipping was safe, was not sabotaged. At that point the only people who were authorized to remain in the town were military or government or railway personnel. Obviously. Dad and mom wanted to stay there,

probably because they had designs on that homestead location north of town. But since they had not filed to become homesteaders they had no status to claim the right of remaining in Alaska. The build up of Seward for military purposes actually started well before the declaration of war occurred, so the military presence was large enough to affect everyday life. That, as noted above according to mom is the real reason that she left Seward, at which point Dad stayed behind for a few months before he, too, moved to Naples.

Return to Naples

Naples turns out to have been the haven, the sanctuary, the home base for Jim and Marie. I didn't realize this until the last week when I was discussing their peregrinations with Dee, trying to understand just what happened, what they did and when they did it and in what order they did it. Slowly the realization dawned on me that they had relied, albeit unconsciously perhaps, on the stability and security in the knowledge that grandpa and grandma Merrell were in Naples and that they could return there whenever they wished. They engaged in flights of fancy and courageously embarked on various enterprises. Yet they knew behind it all that whenever things got too tough for them, whenever they lost their way and livelihood, all they had to do was to return to Naples where in the womb of Marie's family they could re-group and re-organize before embarking again on whatever enterprise they wanted. I obviously don't know whether or not they consciously thought this way but the evidence cannot be denied.