

# UPHILL - BOTH WAYS



**Volume 8- Seward, Alaska 1951-56**

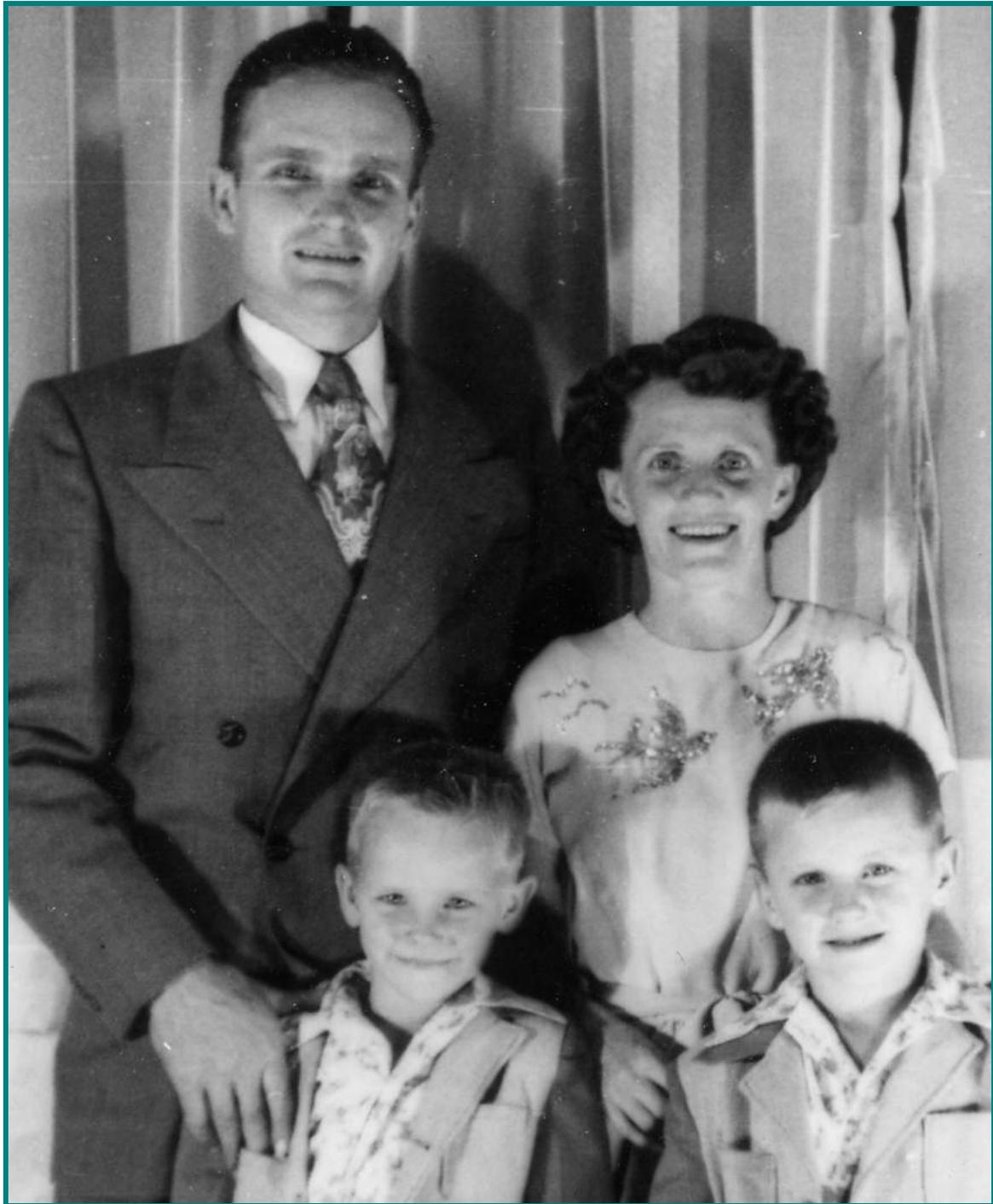
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Dedicated to us...



Viola's house - SLC - 1953 - Age 11

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<u>12</u>
<b>2003 Interlude</b> .....	<u>13</u>
Organization .....	<u>18</u>
Geography of Seward .....	<u>22</u>
History of Seward .....	<u>26</u>
Territory .....	<u>27</u>
Frontier and Wilderness .....	<u>28</u>
The Economy .....	<u>30</u>
Arrival in Anchorage .....	<u>32</u>
Alaska Railroad .....	<u>34</u>
2003 Interlude: .....	<u>37</u>
Arrival in Seward .....	<u>39</u>
Sunset all night .....	<u>41</u>
<b>2 Homebrew Alley - Part 1</b> .....	<u>43</u>
Home Brew Alley .....	<u>43</u>
White Paper Clam Shells .....	<u>43</u>
Aerial Photo of Homebrew Alley .....	<u>46</u>
Homebrew Alley House .....	<u>47</u>
Floor Plan .....	<u>49</u>
"Nigger Toes" .....	<u>51</u>
The Attic Bedroom and Storeroom .....	<u>51</u>
Flashlights and Scary Faces .....	<u>55</u>
The Front Porch .....	<u>56</u>
The Bathroom and the Starfish .....	<u>56</u>
Drying Starfish .....	<u>58</u>
Billy's Squirrel bit me - so did Billy .....	<u>59</u>
The Back Porch and the Boulders .....	<u>60</u>
<b>2 Homebrew Alley - Part 2</b> .....	<u>64</u>
The Homefront .....	<u>64</u>
The Vacant Lot and the Snyder Boys .....	<u>65</u>
Waterfall and Pond .....	<u>68</u>
Alley B - the Red Light District .....	<u>71</u>
4-Door Nash .....	<u>73</u>

Irish Lord and Bear River .....	<a href="#"><u>75</u></a>
Babysitting .....	<a href="#"><u>78</u></a>
Multileg Starfish .....	<a href="#"><u>79</u></a>
Grape Nuts Flakes .....	<a href="#"><u>81</u></a>
2 Homebrew Alley - Part 3 .....	<a href="#"><u>82</u></a>
The Docks .....	<a href="#"><u>82</u></a>
Bear Lake .....	<a href="#"><u>85</u></a>
Cannery Dock .....	<a href="#"><u>87</u></a>
The City Dock .....	<a href="#"><u>91</u></a>
Standard Oil Dock .....	<a href="#"><u>92</u></a>
The Army Dock .....	<a href="#"><u>93</u></a>
Korean War History .....	<a href="#"><u>96</u></a>
Barge Dock .....	<a href="#"><u>100</u></a>
San Juan Dock and Halibut .....	<a href="#"><u>103</u></a>
2 Homebrew Alley - Part 4 .....	<a href="#"><u>107</u></a>
Small Boat Harbor .....	<a href="#"><u>107</u></a>
Stealin' steel wheelbarrows .....	<a href="#"><u>112</u></a>
Dockside Longshoreman .....	<a href="#"><u>114</u></a>
Northern Stevedoring and Handling Corp. ....	<a href="#"><u>114</u></a>
Rolling Stock .....	<a href="#"><u>118</u></a>
Union Board and Dispatch .....	<a href="#"><u>122</u></a>
18' Sea-Going Freight Canoe .....	<a href="#"><u>124</u></a>
Elgin 7.5 HP Outboard Motor .....	<a href="#"><u>128</u></a>
Salmon Fishing .....	<a href="#"><u>131</u></a>
Mom's First Silver Salmon Derby .....	<a href="#"><u>135</u></a>
Next Marie Salmon Derby .....	<a href="#"><u>136</u></a>
The Railroad Gang .....	<a href="#"><u>137</u></a>
Bailey the Blacksmith .....	<a href="#"><u>139</u></a>
2 Homebrew Alley - Part 5 .....	<a href="#"><u>141</u></a>
LDS and Oddfellows Hall .....	<a href="#"><u>141</u></a>
Wilford's Letter .....	<a href="#"><u>141</u></a>
Big Bear Cairn .....	<a href="#"><u>146</u></a>
Dick's Broken Glasses .....	<a href="#"><u>156</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 1 .....	<a href="#"><u>157</u></a>

2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Place .....	<a href="#"><u>157</u></a>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Boarding House .....	<a href="#"><u>159</u></a>
Front Porch .....	<a href="#"><u>162</u></a>
Dressing for a winter night's work .....	<a href="#"><u>162</u></a>
Vat skin .....	<a href="#"><u>163</u></a>
Front Room .....	<a href="#"><u>165</u></a>
Bedroom .....	<a href="#"><u>166</u></a>
Closet .....	<a href="#"><u>167</u></a>
Kitchen .....	<a href="#"><u>167</u></a>
Basement .....	<a href="#"><u>168</u></a>
Backyard Yard .....	<a href="#"><u>169</u></a>
Front Yard .....	<a href="#"><u>171</u></a>
Neighbors .....	<a href="#"><u>172</u></a>
1. Dave & Peggy Fleming .....	<a href="#"><u>174</u></a>
2. Gen and Jim Schaefermeyer .....	<a href="#"><u>175</u></a>
3. Whitmores .....	<a href="#"><u>177</u></a>
4. Mr. Leonard .....	<a href="#"><u>178</u></a>
5. Freddy & Jerry Richardson .....	<a href="#"><u>179</u></a>
6. Suspicious Neighbors .....	<a href="#"><u>181</u></a>
7. The Episcopal Church .....	<a href="#"><u>182</u></a>
8) Incomplete log cabin .....	<a href="#"><u>183</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 2 .....	<a href="#"><u>185</u></a>
Sunbeam MixMaster .....	<a href="#"><u>185</u></a>
Jap-A-Lac .....	<a href="#"><u>186</u></a>
Tree Houses and Forts .....	<a href="#"><u>186</u></a>
Five and Dime stores .....	<a href="#"><u>188</u></a>
Post Office Box .....	<a href="#"><u>190</u></a>
Allowances, Washing Dishes & Cleaning the Kitchen .....	<a href="#"><u>193</u></a>
Soap, Washing & Beans .....	<a href="#"><u>195</u></a>
Ambulatory Toilet Seat .....	<a href="#"><u>200</u></a>
4 <sup>th</sup> of July Creek and Hermit .....	<a href="#"><u>202</u></a>
Janitoring .....	<a href="#"><u>203</u></a>
Shoveling Snow .....	<a href="#"><u>205</u></a>
Manikins .....	<a href="#"><u>206</u></a>
Whales and Seals .....	<a href="#"><u>208</u></a>
Andy's Army Surplus Store .....	<a href="#"><u>208</u></a>

Oddfellows' Hall .....	<a href="#"><u>212</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 2.1 .....	<a href="#"><u>215</u></a>
WW II Military trails & Quonset Huts .....	<a href="#"><u>215</u></a>
Wreck of the Quackenbush .....	<a href="#"><u>217</u></a>
Searchlights, Dead Climber & Mt. Marathon .....	<a href="#"><u>218</u></a>
Hooligan Fishing .....	<a href="#"><u>219</u></a>
Cold Storage Locker .....	<a href="#"><u>222</u></a>
Smoking Salmon .....	<a href="#"><u>224</u></a>
Cramming and Clabbing .....	<a href="#"><u>227</u></a>
Cat Marbles .....	<a href="#"><u>228</u></a>
Pepper the Parakeet .....	<a href="#"><u>229</u></a>
Paperboy .....	<a href="#"><u>231</u></a>
Halibut Lines .....	<a href="#"><u>235</u></a>
Elsie, Slugs and Nails .....	<a href="#"><u>236</u></a>
Breakfast food Ads .....	<a href="#"><u>237</u></a>
Stamp Collecting and Postmaster .....	<a href="#"><u>240</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 2.2 .....	<a href="#"><u>247</u></a>
Selling fish .....	<a href="#"><u>247</u></a>
Primary .....	<a href="#"><u>248</u></a>
Trail Builders .....	<a href="#"><u>248</u></a>
Hit by Car .....	<a href="#"><u>259</u></a>
Polio Epidemic .....	<a href="#"><u>262</u></a>
Achilles Tendon Surgery .....	<a href="#"><u>263</u></a>
Bicycles .....	<a href="#"><u>265</u></a>
Schwinn Bicycles .....	<a href="#"><u>270</u></a>
Jesse Lee Orphanage .....	<a href="#"><u>272</u></a>
Benny Benson .....	<a href="#"><u>276</u></a>
Guinea Pigs .....	<a href="#"><u>277</u></a>
Brent, Janice & Pogo Sticks .....	<a href="#"><u>278</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 3.1 .....	<a href="#"><u>281</u></a>
Grandpa Jensen's Correspondence .....	<a href="#"><u>281</u></a>
Grandpa Jensen's Letters .....	<a href="#"><u>281</u></a>
Fishing .....	<a href="#"><u>286</u></a>
Kobuk, RIP and the Porcupine .....	<a href="#"><u>288</u></a>
Edible Plants .....	<a href="#"><u>293</u></a>

Fourth of July, Home-Made Root Beer & Mooseburgers .....	<a href="#"><u>297</u></a>
Marathon on Mt. Marathon & July 4th Parade .....	<a href="#"><u>302</u></a>
Hunting Ptarmigan on Mt. Alice .....	<a href="#"><u>313</u></a>
May Titus, Red Card and rancid seal oil .....	<a href="#"><u>314</u></a>
Parties, Penuche, Taffy & Table Games .....	<a href="#"><u>316</u></a>
Model Airplanes .....	<a href="#"><u>317</u></a>
Junior Gateway Swingers .....	<a href="#"><u>318</u></a>
Tiny cave on Little Bear .....	<a href="#"><u>319</u></a>
Mike the Big Bomb .....	<a href="#"><u>319</u></a>
Picnics in snow on Little Bear .....	<a href="#"><u>322</u></a>
Fur Rendezvous .....	<a href="#"><u>323</u></a>
King Islanders and Eskimos from Little Diomedé .....	<a href="#"><u>325</u></a>
Eskimos .....	<a href="#"><u>330</u></a>
Blanket Toss .....	<a href="#"><u>333</u></a>
Sled Dogs .....	<a href="#"><u>334</u></a>
Art Show .....	<a href="#"><u>335</u></a>
Fort Elmendorf and JATO bottles .....	<a href="#"><u>336</u></a>
Bull Moose Threat .....	<a href="#"><u>340</u></a>
3 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue Part 4 .....	<a href="#"><u>343</u></a>
Rubber Airplanes @ a Bar .....	<a href="#"><u>343</u></a>
Weekly Radio Shows .....	<a href="#"><u>344</u></a>
Seward Police Department and Wrestling Team .....	<a href="#"><u>348</u></a>
Fizz Pops, Canned Pop and Pop Tops .....	<a href="#"><u>350</u></a>
Cone Top Pop .....	<a href="#"><u>351</u></a>
<b>Dances - Part 1</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>352</u></a>
Library and Mythology .....	<a href="#"><u>353</u></a>
Cheechakos, Snow Worms & Snow Caves .....	<a href="#"><u>354</u></a>
Mom Made a Harbor Seal Parka .....	<a href="#"><u>356</u></a>
Flounder or Dungeness .....	<a href="#"><u>358</u></a>
Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen .....	<a href="#"><u>361</u></a>
Dog Food .....	<a href="#"><u>363</u></a>
McCarthyism .....	<a href="#"><u>364</u></a>
Recording at Home .....	<a href="#"><u>365</u></a>
Halloween .....	<a href="#"><u>367</u></a>
4 Advertising .....	<a href="#"><u>369</u></a>
Sneakers .....	<a href="#"><u>369</u></a>

Benzedrine .....	<a href="#"><u>370</u></a>
Smith Brothers, Dentyne, Chiclets .....	<a href="#"><u>371</u></a>
Heels and Hose .....	<a href="#"><u>372</u></a>
Mum deodorant .....	<a href="#"><u>373</u></a>
Niagara Starch .....	<a href="#"><u>374</u></a>
Coke .....	<a href="#"><u>375</u></a>
4 William H Seward School - Part 1 .....	<a href="#"><u>376</u></a>
William H. Seward School .....	<a href="#"><u>376</u></a>
Mr. Watts Fights with a Student .....	<a href="#"><u>378</u></a>
Trojan Balloons .....	<a href="#"><u>379</u></a>
Miss Wilkinson and Spelling Bees .....	<a href="#"><u>380</u></a>
Auxiliary Classrooms .....	<a href="#"><u>383</u></a>
Methodist Church .....	<a href="#"><u>385</u></a>
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade & Episcopal Undercroft .....	<a href="#"><u>386</u></a>
Mr. Berg, Music Man .....	<a href="#"><u>389</u></a>
Mrs. Connolly, Jr. and the Methodist Church .....	<a href="#"><u>392</u></a>
Mrs. Connolly, Puffins, and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place .....	<a href="#"><u>395</u></a>
4 William H Seward School Part 2 .....	<a href="#"><u>400</u></a>
Nine Girls .....	<a href="#"><u>400</u></a>
2 cent bottles of milk .....	<a href="#"><u>402</u></a>
Cleaning Erasers in the Boiler Room .....	<a href="#"><u>403</u></a>
Obscene Ruler Figures .....	<a href="#"><u>403</u></a>
Opera Singer vs. Students .....	<a href="#"><u>404</u></a>
Christmas Tree Bra .....	<a href="#"><u>406</u></a>
Raffling Dad's Painting .....	<a href="#"><u>408</u></a>
Clarinet in the Band .....	<a href="#"><u>410</u></a>
Christmas Program, 1954 .....	<a href="#"><u>413</u></a>
"Coach" and the Metropolitan .....	<a href="#"><u>417</u></a>
Chik-a-lak-a-chow-chow-chow .....	<a href="#"><u>419</u></a>
Crossing Guard for Police Department .....	<a href="#"><u>422</u></a>
All Alaska Music Festival 1956 .....	<a href="#"><u>424</u></a>
The Girl who got Pregnant .....	<a href="#"><u>425</u></a>
Betty Boop .....	<a href="#"><u>427</u></a>
Tijuana Bibles .....	<a href="#"><u>428</u></a>
Waldemar and John Ahrins .....	<a href="#"><u>428</u></a>

5 Troop 620 Part 1 .....	<a href="#"><u>429</u></a>
Troop 620 .....	<a href="#"><u>429</u></a>
Lord Baden-Powell .....	<a href="#"><u>431</u></a>
Scout Troop 630 .....	<a href="#"><u>433</u></a>
Mr. Phyles, Scoutmaster .....	<a href="#"><u>436</u></a>
Time Trials .....	<a href="#"><u>439</u></a>
Parade Drill .....	<a href="#"><u>440</u></a>
Singing .....	<a href="#"><u>441</u></a>
First Aid drills .....	<a href="#"><u>443</u></a>
Vespers .....	<a href="#"><u>443</u></a>
Charred skin .....	<a href="#"><u>445</u></a>
Weekly Patrol Meeting .....	<a href="#"><u>446</u></a>
Day Hikes & Snipe Nests .....	<a href="#"><u>446</u></a>
Furnace in the Rec Hall .....	<a href="#"><u>447</u></a>
 Troop 620 Part 2 .....	<a href="#"><u>449</u></a>
Tonsina & Trapper's Cabin .....	<a href="#"><u>449</u></a>
Snipe Hunt .....	<a href="#"><u>451</u></a>
Breaking & Entering .....	<a href="#"><u>454</u></a>
Inquisition .....	<a href="#"><u>455</u></a>
Gorsuch Pioneers .....	<a href="#"><u>459</u></a>
Teepees .....	<a href="#"><u>460</u></a>
Cooking Detail .....	<a href="#"><u>461</u></a>
KP Detail .....	<a href="#"><u>462</u></a>
Swimming & Canoeing .....	<a href="#"><u>463</u></a>
Black Bear Scare .....	<a href="#"><u>464</u></a>
Scout Jamboree .....	<a href="#"><u>465</u></a>
Flint, Steel & Tinder .....	<a href="#"><u>468</u></a>
Winter Camp Out Mile 5 .....	<a href="#"><u>469</u></a>
Cedar Totem Poles .....	<a href="#"><u>473</u></a>
 6 Vernal Expedition 1953 .....	<a href="#"><u>475</u></a>
Vernal Expedition Summer 1953 .....	<a href="#"><u>475</u></a>
Indian Burial Ground .....	<a href="#"><u>478</u></a>
Raymond, Alberta .....	<a href="#"><u>480</u></a>
Idaho Falls Temple .....	<a href="#"><u>481</u></a>
Conrad & Viola's Place .....	<a href="#"><u>481</u></a>
Samuel's Family Reunion .....	<a href="#"><u>482</u></a>

Merrell Family Reunion .....	<a href="#"><u>487</u></a>
Eggs and Chickens .....	<a href="#"><u>488</u></a>
Slaughtering and Plucking Chickens .....	<a href="#"><u>489</u></a>
Greenriver Ranch .....	<a href="#"><u>491</u></a>
Peeling and cooking cottontail rabbits .....	<a href="#"><u>491</u></a>
Rattle snake on the Porch .....	<a href="#"><u>492</u></a>
Burning cottonwoods .....	<a href="#"><u>493</u></a>
Tiny melons .....	<a href="#"><u>494</u></a>
Fishing on Green River .....	<a href="#"><u>495</u></a>
Mud puppies .....	<a href="#"><u>495</u></a>
Pitchforks and giant carp .....	<a href="#"><u>495</u></a>
Tractors and Jeeps .....	<a href="#"><u>496</u></a>
Bucking bales of hay .....	<a href="#"><u>498</u></a>
Laurel & Wolves .....	<a href="#"><u>498</u></a>
Catalpa and Bee Colony .....	<a href="#"><u>501</u></a>
Devil's Playground and Fossil Turtles .....	<a href="#"><u>502</u></a>
Visit to Rainbow .....	<a href="#"><u>503</u></a>
Hunting Gastroliths & Uranium .....	<a href="#"><u>506</u></a>
Dynamite & Milk Bucket .....	<a href="#"><u>507</u></a>
7 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue - Part 5 .....	<a href="#"><u>510</u></a>
Woodbury Cosmetics, Lana Turner & Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer .....	<a href="#"><u>510</u></a>
Ptarmagin skin .....	<a href="#"><u>512</u></a>
Turkey neck .....	<a href="#"><u>513</u></a>
Fox Tail .....	<a href="#"><u>514</u></a>
Mahurrin Mountain Tragedy .....	<a href="#"><u>515</u></a>
Adolph's Meat Tenderizer .....	<a href="#"><u>518</u></a>
Bear Paw Airlines .....	<a href="#"><u>519</u></a>
Tiny Trichowski and the Republic Seabee .....	<a href="#"><u>520</u></a>
Mountain goat and Buck Fever .....	<a href="#"><u>522</u></a>
Blood in the Snow .....	<a href="#"><u>523</u></a>
Portage Glacier .....	<a href="#"><u>524</u></a>
Moose .....	<a href="#"><u>526</u></a>
Foods .....	<a href="#"><u>527</u></a>
Betty Crocker Cake Mixes .....	<a href="#"><u>528</u></a>
Mom's nightly Noxzema Rub .....	<a href="#"><u>528</u></a>
Albert the Alligator Pitching Soaps .....	<a href="#"><u>530</u></a>

Fizz Pops, Canned Pop, & Pop Tops .....	<a href="#"><u>531</u></a>
Billikin .....	<a href="#"><u>531</u></a>
1955 Constitutional Convention .....	<a href="#"><u>532</u></a>
Ninilchik, Coal and Giant Razor Clams .....	<a href="#"><u>533</u></a>
8 Yukon Expedition .....	<a href="#"><u>539</u></a>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>541</u></a>
<b>Map of the Expedition</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>543</u></a>
<b>Seward</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>545</u></a>
Alvin's Prologue .....	<a href="#"><u>545</u></a>
Where's the canoe? .....	<a href="#"><u>548</u></a>
Refinishing the Canoe .....	<a href="#"><u>550</u></a>
Loading the 3/4 Chevy Pickup .....	<a href="#"><u>552</u></a>
Anchorage .....	<a href="#"><u>555</u></a>
Alaska Railroad ride to Nenana .....	<a href="#"><u>556</u></a>
<b>Tanana River</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>561</u></a>
<b>Nenana (Alvin)</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>561</u></a>
Nenana Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>567</u></a>
<b>Minto</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>568</u></a>
Minto Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>574</u></a>
<b>Tolovana Slough and the Pritchards</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>579</u></a>
Tolovana Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>585</u></a>
<b>Manley Hot Springs and the Clements</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>587</u></a>
Manley Hot Springs Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>589</u></a>
<b>Yukon River</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>593</u></a>
<b>Christian Indian Cemetery and Yukon</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>593</u></a>
Abandoned "Mission of Our Saviour" .....	<a href="#"><u>594</u></a>
<b>Tanana Town</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>599</u></a>
Potlatch .....	<a href="#"><u>602</u></a>
Fish Camp below Tanana .....	<a href="#"><u>605</u></a>
<b>Grant Creek and Harry Mudge</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>607</u></a>
Grant Creek Album .....	<a href="#"><u>609</u></a>
Kallands and Rhubarb .....	<a href="#"><u>612</u></a>
The Palisades or Elephants on the Yukon .....	<a href="#"><u>613</u></a>

Palisades Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>615</u></a>
<b>Birches and Bill Sauerwine</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>618</u></a>
<b>Kokrines and Grandma Bob</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>618</u></a>
Kokrines Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>622</u></a>
Gladys Pika and the "Drunking Spree" .....	<a href="#"><u>624</u></a>
Ruby and "Scotty" .....	<a href="#"><u>625</u></a>
Ruby Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>627</u></a>
Melozie and Paul Peters .....	<a href="#"><u>629</u></a>
Louden Graveyard .....	<a href="#"><u>630</u></a>
Galena and Henry Captain .....	<a href="#"><u>631</u></a>
Bishop Mountain .....	<a href="#"><u>633</u></a>
Koyokuk and Dominic Verneti .....	<a href="#"><u>634</u></a>
<b>Koyokuk Rabbit Chokers Club</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>636</u></a>
Nulato and Andrew Johnson .....	<a href="#"><u>638</u></a>
Kaltag and the Pentecostal Smogges .....	<a href="#"><u>641</u></a>
Old Kaltag Village site .....	<a href="#"><u>643</u></a>
Kaltag Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>643</u></a>
CAA Station No. 2 and the Bakers .....	<a href="#"><u>646</u></a>
<b>Trapper's Cabins</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>647</u></a>
Eagle Slide and Leo Demoski .....	<a href="#"><u>648</u></a>
<b>Blackburn and the Thurston Brother</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>648</u></a>
<b>Holikachuk Villagers at a Fishing Camp</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>649</u></a>
Rapids and Johnny King .....	<a href="#"><u>650</u></a>
<b>Fishwheel and King Salmon</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>651</u></a>
Rapids Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>653</u></a>
Johnny Deacon's Sawmill .....	<a href="#"><u>658</u></a>
Johnny Deacon Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>659</u></a>
<b>Anvik and Billy Williams</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>661</u></a>
Anvik Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>661</u></a>
Paradise .....	<a href="#"><u>662</u></a>
Holy Cross .....	<a href="#"><u>662</u></a>
Holy Cross Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>664</u></a>
McGrath and the Forest Fire .....	<a href="#"><u>666</u></a>
McGrath Photo Album .....	<a href="#"><u>669</u></a>
 Benediction .....	 <a href="#"><u>671</u></a>

## Introduction

**H**ow do I begin. How do I tell you what it was like. 5 years in the Alaskan wilderness. A young boy out there, moving from a parched desert amongst dozens of relatives to a cold wet foggy isolated coast town of strangers, trains and rains. Passing through the change from childhood to teenagehood, moving from the simplicity and innocence of childhood, into puberty, growing hair, growing in stature, changing shape while my mind simultaneously changed. Hormones kicked in, and scales fell from my eyes. Stories, images and events that had no meaning before stunned me. I was transfixed. My mind looked at itself and recognized intelligence and agency that had always been present but which were previously unappreciated. The tempest of teenagehood erupted, threatening my hold on reality. Seward was where I finally glimpsed my agency and mind.

There was a build-up. The thing didn't happen over night. During the ages of 11 and 12 I was slyly seeing things. Our attention is snared about then with disturbing things that we chew on and then pass off. But the things are stored in a special file of the fodder that is digested and consumed when we erupt. The eruption lasts 2-5 years for most of us, having no clear beginning nor end, waxing and waning the whole time until we come out the end of that tempest around age 17-18. But the deed is done by then. We have finished our release from the metamorphosis that coverts the simplicity of the child into a wary, watchful, appetite-full adult.

I was 9 years old when I moved to Seward in 1951 and was 14 when I left. I look back 50 years later and see what happened inside of me. It was an extraordinary place in which to awake, 1,800 men, women, children and dogs on a rugged alluvial fan on an awe-spiring fiord, 128 miles from Anchorage, at the railhead of the Alaska Railroad, 62 annual inches of rainfall, snow, mist, ice, wind, animals and birds and fishes and clams and crabs and boats and guns and fishing rods, death in the mountains, Korean War in progress, and the military underwriting our livelihood.

Life in those early 1950's in territorial Alaska was an experiment in outdoor living in the United States' last frontier. That experiment, where moral values were imbued simultaneously and generally successfully along side a profound curiosity about the world, terminated at the end of my fourteenth year. We moved to the cosmopolitan, multi-faceted city of Boston where dad took a position as a preparator in the Department of Vertebrate Paleontology in the Museum of

Comparative Zoology in the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. A more extreme contrast with Seward and dockside stevedoring could not be found in the USA. The remote individual experience of life isolated in a true wilderness was followed by the hectic, crowded life of a metropolitan city, filled with history and hosts of loud forces and convictions. The story of Boston is told in the next volume.

### 2003 Interlude

I'm going to insert notes here and there from the "research" trip I took back to Seward with Dee in 2003. The memory that July 4<sup>th</sup> was the warmest day of the year -whether or not it's accurate- informed my choice of weeks to visit Seward with Deanna in 2003. I knew that the Marathon had become a nightmare of people and that I had no stomach for crowds in the Seward of my memory, so I picked the week of the 6<sup>th</sup> of July. I was willing to see the changes in the town. I knew they were there. I'd seen recent photos of the town so knew it had happened. Of course, I didn't even need photos to tell me that things would have moved on, that the town of my childhood would be altered from what it was 50 years ago. But I did not want to subject myself willingly and knowingly to 10,000 grubby tourists, yuppies and hanger's on clogging the streets where a few hundred had congregated.

As it turned out, that was one of the most remarkable weather weeks in Seward's records - no rainstorms for a week, with temperatures rising into the seventies every day. Most remarkable. I took 1,200 photos of that week in Alaska, most of them in Seward, and will cull them for you later.

That visit refreshed memories that were faint, and recovered others that were forgotten. Seward remains today a tiny subsistence town, preying this time, not on shipping and the rails, rather on eager energetic yuppies and fringe types who want to 'rough it', who revel in the glorious beauty of Mt. Alice and the bay. It is a town filled with tourist traps yet beneath it all, the old town remains. Dee and I spent 2 and a half hours walking from the south end of town to the north, following 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue for the most part, hunting for "Old Seward."

It was a remarkable 2 hours. The patina of yuppie boutique commercialism didn't bother me. I saw it and it looked like what happens to any 'discovered' place in any era. But the patina had concealed what I remembered. This slow excursion gave time to see what was there all the time. Old Seward is alive and well. I've

printed two pages in black and white of images from that little trip to show you just how alive and well Old Seward is.

**PRINT OUT THE TWO CONTACT SHEETS OF 16 images  
in the CONTACT SHEET SUBDIRECTORY OF SEWARD  
2002 in photosandimages.**



The most memorable instant of that nostalgic excursion across Seward is a 3 minute exchange that I wish could have been recorded for you and me with the breeze and sounds. As Dee and I looked at and photographed a rattle-trap uninhabited house, a strong, wind-blown, thin 20'ish woman with a clinging 6 year old girl came out from behind us, mildly challenging us as if we were intruders, standing there in the middle of a public street. She had long fluffy black hair, a flowery loose top over frequently-washed black leotards, long skirts behind which the child hid, looking cautiously at us as her mom talked. In torrents of half sentences, coherent, intelligent, lonely, compulsively, protectively, worriedly. All at once sentences squeezing out to be shared with total strangers, the kids who left that blue tarp that might blow into the road and cause an accident, using drugs, threatening them to call the police, they just left it, the house left behind by a native woman who didn't care for it and wouldn't sell it, someone was going to build in the empty lot, see, and they started but didn't finish and it needs to be finished, and her house was a garrison built before the 1918 war for the commander and the house next to it was for the telegraph operator and the two houses across the street were for the soldiers and on she went. I was spell-bound as she stood there arms folded squeezing herself, right hand distractedly stroking her chest, staring at the old house, lost inside her mind, speaking to us yet not aware of us or her impact on us, a slight breeze pushing her dark hair, the child's round solemn patient face safely watching us all, understanding this woman her mom loved her and would have ferociously attacked us in an instant if we had threatened her. We finally left, feeling we had imposed on a private event. Lovely experience that I wish we could have recorded for you. When we finished taking photos of the four garrison houses, she was gone. With the tarp and her child.

## Beehives

I'm interrupting the story to insert something that I discovered in Oct. 2003 when I visited mom again. I went into the "pit" and rummaged around again, looking for things of significance to UBW. That's sort of the over-riding concern for me these years, find things to pass on to you kids. I pulled out the box dad had labeled as "Hawaiian Fish casts" so I could take some pictures of them for the Hawaii section. Down in the bottom of the box I found the master model that dad made of the beehive that got us to Alaska.

This is described at the end of the Vernal volume. I don't know how many hundreds of these mom made but it was many because she was making them to order for the Lion's Club that was holding an international conference in Salt Lake City. I don't have any idea how mom and dad managed to contract with the Lion's club to make these souvenirs of Utah but whatever it was, the project earned us fares to Seward.



Dad made the original model in plasticene clay, a medium he liked. After the clay model was finished, he created this master out of plaster of paris as the permanent model from which he created a dozen or so plaster of paris molds so that mom could pour that many at a time, assembly line fashion. You can see the vertical pencil lines that he drew on the master to guide him each time he made another plaster-of-paris mold. Mold making is not a simple process. The right element in particular required special attention. Due to the fact that the bees stuck out from the surface of the skep -that's the fancy old word applied to beehives made out of coils of straw- dad had to make a four part mold. There was a section for the top three tiers, and three segments for the remainder of the skep. That way when the slip had solidified and the mold was pulled off, the slip casting did not deform or tear. The problem, of course, is that more pieces meant more work and time, but that was how they did this job.

The left element was the reservoir that was filled with honey and then sealed with a piece of cellophane that was glued in place with Ducco cement. The right element was the 'cover' that slipped down over the reservoir. The left element was fired to bisque, sprayed with a clear glaze and refired before it was filled. The cover was sprayed a stray-color first, after which mom touched the wings of the

bees with black and the body with brown. So this is the thing that got us to Alaska.

## Organization

I will start Seward at the beginning in June 1951 and end in June 1956. Bookends. Five years without a sense of age or time, roughing it with rough parents, loved by them, pushed by them, controlled by them, punished by them, hauled in their wake onto mountains and the ocean, digging clams, catching salmon, camping and smoke-smelling. In a rough world that was cold and dark and wet all the time. The warmest day of the year, so it was said, was the Fourth of July. It got to 70 degrees. That is about true. The rest of the year was wet beyond imagining for a desert dweller, 62 annual inches of precipitation, but I loved the rain and the grayness and the greenness. I understood that the green came from the rain and accepted both with the simple thoughtless affection of a child who cherished a new environment that was as different from the old as I could have possibly imagined.

As usual, this volume is copiously illustrated with a combination of photos and images from the internet. The difference is that some of the photos are ones that I took myself.

Dad's love of cameras rubbed off on me and I got an old Kodak box camera first and later for Christmas a smaller, fancy plastic job. You can see two windows on this box camera, one of each side. The one of the narrow top edge is to take "portrait" images and the other for "landscape" images. The long narrow silver band below the 'landscape' window is the shutter.

There is a narrow metal strip that isn't visible that you move from one side of the slot over to the other side during which, the shutter mechanism is tripped one time. But if you got excited, you might accidentally push it back and forth several times in which case the shutter dutifully triggers that many times, making that many overlapping images on the film. The hole on the front of the box is where the lens is placed, and the back, bottom metal thing is the film winder.



**Figure 4**

<http://www.pacificrimcamera.com/images/81746.jpg>

There was a window about the diameter of the lens opening that was opposite the shutter that was covered with a yellowish plastic sheet. You had to hold that up and watch as you wound the film because there was no other way to tell how far you had advanced the film. The paper strip on the outside of the film had numbers printed such that they could be seen through this little plastic window. There were actually three repetitions of each number, i.e. "1 -1 -1", "2 - 2 - 2" etc. The reason was that as you watched the film advance you might twist the knob a little too far the first time a number appears so the first number was actually a warning to alert you that the middle number, the best one to use was coming really quick. If you missed the numbers, the images you made would not be centered on the film right and might overlap with another one.

The film was a totally different kind than the 35 mm cassettes you're familiar with. It came in paper rolls that had to be carefully opened and loaded, a laborious process. Here's an image that shows how a new roll has been attached to the empty spool that was inside of the camera. The empty spool was moved from one side to the other so that the winding wheel would advance the film.

As usual, I provide the URL's for the internet sites so you can go explore further though I've discovered that one or two of the sites I checked have gone out of existence. The urls I provide are nonetheless accurate for the instant in time when I located them because I simply blocked and copied and pasted them out of the browser into WordPerfect.

There are a few more of dad's writing in this volume, but he wrote less about the intermediate years in his life than the early or later portions. The intermediate years are Harvard years and early BYU years. All of the things of his that are included here are clearly identified as his. His largest contribution to this volume is the final 150 page section about a 3 week trip we took down the Nenana, Tanana and Yukon Rivers immediately before we finally left Alaska. He didn't date the manuscript that I have scanned, cleaned up and inserted so I don't know specifically when he wrote it. But from internal evidence it is clear that he wrote it after about 1980. It is a startling realization at this instant to discover that he, like I, turned to his history in his 60's.

In any event, his volume about the Yukon is a major contribution to this volume, one that I would not be able to reproduce. I would have been able to prepare a sketchy narrative of a few memories but nothing like his detail history. It appears to me that he must have set up his slide projector and written from the images as he looked at them. This is the last major writing of dad's that will be

included in UBW because it is his last major piece of writing that involved family events. There is one other piece that I will include, his account of 4 months in Antarctica. I have scanned it in as well so it will be included in UBW later though it will be an accidental insertion since my own life had evolved and separated by 1969 when he was down there. He wrote it because he wanted his descendants to have it so I will include it in this compendium so it does survive the distribution and destruction of the estate at 2821 North.

As in previous volumes, I'm including a mish-mash of advertisements from this era. They include breakfast cereals, toys, clothing and toiletries, things that I remember as part of that universe. They are spread throughout the volume which makes them sort of confusing if you don't realize that they are going to appear randomly to sort of reflect the reality of seeing them randomly. I suppose I could have put them into one tidy section but chose not to.

I'll start this volume with the usual geographic-historical things to place the town for you in space and time and since Alaska was a 'special case', I'm going to give you a detailed description of certain features that I don't discuss in other volumes. It is absolutely essential for you to have all of the information in order to understand what happened there and what my daily life experience was like. Physical settings are as critical in some ways to history as the human interactions that took place in them. In this case, Seward was a tiny town in a remarkable setting that colored much of the experience and you will grasp the influence of the setting better when you understand the setting itself.

Before launching into the background information I will give you a thumbnail sketch of the key dates and events involving my time in Seward:

Date	Event
1950	Dad quits LT Payton's Machine shop and returns alone to Seward
6-1951	We fly from Seattle to Anchorage, take steam engine train to Seward to meet dad
1951-56	I attend school from Grade 4 through Grade 8.
6-1953	We drive over the Alcan Highway through the Northwest Territory, the Yukon Territory, British Columbia and Alberta to Naples, Utah and spend 2 months with grandpa and grandma Merrell in the sun
1954	I am hit by a car, also get polio that settles in injured leg

1955	Have surgery to lengthen Achilles Tendon, in cast 3 months, ultrasound therapy for 4 months
6-1955	Go to Gorsuch Scout Camp first year it is open with 5 teepees
6-1056	3 week trip down Tanana and Yukon River
6-1956	We drive out over the Alcan highway again, spend 6 weeks in Naples before mom drives us kids across country to Boston in an old overloaded pickup

### Geography of Seward

I'm going to cut and paste the relevant text from Volume 5 - Seward 1941: 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. 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 Boise 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. (I wonder how many times he worked that scam.)

I selected the mid-section of the map, from Seward on the Gulf of Alaska up past Mt. McKinley to Fairbanks to show you my old stomping grounds. The red line running up and down the map is the Alaska Railroad. Right after we landed in Anchorage we rode the train to Seward. The route is clear in this map and you see where Hope is. That's where the terrifying multiple-tiered circular trestle was located. We were some of the last people to traverse it before it was taken out of service due to its inherent instability and risk.

During the time I lived in Seward, it was the terminus of the railroad and received all shipping from the "Lower 48" or "the states" or "stateside" as it was said in those days. Considering that the Korean Conflict was going on, not too far away, and considering that there were something like 5-6 military bases in the interior of Alaska, you can see how critical Seward, the Alaska Railroad and shipping were. The smallness of the town belied its crucial role in the provisioning of the military in that era.



This wonderful triptych shows the town in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a sprawling town that hatched in this particular location on Resurrection Bay



Figure 6 [http://www.americaslibrary.gov/pages/jb\\_0330\\_alaska\\_1\\_e.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/pages/jb_0330_alaska_1_e.html)

because there was an alluvial fan large enough to set up housekeeping for a town with shipping. This alluvial fan is a delta that was deposited where Lowell Creek dumped into the Bay after flowing between Mt. Marathon on the left/north and Bear Mountain on the right/south in this image. The unexpected but obvious feature of this alluvial fan that affected me every time I went outside the house was the fact that every -EVERY- road sloped down or up, depending on the direction you were headed. Most of the time the pitch was surprisingly steep. It was great for making little dams and directing tiny streams of water in the ice in the road in the spring, but it meant an irritating, slow walk back home with my bicycle while I had to balance whatever it was I had collected this time.

Directly across the bay sits Mt. Alice, left of center in this image, sort of a sentinel guarding the town. It was the dominant feature of my view when I stepped out doors, omnipresent and imposing. When I visited Seward the summer of 2003, I had the reverse experience of the size shift we usually undergo when returning to our childhood home. Usually things have shrunk but Mt. Alice had grown enormously tall and had moved much closer to the town that I remember. The degree of change was remarkable. Mt. Alice just dominates the landscape. It looked and was much closer than I remember. I remembered it being sizeable and close but not that tall, sitting on the doorstep. It dominates the landscape.

Around 1954 Mt. Alice experienced something that wasn't explained to me at the time, but I understood that it was a significant event. One morning as I looked across the bay, I noticed that there was a cloud of dust, not a cloud of moisture, rising from the ridge just to the north of the peak. I don't think there had been an earthquake although they happened but something had caused a substantial block of the face to shift. After the dust had cleared there was no way for someone who hadn't see it happen to even tell that it had, but I saw it.

The bay itself runs to 3,000 feet deep so is an excellent place for ships,

though few come today. While I lived in Seward, it was THE railhead and major port for all shipping from the "Lower 48". That's how dad made his living to support our family.

As you see in the above map, Seward is located on the Kenai Peninsula at the north end of Resurrection Bay which is a gorgeous deep narrow fjord, probably 25 miles long, bounded by tall mountains that thrust straight up from the water 4 or 5 thousand feet or more. There are few beaches along the bay, because the mountains stand on sheer cliffs everywhere. Glaciers topped some of the mountains, the most dramatic in our days being the Fourth of July Glacier just south of Mt. Alice and directly across the bay from Seward. I was surprised, and saddened actually, to hear recently that the glacier has since receded. The rough weather experienced by the Gulf of Alaska is attenuated as it enters the bay by two islands sitting squarely in the mouth of the bay, one of them named Fox Island. The head of the bay is an alluvial fan deposited primarily by the Resurrection River which is fed by smaller glacier-spawned streams and somewhat from Bear River.

Tidal movement over this tide flats is surprisingly fast and covers a great distance. I went out on the flats at low tide to explore but I never dared go all the way out to the lowest tide because I was afraid I could not run fast enough to get back to safety when the tide turned. I wanted badly to go out and explore the remainder of the Quackenbush that lay tantalizingly close on the flats, but I didn't dare. I was afraid I'd get inside the hull and be drowned in a wave.

I suspect today that I was overly anxious but a couple of small kids who had learned painfully other ways about taking care of themselves who wander out there alone without any adult supervision were not going to get in trouble that they couldn't get out of. This part of the bay was where salmon schooled prior to their migration up the rivers, providing as a result excellent fishing grounds. We caught more salmon there than anywhere else in the bay.

The depth of the bay and its location at the head of the Gulf of Alaska made it an excellent shipping avenue, which is one of the reasons that it was selected to be the railhead for the Alaska Railroad back in the 1920's. There was no highway or rail access and air travel was minimal. At that time the sister ports of Valdez and Cordova were minor players in the shipping business and Whittier near Anchorage didn't even exist. The lion's share of shipping to and from Alaska went through Seward. Consequently there was a constant flow of ships in and out of the bay. The livelihood of the tiny community of 2,000 people was based entirely on shipping and railroading. Businesses of various sorts developed to supply the needs of the

community but they were primarily services, there being no manufacturing or industry of any type.

Seward is on the west side of the head of the bay, situated on the alluvial fan deposited by the Lowell River. It sits on the foot of Little Bear Mountain and Mt. Marathon. Anchorage is 128 miles away, at least it was in those days, and there was no town to speak of in-between. There were a few little bergs like Moose Pass, 30 miles outside of town, that's how they were described, the mile post, but it was only a dozen or so homes with a couple of businesses.

So Seward was isolated and insulated from humanity in general. In the winter the road -not a highway, just a 2-lane dirt road, would sometimes be closed by avalanches. The Alaska Railroad was also affected by avalanches but there were enormous rotary snow plows that were put on the front of a heavy locomotive that would manage to clear the track so there was generally



commerce on the railroads year around. There was no commercial airline to service Seward so access to Seward was by ship or rail year round, with road access most of the year. Bush pilots like Tiny Trikowski, flying a rear-mounted engine Widgeon, operated out the Seward, doing the extraordinary things they did so in an emergency one could charter one of them to get to Anchorage. One felt the isolation and the need for interdependence.

### History of Seward

The bay was discovered by Russians in the late 1700's. They built a fort and a small ship-yard down the bay to establish their claim as well as to

provide a means to repair and construct boats. Russia claimed the immense territory for its own but in 1867, at the far-sighted behest of William H. Seward, the US purchased it. The gold rush brought explorers to all parts of the territory, including Resurrection bay that was already providing trappers excellent quality pelts.

Frank Lowell was apparently the first, or at least is credited with being the first, European to settle in Seward. He brought his family with him and today the Lowell name shows up different ways, i.e. Lowell Point down the bay, Lowell Creek, etc. Mt. Alice is named for Alice Lowell.

The way family history fits into the history of Seward is that dad went to Seward in August 1940, and mom followed in May 1941 at which time they were married. At that point, Seward became part of our family history. Mom and dad bought two lots for a 2 room house that dad started in August, but the influx of soldiers and the explosive growth of Fort Raymond, even before the bombing of Pearl harbor (Dec. 7, 1941), made the place unsafe for females. Mom left in Nov 1941 and dad followed in Dec. 1941, meeting his in-laws for the first time at Christmas 1941, in Naples.

For a comprehensive view of the history of the town, look up Mary Barry's three-volume set. It's in my stuff. I have talked to her on the phone several times, a friendly auntish sounding woman who was from Seward herself. She moved stateside to go to college in 1951, the same year I moved to Seward. Her dad, Mr. Paulsteiner, had a lumber yard in the years I was there. He was also a historian and wrote a colorful history of Seward that is out of print.

Seward's physical gave it a prominent role in the political arena as noted above. Its history reflects that effect of its location at the terminus of the lifeline to the interior when all shipping went through the docks that were destroyed in the Easter Earthquake tsunami in 1964.

If you're really interested in an in-depth history of Seward, go to Mary Barry's three-volume history of Seward. It appears to be the most comprehensive one done so far. I've talked to Mary on the phone three times. She was a young girl leaving Seward at age 18 for college in Oregon I think it was in the same year I moved to Seward so our paths did not cross. Nice person who keeps the books in her basement, after paying their publishment. After I saw mom's interest in the history of Seward, I called Mary and asked her to mail a copy on my dime to mom which she did. Mom looked at it and has forgotten I ever sent it to her. At one point when I referred to it, she admitted she had a copy but didn't know who sent it

to her.

## Territory

Alaska was a territory which means, as you know, it was a big chunk of land that was "owned" by the United States but which hasn't been granted "statehood". It had a variety of connections with the "Lower 48", i.e. governmental, commercial, familiar, social, etc. The incipient mechanism of statehood was there, but hadn't matured sufficiently to qualify for statehood. While I was there, the "Constitutional Convention" met and created the Constitution for the state of Alaska. That was 1956, just before we left and I still have a copy of the special edition newspaper that commemorated the event. It has photos of all of the participants in that convention. Then in 1959, after I'd been in Boston for 3 years, Alaska was "admitted to the union" and was granted Statehood. Hawaii followed by a year at which time the federation of 50 states was completed.

I knew the term "territory" and I understood that it meant we weren't a state. That was not at all distressing but it did mean that we were more primitive than a real state. That was fine, indeed, I liked the idea of being out there on the fringe of civilization. I thought that thought often while I lived in Seward, perhaps not that explicitly but I thought the kernel of that thought. To this day, I am proud of the fact that I was privileged to have the chance of living in the last frontier of the United States of America. (Hawaii was not a frontier at that time!)

## Frontier and Wilderness

Pretty fancy sounding names to apply to a place I lived in, aren't they. To you kids, the words probably connote eras and places a hundred years before my days and places. Right? The fact of the matter is that you're right. Except that the territory of Alaska in general and the tiny town of Seward in particular were left-overs. What happened is that the lower 48 states which had once been wildernesses, frontiers and territories had become inhabited, civilized - debatable in some instances - and modernized and politicized. Are those the characteristics of the transformation of a territory into a member of the union?

Turn the thing around. Define the terms "frontier" and "wilderness" and then see if those definitions apply to Seward. Generally, a wilderness is an uninhabited

region, a region that may have a few trappers, miners and explorers and even a few homesteaders, which has not been civilized with roads and established industries and full-blown governments. Sound right? That describes the territory that abutted on all sides the town of Seward. And, generally, a "frontier" is a geographic region that is a buffer between the fully civilized areas and the wilderness areas. It has developing establishments and businesses and government but is still primitive and under-developed compared to fully civilized regions. That also describes Seward.

Those definitions did apply to Seward and they also applied to the whole territory but the only thing that mattered to me as a little kid up there was Seward. I didn't deal with the idea of the "territory". As the wags say today, "All politics is local." Indeed. All life is local and Seward itself was for me a frontier and sat in the middle of wilderness that showed up in this story.

In the summer of 1955, Robert Muller and Marshall Mahurrin who were the patrol leader and assistant patrol leader for Dickie's and my patrol in Scout Troop 620 decided that they were going to teach us orienteering, either for a rank advancement or merit badge. These two guys took their responsibilities seriously and knew how to "Take charge". In my mind, when they ordered me, in their role as patrol leaders, to do something, my dad might as well have ordered it. Granted, there's a bit of exaggeration there but not much really. I had great respect and/or fear of authority for good reasons. So when these two guys said to take our compasses and get ready for an exercise in orienteering we knew it would be the real deal. We hitched on our canteens, put on good shoes, took a jacket for warmth, and put a box of waterproof matches in our pocket "just in case." This was Alaska and you went out to the wilderness unprepared at your own peril.

They hauled us on foot way out north of Seward, north of the TB San on a dirt road we had never been on. After being sure that we could read compasses and understood how to take and change bearings, and knew our "pace", they took us to a specific spot out there in the middle of the wilderness, up in the direction of where Exit Glacier is today. They got us to where they wanted us to start, handed up a single sheet of paper with instructions, and left. No map, just instructions. Dick and I stood there alone. It was wilderness, my children. There were bears out there, foxes, eagles, all sort of creatures and there were no habitations, no street lights, no telephone poles, no running water, no people, no police, nothing that marked civilization, nothing to turn to, no where to go, just this narrow rutted dirt road and the forest in front of us. We were left on our own.

But we weren't afraid. We had faith in our leaders and in ourselves. We made sure we understood our assignment: follow the instructions on the sheet of paper to get ourselves back to Seward - ALONE. That was the operative word. We stood out there underneath the alder and spruce forest alone, several miles from Seward and it was up to us to get back home by heading in a certain direction for a certain distance and then taking another bearing, following it for a certain distance and so on. We had canteens, jackets, compasses, good shoes and matches so we were set. Of course, we could have cheated and walked back out that road that those two guys took when they left, but to do that would be to admit that we were unable to do the job, afraid to do it. We would not consider that alternative and it's significant I think to note that we didn't even joke about, "Oh, let's just go back on that road!" which is the kind of thing that seems to be standard in such situations any more. Make jokes about thing, act like you care but don't, take the easy way out, etc. Nope, we were going forward, and we did.

We could have done the same thing in Fred Meyer's parking lot or down in the Grove at least in terms of the mechanics but this was wilderness so it was a sobering experience. We followed those directions and suffered a couple of episodes of mild panic. You gotta remember. We were 12 and 13 and we were out in the forest -wilderness- alone in totally unfamiliar territory with nothing but this paper and instructions, our compasses and our brains -and the powerful trust of our leaders which was critical- to get us home safely. We followed those instructions, had to redo a couple of stages and finally we got close enough to familiar territory to be able to finish by finding a road and following it in. But in the middle it was scary. I can testify from personal experience that Seward was a frontier town in a wilderness.

## The Economy

Does that sound boring? It does to me. As a little kid I didn't even know the word. "Economy". What's that. Well, for one thing, I just happen to know that it comes from Greek. And I just happen to know that the original meaning involved the home, its food, cooking, organization and money. That is what the word originally referred to and that's how I'm actually using it here. I use the term to refer to how all of us little families sitting up there in the cold, isolated frontier survived, how we made money and bought food and cooked and kept warm.

We were 128 miles from Anchorage, a few tiny villages in between. You got any idea how far away that is from the next town? It was pretty darn far away. We were on our own. We all had to depend on what happened in our town for survival. Even electricity was generated by a local plant. No electricity came to us from outside. When the generator went out in the winter in the middle of a snow storm, I was afraid, particularly if I happened to be walking back from Werner's Market. I felt like the mountains would spill down on us crushing us in our houses. There was a phone line to Anchorage that worked as long as there were no avalanches that broke the connection. The railroad and the auto road remained open as long as there were no massive slides. But Seward really was isolated and on its own. When avalanches blocked the little highway and the railroad and I heard about it, I felt afraid somehow.

So how did people get money to put food on the table and pay the rent? There were basically seven sources of income in the order of volume of money generated:

- The docks
- The railroad
- Small local businesses including services, i.e. medical, dental, legal
- Government
- Fishing
- Lumber
- Trapping
- Mining

The docks were the largest source of income. There were three when I moved there in 1951 and a fourth shipping dock was constructed in about 1953. These four docks serviced commercial freighters that came into the bay to drop off supplies and equipment. There were two stevedore unions that I'll talk about in detail below, the dockside and the shipside unions.

The cargo unloaded from the ships was loaded onto the railroad for shipment up the line into the interior of the territory. The railroad hired the second largest number of people.

The small businesses spanned the spectrum; several grocery stores, bakeries, laundry, hotels, restaurants, churches, bars, hardware stores, bowling alley, drugstores, gift shop. None of them was large because there were not enough

people in town to support anything large. There were no "outlet stores" in Alaska at the time, and probably few in the lower 48 since that concept was unborn. Nor were there chains or franchises in Seward. The businesses were locally owned and run. The guy who opened and closed the business was the owner. The service organizations included medical and dental and legal offices. None was large: the hospital probably had 15-20 beds at the most and was administered by Mrs. Blue.

Government also spanned the spectrum from town to territorial to federal offices. There was a fire department that was mostly volunteer, police, game wardens, "Highway" patrol, and a single school building for 12 grades.

The four remaining sources of income, fishing, lumber, trapping and mining, were marginal at best. Few men earned their livings from any of these forms of enterprise, but they were present in our awareness.

The economy from which our families derived money and goods was based entirely on the population of ~2,000 in that tiny town. Fathers worked at jobs that generated money that was spent in turn on goods and products in the community. Dad worked on the docks as a dockside stevedore/longshoreman to make the money for his family.

I'll launch into the story now, picking up where I left off in Volum 7 - Vernal.

### Arrival in Anchorage

**T**he story of our trip to and stay in Seattle before our flight to Anchorage is told at the end of the preceding volume, Volume 7 - Vernal 1945. It was a momentous event to climb into that airplane in the evening and fly away. The tiny Vernal airport was used by locals with their tiny airplanes. There were no commercial flights which meant that we didn't get to see the large airplanes that the airlines flew, TWA, PanAm, United, the first two being international companies long -dead. Just seeing a DC-3 in Seattle was an exciting thing. To actually climb into one was more exciting and the thought of flying off into the air stomach-wrenching.

You are used to long, carpeted, well-lighted tunnels that take you to the door of a large jet liner. Quiet, climate controlled, like a large long room, and no sense of the act you are committing. Getting out to board a DC-3 was a totally different experience. There were no sophisticated jetways to get you out to the plane, as it sat parked a ways from the terminal on the landing strip. We waited anxiously in the lobby until our flight was announced, nervous that we would be forgotten or

would not be allowed to board. Irrational fears but real.

We had checked in, having our tickets examined and our bags carefully weighed and measured, causing concern for mom lest she have to pay over-weight penalties. It was a relief that none was assessed. I felt blessed. Then we had to wait. Finally our flight was announced and we nervously watched mom for instructions. She was cool and calm, like an international traveler in our minds though she was probably uncertain since she hadn't flown before. People lined up in a queue at the door that had a number on it. A person opened the door and announced that we could pass through to walk to the plane.

Evening had fallen so lights showed us the pathways painted on the pavement that we had to follow to get out to the airplane that sat there waiting. I was nervous about walking outside the lines, afraid that someone would yell at me to get back inside, looking anxiously around at the immensity of the terminal, the crowds of people, the bustling uniformed workers who were calm, acting as if this were the most normal thing for them to do. Mom carried her handbag and we had our books. That was all. Carry-on luggage was severely limited due to the weight limitations.

When we got to the gangway I stared up. The staircase was like a wide metal ladder with low walls, that we had to climb. A person stood at the bottom pointing where to go seemed superfluous because there was no where to go when we came to the end of the cattle chute painted on the pavement, but adults know how things should be done. The other person at the top made sense. I needed someone up there to assure me that it was OK to go up and that it would be OK to go inside the airplane.

As we got to the top of the gangway, we were face to face with the reality that we were entering a large airplane. A finality. We were committed and couldn't turn back. I had a fearful fatalistic sense about it. I wanted to go see my dad but I was as scared as I could be about that big thing getting into the air with all those people inside of it with their luggage. But there I was, holding on to mom who went inside. Suddenly things quieted down and we saw small lights that illuminated the interior. And a long, steep floor that we had to climb. The seats were sort of like those in the Grayhound busses we went to Seattle in, the busses we had ridden between Vernal and Salt Lake City, but the floor was sloped up and the ceiling was curved. We had to hold onto the seat backs to help us climb up to our seats. Then we sat down and buckled ourselves in, an unsettling thing to have to do. If this was so safe why am I tying myself in?

Things finally got underway, the pilots revved up the engines, taxied out on the runway and then shoved the throttles to the firewall. Commotion and terror and shaking and roaring and bouncing as the plane started down the runway, clawing to get into the air. It finally succeeded and eventually the plane leveled off and the stewardesses came around to see if we wanted some of the chicklets gum or half-rolls of lifesavers that would keep our ears from hurting as we changed altitude.



**Figure 8** DC-3 in Anchorage museum in 2003

These planes weren't pressurized like modern planes so the pressure differentials were much larger.

The overnight flight did not crash. We woke up in sunshine, descending into Anchorage. At the time, Anchorage was probably about 30,000 people, the largest town in the territory. Alaska didn't gain statehood until 1959, three years after I had left. I don't remember where the Anchorage airport was and don't specifically remember landing or getting to the train station, but we made it. The town had pavement on the main streets but outside the main section everything was dirt.

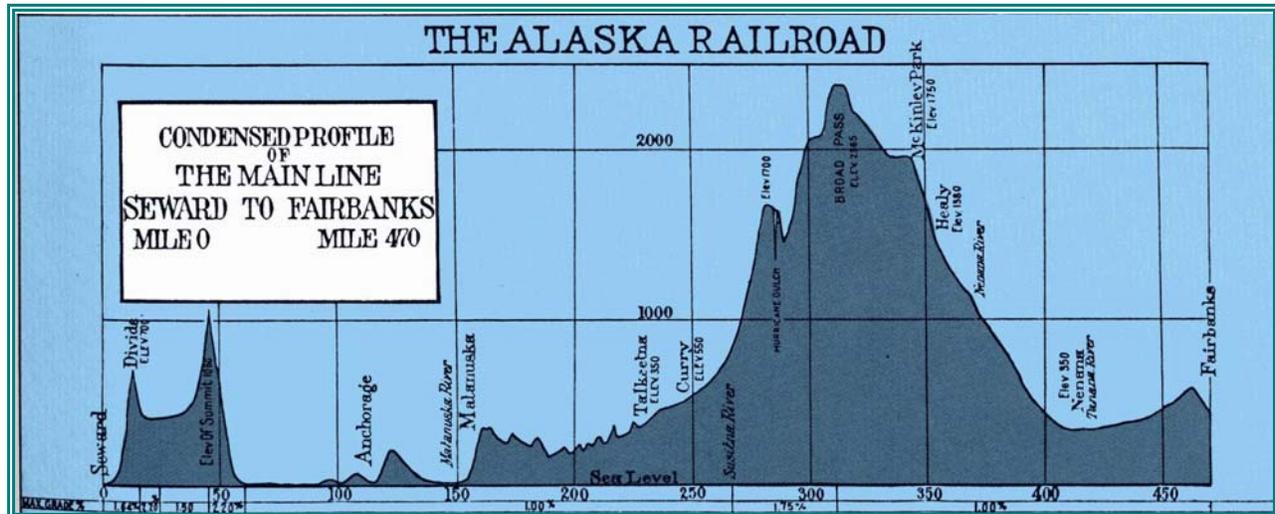
## Alaska Railroad

**A**nchorage was just an impatient interval on this trip to get back to dad, to see him again, to reconnect with him and have him overshadow me. I don't even know whether we had to spend the night in Anchorage or not. I just remember that we got on the Alaska Railroad and headed with our gear to the place we had talked incessantly about for 6 months, the place where my dad lived - Seward.

The train station that we entered in 1951 is the same one I visited with Dee in 2003. I didn't see a date of construction but it was built in the style of institutional, governmental buildings of the 1920-30's, sort of a modified version of art deco. The lobby inside was enormous and had those mammoth tusks I showed at the end of Volume 7. We got our tickets and boarded the train.



This profile, from "Encyclopedia of North American Railroads" (AE Klein,



1985, Bison Books) that I found in the Depoe Bay used book store in 2002, shows the Alaska Railroad "profile" as its called from Seward, the rail head for the line, up to the terminus at Fairbanks. One of the last things we did before leaving the territory, a sort of Right bookend to our life in Alaska, was to take the train up to Nenana. The first trip on the railroad was to go from Anchorage to Seward. Note the sea level elevation near Anchorage and at Seward. The last 50 miles before Seward had elevation up to 1,000 feet.

The engine pulling a combine of 8 or 10 cars produced a great deal of grey smoke that billowed out the stack, blowing down along the cars as they followed. As the drivers turned, the cylinders released puffs of loud steam, the characteristic chuff-chuff sound of a steam engine. The other impressive thing about this trip was the terror I felt at one point, the point where the engine had to make a climb up from a flat area to gain entrance into a tunnel into the mountain. I suppose it had a sound engineering basis but it was unsettling that the tracks didn't just go straight into the tunnel.

This tunnel was bored into the mountain hundreds of feet above the floor of the valley so the train had to climb up to enter it. The route that was laid out for this climb was a trestle, an elevated track supported on long piles driven deep into the ground. They were obviously secure but to me they were ludicrous. This enormous train with its weight felt out of place up there on top of this narrow trestle that was nothing but a bunch of tree trunks stuck into the ground, on top of

which steel rails had been laid. I imagined that the train made the track shake though I suspect that was not true. The most shocking thing about this trestle was not its length. It was long which only prolonged the risk to me of a crash off the tracks.

The shocking part was the fact that the trestle could not be constructed as a straight run from the floor of the valley up to the mouth of the tunnel. The tunnel was so far above the floor that the trestle had to gain considerable elevation. The trestle was constructed such that the track made a great turn, kept turning, and eventually crossed back over itself. It made a 360 degree turn over itself which persuaded me that the whole thing was so flimsy that it would collapse. It didn't and we made it into the tunnel that was a noise, smoky experience. It was long enough to add its own dimension of fear, i.e. that we might not come out the other end, smoke and noise filling our car.

In this image you can see a train on the bottom of the loop. It is headed to the right side of the image, will make that huge circle and pass under the trestle on a straightaway that is difficult to see, but it is there if you look carefully. It was terrifying and Ralph Tingey told me that this loop was taken out of service in 1951 due to structural problems and risks. That means that I was one of the last people to traverse it because I went over it in June 1951. (The photo is from page 48, *Railroad in the Clouds*, William H. Wilson, Pruett Publishing, 1977. Dad found this book in a used book store on the Oregon coast in 1988.)



The Alaskan Engineering Commission's Seward Division embraced the Kenai Peninsula from Seward to the head of Cook Inlet's Turnagain Arm, including the Loop District, shown in a bird's-eye view. *The Alaska Railroad*

**2003 Interlude:**

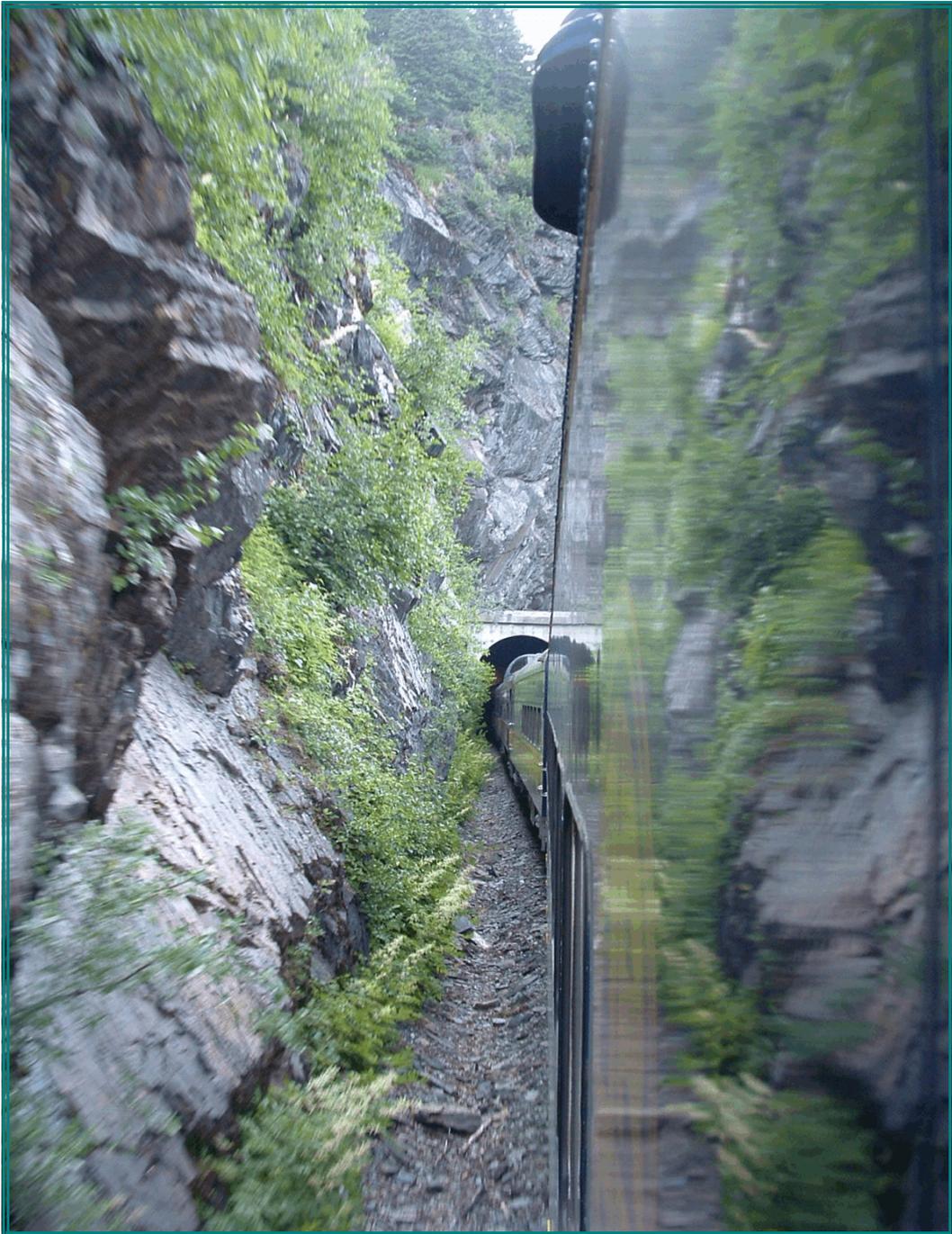
When  
Dee  
and I visited  
Seward, we rode  
the train back to  
Anchorage and  
stood on the  
platform  
between cars for  
the duration of  
the 4.5 hour ride  
and were  
astounded at the  
gorgeous beauty.  
This photo shows  
a forest drowned  
by encroaching



water with rugged mountains in the background draped by hanging glaciers.

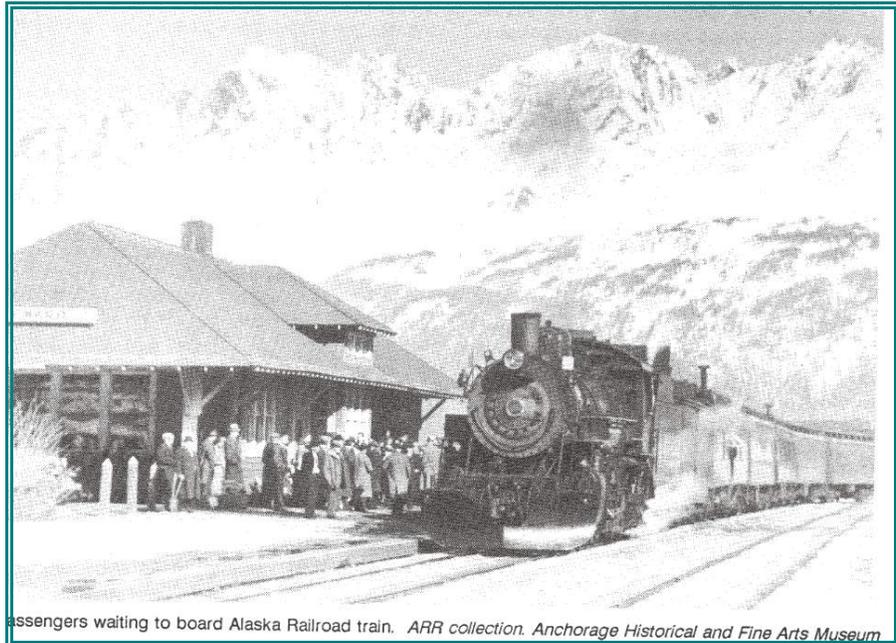
In one stretch there are about 8 tunnels that are close together, with steep drop offs between. Non-stop beauty. I took 200+ images in that 4 hours.

This obviously was the same stuff we saw when we rode the steam engine train from Anchorage to Seward in 1951.



## Arrival in Seward

Eventually we arrived at the Seward train station, a small, typical train-station of that era, with the sign "Seward" on the roof. This image from Mary Barry's book shows the Seward train station as it looked when we arrived. On a train drawn by a steam engine like this. Note, again, that people are well dressed for the occasion like they were for the plane flight. The change in travel attire is not something that pleases me. Something is lost in the rush to be casual, something that bestowed a significance to the event.



The main street of town, such as it was, ran off to the left side of the photo, perpendicular to the long axis of the train station. The "City Dock" would be to the right side of the person who took this photo. The mountains in the background are the ones immediately to the north of Mt. Alice across the bay.

I took this photo a few years later when there were a bunch of dog sleds on display with dad standing behind the sled. The bare, white mountain on the right in the background

is Little Bear. We lived at its foot about directly behind the second telephone pole from the right side of the photo in "Homebrew Alley". We were happier to arrive in Seward than in Anchorage.



It was late in the day again and we finally got

to see dad, and got to see the ocean, a fantasy to me. The train ride was long and noisy and rough but we had waited for many months to make the trip. It was time to get there. We had waited a long long time and traveled a long long way. Two little kids who have lived out on the desert their whole life are in a state of shock after waiting so long and traveling so far. It was time to see dad.

Dad was there, waiting for us, ready to take us and our bags to the house he had rented and prepared for us. It wasn't a great distance away but he didn't have a car so had to rent a taxi to get the job done. The taxi drove along the road that you see on the right hand side of my photo of the station in the winter. Imagine that the road goes straight for about 4 blocks. That takes you to the foot of that mountain, Small Bear, and to the foot of Home Brew Alley. Our house was about six houses up from this road.

## Sunset all night

The evening we arrived we were so excited that we couldn't sleep. Too much stimulation we thought. Sleeping finally in a little house, up in the attic, in Seward with my dad again, finally. But after another night or so it became evident that the problem wasn't really stimulation. It was light, good ol' sunlight.

In June, the sun in Seward comes up around 4-5 am and sets around 10pm. Doesn't sound like too different from the Lower 48? Right. Except that the POSITION the sun comes up in and the position the sun sets in are totally bewildering. Here's a good illustration.

To get what this photo portrays, you have to think carefully about it.

First, this is Mt. Alice, across the bay from Seward. That means it was about due east from where I was sitting when I took this photo. I was looking straight east.

Second, this photo was taken about 10:00 p.m. Repeat: 10:00 p.m.

Third, look carefully: the sun is coming from my left as I am sitting there



looking directly to the east at this mountain at 10:00 p.m. From my LEFT at that time of night. This amount of light may not be so surprising but the direction is. At that time of night, the sun should be coming from my right. The sun is northWEST of me in this photo. It should have been southWest.

Point: the sun comes up in the north east, makes about a 275 degree circle in the sky and sets in the north west. Normally, in the latitudes of the lower 48, the sun comes up in the east-south-east and sets in the west-south-west. So there is about 18-20 hours of sunlight a day and that wreaks havoc with sleep for most people who are not used to it.

Of course, the obverse is true. In the winter, the opposite is true. The sun is rarely up. It rises late in the morning in the far south-east and sets after 4 hours far south in the south-west.



## 2. Home Brew Alley

Arriving in Seward was an exciting event compounded of many things, finally seeing dad after six months and finally getting to the ocean. The latter loomed large in my mind. Dad was exciting and was his typical how-are-you-nice-to-see-you-good-by guy. I wasn't too disappointed, however, because first, I knew he'd do that and I still loved him and knew in some way that he loved me, and second, The Ocean. The ocean was a wonder, a thing I could scarcely imagine, a body of water so large I wouldn't be able to see the end of it. I had dreamed about it in my mind, trying to comprehend a body of water that large, a body of water with waves on it, docks and ships.

After we got to the house on Homebrew Alley and had deposited our bags, dad and mom had a lot to talk about. We could sense that our company wasn't a hot item at the moment. So us kids dared beg permission to go down to the beach. We could see it when we went from the train station to our house because we went along the beach for several blocks before we got to the end of the alley and turned up. We knew where to go so we asked permission hopefully to go back down to the beach, an impossibly exciting thing. They said, "Sure, that's OK. Just be careful now and don't you go into the water." We about tipped over in our shock and quickly agreed that we would be careful and that we wouldn't go into the water. Both of us were afraid of the water. We were desert dwellers who bathed once a week. Water was not a normal part of our routine but it was compelling.

### White Paper Clam Shells

We left the house and could see the ocean from the steps on the front of the house, and walked hurriedly down the alley toward the beach. It wasn't far and when we got there we crossed the road and a train track to get to the sandy beach. Finally, we were there. I had dreamed all winter of going to the beach to see the waves and to see the sea life that I had read about. I was finally there. We were timid about walking far on the beach because we were new to the area so didn't know what risks awaited us. We had seen maps with sea monsters drawn on them and we didn't believe the, but just in case, we were careful.

This is the beach we walked on first, the beach by the City Dock. The only difference between the day we were there and the way it looks here is the debris in the water

from the collapse of one of the buildings on the dock. The beach was always covered with flotsam and jetsam and dunnage from the rail cars and ship. The former is garbage and



junk of any kind, the latter is lumber that has been removed from ship holds or railcars which had been used to secure things for transport but which was finally removed and discarded. In this image the dock had been damaged by a bad storm so was being repaired. This is where we first met the ocean that evening. We played and beach-combed on this beach for years. The access to the dock that you can see provided a great place to fish when we weren't chased away.

We walked up to the edge of the water because the waves were as small as in this photo, so small that they weren't fearful at all. We learned about big waves later. We didn't see any sea life on the beach, just some bad smelling plants that turned out to be seaweed. As we looked intently out into the water, we discovered some white objects. They were circular and lay still. Like clams. That is what they were, clams! Man alive, our first trip to the beach and we had already discovered clams. They were too far out to be reached without getting wet, so we couldn't get any to take home to show dad, but we would drag him down to look at them with us.

The next day we managed to get his attention and convinced him to go down and look at these pure white clams with us. He went and sure enough, they were still there. He stopped and looked at them a minute, obviously thinking hard about

them. We interpreted his slow response as thoughtfulness about the importance of the find. We expected he would have something impressive to tell us. When he did speak it was a quiet comment, a kind one. He said, "See, those white paper cups you drank water out of on the train? Well, they are folded pieces of paper and when those cups get wet, the pieces of paper come unfolded and spread out like that. Those are paper cups." Oddly enough, while that was disheartening, I don't remember feeling like he had criticized us, like I had made a serious mistake. I knew when I did those. It was real clear. But in this instance, he reported the truth, a thing he loved and respected, and left it at that. So he told us where clams live and how you get them, and looked at seaweed.

The name of this waterfront neighborhood gives you some insight into what we moved into and the map on the next page shows it. The green house is the one I lived in. The house to the north of my house had two stories and was rented by a man, his wife and child, who came from the south. They were the first ones I remember speaking with an accent that I had a hard time understanding. On the south side of our house there was a narrow path that extended from the alley back to the mountain. There was a door on the side of the house that we could use to get to the path and get to the mountain to climb and fool around. On the south side of the path was the Colonel's house. He was a strange, secretive type. On the south side of his house was the largest house on the alley.

Two of my best friends lived there, Darlene and Gary Mattson. Mr. Mattson had taken a powder so the kids spent the days alone because mom had to work. So they had more freedom than I did. Darlene, a largish specimen with long hair and stronger than most boys, introduced me to a new-fangled sandwich that I thought was the neatest I had ever eaten: two slices of baker's bread -as opposed to home-made bread which was still made by many moms in those days including Marie- with a couple of leaves of iceberg lettuce, a slathering of miracle whip and several tablespoons of granulated sugar. That was it, that was the recipe. When I tried to get mom to make one, she recoiled.

### Aerial Photo of Homebrew Alley

This grainy photo shows Homebrew Alley on the top left. I colored our house in green so you can see it and there is a large vacant lot directly

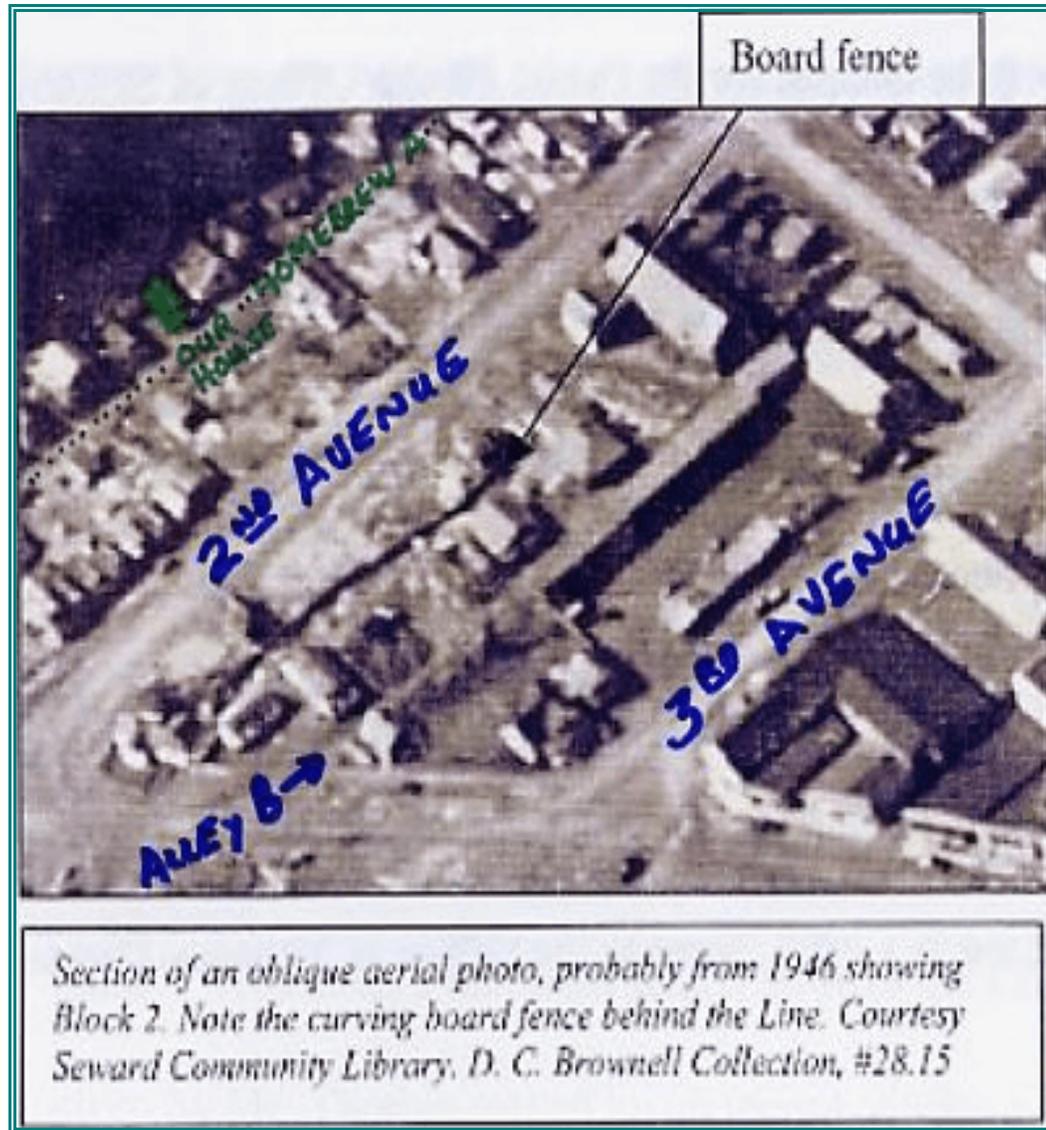


Figure 18 From "Regulated Vice: A History of Seward's Red Light District - 2002"

across the alley from our house. A structure was added to the north end of that lot which you will see later in the photos of me and Dick with some dogs and photos of salmon. Otherwise, the alley looked just like this photo. This photo is from the book written about the redlight district that flourished in Alley B. (Regulated Vice: A

History of Seward's Red Light District. Seward Visitor center Compliance Project, prepared by Annaliese Jacobs Bateman, National Park Service, Alaska Support Office, July 2002.)

Notice the roads in this photo. Homebrew Alley is on the top - the name is written in green. Our house is colored green and sits across from a large vacant lot on the other side of the alley. On the opposite side of the vacant lot is a wider white road which is Second -not First- Avenue. First Avenue doesn't show in this photo although it did exist further north in town. In the block below Second Avenue is the infamous Alley B, the redlight district which is located along the narrow alley through the center of the block. The board fence on our side of the district was next to another field that we played. More about it later.

All the roads and alleys in Seward were unpaved with the exception of several blocks of main street.

Mom is standing in Homebrew alley right in front of our house. This shot looks north. We moved after about a year and a half to a house over on Second Avenue which was on the other side of the vacant lot which is to mom's left in this photo. The house we moved into was located right at the highest point in this photo. Count the telephone poles. They mark intersections. The first telephone behind mom marks the road we'd turn right on to go three blocks to get to main street where the stores were. The last telephone pole, on the left, is at the intersection by the Episcopal Church which was just south of our second house.



## Homebrew Alley House

I don't really know how dad and Art Schaefermeyer traveled to Seward, other than they went together. I did find one photo of dad on a steam ship on his way to Seward so I assume Art was with him, but am not sure. Here's a great shot of Art "working" on the City Dock, about the only photo we have of him which is odd, given the amount of time we spent together. This particular day Art was



assigned to drive jitney and was obviously in-between jobs. Art was apparently as fed up with his job and situation in Vernal as dad was so he joined up with dad and moved. We were all living out the tail end of the depression and the impact of World War II on the national economy and men moved around to make more money than they were otherwise making. This trip to Seward seemed to be that sort of thing, although there was doubtless a certain of nostalgia involved for dad.

I imagine that sure they traveled to Seward by ship. Commercial airlines were novel and expensive and they had little money so would travel steerage class and put up with the inconvenience to save money. When the two of them arrived in Seward, they obviously had to find a house to live in because staying in a hotel would be too expensive. Dad had friends from his previous visit 10 years earlier so they may well have stayed temporarily with them. I think it is highly likely that Rachel gave them a spot on her floor. She would have done anything she could to help and would have been upset if they didn't accept her offer.

They signed up for the union to work as longshoremen on the docks and hunted for a place that was in their price range, not very high. Even in 1951 it is likely that there were few places to rent because Seward had always been a small

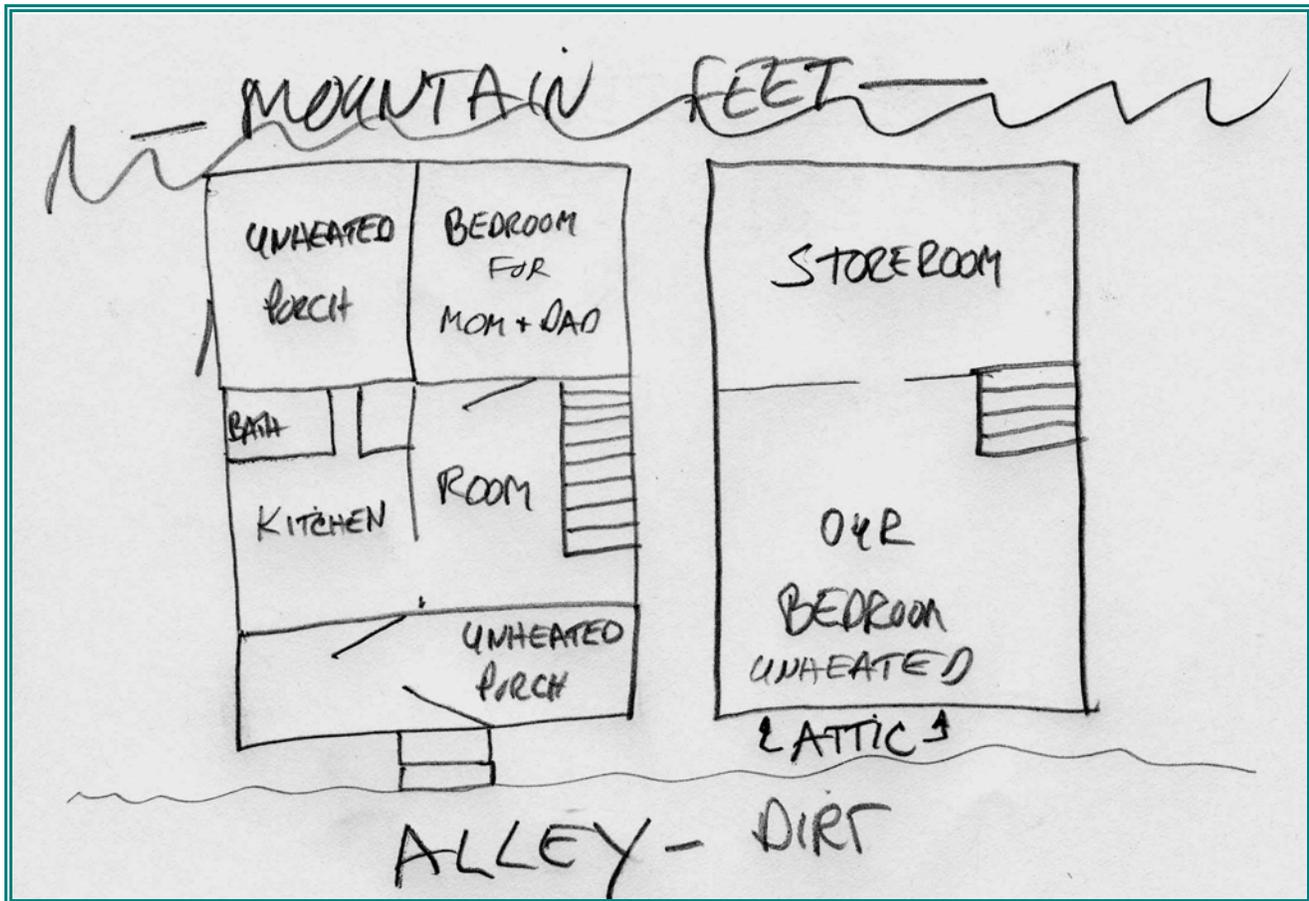
town, except for the temporary growth from the defense industry but when that industry evacuated, the housing evaporated because they took down many Quonset huts that had been used for housing. and ended up choosing this little house on Home Brew Alley.

They roomed together to save money and shared the task of cleaning it up after they first rented it. Apparently it was filthy which is not surprising. Homebrew Alley was named "homebrew" for good reason. In addition to the home brew aspect, the alley was basically flophouses for vagrants, tramps and prostitutes who plied their wares in that alley and through the block at "Alley B".

The worst cleanup job was the stove according to dad. I don't remember what fuel the stove burned but it apparently was covered in nasty smelling stuff that they could not completely remove. The sources of heat in the town were oil or propane so it was one of those. They finally resorted to burning large quantities of sage on the stove top to change the smell of both the stove and of the house. Later I learned more about "Homebrew Alley" and the fact that it was the slum part of the town. It was populated with types who didn't think highly of bending their elbows just to keep a place clean. Instead, they brewed brew, they indulged in their indulgences and generally raised hell, leaving a stinky residue .

## Floor Plan

Here's the floor plan of that tiny house that had a main floor and an unfinished attic:



It wasn't large. My guess, based on the houses I've lived in, is that the width of the house was probably about 20 feet by 25 feet, not much, 400 square feet per floor. Look at mom and dad's bedroom. Their double bed occupied most of the width. That room was half the width of the house, so the kitchen side wasn't much wider than a double bed. The room where the staircase is located to the attic was too small to hold any furniture except a chest of drawers.

This set of drawers held mom's and dad's clothing, and some of ours. It was tiny. It set on the others side of the wall that backed the stairs. The space between the drawers and the wall the divided the house into halves was so narrow that there were no chairs or tables. Just space. This chest of drawers was off limits to us kids but that didn't keep me from exploring it. As described lower, we purchased goods in case lots from the "Lower 48" so had large quantities of stuff after it had arrived.

## "Nigger Toes"

As I nosed about in this set of drawers, something that would have cost me my head if mom had discovered me doing it, I ran across a pile of cellophane bags of "nigger toes" in one of the drawers. This name was the common one applied to Brazil nuts. The name didn't seem pejorative to me, rather just a name, like "squaw candy" or such. These cellophane bags were from a crate that mom ordered when she sent in our annual food order. Mom loved these like her dad did. She obviously bought this extravagant luxury to pamper herself. We were not to know about it apparently because I hadn't seen them before, but one sack was half empty.

Well, I found the hoard and in the manner of a selfish pack rat coveting that which someone else had, I liberated one of the plastic sacks and tore it open. Man alive, that was heaven. All those crunchy large nuts. To protect myself and the hoard I took the opened bag upstairs and hid it somewhere under my bed or in the back storeroom so neither Dickie or mom could find it. I explored those drawers many times, hunting for whatever interesting things were there, though I had no idea what I was hunting for.



Figure 22

[http://www.deliaonline.com/picture-library%5Cjpeg150/br/brazil-nuts.j](http://www.deliaonline.com/picture-library%5Cjpeg150/br/brazil-nuts.jpg)

pg

## Attic Bedroom & Storeroom

The top "floor", a mighty grand way to refer to it, was an unheated and uninsulated attic. The roof over the space was rafters covered with boards which were covered on the outside with rolls of heavy tar paper impregnated with green sand to allow it to withstand the weather. But inside, there was nothing. Just the bare rafters. There was no insulation, nor was there even wall-board or lath, nothing to make a ceiling. It was like living in a half-finished space, a barn with a ceiling that was too low to stand up in except in the center.

This attic space was divided by a partition in the middle into two "rooms", a

front room and a back room. There was even a door in the partition. We slept in the attic because there was nowhere else to sleep so the front room was called our "bedroom", another euphemism, and the back "room" was the store room. Since there was no insulation and since there was no stove or other source of heat, the cold was severe in the winter. Sleeping up there in the attic was like sleeping in a deep freeze. No kidding. You have no idea of the constant continuous relentless cold until you try to sleep in it without any protection except your own body heat and a pile of blankets. The best thing that can be said about the attic as a sleeping space was that (1) it was in fact always dry -not a trivial thing in Seward!- and (2) there was no wind blowing through it. That dryness and stillness did actually help our situation up there.

Here's how it was in the winter. In the evening after we had dawdled as long as we could without incurring the wrath, we'd see that the time had come to get ready. We'd take our clothes off while standing in front of the stove in the kitchen lingering, enjoying its warmth, dreading the ordeal. Then we'd put on the home-made flannel PJs that mom had warmed in front of the stove. After getting into our pajamas, we fooled around again as long as we dared, risking the wrath on mom. Finally, Mom made us kneel on the floor at the kitchen chairs and say our prayers before we were banished to the attic.

After we stood up from praying, we steeled ourselves, hating it every night, wanting to be allowed to sleep on the floor in the little room, just to be in a warm place. We'd go over to the staircase, pull the door open and turn the switch to light the light in the attic. Then we'd make a heroic dash up that narrow, steep stair case to the attic, stumbling over each other, anxiously trying to get into bed before our PJ's cooled off too much. Mom would holler up the stairs, "Are you in bed yet?" When we responded affirmatively, she turned off the light, shut the door and there we were outdoors freezing to death.

We each had a tiny bed set on opposite sides of the tiny front "room". We'd run to our bed, lift the covers up and hurriedly dive in, pulling the covers up completely over our heads. We had discovered that our breath was the best way to warm our beds so we trapped it inside of the bedding. We'd hold as still as mice, afraid of the new area of coldness that we would feel if we moved our legs. Water in a container in the attic would turn to ice up there. Literally. It took half an hour or so for our nests to warm up enough to be comfortable. During that time we didn't move a muscle. We'd finally warm up enough and go to sleep in whatever position we were in when we jumped into bed. Getting up during the night to go to

the bathroom was terrible. We'd have to go down the stairs into the house, go to the bathroom and then go back up and repeat the performance.

A note about those quilts: there were still in my possession at 5111 I think. Before we left Vernal to go to Seward, mom and her mom decided it would be a wise thing to make some large heavy quilts, not know what would be available there, and what the cost was. Mom had lived in Seward so knew how bitter the cold was and knew it was prudent to prepare for it. So they set up quilting frames and tied two quilts, one for each of us. The batting was doubled and the top and bottom were heavy flannel. We helped her tie them because it was an east task and it gave us a sense of ownership.

The back "room" was filled with cases of the canned goods and breakfast cereals that mom and dad purchased from the "Lower 48". These goods were shipped up the coast from Seattle via the "Coast Line" I think it was. Whatever the name of this shipping line was, all of the cargo ships had 2 pale pink smoke stacks. Our stuff took a month to arrive so we eagerly watched for these ships to come in, hoping that our next supply of food would be on it.

When it arrived, dad brought it from the dock and hoisted it up the narrow steep staircase to store in the back room. There was a great sense of comfort to see the food there, to know that we had food to live on, to know that mom and dad were taking care of us that way.

The cardboard cases we stacked much like a storehouse for a grocery store. There were boxes of Corn Flakes, Wheaties, Jello puddings, beans, spaghetti, fruit salad, mandarin oranges, Mexican Corn and other vegetables. The reason for buying stateside was that the local prices were so expensive. Even paying for the shipping cost for this much freight, the goods still cost far less than buying them from local merchants. At the time I didn't wonder how the merchants felt about people doing this but I suspect today that they had mixed feelings. The things we did buy at Warner's or the other market were things that weren't in this collection of cases or perishables like vegetables and meats.

In this photo which was taken on the City Dock, you see a pallet of cases of canned goods as they are being off-loaded from a ship. This could have been a load of the goods that mom and dad bought to tide us over the winter. It's hard to see in this photo but there are two men spotting the pallet as it is lowered by the slingman down onto one of the wheeled 'carts' that were towed by the jitneys. The front man with his back to the jitney is the driver. Once the load is settled to his satisfaction, the sling will be unhooked, the driver will mount the jitney and he will drive either to a rail box car or to a truck for local delivery. These two guys are members of the "dockside union." The slingman and his buddies who are working on board the ship belonged to the "shipside union."



## Scary Faces

The attic had only one light. In the winter in the afternoon, the darkness filled that attic completely if the light wasn't turned on, there being only one small window on the east end and another on the west end in the other room. Billy Schaefermeyer and his little brother Mike came to visit us many times. The house was too small for us to play on the main floor with adults so if it was raining too hard to play outside, we had to find somewhere else to be rowdy and loud which naturally meant the attic.

There is something about a dark play space that brings out the worst in some kids like me. Instead of keeping the one light on so we could see what we were doing and maybe play some Parcheesi or Fish, one of us would run and turn it off. Then we'd dig up some flashlights. The object of this play was to try and scare the other kids by turning the light off and turning the flashlights on.

In the dark, we'd hold the flashlight right up under touching our chin and point it straight up. When we did that, the flashlight cast funny shadows up over our face, making streaks of light and dark over our chin as we opened our mouths, nose, lips, cheeks, eye sockets and forehead. It was impossible to really make out what we were seeing which naturally scared the crap out of us which naturally made us more excited to do it.



**Figure 24**

<http://www.ahowlinggoodtime.com/gallery/jackolanterns/images/twoscaryjol.jpg>

To add to the excitement and fear, someone would start growling like a bear in a deep scary voice. At first that was just corny and no one believed it. But in the dark, our imaginations would ignite. One of the kids would get the bright idea of imitating a gorilla so he'd start swinging his arms, grunting like a gorilla, bouncing up and down like we thought gorillas would, like we saw them do in movies. The humanness of gorillas is disturbing anyway, but to have one in your bedroom in the dark is unnerving..

By this time, we'd truly get scared and start yelling for the kid to stop it. But he wouldn't. He'd continue to growl and roar and pull more funny faces while he'd crouch over to make a hunch back and swing his arm around like a gorilla. We

couldn't really see his arm but we could see them well enough to know that it wasn't him doing it! We'd scream some more, Mikey would get really scared and start bawling, at which time one of the adults would open the door to the stair way and yell up at us to cut it out and ask Mikey if he was OK. He was OK and we'd all sneer at him when the adults couldn't see us -as if WE weren't scared. But if the adult came up stairs, we were solicitous of Mikey and asked him if he's OK, if he got scared, told him it was OK, said we were scared too, which we really were, etc.

This episode happened many times and was the kind of thing that was followed as we aged by scary things at campfires and in the woods at night when we were hiking or camping. There was little commercial entertainment so we made our own and in its own way, it was more authentic and scary than the stuff you see in movies and on TV with explosions and blood and torn bodies. That isn't really scary, but when that kid started swinging his arms like a gorilla and bouncing up and down like one while he made ugly faces that were grotesque in the strange light, it was about as real as anything can be that isn't.

## Front Porch

The front porch shown in the above diagram was unheated, a typical arrangement for any Scandinavian house. Today this kind of porch is given a fancy name, "Arctic Entrance." My, my, how cute. In those days, it was just a porch, plain and simple, and it had one function: it served as a sort of decompression chamber between the heated interior of the house and the windy bitterly cold outside. The fancy name "mud room" might also be applied but we didn't have that sort of artificial word. We just knew we needed to have a way to prevent the wind from souring the house, removing the precious heat we paid precious money for. We changed boots and put on or took off coats in this porch before entering or leaving the interior of the house.

The kitchen was the room you stepped into when you went through the front door. A propane stove and a table with four chairs filled it. On the back of the kitchen was a door way that went to the bathroom and a small storage room. The bathroom tub was the site of a wide variety of scientific experiments that involved sea life, clams, crabs, and starfish. Mom didn't care too much for the business of storing live sea creatures in the filled tub but understood that these experiments - that is what they were- somehow were 'good for the boys'. They were. We did

other experiments out side the house with variable results.

### Bathroom & Starfish

**T**here was a bathroom in this house, a pretty darn exciting thing. This house, out there on Homebrew Alley, was the first house I ever lived in that had indoor plumbing and a bathroom inside so you didn't have to go outside in the winter and hang your bum out there freezing in the cold breeze in the winter. No kidding. I was nine years old and had obviously used indoor plumbing many times at other people's houses but I had never had it in my own house.

The bathroom was as tiny as the house. When you stepped into it, there was a clawfoot tub on the right sort of like this one. The thing about these cast iron tubs is that they take a long long time to get warm in the winter so even if the water is too hot to sit in, when you finally get set down, your bottom gets cold from the cold iron. The faucets were far away so you had to stand up to get to them which cooled your bottom off more and so on.



**Figure 25**

<http://ftp.internetconsignment.com/photos/tubbrad1.jpg>

The commode was straight ahead when you went in, and nearly touched the tub. On the left wall between the door and commode was the small sink with hot and cold running water, a mirror hanging above it to see the effect of your splashing efforts with soap, water and comb.

Another experiment involved trying to keep star fish for pets. We had an endless supply of the things. This time we put a sandy pair in the clawfoot tub and ran a few inches of water over them, watching carefully to see what happened. What happened was that mom came in and said, "Get rid of them!" Being cooperative, far-sighted children, we just thought that was the finest bit of advice we'd ever heard. So that experiment came to a crashing halt. But it didn't stop us. It just slowed us down and we had to find another lab.

## Drying Starfish

One of the most memorable experiments was an attempt to dry starfish. We had seen dried starfish in stores and figured that since there were no obvious abdominal contents that all we needed to do to produce our own was to put starfish on the roof of the storage room. The roof over the porch was close enough to the elevated path that went back onto the mountain that we could climb up onto it. So we collected half a dozen starfish down on the beach after a storm which always threw them up, arranged them on the roof and waited. Most of them were the five-legged variety -something like this- but there were starfish with something like 14 or 15 legs. We had some of those as well.



**Figure 26**

[http://www.njscuba.net/biology/misc\\_starfish\\_etc.html](http://www.njscuba.net/biology/misc_starfish_etc.html)

Every day we climbed onto the green roof over the back porch to check the specimens noting any change in coloration and weight. The most significant change we ever noted before we were finally told to get rid of them was the odor. Seward has 62 inches of rain a year. Do you understand how much that is? More than an inch a week. This obviously meant that the star fish were watered about every day, and also meant that the sun didn't shine. After several weeks the smell was overwhelming but I think we would have left the starfish up on the roof "just in case" if mom or dad hadn't ordered them back to the ocean. We discovered through this process, talking with mom or dad, that the store-bought dried starfish must come from much dryer climates or must be quickly dried in ovens.

Discoveries of all sorts happened at Home Brew Alley, another one involving inch-long crabs and clams. We went clam digging down the bay at Tonsina or beaches in between. There were large cockles and horse clams that we brought home. The nice thing about digging these clams is that they don't shoot out their foot and take off in the sand like razor clams do. They just lay there while you dig them out, sort of like digging potatoes. You can do it with your hands. Just find the characteristic depressions in the sand with two tiny holes. It was probably while preparing the horse clams to be cooked that someone made the discovery that

some of them had one or two white, inch-long soft-shelled crabs trapped inside their siphon. The crabs appeared to be healthy and apparently were sucked in when small and grew to adulthood by eating of the stream of nutrients that the clam ingested for its own use. Much like the shrimps that enter certain sponges where they are trapped for life.

### Billy's Squirrel bit me - so did Billy

I got in trouble, real trouble and Billy jumped me and started pounding on my face. I don't blame him. Billy and his family lived outside of town. First they lived over on the Old Nash Road near its ending, in a house that was as much a house of ill repute as the one we lived in, I can tell now, looking back, because there were thousands of little glass beads in the dirt from the fancy lanterns that had been used inside. I was fascinated by those little beads and collected handfuls and wanted to make something of them but never did. They were the draping veils that hung from Tiffany style lamp shades.

Anyway, out there is the "country", as if Seward was "city", Billy did get to do things that we didn't. In this case, Billy made a trap with his dad's help to catch a squirrel. That was one of the full-time occupations of kids up there, catch some animal or bird. It was in the air, and running trapping lines had a certain romantic appeal. The Schaefermeyers came to visit us one afternoon from their place over on the old Nash Road. On this trip he had a trap with a squirrel inside.

This trap was a wooden frame covered with chicken wire. The lid was hinged and constructed in such a way that it could be propped open and then tripped shut when a squirrel entered. Billy put some sort of bait down in the interior of the box, attached a long string to the stick that held the door/lid up, walked a ways away and sat down to wait. It strikes me that he used peanut butter to bait the trap. Eventually a squirrel of which there were many identified the scent as something desirable and came to investigate. Billy told me how it was done. The squirrels were used to seeing Billy and his brothers so were't too



Figure 27

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~kwanten/squirrel.gif>

troubled that this kid was sitting where he could be seen from the scene of the about-to-happen accident. The squirrel decided the scent was really good and climbed up on the cage/trap affair. The trap became a cage after something was inside of it. The critter then climbed down inside of the cage at which time Billy excited yanked the string pulling the stick out. The lid fell down and the squirrel was caught.

The next time he came to town, he brought the cage with him to show Dick and me. He proudly waited while his dad pulled it out of the trunk of the car and brought it over the sit on the ground between the houses. The adults then went into the house to chew the fat while us kids played. We all stood fascinatedly around the cage, seeing a squirrel up close for the first time. He was frightened and cowered in one corner looking back at us as we looked at him. Billy said not to open the cage because he'd get out. So we didn't open the cage. But for some reason I couldn't stand waiting like that while this pretty wild creature just sat there. I had to do more than that, so without Billy's permission, I undid the catch on the lid and reached down to the squirrel. I don't know what I expected to happen but what did isn't what I wished. The squirrel didn't fancy this kind of attention and a human hand coming in his direction spelled trouble, so he did the only thing he was equipped to do: he bit this finger.

When the kid, i.e. me, screamed and jerked his hand out of the cage, the squirrel who was afraid of retribution, beat a hasty retreat out the still-open lid. At this point, Billy also attacked this kid for allowing his pet squirrel to get away. He had a point, but I felt like I deserved to be given a little sympathy because I had just been bitten by a wild animal. Billy didn't appreciate that subtlety and whacked away at me while I yelled loudly.

The adults tiredly reappeared, separated the combatants, and one got lectured about minding his own business while the other was told to not worry that he could always catch another. Neither kid was happy about his lecture and was willing to trade. The rest of that afternoon with Billy was spoiled. His frame of mind was shot and he pouted and wouldn't talk to me. I can't blame him. I don't know why I even did that dumb thing because it was predictable that he would (1) bite me, and (2) get away. Neither outcome was a good one, so why did I do it? Mom said I always just had to try things and as a result got hurt. She said that when I was a really kid in Vernal, I was heart broken because I had been stung by a bee. According to her version of the attack, I was heart broken, not simply because I had been stung, rather because I meant no harm and only wanted to pet the bee.

The squirrel episode seems like the same specie. Don't know what's wrong with my nervous system.

### Back Porch & Boulders

There was a back porch which was unheated and uninsulated, located behind the bathroom. It was used as a storage place for some of dad's stuff, an old beat up table along with a few empty crates. The two huge wooden boxes that had been shipped up with our worldly belongings were sitting there as well, half full because the house was too small to hold all of it.

The fascinating thing about these huge heavy wooden boxes was that they were the halves of a shipping crate for a coffin. Before dad left Vernal he prowled around to find something that would be large enough and durable enough to make the trip to Seward with the belongings that he and mom picked out. I remember that he finally found this thing at a funeral parlor on the north side of Main Street, on the street that ran in front of Central Elementary. This funeral parlor was sitting in proximity to a tannery, a place I visited on a school field trip with shocking results.

Dad took this crate over to Payton's shop and sawed it in half. Then he nailed heavy boards over the open ends of these two boxes. He sawed the lid in half as well, so he now had two separate crates to load our gear in. Since there was no intention of using the crates repeatedly to ship things, the lid was not put on hinges. When the time came to close the things for pickup by the shippers, the lid was simply and tightly nailed on. Then in Seward dad used a crowbar to carefully pry the lids off so as not to damage them or the crates just in case he needed to use them to ship things. It turned out that these crates, set on top of each other served as our closets at 307 Second Avenue later, but for now, these crates were stored in this porch.

I suppose it could also be called a back room because it was a "room", but the fact that it was uninsulated and didn't have sheet rock on the walls always made me think of it as a porch. This part of the house was in an odd place as far as I was concerned. It was actually sitting in a sort of alcove that had been dug back into the foot of the mountain to get a wide enough, flattish space to lay the catty-wompus foundation. That makes me think that the surveyors had either miscalculated where the alley itself should be, or the layout of town started up higher, leaving this poor alley to take care of itself. As a result of the alley running so

close to the foot of Little Bear this alcove thing had to be dug so deep that it extended more than half way around the house on both sides. As a result, when I stepped out the door on the south side of this porch, I was running into the angled strip of mountain that extended toward the alley. As soon as I stood on that strip I was on the mountain.

The proximity of the house to the mountain had near fatal results for dad one spring morning. There had been nearly continuous rain for several weeks. We were always wet, trying to keep warm. The sky was concealed in steel-gray clouds and low mist that covered the mountains like a Japanese print. On this particular day, dad had worked the night shift which was from 7:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.. He'd get home from work about the time we were being stirred to get up, get ready, eat and be off to school. He had his own breakfast and crashed into bed, head against the back wall which was nestled into that alcove.

Mom had gone to town to do some shopping and while she was gone,



something astonishing happened that could have killed dad. The constant rains must have been even more than usual because they loosened enormous boulders up above our house. There were rocky cliffs standing out here and there in the pine trees and one of them had a pair of loose boulders that sat still until this morning. The rain washed away enough soil, and loosened the rest. The boulders let go and came charging several hundred yards down the mountain. They took one final bounce and bounded several yards through the air, crashing into the back of the house. 10 feet from dad's head. He didn't hear a thing. Not until mom went into the back porch later that day was the damage discovered.

Dad and Art hiked up the mountain behind the house and were able to trace the trajectory of the boulders. They identified the cliff they fell out of, and could count the foot prints made by each boulder as it careened several hundred yards down to the house. It was a miracle that my dad wasn't taken that morning.

It was naturally his job to take care of this problem and he approached it with his usual thoughtfulness and methodicalness. Nothing that he did was random. He looked things over, thought about his options, picked one and then set about implementing it. It was an elegant solution.

His first step was to smooth and excavate the wall of this dirt alcove behind the house so he had a wall and floor without projections. I didn't understand why he spent the time doing that but I sure as H... wasn't going to ask him. When he was in his creative mood, interruptions were usually greeted with flaring anger that I didn't need. I learned some patience over the years of living with him, anxiously trying to figure out what he was doing - primarily because he wouldn't tell.

The second step involved a large sledgehammer. He swung this mighty thing like John Henry, mighty swings and whacks, making faintly sulphurous sparks and dust, chipping the huge boulders into small pieces. He was careful how he made these chips because the third step, the disposal step, depended on the chips being of a particular shape. He wasn't a man to just angrily muscle the darn things into chunks and haul them away. Nope. He was an artist by nature and unconsciously approached any problem from an esthetic point of view, which in this case also turned out to be an energy saving point of view.

Dad knew how to knapp flint and basically reproduced the results here except with granite boulders and with a 12 pound sledge. Who'd a thunk it. As he chipped the boulders into foot long chips, he laid them into a wall from one end to the other of the alcove, completely lining it as he moved up and the boulders when down. He

didn't have to haul any stone away, a blessing given that the boulders were in a hole behind the house between the foot of the mountain and the back wall.

Then he repaired the back wall of the back room and things returned to normal, except that there was now an elegantly lined alcove. It is probably possible to find that alcove today and people will wonder why in h... anyone would go to so much effort to build a wall of flat granite chips in that place.

### 3. Homefront

A short time after we had settled into Home Brew Alley our family took a walk down the alley and up above the old Cannery. It was a Sunday and since there was no church to attend in the town, we were on our own. Since it was Sunday we were dressed up as if we were going to church. Notice again the fetish of "dress alike." Why. I don't know why. Notice, too, the formality of our clothing. Mom was not content with just a white shirt for our Sunday-best. We always had to



have sport coats and later suits. Absolutely. Without really knowing what was at the bottom of this obsession, I believe it was a by-product of the poverty of her own childhood. She was NOT going to let her kids look like 'just anybody's kids'. They were HER kids. I suppose it is the same phenomenon wherein she personally obsessed about her own appearance, clothing, shoes, make-up, hair. All of you have experienced her elaborate, complete preparation for the day, even out in their motor home. When you saw her for the first time in the day, she was never with a hair out of place. Do you remember? It's all part of the deal. I don't get it.

In this photo, Homebrew Alley would be just behind us to the left -to our right. The white house to my left in the photo is the a house at the entry of Alley B. The beach down there to my left is the one we went to the first night finding white paper clam shells. The large, two-story black-tarpaper house there in the center is on the east side of Third Avenue. The white buildings beyond the tarpaper building were the 'commercial' district of town. The tall building in the background on the right side of mom's head -her left- was the Federal Building where the post office was located. The train station is touching the left edge of the nearest telephone pole. At the bottom of that same telephone pole is an old barge that was permanently beached, with an outhouse to its left. Both were used by the rail gang that lived in the string of railroad cars, a semi-permanent emplacement- that starts at the bottom of that telephone pole and extend almost up the train station. Everything right there, tight and cozy. Seward was a tiny town.

Please turn to the Panorama of Seward that follows somewhere around page 50 plus or minus 10 pages - depends on just how much more stuff I put in. That photo taken up on Big Bear Mountain gives you a bird eye view of this same scene. There you can see that the town is only 9 blocks wide, counting two blocks that are hidden by the mountain at the bottom/left. My whole life was lived in the confines of that little town. If you go to the town today, you will discover that absolutely every one of the things you see in the bottom third of this photo are gone. In their place there is a large flat field with a row of trees growing. Homebrew Alley houses were completely destroyed as well as the alley so there is no trace of anything, just a flat area that runs into the foot of Little Bear, the location that one knows was where the alley was. But there is nothing left today.

To go back to the term "neighborhood" you should note that the term is a mite presumptuous. Only 1,800 people lived in the entire town. There were really no identifiable neighborhoods although there were subtle differences in the ambience of different locations in the town that reflected socio-economic gradations of the society, artificial to be sure, but nonetheless 'real' in town. Homebrew Alley was different in two ways from the other alleys that divided blocks between two avenues. In the first place, there was no First Avenue to the west. First Avenue only came into existence further north at the level of Adams just behind the Episcopal church, and ran in front of the Whitmore family. So homes on the west side of Homebrew alley were perched at the foot of the mountain. In fact, the space for the floor of our house was excavated into Little

Bear Mountain so there was a 2-3 foot space between the back wall and a cliff that was as high as the roof, were nestled against the steep foot of Little Bear Mountain.

In the second place, the alley had a history of illicit substances and off-beat life styles so living there automatically placed a sort of stigma on us. I don't think I was really aware of it from the behavior of kids in school. Fourth graders aren't really astute about those subtle things, but I think I was aware from mom's behavior and attitude that Homebrew Alley wasn't as "nice" a place to live as higher in town. That's why we moved further north in a year and a half after a house either became available or mom and dad had paid some bills so they could afford to pay more rent.

### Vacant Lot

Our house nestled in the niche carved into the foot of Little Bear. It sat right on the alley which ran north-south in front of the wooden steps. There was absolutely no front yard for the house, just the alley there. To the south of the house was the Colonel's house that set across the path that went up on the mountain, and to the north was the 2 story house of the southern gentleman, his wife and their joint baby. There was no yard on either side. Across the dirt alley



there was this vacant lot that looked like someone had started to build something, or there had been something but it had burned down years before. There was the carcass of a long defunct truck that was missing wheels, motor, bumpers and bed, but it was a great place to pretend. So we had no alternative but to play either in the alley itself or over there in the vacant lot. We were satisfied however and did just that. Coming off a scrappy farm this was just fine to me.

Dad took these shots looking to across the lot and to the south. In the lower photo, our house would be directly behind me off the right edge of the photo, and the Snyder's house is on the left behind Dick. The bunker-like structure we're kneeling on didn't look like a foundation of a house and I don't know today what it was. It had a hollow space beneath it, as if it were truly designed to crawl under, like a bomb



shelter but this was in 1951 so the civil defense push to build personal bomb shelters hadn't started. Since it was constructed before the atomic age, it couldn't have been a bomb shelter. I have no idea why it would have been built.

We loved dogs but weren't allowed to have our own yet, although we were given one in a year or so after we had moved up on Second Avenue. We adopted these two pups insofar as possible. Dick is holding King and I'm holding Butch. These dogs were owned by the Snyder boys who lived in the house in the left background.

## Dog Dung Face Cream

Well, it was a trip playing there in the vacant lot with the "half breed" children of the marriage of a white man, Mr. Snyder, and an Eskimo woman with TB of the spine which basically paralyzed her. There were other kids but these were the ones we played with most. One of the boys was named "Woody" but I can't remember the name of the other. There were a number of children, two boys of about our ages so they are the ones we played with. Mr. Snyder was a longshoreman like dad so was gone the same times, and the mother didn't come outside much because of her disability. The kids took care of themselves for the most part during the day.

Note the term "half breed." That is the term that was used in the community to refer to kids/people who were a mixture of races. It was not my opinion of the kids. Indeed, I understood that it was a derogatory way to refer to anyone and had been taught -though I didn't always follow the teaching- that one should not make fun of other people. I certainly did understand, however, that mom and dad had a respect for native Americans so I did, too. It is fair to say that the term 'half breed' was not any more derogatory than the term 'nigger' which was also used at the time. I am not sure that either term was really intended to be derogatory when people used them. They were descriptors that everyone understood, hence were convenient to use, but they were not complimentary either. Just don't think I really liked either term even though I've used the term 'nigger' during your lives. For me when I used it it was as a sort of joke because it sounds so funny but it was not actually being derogatory of blacks.

We often played in the vacant lot on the other side of Second Avenue along the board fence by Alley B in clumps of what the Snyder kids called "poochskie". We didn't know the common name "Cow Parsnip". It was a huge rhubarb-looking plant that grew to 3 or 4 feet in height all in large clumps. The plants were tall enough that us little kids could crawl in amongst the stems and disappear. The clumps made great forts for war play where we were defending ourselves from the enemy. Sometimes the enemy was these Snyder boys who didn't always play by the rules, although I would have been hard-pressed to actually explain what they were. Whatever, we'd get incensed and start fighting and one side of the



other was tear a branch or clump of flowers off the plant and rub it in the face of one of the other kids. The plant had nasty juices that created pain and little water blisters.

These kids were our ages and sizes so we played reasonably well. Our imaginations were comparable and the games we wanted to play were similar, cops and robbers, hide and seek, cowboys and Indians, commercial fishing and so on. For the most part it was benign play and we'd sort of wander off when we got bored, but there were times when play was rough.

We'd start arguing about some stupid rule change or someone's trivial violation of a trivial rule. If we were tired enough, in the right state of mind, these arguments could end up being physical. None of us really understood the rules of the games we played because there were NO rules anyway, so there was always something to argue about if we were inclined.

If we got mad enough, we start pushing and shoving. We were civilized so didn't kick or hit, but there was nothing in the rule book that forbade pushing the other guy. We thought. I'd end up pushing one of the kids who was smaller than I was, which wasn't nice of me, but he wasn't much smaller I thought so kept at it. His brother, Woody, would get involved and he'd push back and call names. The words he used were ones I wasn't allowed to use, some I am not sure I even understood in which case they didn't upset me much. I'd just get mad about them because that was what you supposed to do when someone called you those names, whether or not you actually understood what they meant.

As things escalated, if a parent didn't see us can intervene or one team didn't abdicate the playing field, the outcome was unpleasant. Losing the argument by leaving wasn't an option for either side. We had pride and didn't want to loose a fight or argument so we'd hang in there. When Woody finally got to the point that his name calling wasn't working, and he wasn't able to push me around, he'd resort to scatological activities. Literally.

There were lots of dogs around so there was lots of the stuff that these creatures deposit all over the place. And Woody, bless his wrinkled hide, when he was angry enough, would pick up one of these brown cigars and in an instant would smear it on my face. Man alive. I hated him for that and would erupt in kicking and hitting and screaming. About this time mom would hear the noise, come out, and order us all to neutral corners. I would be so angry I couldn't speak and would have tears in my eyes, and not just from the dog dung.

Mom wouldn't wash my face for me. I had to go into the bathroom and wash

up myself. That didn't seem unfair at the time, nor is it surprising. Mom was a great believer in object lessons and I am sure that she

### Waterfall and Pond

This was a sort of magical place for me, but it had a prosaic beginning. In 1940, the Army Corps of Engineers was given the assignment of diverting Lowell Creek that flowed out between Mt. Marathon and Little Bear



through Little Bear to prevent further damage to the town from the annual floods that occurred every spring as the snow melted and roared down the narrow track. According to this photo, the river was first redirected through the tunnel in Sept. 8, 1940, which would have been a month after dad arrived - which probably explains why he had the photo. Notice how sparse the trees are. Today that slope is completely covered by mature trees. I suspect that the original growth was logged off for logs and firewood and it was growing back when I went there.

Note for future reference, the scary little house sitting on the beach to the left of the torrent, with a tiny tree in front of it. The road you see in the foreground was just like that when I went there, gravel and dirt track that wobbled

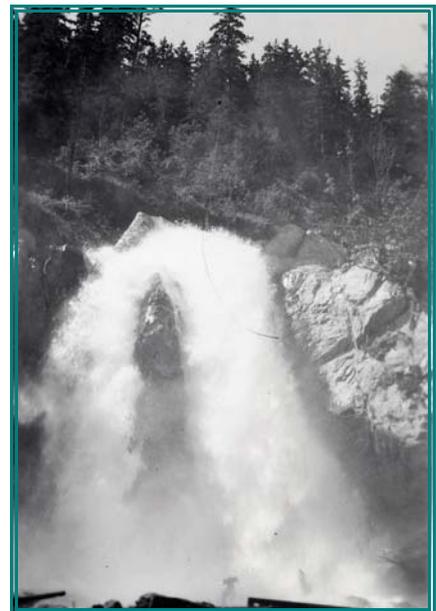
around the beach. The Cannery Dock is just off the left end of this photo. Widen it 2 inches and you'd see it. Go right two inches and you'd see the bottom of Homebrew Alley.

This is how the other end of the tunnel looked where it was bored into Little Bear. Note again the identical suspenders, identical shirts, identical cords, identical sneakers, and identical silly grins. I can't tell if we were happy or were petrified of standing right there where we could fall off.

It is noteworthy that the canyon has been closed off today.

Good idea. Prevent some morons from trying to float through the tunnel and kill themselves at the outlet which looks like the closeup on the next page of how Lowell Creek looked where it flowed through the outlet of the tunnel. It thundered down non-stop, creating a clear-water pool of icy cold water since the water came from melting glaciers, as well as snow melt-off in the spring. The air was filled with a smoky mist that composed of large-enough drops to put a layer of water on you every time you walked past it, regardless of the temperature or sunshine.

When I walked down the alley to the beach I had to turn right or left on Railroad Street or whatever the road was called that ran parallel to the shore around the town. If I turned left, I would be



headed toward the center of town, if I continued straight ahead across the road, I would run into the rail gang's rail cars and beach, and if I turned right, I'd head for the pond at the base of the falls, and to the Cannery further on. We never went beyond the cannery because the road ended right there.

This waterfall was a short distance from the alley, and when you turned the corner, it could be heard thundering and roaring day and night. It was an imposing sight with thunder and a

constant mist that filled the air. As I walked around the edge of the bay on the dirt road, I passed the little house that I pointed out above. It struck me as a sort of scary place, probably inhabited by a hermit at least and a goblin at worst. It set off by itself and I think it was this isolation that created the sense of mystery and fear



associated with it. It also shows in this photo, the little house on the beach I just mentioned, just to the left -your left- of the man on the left of the photo. The falls are behind the other man and the Cannery Dock is just out of sight to the left of the image. The "house" on the beach has several small rooms and I saw smoke from the chimney so knew someone lived there but never saw them. Dad's driving a jitney - not hamming it up for some reason, public audience probably.

The waterfall created a pond which was constantly rippled with small waves created by the torrent falling. It seemed like a place that would hold secrets that were probably undiscoverable to me but I always explored things. One day on my way over to the cannery, I poked around in that pond, marveling at the wall of water cascading out of the hole in Little Bear, getting wet from the heavy mist it created. As I prowled the margin of the pond, I noticed what looked like a heavy fishing line in a place none was expected. This line ran out into the water so I looked around to see if anyone was watching me and then pulled on it. It moved and had something

heavy on the end. In a minute a strong of a dozen or so fish appeared.

Whoever had caught them -probably whoever lived in that scary little house- had apparently put them in this icy cold pond for storage until they were needed. I had seen an occasional man standing in the surf casting for fish but had never seen them catch one. The proof in this pond was undeniable. The fish were fat and discoid rather than tubular, totally different than any I had ever seen. But I didn't dare ask what kind they were lest I reveal that I had been snooping in a place I shouldn't be. To this day I don't know what they were. I imagine that they were caught by the man/men who lived in the peculiar house on the beach across the road. The pond filled with glacier run-off was probably his source of refrigeration.

### Alley B - the Red Light District

**A**s noted above, this is what we saw when we looked out the front door, a vacant field that we played in every day across the alley in front of our house, Second Avenue on the other side of the vacant lot, another vacant lot on the east side of Second Avenue, and the board fence that was erected to separate the Red Light district from the rest of the community. That was a silly thing but somehow it made sense to some people.



The row of houses on the far side of this fence were where the houses where the girls and their madams lived. The fence was an attempt apparently to corral the crime. These houses set along the next alley to the east termed "Alley B." That alley divided the block between Second Avenue and Third Avenue into two halves. The south end of the alley was aimed more or less at the docks and railroad. That was doubtlessly not accidental.

Us kids obviously didn't have a clue what prostitution was so we didn't understand what this alley was really for. In fact, as far as I was concerned, that alley was no different than my own alley. Homebrew Alley and Alley B looked to be the same kind of alleys as far as I was concerned. They were narrower than the avenues and rougher. Except I knew that there was a subtle difference between them that I couldn't have articulated. I sensed it. I knew it because of things I heard, not the words perhaps but the hidden text in the form of feelings and emotions and judgments.

In the last few years as I collected memories from mom about Seward, I referred in passing the Alley B, not really expecting mom to have any response. She surprised me. She told a story that amazed me primarily because she has been so buttoned up and judgment about anything dealing with sexual topics that I can not conceive of her venturing. I had referred to walking past the entrance to that block each time I walked to Warner's Market. She laughed a funny laugh and then said something funny. She said that one day when I had come home from going to the store I gave her the groceries and announced that, "Whenever I walk past that alley, I get all tingly." Mom laughed about it but I had no memory of the experience.

The substantial role in the civic life of Seward of the citizens who lived on Alley B was well documented in . "Regulated Vice: A History of Seward's Red Light District: which was published as part of the Seward Visitor Center Compliance Project, being prepared by Annaliese Jacobs Bateman, National Park Service, Alaska



Support Office, in July 2002.

When us kids went outside to play in these fields we ended up playing by the board fence. When we went to the grocery store for mom, we walked past the north end of Alley B and could see down into it. And when we walked along the south end of the Alley when we played on the beach, we could look up the alley from that end. In each instance, we saw the houses and saw an occasional adult, but we didn't discriminate between females and males. The Alley was a place with a special reputation but we didn't understand the reputation and had no concept of gender.

Ralph Tingey's associate Ted Birkedal interviewed me in the summer of 2003 regarding my experience with Alley B. He had an understanding from another informant that kids made it a point to throw rocks at these houses when they were playing in their area. But I didn't have that experience. If anything, the sense I got about the Alley was that it was a place to be avoided because I might get in trouble if I messed with it.

We did throw rocks many times. Indeed, I have a scar today on my forehead over my left eye from stopping a rock with my head. That's not recommended. Dick and I were down on the beach throwing rocks up at kids who were walking along the walkway on the road. Both teams threw rocks, ducked and ran and repeated the series with any smallish rocks they could find on the ground. Typically, no one was hurt and we all experienced an adrenalin high from the fact that we really could be hurt.

On this particular day we were having a fight with who ever was up there on the top throwing down at us. We had no conception of the advantage of the higher location. We were just lobbing rocks back up at kids who lobbed them down. This one time I had stooped over to pick up a rock and looked up like I always had, at which instant I caught a rock in my forehead. There was an enormous 'bang' inside my head and a jarring accompanied with intense pain. I couldn't understand what had happened, why my head hurt. My head hurt but I couldn't figure out why. I hadn't walked into anything, hadn't cut myself somehow.

It wasn't until I felt and saw blood dripping from my head that I understood that I had been hit with a rock that had punctured my skin and allowed it to bleed as profusely as facial wounds always do bleed. So Dickie and I went home to Home brew Alley, leaving the other kids to disappear lest someone corner them and interrogate them about what they had done. That was the farthest from my mind because I knew I had voluntarily entered into this game and that the result was an injury that I knew might happen. How could anyone else be criticized for hurting

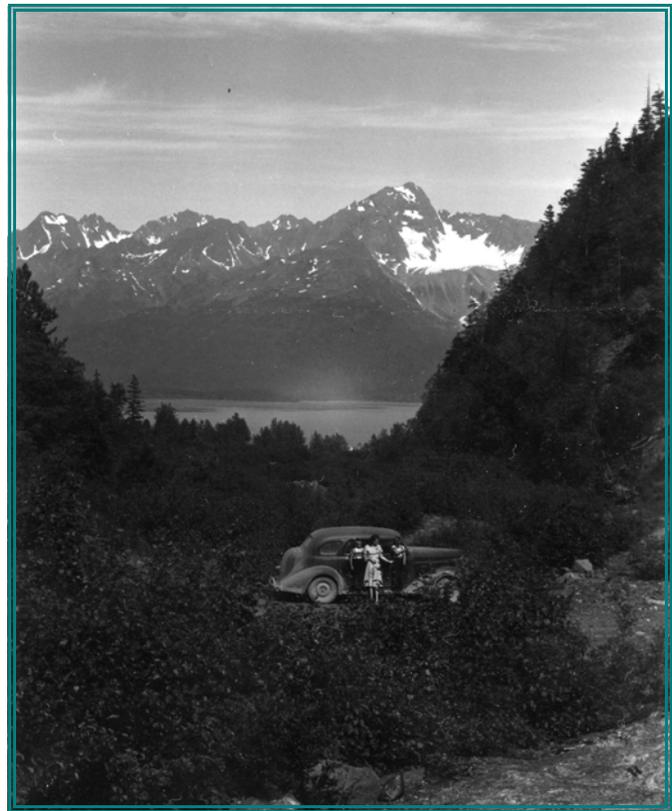
me when I was stupid enough to do what I did?

These are the kinds of rock fights that happened when we went out to play. Not once do I remember that we threw rocks at any structures ever. I don't know if that was because of strictures against it or simply because there were other more interesting things to throw rocks at. The Alaska Transfer had warehouses just past Alley B but there was no way we were going to throw rocks even at that large anonymous building. Because our value system understood that breaking windows or doors that way was destruction of personal property, therefore expensive and subject to punishment. I suppose the latter is the reason I desisted from damaging property: I hated punishment and the best way to avoid it was to not do anything that had such penalties attached.

So none of the kids we played with threw rocks at the Alley B houses, the Snyder kids, Gary and Darlene Mattson and whoever else lived on Homebrew Alley. Swift punishment would be meted out and we had better things to do with our posterior epidermis than subject it to paddles.

## 4-Door Nash

Within the first year on Homebrew Alley, mom and dad scraped together enough money to buy an old car. I don't know its age but remember three things about this old timer. The first is that the back door opened from the front side, not the back like car doors today. It opened from the center post just like the front door did. The second feature was the fact that the wing window on the passenger's side was shattered. Rather than purchase a replacement window, dad used a vile smelling cement to hold the pieces together. It was a synthetic, rubber-like substance that was opaque so it looked sort of weird but that didn't bother us in the least. I was simply aware that it was different than the rest of the windows. The third feature was the fact that the front fender on the passenger's side was bent from having hit something.



The photo on the right of mom, Dick, me and the Nash with Mt. Alice in the background was taken at the diversion dam up in Lowell Canyon where the creek had been diverted into the tunnel through Little Bear Mountain emptying down just below the bottom end of Homebrew Alley. The other photo was taken in front of our second house, 307 Second Avenue. In that photo, you can see the front-opening back door, the crumpled front fender but not the shattered wing window.



Here are excerpts from those two photos enlarged to give you a better view of the car itself. It was a tough old thing. Washing a car? I never heard of such a thing. I guess after we got the 1953 Chevy it sounded like something to do but to us little kids the concept of washing a car was just a degree less stupid than the idea of washing our own bodies!

The bottom photo is taken in front of our house on Second Avenue. Dave Fleming's house is on the right side.

### Irish Lord and Bear River

**I**t was raining hard this day, but we were so excited we couldn't stand to wait another day so when mom said, "Let's go!" we went. We hadn't been in Seward very long and Dad had checked the car out to make sure it was running OK for us to take a trip out of town about 8 miles. We were going fishing. The first time in Alaska. Mom had been out the Bear Lake Saw Mill in 1941 so knew the way. Bear Lake emptied



into Resurrection Bay through a river imaginatively named Bear River.

It was an exciting event. Dick and I argued about who got to sit in the front and finally ended up where mom said we'd sit. We loaded fishing line, hooks, sinkers and salmon eggs into the trunk of the old care. Notice what missing: no poles. No fishing poles. Standard procedure for us in those days was to make out own poles after we arrived at the fishing spot. We'd never fished with salmon eggs before and were amazed at how large they were and at the idea itself. We only used worms to fish in Utah, although older cousins used frogs to fish for catfish on the Greenriver. But if people used salmon eggs there, we'd use them too. I don't think I had even seen fish eggs that size before.

We turned of the main drag at about Mile 6 on the side road that headed out to the sawmill on Bear Lake. We were just looking for a place to park. There was no specific fishing place in mind. The road was narrow and twisty so parking was more difficult that I had expected. I was in agony to get on the river so was impatient with the slow drive and the hunt for a safe place to park. The road wasn't much wider than the car so we had to find a turnoff where the car would be safe.

We finally found a good place in the dense alder trees that formed a canopy over everything, including the river. We got out of the car lifted the trunk lid and took out our fishing gear. Mom was careful to be sure we had everything we needed and then took us down to the river which was not very wide which didn't bother me. Some of the streams we fished in Vernal were irrigation canals so size wasn't an issue.

She had to make fishing poles for us out of alder branches. We couldn't afford actual fishing poles. The delay while she hunted for suitable sticks and prepared them was unbearable. I looked at the running water through the rain, sure that the fish I was meant to catch were getting away. But there was nothing to do but wait. To say anything was to get a verbal reprimand. She wouldn't let one of us start fishing until she finally got both poles ready. Equality and sameness were her ruling words where us kids were concerned. I never understood how much she was being fair and how much she was sort of teasing or even punishing us by making us wait like this. In any event, she finally got three poles prepared with 8 feet or so of line, a hook and sinker and handed one to each of us and took her own.

She led us down to the river and baited our hooks with salmon eggs. We were standing in low shrubs and beneath the alder canopy so we couldn't swing our lines well. Naturally, we snagged them again and again and she had to come and unhook them because we were too little. I was 9 and Dick was 8 and we were too small to

get to the places we snagged the hooks up over our heads in the rainy leaves and sticks.

We finally got our baited hooks in the river and anxiously waited for a bite. Sure enough, we got one and jerked the pole. But the hook was empty and ended up stuck up in a tree again. This continued for some time and I am sure mom was exasperated with the whole thing because she was a dedicated fisherman.

Finally one of us caught a fish that was pulled out onto the rocky bank to be examined. But glory be, it wasn't a trout, it wasn't a sucker, it wasn't a catfish, it was a bizarre thing called and "Irish Lord." The name was a weird as the fish that we had never seen nor heard about. The one thing that was familiar about the thing was the spines. We knew spines from cat fish so understood the risk of painful pokes. But in terms of keeping and eating the thing, it was out of the question. And it kept drizzling, the sky leaden grey.



Mom finally managed to land several small dolly varden trout that we could take home. I wasn't then, nor am I now, an expert in trouts. I can scarcely tell the difference between them but when mom said, 'This was a dolly varden trout.' I believed her. This image from British Columbia shows a small dolly varden that is probably about 6 inches long, the size mom caught.



It was thrilling to see these fish finally after the struggle in the rain and the willows and the need to make our own poles and so on. We loaded them back

into the trunk with the small amount of gear and headed home. The ride back was as bumpy as going out and the rain continued. Over the next five years we lived in rain and clouds and wetness and coldness. But it was just how it was. We didn't think, "Ah, this is depressing." Not at all. It simply was how things were.

When dad got home from the docks we triumphantly showed him the trout

**Figure 45**

<http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/~keeley/dolly.htm>

that "we" had caught, i.e. mom had caught. He was pleased and went about doing his dad thing but we weren't put off because we were used to his inability to spend much time with us. We were grateful for any time and attention he gave us and the short time he looked at the fish and made his comment was sufficient for our needs. At least that's how we saw the universe in those young tender days.

### Babysitting

The neighbors who lived in the house just north of us on Home Brew Alley were from the south. Their accents were pronounced but we understood them fine. They had not been married many years and had a brand new baby. The man worked on the docks like dad, like most men did who weren't in business of some sort. The wife was getting cabin fever sitting at home all day with the baby so the man decided to take her to dinner but he needed to find a baby sitter. So he approached mom about getting me to do that.

I'm not sure of the conversation they had but it must have gone something like this. This was the first paying job of my entire life. The first. So the man probably said something like, "Your son looks old enough to sit in the house with the baby for a couple of hours so I can take my wife to dinner. She'll make sure the baby is fed and changed and asleep and he can just sit in case the baby wakes up.". Reply was that, Yes, he's old enough to do that, how much are you going to pay? Plus, if he has any trouble, he's right next door so can get me if he needs to." The man paid 25 cents an hour, an astronomical figure. I have no idea whether that was the going rate for baby sitting in those days or whether the man was just being generous. Whatever, I was in a state of shock. It was my first "job". When he and his wife came home, they had been gone for 2 hours so I received two quarters, plus something they called a "tip". That's a word that meant "to push something over" and I didn't see how it meant anything here. I felt like I shouldn't take it but they insisted so I took it anyway marveling that they would pay me more than they said and at my good fortune. Sixty whole cents! Man alive, that was 12 candy bars or two movies and 2 candy bars and so on. I certainly made my way to the five and dime as soon as I could to get rid of that money that was burning a hole in my pocket.

### Multileg Starfish

The only star fish I had been introduced to were the standard 5-legged versions. They washed up on the beach at odd times, but particularly after severe winter storms. When there had been one of the bad storms, we couldn't wait to be allowed to go back down to the beach. It's interesting to recall that we had to be allowed to go down after a storm because we generally were allowed to go when we wanted. There must have been some anxiety about us getting hit by large rogue waves that kept us at home.



**Figure 46**[http://www.seanet.com/~fowler/attu/attu\\_91.jpg](http://www.seanet.com/~fowler/attu/attu_91.jpg)

In any event, we were finally allowed to go down on this particular day. We started by the grounded barge by the railroad gang and worked our way slowly toward the City Dock. There was no method to our searching. We just wandered walking over to whatever thing caught our attention next. Most of the stuff we checked out was just junk or garbage but every so often we would run across something that excited us. On this date, down near the waves we ran across an enormous starfish like no other we had ever seen.

This starfish was probably 10-12 inches across and was a dark violetish color. We stopped to look at it. What a thing! We have never seen a starfish with more than 5 legs and here was one that must have had a dozen legs. We weren't sure what it meant, was it actually a star fish or was it some other sort of character that looked like one, except with a lot of legs. In any event, we picked this weird thing up and noted that it felt pebbly and stiff like a starfish.

We walked it home and waited for dad to come home. We excitedly announced that we had a surprise for him. We had put the thing in the bath tub and covered it with water in the hope of keeping it alive. We drug him into the bathroom to show him the miraculous find. He squatted down and examined it slowly. Every time he saw something new, he would pay serious attention to it. His example took and my whole life is devoted to learning. The best way to snare my

attention is to provide me something new and I will be hooked. That's how he was. In the end we didn't save the thing because we had already had experience with trying unsuccessfully to dry them out but we didn't really want to let it go.

## Grape Nuts Flakes

Most of our favorite breakfast cereals were manufactured by Kellogg Company, but there were individual cereals from other companies that we liked. One of them was Grape Nuts Flakes. I don't know where the name "grape nuts" came from but it was suggestive and disappointing at the same time. In any event, Post Cereal Co. manufactured this cereal that we liked about as much as we liked Wheaties. Mom bought the stuff by the carton.

As was the case for all breakfast cereal manufacturers of the era, they each offered extravagant toys. The idea naturally was to persuade kids that they



Figure 47 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/newsad05.jpg>

needed a particular toy so that the little kids would persuade mom that she would prefer to buy the particular brand that just happened to have the desired toy inside of it.

This toy had a set of gimmicks to set it apart from others. For example, the item was actually in the box. No need to mail anything off, no need to spend additional money - great point to hit mom with. And 12 different versions of these

little flip dealies made a set, the manufacturer's hope being that us little kids were plead and whine with mom until she threw her hands up in the air and bought a hundred boxes just to shut us up. The truth is that there was actually some truth to that view of things though the mothers of the world would have denied it.

### Gary & Darlene

About three houses down from our house there was a large two story building that was more than a single family dwelling. The second floor was occupied by two families and it seems like the first floor had a garage or storage area. On the north end of this building lived the Mattson family. The dad took a powder years ago so Mrs. Mattson was the breadwinner, which explains why she could only afford that small apartment. Which also explains why we, too, lived on the Alley.

There were two kids our ages, Darlene who was my age and Gary who was Dick's age. They were European Heinz 57 Varieties like we were and had to take care of themselves during the days. I don't know where the mom worked, just that she was gone much of the time during the day. Darlene and Gary would visit us in our house but for some reason mom didn't care for them and made them -and me- feel uncomfortable. As a result we'd all gravitate out the door to play with Woody, his brother, Butch and King, or go down to the beach.

Darlene was a largish girl, heavier than I was. She always wore a scarf tied under her chin like a Russian, as most girls did. Gary was a unremarkable kid wearing a knit cap and generic clothes. Mom would not allow us to go to the Mattson apartment if the mom wasn't home. I never understood why because I had no interest in getting into trouble, but mom didn't know that. But on at least one occasion, I did go up to the apartment with Gary and Darlene, because Darlene promised to make me a special kind of sandwich I had never heard of. Baloney, jam, jelly, peanut butter, etc. were the kinds I was used to but she had a great idea.

She took two slices of bakery bread -mom was still making her own bread which was heavy and hard- and laid them on the counter. She got a head of lettuce out of the fridge and tore off a big leaf that she laid on one piece of bread. She took the jar of Miracle Whip and spread it heavily on the other piece of bread. So far, not too unusual, but then she applied the coup de grace. She got the sugar bowl down and liberally sprinkled sugar on the lettuce leaf, put the Miracle Whip-coated side on it, and handed it to me. Delicious, absolutely delicious. What a great

sandwich.

#### 4. The Docks

**S**eward had a total of 6 docks that started just south of the town and were spaced around the town, ending with the Small Boat Harbor. A seventh dock, the Barge Dock, was constructed while I lived there:

1. **Cannery Dock, the southernmost of them all -**  
(Out of operation - just a place to fish)
2. **City Dock was closest to Homebrew Alley -**  
(7/24 commercial operations)
3. **Standard Oil Dock was just north of City Dock -**  
(7/24 commercial operations)
4. **Army Dock was just north of the Standard Oil Dock -**  
(7/24 commercial operations)
5. **San Juan Dock was north of Standard Oil -**  
(Limited commercial fishing operations - buy halibut there)
6. **Small Boat Harbor - the northmost on that side of the bay.**  
(7/24 operations for private boats only)
7. **Barge Dock which was across the bay**  
(7/24 commercial operations after it was constructed 1954)

Every single one was destroyed in the tsunami generated by the Easter Day Earthquake in 1964. But while I lived there, the commercial docks - 2, 3, 4 and 7 - along with the Alaska Railroad, were the life blood of Seward. When you consider that the population of this town was around 2,000, and that the town was 128 miles from Anchorage, you begin to wonder why Seward has so many docks. The answer involves the strategic location of Seward in terms on shipping and in terms of the Alaska Railroad.

The only one of these docks that didn't affect my life was San Juan. It was a fish and shrimp packing plant so didn't handle regular shipping like the others did. The Cannery Dock is where I fished and the Small Boat Harbor is where we moored our canoe, and fished. I'll tell you about each in the same order right now to orient you to them because I refer to all of them at various points. Our livelihood and our entertainment centered on the ocean, on these various

The panorama of Seward and the head of the bay which is on the next page will be referred to many times. Please mark it so you can return easily to it. I want

you to fix this image in your mind because it shows you, in a single image, 90 percent of the places I will talk about again and again.

In the center of the panorama you can see Dick and me standing with our arms outstretched on top of a rock pile high up on Big Bear Mountain on a day trip we took with dad while we lived at Homebrew Alley. Behind us you see the entire town of Seward. On the upper left end of town you see two roads entering town and there were few habitations out that way. I should point out that the road for vehicles is the 'new' road, the one that was built after we moved there. This new highway looks like a genuine highway because it is wide and straight. All of the curves had been removed and the right-of-way had been cleared. It wasn't that way in 1951.

Today the area on the left of the panorama that is basically vacant is non-stop houses for about as far as you can see along that road but back then it was wilderness. The heavier gray road, on the right, is the train track, the other lighter one is the road. You can see five of the docks. Starting from the bottom (south) and moving up (north) they are in the same order as listed above: City Dock, Standard Oil, Army Dock, San Juan and Small Boat Harbor. The Cannery Dock is even further to the south outside of this image, and the Barge Dock built to handle munitions during the Korean War hadn't been built across the bay when this photo was taken.

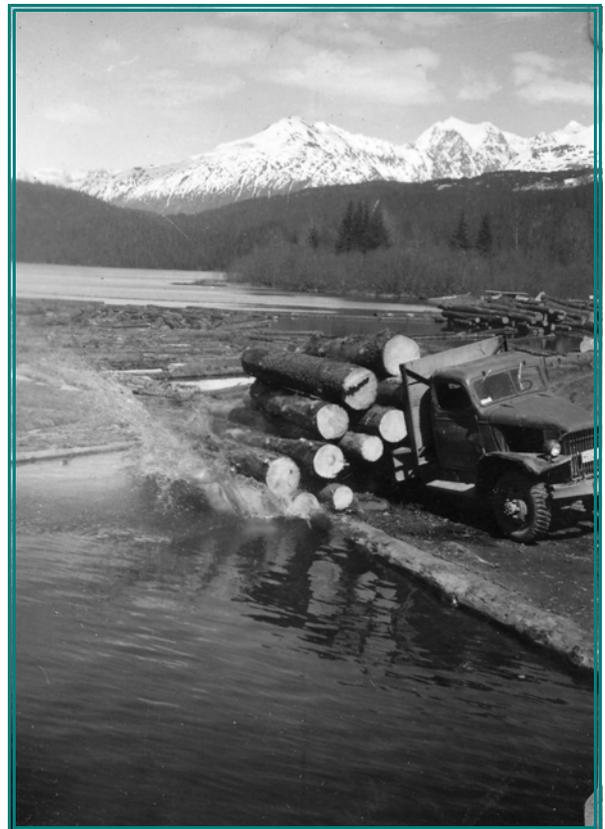
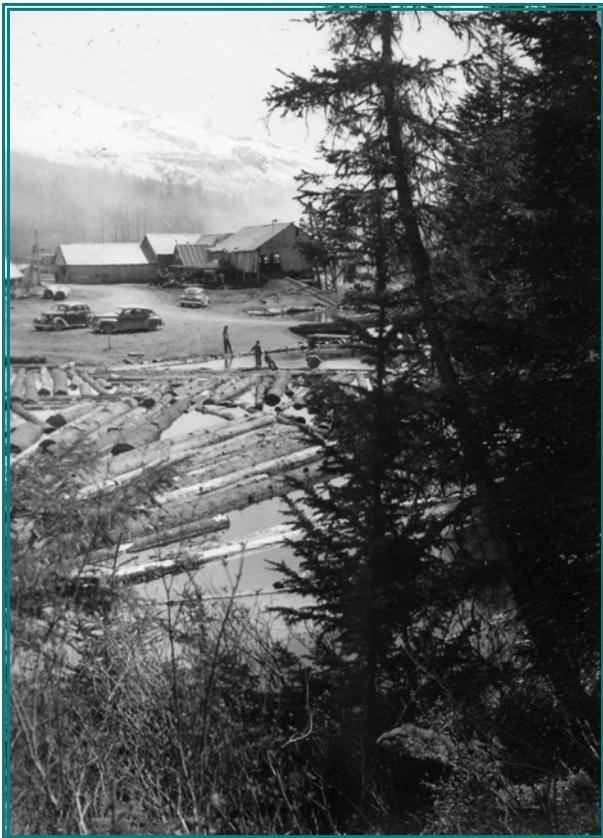


## Bear Lake

I'm going to digress for a moment because at the very top of the panorama -that's how I'll refer to it- you see a small round lake. That is Bear Lake, about 8 miles outside of town along the roads, although it was closer as the crow flies. There was a sawmill on it when mom and dad were there in 1941, with mom there.



It was still there when we lived there in 1951 as you see in the left photo



here. Our old car is the one on the left. This is the same sawmill from a different angle. We're the kids standing out on the logs while mom's standing on the shore watching us. Note the freedom we had to do stupid things. If one of those logs had turned, as they do, two little boys would have taken a cold bath at the least, been badly hurt in the middle, or drowned at the worst. Mom was by us.

That's one of the oddest things about those parents. They were rigid and strict and mean about most values, yet they gave us enormous freedom in the physical world up there in Seward for which I thank them. I developed a sense of self-reliance as a result.

Logging was done all around the area so this small saw mill was supplied with prime trees. Army Surplus trucks were used to haul the logs to the lake where they were dumped for storage and handling.

Going back to the panorama of Seward, you see the mud flats along the top of the photo that were exposed twice a day at low tide. In this photo, the tide is a moderate low, and you can see how much territory was exposed. It's a long way out from the beach and the high tide mark. When the tide was ultra low, the expanse of mud doubled. The interesting thing is that this is precisely the area where we trolled successfully for salmon when the tide was in which means it was something like 6 to 10 feet of water. The salmon congregated at head of the bay in the mouth of the three rivers you see along the head of the bay before some signal told them to "go". While they were in this location, they were susceptible to the right lures which we had.

Now back to the docks. I'll give you a few photos of these places to make them familiar and let you see them as I saw them as a little kid.

## Cannery Dock

It turns out that there actually are no good photos in mom's and dad's collection of the Cannery Dock, the Army Dock or San Juan. I'll use photos that focused on other things that also showed these docks to give you a sense of their location and construction so you'll have a ground-level perspective. These three docks that don't show up in photos as the central topic were obviously of little interest to dad. I know that we seldom went to any of them.

This is a great photo for two reasons: first, it is a shot of the SS Mt. McKinley moored at the City Dock facing north-east. This is the steamship that dad took to Seward from Seattle in 1940. Second, if you look to the left edge of the slide at the edge of the water, you can see about half of the Cannery Dock. It was not far from the City Dock.

The Cannery Dock was just that, a dock with facilities for receiving, preparing, freezing or steaming fish, clams, crabs or shrimp. It saw its heyday in the 1920's and '30's and was basically vacant when mom and dad were there in 1941. There were no operations at all when I was there. The dock was empty and the decks under the buildings were so rotted that mom and dad forbade us from going inside them. So we didn't. But for reasons I don't understand, the decks around the buildings that were exposed to the elements were still sound so we could walk on them to fish, which we did a lot when we lived in Homebrew Alley.

To place things again, note in the above photo that if you run a straight line parallel to the dock, it will run into Little Bear Mountain in the background. That point is about where Homebrew Alley comes out. Our house about 5-6 houses up



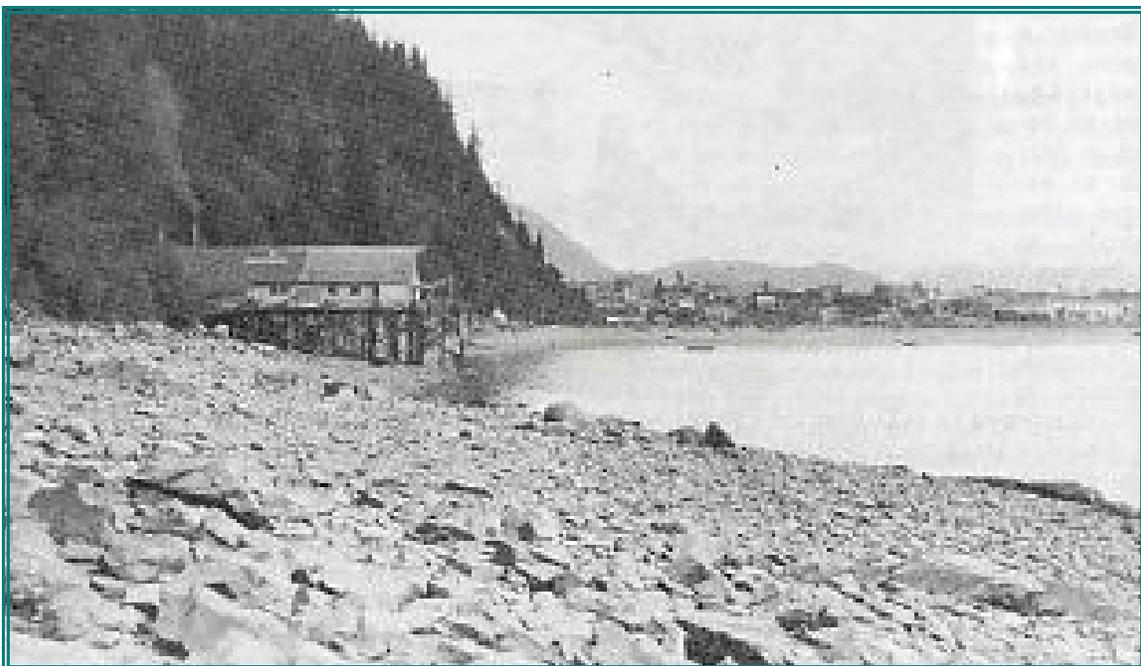
the alley from that junction, sitting on the mountain-side of the alley. You can see that these places are all close to each other. Seward is really a tiny town.

Here's the great shot I used in Vol. 5 looking that was taken on the Cannery Dock, looking back to the City Dock where the previous photo was taken.

The City Dock is obscured by the freighter moored to be unloaded. Dad was trying to get used to being anchored by marriage which mom said was very difficult for him. It was. To the left of dad's head on the edge of the photo is the entrance to Homebrew Alley so you see how close it was to the Cannery.



Mary Barry has another excellent photo to add here to supplement dad's photos:



The image has the graininess created by copying lithographic images but it gives you a better sense of the location of the Cannery Dock than any other I have.

This is the dock where Dick and I fished many times, having variable luck, but we liked to go there to fish. In this image, the tide is way out so the dock is almost out of the water, but when the tide was in, it rose almost to the top of the rocks to the left side of the image. We'd hunt through the rocks on this side of the dock and would find "fool's gold". Dad said it was called iron pyrite but it was close enough to gold to make me happy. We'd pry some crystals out and take them with us.

Looking just to the right side of the dock you see a whitish streak. I don't know the age of Mary's photo but that streak appears to be the waterfall where Lowell Creek emptied out of the tunnel through Little Bear. Right at the bottom of the falls is a black square that is the small, weird house. Looking to the right of the falls, you see Little Bear Mountain angling down. Right where it intersects the flat is where Homebrew Alley was. A long low building is nestled against the slope and to the right of that low building is an opening that is Homebrew Alley. This is how it looked when we played on the dock and looked back toward home. When we came out of the alley and turned to our right, we walked past the water fall, that bizarre little house on a rough dirt road that ended at the cannery dock. and around that part of the bay to get to the cannery dock.

You can also see the west access to the City -not Cannery- Dock on the right edge of this photo. From that access to the Cannery Dock is the stretch of beach where we spent many hours playing and beach-combing.

Just to the right of the mouth of Homebrew but in the water there is a small boat sitting lengthways with the photo. I mention that to give you a landmark to find the barge that had apparently run aground on the beach and was left there. You see it to the right of this small boat, about halfway between that boat and the City Dock access on the right edge of the photo. We played on that barge many times. The railroad gang that was housed in the railcars stored on the spur used that barge for handling crab traps and boiling crabs.

Later I found an excellent image of this part of the beach which dad took in 1941:

The Cannery Dock is on the left edge of the photo, the scary little house which has a smoke stream rising from its chimney is to the left of the light pole in the foreground and the falls are to the right of the same pole. If you could see



Homebrew Alley, it would be about a quarter inch beyond the right edge of this photo. We'd come down the alley in this direction and then turn right to follow this dirt road past the falls and pond, past the scary little house and on around to the Cannery Dock. When we passed the pond at the bottom of the falls we always walked through a shower of heavy mist. It was not a congenial walk, unless the sun was shining. That made anything OK.

## The City Dock

Going back to the panorama of Seward from up on Big Bear, the bottom-most dock is the City Dock. Note in that photo that the dock has two accesses for vehicles and pedestrians. The train access is much sturdier and runs into the top -north- end of the dock. Here's another photo that I include again because it's a good illustration of the City Dock from Big Bear above the Cannery



Dock. The only problem with this shot is that the dock had an extension built onto it later so it extended to the left a fair distance. Otherwise it is an accurate representation of the City Dock.

In this photo you can see the falls on the bottom left, just to the right of the left-most pine tree. You can see how a small pond was created and the flow of water has disrupted the beach at that point.

In this photo, you can see the houses on the left side of Homebrew Alley, then the alley, and then the row of houses on the right side of the alley. on the very left edge, right along the edge of the mountains, is Homebrew Alley. Our house which I can pick out is about the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> house on the left side of the alley, nestled in the foot of the mountain. The first long narrow whitish building you see

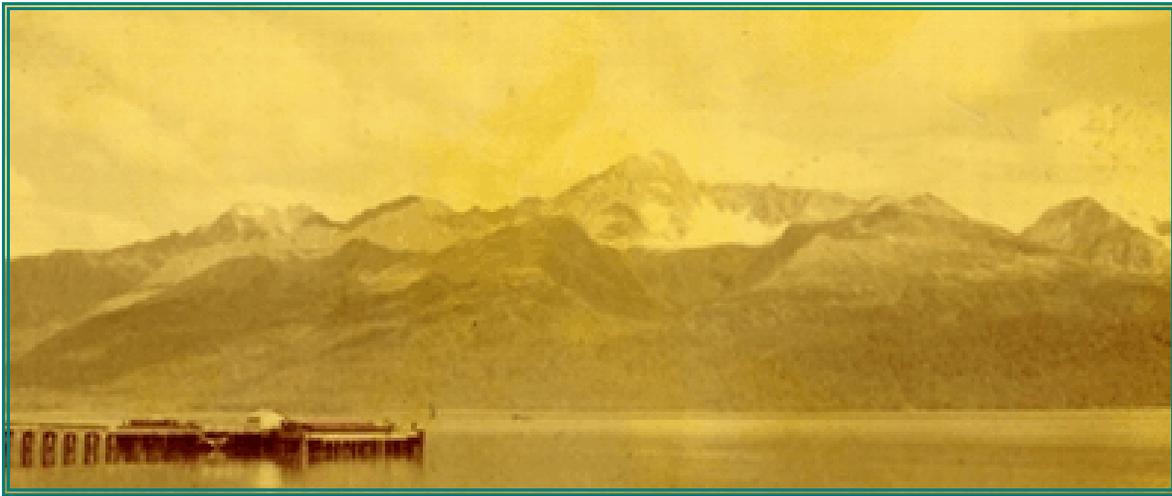
on the right side of the alley was across the street and just above our place. It was on the north side of the vacant lot that we ruled.

### Standard Oil Dock

The Standard Oil Dock, next to the City Dock, was the rail head for petroleum products for the interior, just as the City Dock and Army Dock handled all other goods for the interior. The size of the Standard Oil Dock gives you some sense of the size of the population for the state: not much. That little terminal handled all of the fuels for all populations, including the aviation fuels for the air force bases, the diesel fuels for the army docks and so on. This image gives you a closer view of the dock, a view that's familiar because we beach combed right up to its access, though we were never allowed onto the dock:



That's Mt. Alice in the background, towering over everything. We'd wander up the beach right to the piles but no further. We didn't beach comb anywhere really except for the beach by the City Dock. I don't know why. Probably because there was a rule that forbade us from going further, as in a rule from mom or dad, though I'm not sure why that section of beach was much different than that running along the City Dock. When no tanker was tied up to the dock, it was a pretty unimpressive place:



Mt. Alice just dominates the whole region.

### The Army Dock

Return to the panorama of Seward and you get a view of where the Army Dock set in relationship to the other docks. Here's a photo taken up on Marathon that gives a closer perspective of the configuration of the Army Dock there in the center of the image:



We're standing on the bench on Marathon on our way to the top. You can see Fourth of July creek across the bay in the top right corner. Note that there is nothing north of Fourth of July Creek which means that this photo was taken before the Barge Dock had been constructed over there.

The army dock resembled the City Dock in general, though it was more heavily constructed because it handled war materiel, including tanks and vehicles of various kinds. I never went on the Army Dock because it was off limits in a different way than the City dock. The City Dock was also off limits but it was somehow more friendly feeling. The Army Dock was dark and remote and not a place I would have gone even if I'd been allowed to.

Dad worked the Army Dock when assigned and took a few photos that I'll insert here:

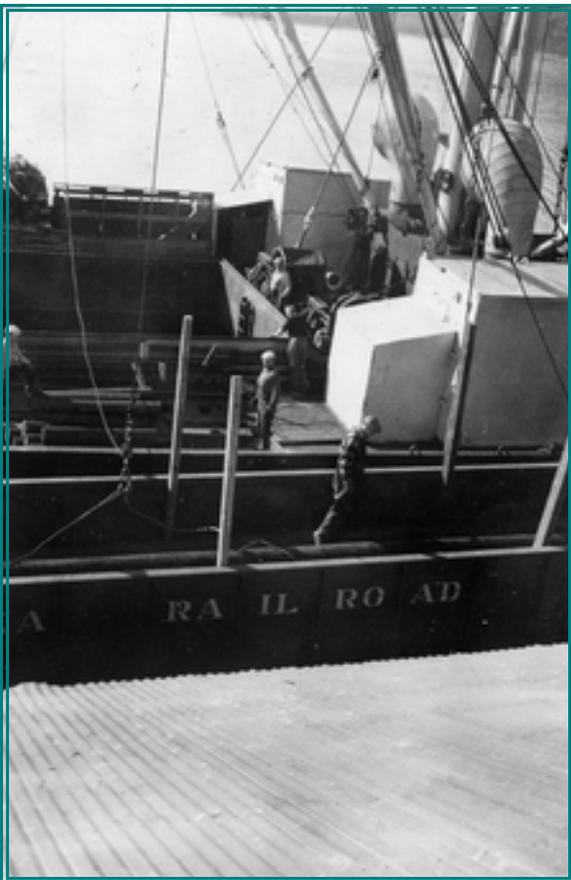


Figure 60 View of ship's hold and shipside crew



Figure 61 Hank Pallage, R. Doyle and O. Gilbert



Figure 63 Unloading Flat car from ship -  
see size of men

I suspect that this was dad's favorite photo of the Army Dock. He captioned it, "Working on the Docks".



The ship in the bay appears to be anchored, something I don't remember. I say it appears to be anchored because there is no bow-wake which would have been created even at low speeds - plus dad wouldn't have been able to set this photo up

as carefully as he did. He's sitting on a 'jitney'.

I don't remember whether or not the Army Dock the entrances were guarded but in my mind they were off limits. In my mind there was an anchor fence affair and gates that controlled access to the docks. That may be more of a mental image, however, spawned by the term "Army." The Korean War -"conflict" is the word that the media and politicians used but to me it was a war- started about 1950-51 which is the same time we moved to Seward. It affected the economy of the town for most of the time I was there.

I feel the need to sort of digress here and preach and teach a little bit. I hope it doesn't bore you because this stuff is helpful, and even necessary for your comprehension of what political forces existed at various times in my life. Those forces shaped the atmosphere of the era, molded the economy in general, and affected daily life to varying degrees and in different ways. I was always aware that there was a war going on and loved military things. Indeed, us boys coveted the insignia of the military. Boys loved to own and wear the ribbons and medals of the military. Since I had so little money, I had none to wear but I coveted them nonetheless. Kids would go down to Andy's Army and Navy Surplus store and pick through the campaign ribbons and buy one now and then and I dearly wanted one of my own. But back to the history:

### Korean War History

**I**n this way, Seward was no different than Vernal: both economies were on war-footings. It's easy to overlook this fact unless it is brought clearly into focus for you. But Seward was practically an extension of the defense department when I lived there. My daily life was colored with military things, the news, dad's work on the docks, the army hats and insignia we admired and coveted, and so on.

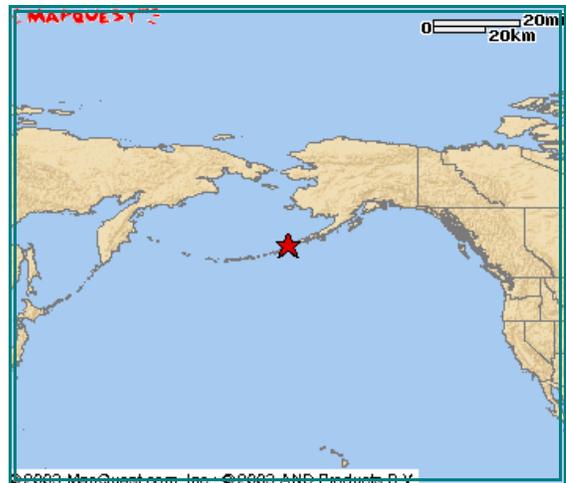
My experience of the world around me in Seward parallels some of my earliest memories, laid out on Volume 7 Vernal, of war and government actions related thereto. The big difference between Vernal and Seward was that the Great Depression was attenuated to such an extent as to not encroach on my awareness. Dad made good money on the docks, as much as \$10.00 an hour depending on the shift and dock.

Seward's entire economy was based on shipping, and shipping was driven to a

substantial degree in those days by the Korean War - I call it a 'war', not a 'conflict' which is what the government technically termed it. I suppose there is a valid diplomatic reason to make that distinction because there was no presidential or congressional "declaration of war", but to a little kid's mind that distinction was silly. We were sending men and materiel there in large quantities, there was some shooting, some dying, and there was a constant threat to Alaska of invasion, so I didn't think of the 'conflict' in any other terms than good ol' bloody, immoral, 'war.'

We need to get a fix on where this "Korea" because it illustrates the strategic importance of Alaska to the Korean war. Here's a schematic map from Mapquest that shows the key elements: Alaska is the large body of land on the upper right. The vertical black line is the border between Alaska and Canada so you see that Alaska is not part of the contiguous "Lower 48".

The Aleutian Chain of Alaska consisting of islands extends in an arc from the bottom part of Alaska to the south east and then east. The red star in the middle of the Aleutian Chain is Dutch Harbor, one of the places that was actually BOMBED by the Japanese during WW II. (Don't give the Japanese too much slack about their role in WW II. They continued to raise hell for us after Pearl Harbor and nearly succeeded in causing trouble on the west coast.)



Today there are hardly any memories of the incursions of Japanese spys trying the harbors in the west coast. But they were there trying. For that reason the Tillamook Oregon blimp hangars were constructed, where reconnaissance balloons were moored, maintained and released along the west coast. That wasn't just a foolish old soldier's favorite illusion. There were also Japanese balloons carrying bombs that appeared in a few place. The Japanese were there and there was reason to watch for them in case they tried another sneak-attack on continental US. In the map above you can see Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, and Nevada in this map- watching for Japanese ships and subs and some were actually sighted but that's another story for another day -but one I probably won't have time to tell.

The Aleutian Chain nearly joins Siberia at the Kamchatka peninsula. There is

a chain of islands extending from that peninsula down to Japan and Korea is barely visible to the west of Japan in this map. So there was basically a stair case of islands leading to the US. It was highly unlikely that Korea itself would have even undertaken direct action against the US but the Cold War had just started in earnest so it wasn't clear who was who or who would help who. Touching Siberia, the Russian Bear, that may well have thrown in with the North Koreans at the time, posed a graver threat than did Korea. The possibility, as remote as it was, that action against Alaska might occur gave politicians spine in this matter and they chose to reinforce Alaska defenses. To give you a sense of what the US and Alaska and the world was thinking in those days here's a page with a photo and a quote from the governmental publication "Prologue", summer of 2002:

*"An artillery officer directs UN troops as they drop white phosphorous on a Communist-held post in February 1951. (NARA, 111-SC-358293)"*

*"Early accounts of the Korean War almost without exception focused on events beginning with the North Korean invasion of South Korea. This was because few people doubted that the Soviet Union had ordered the attack as part of its plan for global conquest. President Harry S. Truman provided support for this assumption just two days after the start of hostilities. On June 27, 1950, he told the American people that North Korea's attack on South Korea showed the world that "communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations*



*and will now use armed invasion and war."*<sup>3</sup> This assessment reflected Truman's firm belief that North Korea was a puppet of the Soviet Union and Kim Il Sung was acting on instructions from Moscow. In his memoirs, Truman equated Joseph Stalin's actions with Adolf Hitler's in the 1930s, arguing that military intervention to defend the Republic of Korea (ROK) was vital because appeasement had not prevented but ensured the outbreak of World War II.<sup>4</sup> Top administration officials, as well as the general public, fully shared these assumptions. This traditional interpretation provided the analytical foundation for early accounts of

*the war, perpetuating the most important myth of the Korean conflict.5"*

[http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer\\_2002\\_korean\\_myths\\_1.html](http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_2002_korean_myths_1.html)

Note the date on the caption for the photo. "1951". What happened in 1951? I moved to Seward is what happened in 1951, thank you very much.

And note that Kim Il Sung is mentioned above. This man is the father of the mad-hatter running Korea today.

This quote gives you a sense of the atmosphere that percolated down to me, a little kid. Kids aren't dumb. As you personally know, they pick up vibrations that adults may even attempt to conceal, but I understood that there was a risk over there in that place called Korea, and that because of the risk, my country was willing to do what it could to help, and was preparing for war if necessary. No kidding. That's exactly how I viewed the situation, and that's how I view it today.

I am not like young people today who are coached by the cynical media and morally bankrupt individuals, the NEA and left-wingers to distrust government and to deride all things with moral values. I believe in government and I believe that it is necessary for the well-being of any society. Ours is sure a sloppy mess, but it's ours and it is the best there is. I've lived in a communistic state (Finland) for 2 and a half years and under a military dictatorship (Brasil) for 2 years so I have some experience with what I'm saying here. We have the longest living democracy in the history of the world and we reap the benefits of that fact every moment of our lives. And it's this way because at key moments, men and women have had the moral courage to take stances in favor of wars which are immoral by nature, but necessary to preserve democracy. Blood is truly the price of freedom and anyone that doesn't believe that hasn't considered the issue objectively.

Anyway, a point I will make now is that the Armistice for World War II was declared in late 1945 about the time dad returned from Pearl harbor so that war was officially over. But wars aren't easily started or turned off. They require slow buildups in industry, training, shipping, storage and so on, like the slow build-up of speed of a large ocean liner that takes 8-10 hours to get up to speed. Similarly, wars don't end quickly. True, the actual shooting can be stopped with a single order, but once the shooting stops, the flow of material and industry winds down as slowly as it built up. The winding-down of WW II in Seward was about over when I moved there in 1951 and was then replaced by the build-up of the Korean War.

Go back to the map above: it shows that the Aleutian Chain was basically a series of stepping stones from Asia to mainland Alaska. That made Alaska

strategically important. The last thing that the US wanted was for part of its territory to be occupied by any foreign power. As a result, all of the military bases in Alaska -and I don't know how many there were but I remember Fort Elmendorf, Fort Richardson, something like Big Delta in the interior and another near Fairbanks, became critical to war plans.

Here's a photo that gives you a dramatic idea of just how much military activity was going on out on the end of the Aleutian chain. 6,000 Japanese were holed up at a place called Kiska. They were so deeply entrenched that the US military had to built

up substantial forces before even daring to take them on. The staging area was at a place called Adak. And Adak is NOT Dutch Harbor. The Japanese were very busy on our territory. This photo shows SOME of the navy ships that were brought in for the invasion of Kiska. You can see that



there was substantial military activity out there. In 1951 the memories were strong of those events which were supplied with men out of Ft. Raymond, there in Seward. Remember: this is in US TERRITORY that was occupied by JAPANESE, not somewhere out there in the Pacific.

The result was that as the various bases were beefed up in the interior of Alaska to support US war plans, including preparing for possible invasion, the traffic through Seward increased proportionately. That was a greater concern to me than the atomic bomb that became so famous later. I was worried that the "Red Horde" or the "yellow horde" might move up the Aleutian Chain and occupy Alaska and Seward. I didn't lose sleep over it, but I was well aware of the strategic importance of Alaska and the risk it was exposed to. So it made a great deal of sense to me to arm the bases to the teeth, just to create a formidable threat. The

best offense is a good defense was as true then as it is today.

Back to the Army Dock - it didn't exist when mom and dad went up in 1941, and it was built for purely military reasons, hence the name. The City Dock was sufficiently large to handle the freighting and shipping needs of the civilians. The Army Dock must have been built during the World War II years when the defense industry basically occupied Seward. Mary Berry reports that at the height of the build-up of Fort Raymond, up to 3,000 additional people were moved into Seward. That is an indication of the volume of activity in Seward and in the interior. Any activity requires "stuff" to work with and all of that stuff passed through Seward.

There were other deep water ports in Alaska to service the military. Everything -everything-was funneled through Seward. Everything. Valdez and Cordova to the east were deep water ports as well, but they didn't have the rail head. The only port that competed with Seward was Whittier. It had the potential to assume the role of Seward so did pose a threat for a variety of reasons, all of them political. If certain politicians had had their way, Seward would have lost its pivotal position in shipping. As it was, however, with the Alaska Railhead in Seward, it retained primacy and serviced the interior. Recall that in those days there was no cross country shipping to Alaska through Canada, because the ALCAN highway was just being build, and there was no commercial airfreight carriers. Everything into Alaska was shipped up, and all shipments went through Seward. So Seward with its tiny population played an enormous role in the life of the territory.

## Barge Dock

I'm going to take this dock out of physical order because it fits perfectly into this discussion of the Korean War.

The Barge Dock is the most tangible proof of the enormous amount of Korean-war related shipping in Seward. In 1951, the Army dock handled all military hardware as noted above. This included munitions. Well, it turned out that the quantities of those explosives grew to such an extent that a concern developed on the part of the local gentry, politicians, officials and any else who was paying attention, that the whole damn town just might be flattened one night when some guy fell asleep on the sling and let a pallet of tender bombs fall into the hold, igniting the whole magazine, the ship, the dock and about half of the town. The concern was so real that someone that I didn't know -I didn't even think about this

part- poneyed up the money, bought a chunk of land on the OPPOSITE side of the bay, extended the Old Nash Road, and built a brand spanking new dock called the Barge Dock for the primary purpose of handling those munitions. That's pretty persuasive, isn't it. The Korean War was real, it affected our lives and livelihood, and had a memorial erected to it - sort of like WW II did.

At the same time that the Barge dock came into existence, the two stevedore unions decided to flex their muscles and get a piece of the action. They went collectively to the powers that be, cleared their collective throats, and allowed as how the families of these poor men who had to drive clear around the bay worried all night about the safety of their husbands, dads and boyfriends, etc. So could the power that be, with all due respect, find it in their hearts to assuage this anxiety by coughing up another buck or so an hour as Hazard Pay whenever the poor stiffs were assigned to work clear over there on that high-risk dock? The logic was iron clad and impenetrable. The unions prevailed, the deal was done, and my dad earned enormous wages when he worked the Barge Dock, particularly when he worked nights and got the night premium as well. Things weren't going too bad.

This is an excellent view of a load of ammo (ammunition) boxes that are being piled on the ship's deck as they are lifted up out of the hold.

It doesn't take any imagination to see what could happen if something caused just one of the small crates to drop and explode in the middle of more.

That's exactly why the powers that be prudently built this Barge Dock across the bay. It was a pain to have to use it, it was expensive and inconvenient,

but the town of Seward wouldn't go up one fine night. Might make a mess over there but better there than here.



Note also how primitive the process is for emptying the hatch. These men are using a manually operated pulley to raise the boxes. The guy in the plaid shirt is holding both limbs of the pulley rope as they hang from the block. He obviously gets the hoist the boxes up. The other two men spell each other grabbing the box which probably weigh on the order of 90-100 pounds if not more and hoist it up - manually- onto the pile that will later be transferred off the ship's deck onto rail cars to haul the stuff north and out of our hair. There are two of these narrow shafts on this side of the barge with ladders secured vertically to give men a way down into the hold.

This is a great view of a portion of the Barge Dock, and a view across the bay



of Seward and Mt. Marathon and Lowell Canyon that locates the dock for you. You see just how far away from Seward this thing was built "just in case" there was an accident with munitions. Dad worked on the construction of this dock and naturally took photos of the project. Seward is barely visible along the right edge of this photo. It was simpler dock than the others because it was built right on the beach so there weren't long accesses like the City Dock had. So dad worked on the Barge Dock.

## San Juan Dock and Halibut

This dock, like the Army Dock, is not memorialized in photos by dad. I don't really know why but I can guess. This dock was not used by transport ships so there was no need for the longshoremen. Dad had little occasion to go to this dock. This dock was apparently built around 1915 as a fish processing plant and that remained its sole function for the duration of its life. The best photo he has of the dock, which actually isn't of the dock at all, is of dad hamming again back in 1940.



According to Mary Barry, the principal fish that was processed at the San Juan dock in the early years was halibut. I've lost the precise URL for this internet image but it's a safe bet it's associated with the town of Seward. This gives a sense of the size of the large halibut some of which reach 450 pounds. For photo ops, people prefer to turn the white side of the fish toward the camera though I don't think it's necessary. The fascinating thing about the fish is that during their juvenile years, one of their eyes - the left eye in these specimens - literally migrates up over the bridge of the "nose" and ends up on the other side of the head by the right eye.



I'm not making this up.

It was an astounding thing to hear and I didn't believe it because when dad was in one of his rare affectionate moods he would tell us big stories. But his statement was supported by the evidence. Both eyes were on one side. When the fish are small, the swim like other fish with their body perpendicular to the bottom, but at some point in their development, the fish begins to swim near the bottom and rotates its body so that it is parallel with the bottom. In this orientation, they lay on the bottom and the dark, mottled side that they turned upmost, since that's where they eyes ended up, provides perfect camouflage.



While we lived there we would go down to the dock when halibut boats came

in to buy a "chicken" halibut. These small halibut probably weigh around 15 pounds, about this size. I learned that they were better flavored than the large halibut. Today I'm not sure that's the case but if my dad said it was so, then it was. They really were delicious. Of course, we never ate the larger ones so didn't have a real basis for comparison! They were gutted and stored on ice in the fishing boats' holds until they were unloaded at the San Juan docks. Anyone could go there while unloading was done and pick out any halibut and pay for it. I don't have a sense of how the price was set, not how fair it was to both sides, but mom would take the thing home and work a miracle.

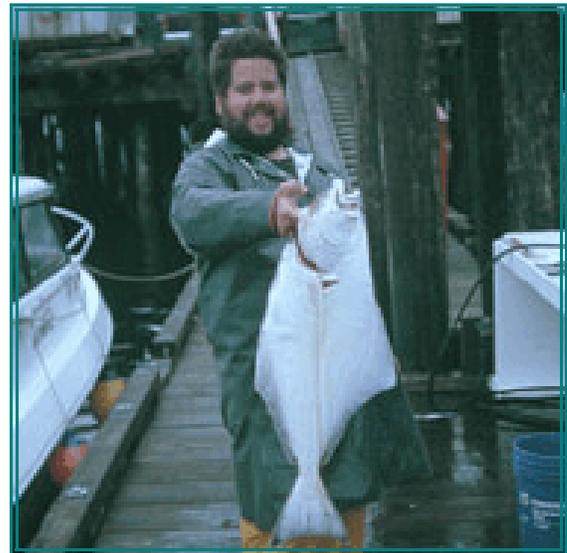


Figure 73

[http://www.salmonuniversity.com/images/vin\\_qs\\_norm\\_halibut\\_190.jpg](http://www.salmonuniversity.com/images/vin_qs_norm_halibut_190.jpg)

While we lived on Second Avenue, dad bought mom a Sunbeam Deep fat fryer for Xmas or her birthday. He always bought her appliances or kitchen wares for holidays when she was to receive gifts. Rarely, he'd get some jewelry but typically, the gift was something like the fryer.

When she got the halibut home, she would fillet it and remove the skin.

Meantime she had made a batter that was unusually light for that era, bordering on the crispness and thinness of Japanese tempura. I don't recall that she chilled it like tempura batter is chilled but it cooked into a crisp tan layer. She would cut the fillets into rectangular strips that were about 4-5 inches long and about an inch thick each way.

She'd dip these strips into her batter and then drop them carefully in the heated shortening which is what she always used in the fryer. Us kids would hang around in the kitchen watching the process, enjoying the smell that rose from the crackling popping strips. The fascinating thing about the cooking process was how she would cook each side equally, but sometimes left a lighter strip between the two sides. That was probably because the strip was too thick, but the pattern fascinated me. She turned the strips to make sure that they were thoroughly cooked. Her batter seemed to seal the flesh into a package that cooked in its own juices.

When she lifted the golden-brown strips out of the fat, she would lay them on a cookie rack over newspaper to drain. They were too hot to eat immediately but one of us would get anxious anyway. He'd grab a piece while mom watched sideways with resignation knowing what was about to happen was going to happen more times. The kid who brazenly disobeyed mom's suggestion to wait a minute, either burned his finger the moment he lifted the hot package or burned his tongue when he bit into it.

Mom made a delicious tartar sauce from scratch. It wasn't until we lived in Boston that I even knew that the stuff could be purchased ready-made from the supermarket and when we tried it, it was tasteless. Her recipe was simple. She started with a cup or so of miracle whip and minced a medium sized yellow onion because they had a sweet, powerful flavor. She'd salt and pepper the mixture and add a small amount of sugar, then let the sauce sit for a few hours to allow the onion flavor to spread through the sauce. This was basically the same sauce that she used on her fantastic potato salad. The difference between the two sauces was that the potato salad sauce had some yellow mustard and minced boiled eggs.

When the fish strips were chilled sufficiently, mom would put them on plates for us. We'd lift one in our fingers, dip the end into the bowl of tartar sauce and bit it off. The flavor of fresh from the ocean halibut well-cooked in a light batter is mild and sweet, scarcely a flavor at all. Mom's recipe produced pieces of fried halibut that were as moist as they could be, basically broiled in their own juice.

## Atmosphere of house

Going back to the little house I want to point out what it felt like to live there. In the first place, I was from a dusty little farm house in Vernal so had that as a frame of reference. However, this house was even smaller and I was aware of that at one level. I didn't think it out loud in my head but I understood it was smaller and it was a source of anxiety. Go back to the floor plan above of the first floor and notice not only how small it is, but how few rooms there were. There was the back porch that was uninsulated, cold and unlighted. There was a small bathroom that we weren't allowed to play in, mom's and dad's bedroom that was filled with their double bed, the small room in front of their bedroom and the kitchen. Basically there were three rooms. One was off limits because it was the bedroom, and another was too small, filled with a chest of drawers, so not a place to play. That left the kitchen as the only place to play when it was cold and wet outside. Since there was a table and chairs and the cook stove, there was little room to play there as well.

Indeed, we found ourselves getting underfoot all the time, particularly if mom was in a foul mood which wasn't every day but we could count on her being out of sorts and not happy to have us in her way when she was trying to cook and or do dishes. So there was a tension in the atmosphere all the time about being in the way, of needing to go somewhere else to play, needing to get away from the irritation that filled the kitchen often. The walls pressed in on us along with the rain and clouds and darkness. It was not a congenial house to live in after all.

Oh, I don't want you to think that I was running away from mom all the time and unhappy, because I wasn't generally unhappy. I was actually a pretty durable little kid who paid attention to things around me and signals in the atmosphere and knew when to vacate a room. But there was this thread of tension that was constantly present that impinged on my consciousness at some level. It was not a really congenial house to be in because it was just too tiny. That is what I think the fundamental issue was, the smallness of the house.

In Vernal we had two larger bedrooms to play in, plus the kitchen was probably larger than the kitchen at Homebrew Alley, there was a nice size covered porch -unheated but playable- to go to as well as the living room and dining rooms that we were allowed to use on occasion. Plus we had a 2 acre yard to explore and run around in, a few cows that caused excitement, the ditches and swamp close by and other items to entertain us, like the granary that we could play in when we

wanted.

Homebrew Alley, while an exciting place to live in because it was in the new town of Seward, was nonetheless a cramped place that held those tensions and anxieties spawned by its size. I also wonder today how much of the tension was related to the quality of mom's and dad's relationship. I don't have any memories of them fighting. Indeed, they always told each other, "We'll talk about that later." when there was a substantial disagreement, so we weren't seeing actual fights between them. But I look back along the string of time and see bits and pieces of dissent in mom and tension in dad in their relationship to each other. Given our pooriness, the distance from mom's family that she had always lived near up to that point, and the harshness of the life we lead, it would be surprising if difficulties didn't develop between them.

The strangeness of living in a rough coast town contributed to the quality of the existence. The men were rough longshoremen, I had never lived close to bars, indeed I don't recall that I had ever been near one. When I think back to my childhood memories of Vernal and Naples, I can't even find a bar. They certainly were there, but my memories of the main street were banks, Penny's, gas stations, Ashton's Hardware, tannery, grocery stores, Safeway, churches and schools. Walking down main street of Seward where practically every other business was a bar with the door open, smoke coming out with noises, was totally new. I was sort of intimidated by that part of town because my fundamentalist upbringing equated alcohol with adultery on the scale of 1 to 10 so I understood that those men were doing nasty things that I shouldn't be near, shouldn't even see.

## 5. Small Boat Harbor

This place was the coolest place in town. I loved going there and went as often as I could - and as often as I could deal with the steep climb back home. The slope of the town going from east-to-west was greater than the slope from north-to-south for some reason. That meant that the ride from 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to the Small Boat Harbor on our bicycles was fun. It was all downhill. It also meant that the ride home was all uphill. Literally. It didn't matter whether we took Adams or any other street down to the harbor, they were all up and down that way.

This is a really poor, fuzzy image but it serves its purpose. Just look at the shapes because they show you what the "Small Boat Harbor" really was. This snippet from "The Panorama", shows the Small Boat Harbor with the mud flats across the top of the image to locate it for you here. You can see three straight "lines" in this image, at different angles to each other.

The top, left-most line is the jetty that was constructed of enormous boulders. Its function was to act as a "breakwater" to reduce the power of storm waves that rushed up the bay. They attenuated the power of the waves, thereby creating a haven, a "harbor", a place in which to hide from the storms, a place to securely moor small boats that couldn't deal with the big waves.

The shorter right-most line is also a rock jetty, and has the same function. It angles up toward the top jetty. The two of these jetties created between them the triangular "Small Boat Harbor" that otherwise would have simply been a spot on the beach. I suspect that the harbor must have also been dredged. I say that because you can see how shallow the flats are at the top of the picture, and I know how the beach ran fairly gently out into the water at other points along the beach along town.



The third shorter straight line in the center which is parallel with the right jetty is the small boat harbor itself. I never wondered about the place then like I do now. Who built it? When was it built? Adults take such a different view of things. But I did wonder back then how in heck anyone could build put that pile of huge boulders in a straight row, without any road, without any way to bring large boats in to handle them. I'd stand on the dock holding my pole while I waited, looking at the rocks, wondering how they were placed there. You can see the jetty at the top 2/3ds of this photo with beach covering the remaining 1/3rd . I'd stand where the photographer stood, looking across that small expanse of water, wondering about those rocks, and admiring the brave men would actually clamber across them out to the end when the salmon were running.



These are the best views we have of the Small Boat Harbor, both of which I've used before but this time I want to point out different things. The thing I want you to look at is the actual dock running along the right side of the photo, a decking made of heavy-duty planks. That is the mooring to which the boats are tied up. There is a white boat sitting on the decking.



The deck is actually a series of equal-sized rafts constructed out of heavy lumber over empty 55 gallon barrels for buoyancy. These rafts which were constructed individually were loosely fastened to each other with steel plates and long nuts and bolts, and were secured in this location by the pilings driven into the bottom of the bay.

The pilings were probably fir tree trunks that had been impregnated by creosote, a petroleum derivative, that repelled sea worms and barnacles and creatures that set up housekeeping on any wood in the sea water. The process is done under pressure to the wood actually absorbs more of the creosote while under pressure than it will hold when decompressed. When decompressed, the logs ooze a thin layer of creosote, like armor to protect the wood. The smell of creosote was one of the omnipresent features of being on any of the docks.

The pilings were placed by a pile driver years before we moved there. Dad's photo shows a pile drive working on the City Dock but was comparable to what had to have been used to get the Small Boat Harbor pilings in place. The way a pile driver works is basically like a large sledge hammer. The piling is raised by a



derrick over the place it is to be driven and then the pile driver is moved up around this log. It is secured in place in the vertical boom you see here. At the top of the boom is a steel weight of several hundred pounds. This weight does all of the work. It is simply lifted up to the top of the boom and allowed to drop by itself down onto the top of the log. As this hammering is repeated, the log is actually driven down in to the ground.

The first pile driver I saw in Seward was steam-operated. It was driving pilings at the City Dock and may be this one. The two dramatic elements of pile driving were (1) the enormous noise made when the weight hit the top of the piling and (2) the blow of steam as the machine lifted the weight to the top of the way so

that it could drop again. It was a slow process, happening more slowly, the deeper the pile is driven. The sound is so loud that it was heard all over town. We all knew when a pile driver was at work.

Look carefully in this photo. On the left edge you can see a section of the upper deck that is 10-15 feet above the dock proper. This upper portion is built on rock and cement. It was a staging area that we all used to organize things before we hauled them down onto the dock, and then to the canoe. Think about the

problem of how to connect the rigid upper deck with the floats that rise and fall with the tides. How are you going to do it so that nothing is broken and so that it takes care of itself? The tide rises and falls at 6+ hour intervals between each movement. Four times a day things reach a limit and reverse themselves.



Even today. <grin> So how do it?

It was disarmingly simple. Just build a long ramp, fasten the top end of it permanently to the upper deck and allow the bottom end to rest on the deck and - here's the only moving part- allow it to move back and forth on top of the deck as the deck moved up and down. Simplest thing in the world. Didn't need any watching, didn't need any power, nothing special, just add wheels to the bottom end of the ramp that set on the dock. That way, when the dock moved up or down, the wheels would roll. That was the key to the whole organization. Allow the wheels to roll and then it didn't matter what the dock did. The wheels would tend the whole affair and keep the ramp in place on the deck. When the rafts rise or fall, the ramp will also rise and fall since there are wheels that allow it to roll along the dock. To protect the wood of the dock as the wheels rolled back and forth in the same place, steel plates were bolted to the top of the dock to create durable tracks for the wheels to roll along.

When the tide as in, as it is in the above photo, the dock was high which

means that the ramp has flattened out, and has extended further onto the dock. When the tide is out, the dock sinks in which case the wheels on the ramp allow it to roll "backwards". This gives the ramp a very steep pitch. Twice a day the tide went out and twice a day it come in, so this unpowered ramp that relied on ingenuity and the tides handled the problem of giving people constant access to their boats.

We would go down to the small boat harbor to fish about anytime we wanted to in the summer. Mom was generous in allowing us that freedom. She always cautioned us to be careful, and told us what time we were to be home, though we didn't have watches. We generally made it back home safely because if we didn't, the privilege would be curtailed the next time we wanted to go.

Note please in those photos that there are no pleasure craft, no shiny boats. There are only working boats owned by commercial fishermen or owned by little families like ours. I say that because I was amazed to see in 2003 that there were NO beat up, used, old boats like them. Times were different then, money was tight, commercialism hadn't reached in to Alaska like it has today. Just compare these old photos to what Dee and I saw in July 2003:



That "pretty" marina was built after the 1964 tsumani destroyed every damn dock.

So now you've been introduced to all of the seven docks that our life was built around in Seward for 5 years.

- (1) The **Cannery Dock** was a place where my brother and I went to fish and explore the rocks.
- (2) The **City Dock** was a place where dad worked to make money for the family.
- (3) The **Standard Oil dock** is where we got fuel oil for our furnaces to stay warm in the cold winters.
- (4) The **Army Dock** is another place dad worked at to make money to support the family.
- (5) The **San Juan Dock** is where we would buy fresh halibut.
- (6) The **Small Boat Harbor** is where we fished, moored our canoe and set out on adventures. And finally,
- (7) the **Barge Dock** across the bay was another place dad worked at, risking his life, to make money for us.

Those are the docks and they all affected us in differing degrees. The livelihood of Sewardites revolved around them along with the railroad but there was little else the provided security and income for us. Now on with the stories.

### Stealin' steel wheelbarrows

**T**he docks and longshoremen spawned lots of stories, some true, some not. We heard them and remembered a few. In one story, a longshoreman was suspected of stealing something for a long time when he left the City Dock. He was apparently familiar to the local law, a bad sign. Two security guards stood at the end of the approach to the dock and it was their job to watch for evidence of pilferage and to take steps to remedy the problem. This particular man was known to cut things a bit too fine sometimes where the line between legal and illegal behaviors was concerned. So when he came off the pier pushing a wheel barrow full of fluffy saw dust, the guards stopped him and searched through the saw dust for any contraband. They didn't find any. The next day the same scene was enacted, for several days in a row. The guards were sure this guy was stealing something but could not catch him doing it because the sawdust was always empty. One day, in

dawned on one of the guards what was going on. He realized that the man wasn't stealing something out in the sawdust in the wheelbarrow. He was stealing the wheelbarrows themselves.

That says a lot about what went on with longshoreman and the stuff they loaded and unloaded. Dad was a "dockside" stevedore so never worked on a ship. He worked strictly on the docks -a dockside stevedore as opposed to a 'shipside" stevedore who worked only onboard ships- as goods were unloaded and had to be moved from the slings used to pull cargo out of the ships' holds onto railroad cars.

The process of securing large things inside of box cars was not complex but it required a certain amount of skill. The "colonel" who lived in the house next to us on Home Brew Alley was a universally detested son of a bitch. Disagreeable and no one liked him. Even the windows of his house were constantly covered with blankets so we could never see into the house. One day Dad and his friend, Art Schaefermeyer, decided to play a trick on the Colonel. He was cutting boards to fit inside of a box car to secure some thing. He carefully measured the board, re-measured the space in the box car that the board was to fit into, re-measured the board, and then to be really sure, went back to the boxcar to re-measure the distance. During that particular time, dad and/or Art went quickly went over to his board, turned it over and used a T-square to make a mark on the board a foot shorter than the length the Colonel had measured. The Colonel didn't see this and because his re-measure in the box car showed the same length he got the first time, he didn't re-measure the board. He simply took his saw and cut the board. A foot too short.

Another time a man on a ship got into a mild discussion with dad about a watch. I think the guy was trying to sell it to dad and dad must have had some derogatory comments to make about it. In the end, the man dared dad to throw this expensive watch over board. So Dad did. Witnesses saw the poor man "dare" dad to do it.

Another time on night shift a couple of guys were bored. So they took a 50 foot hawser, the heavy rope used to secure boats to the docks. Another guy was sleeping in his jitney, a little tractor-like affair used to pull trailers of cargo after the trailers are loaded with cargo from the ships' holds. Whoever did the deed crept up to the jitney while this guy was sleeping, threw one end of the hawser over a tongue on rear of the last trailer and threw the other end of the hawser over the top of one of the pilings that constituted the dock. After the ship side sling man finished loading the trailers, he yelled 'Go". The man woke up, gunned the engine of

his jitney, and took off. When he hit the end of the hawser, the jitney leaped into the air and he had a few things to say about the experience.

Another time a guy found a 200 foot length of high-quality one-inch rope that he decided to steal. Others guys saw what he did. After the first guy walked away from his hiding place, another guy who saw what happened, went over and stole it, and then stored it in his chosen hiding place. Whereupon another guy took it and re-hid it. This happened

several times. Until one guy decided that his hiding place would be in the open. He would just secure one end of the coil of rope around the top of one of the pilings. He tied it securely. He thought. And then tossed the coil out over the dock expecting it to dangle from the secured end. Everyone near heard the splash as the coil of rope went into the ocean. He had not tied it securely. This is what the docks were like.

### Dockside Longshoreman

This is my dad posing on the porch at our 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue house. A longshoreman. Outfitted in his rain gear that was absolutely necessary in the rain. Sitting on a jitney all

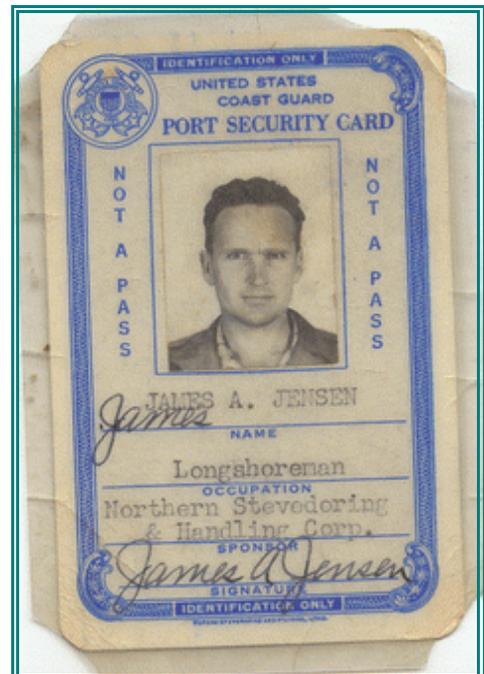


night in a downpour without getting wet was only possible by wearing a bib overall sort of thing on the bottom over knee-high rubber boots, with a raincoat on top and a rain hat. The material was heavy duty because the wear and tear was enormous. He had a repair kit to fix the inevitable tears that resulted from sharp corners. That's Fleming's house behind him.

### Northern Stevedoring & Handling Corp.

There were two unions in those days that contracted with the Alaska Railroad and whoever else they had to contract with in order to hire men to work for them. One union provided men who worked "shipside", i.e. they all worked only on-board ship. They did not work on the docks. The other union provided men who worked "dockside", i.e. they never worked on ships. That was a convenient division of labor, though about the time we were leaving, they merged which also made a great deal of sense apparently.

Dad moved to Seward around Dec. 1950 but the first evidence I can find of his being identified as a longshoreman was this badge that was issued by the US Coast Guard in 1952 that showed that he was hired by the Northern Stevedoring & Handling Corporation. Note that it specifically states that this badge is "Not a Pass." whatever that means.

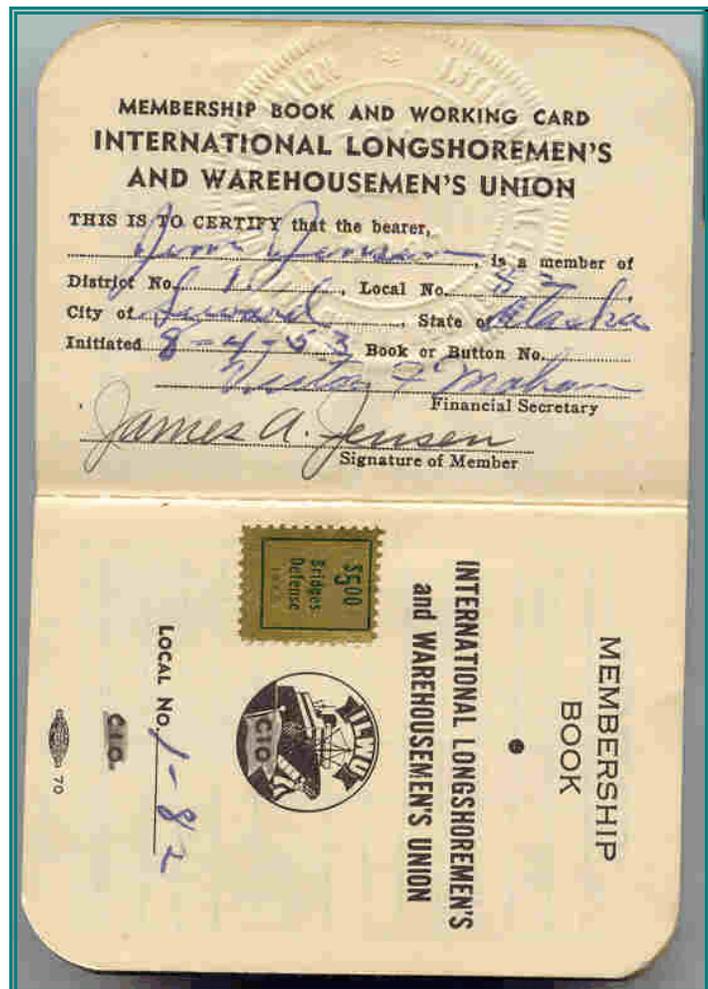
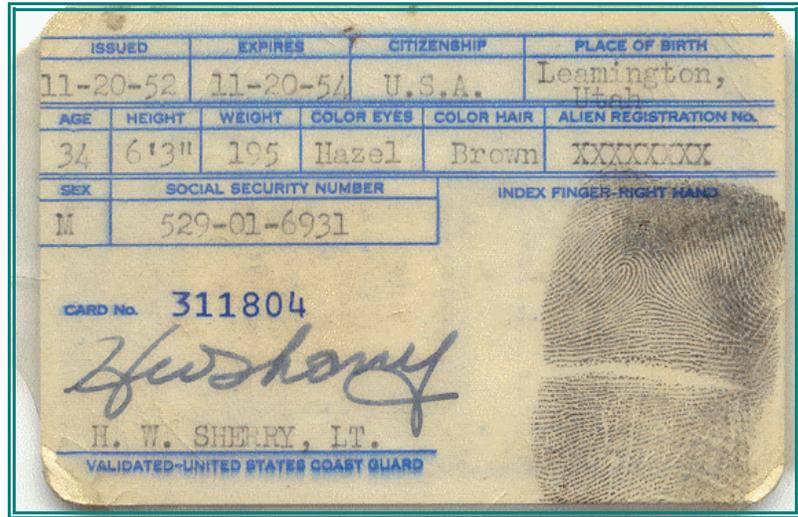


The back side of this badge shows that it was issued "11-20-52". So if he moved there in Dec. 1950, where is his badge that was in effect from that date until the issue date of this card? We'll never know the truth.

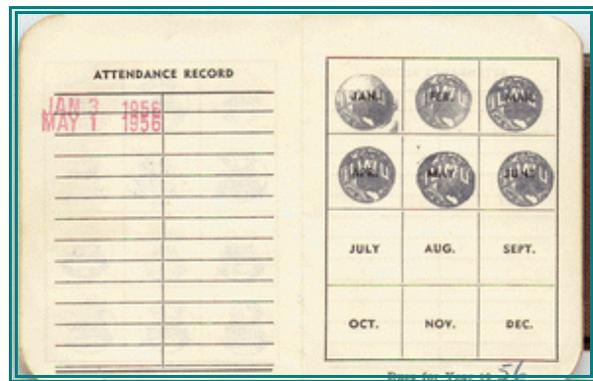
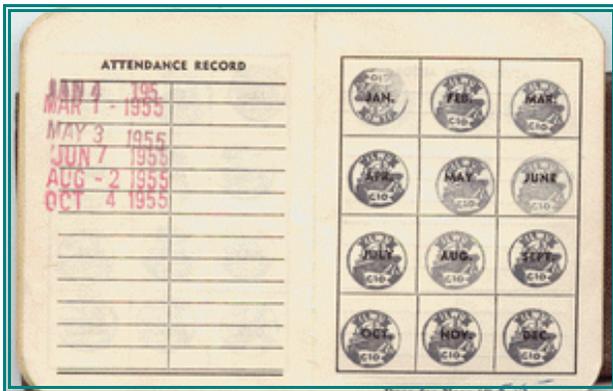
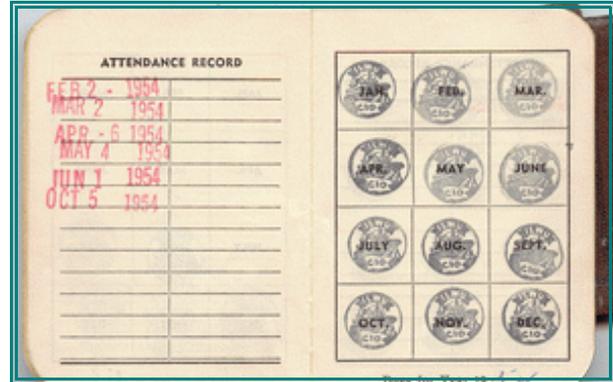
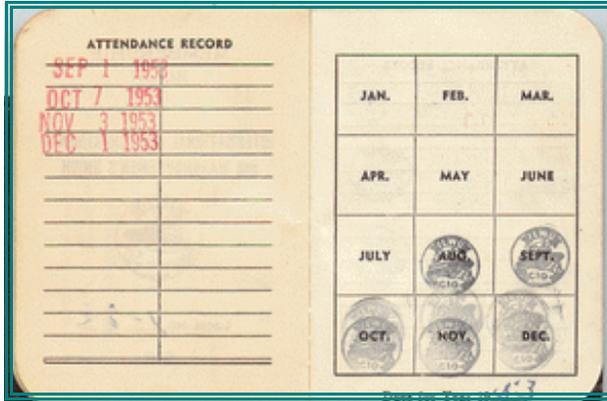
The other puzzle about his employment history involves his membership in the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union.

Note by the way the reference in the name of the union to "warehouses". That doesn't include ships so that explains why this group only worked shipside.

This union book was a big deal for two reasons. First, the secretary rubber-stamped the month each time dad paid his dues. None of this automatic collection by the employer. Each man had to go down and personally pay his dues and got a stamp each time he did. The other thing the book recorded was his attendance at monthly union meetings. From the latter, it's evident that dad only made it about half the time which fits with me sense of him. He belonged to unions out of necessity, not belief. Here are images of the inner pages that show his actual attendance and dues payment. He never missed a dues and never made all of his meetings:



I don't know why he didn't join the union



until September 1953. He had been in Seward working on the docks for a year and a half. Were men allowed to work without joining the union at a lower pay scale than "union scale"? Whatever the truth, dad finally did join the union in Sept. 1953 and did not miss a dues payment until he left Alaska in 1956, 35 months of payments.

## Rolling Stock

**A**s a 'dockside stevedore', dad never worked on the ships. His work, however, was considerably more varied than shipside longshoremen's duties. His duties could be divided into at least these groups:

**1** Handling pallets and nets of goods as they are being lowered from the ship on a ship's boom. This meant directing the "sling" operator where to aim his load and it meant standing there, hand on the pallet as it was lowered, centering it on the trailer, train car or deck after which he'd release the cable and signal the sling operator with a circular motion to "wind it up" so it could be taken back aboard and lowered into the hold for loading again. The handler is the guy on the back side of this pallet coming out of the ship's hold.

**2** Driving jitneys that pulled trailers of goods to the warehouses, train cars or wherever.

**3** Manually moving "stuff" from place to place after it came out of the hold and this stuff ranged from small cases to loads of lumber that required a boom to move them around. Here Pallage, Doyle and Gilbert are wrestling some appliances into the rail car from the wheeled trailer that was driven to this point by the jitney driver.

**4** Once the stuff is inside a train car, it had to be secured into place by lumber nailed to the wooden floor. It was sort of like being a framing carpenter some days. Or course, if there was a car of stuff from Anchorage to be loaded ONTO the ship, the process was reversed.

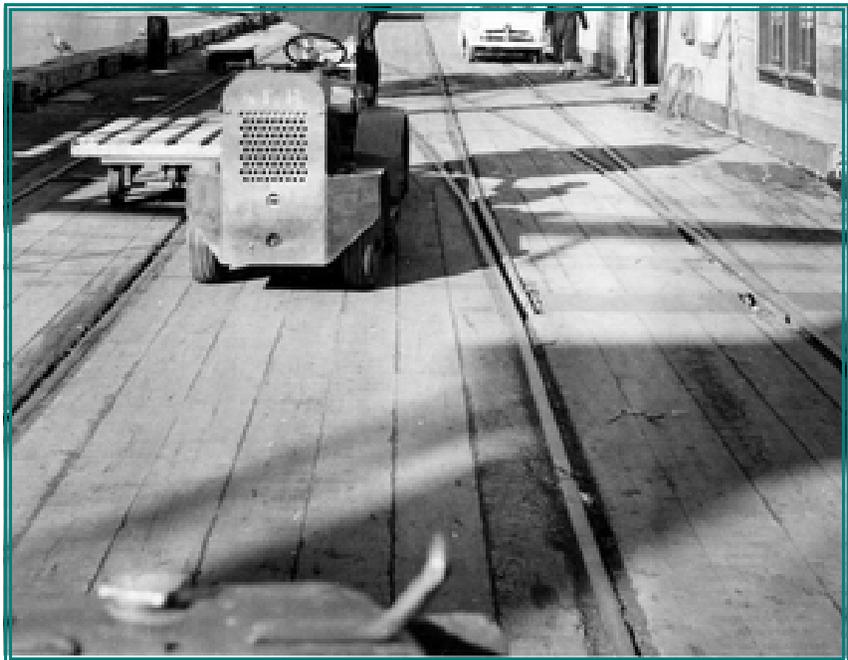


5 Another job dad might be assigned was driving "spotter", heavy vehicles to move train cars when they were to be filled or ready to be emptied. The northern access to the City Dock and the Army Dock were long railroad spurs to get cars out onto the docks to either pick up goods to haul up to the interior or to deliver goods from the interior to be sent stateside. This shot from the south of the City Dock shows how train tracks were laid out to move train cars from the tracks on the ground out onto the dock where they could be emptied or filled. The tracks extended to the end of the dock in the foreground so that ships in any location along the dock could be serviced.



When you think about it, you see that there needed to be two sets of rails running the length of the dock, with "switches" that allowed cars to be moved around each other. This image, also of the City Dock, shows both sets of tracks and one of the "switches" that could be thrown to allow a car to be moved to the other rail.

There were two general designs for these spotters. One was

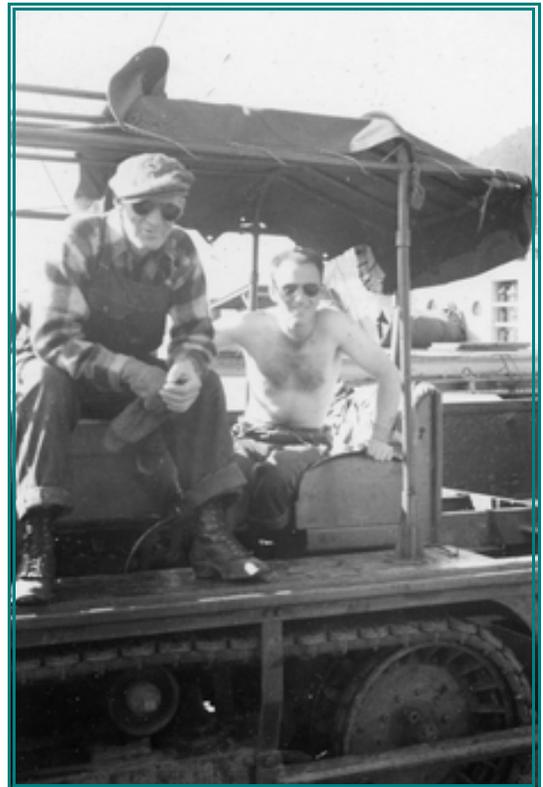


basically a heavy, four-wheeled, rubber-tired tractor while the other was a Caterpillar-looking thing on tracks, built by the Euclid Corporation. They both did the job but since the Euke was heavier and had better traction it would be used to push a group of several loaded cars.

This is the rubber-tired spotter with Mark Walker and Charlie Sheldon waiting for the signal to move. They are connected to a flat car that is partially loaded with telephone poles that had to be shipped in from 'outside' since there were no plants in the territory that did the job. Note the fore deck behind these guys and the way two heavy hawsers cross each other to secure that end of the ship to the enormous cleats built into the docks for that purpose.

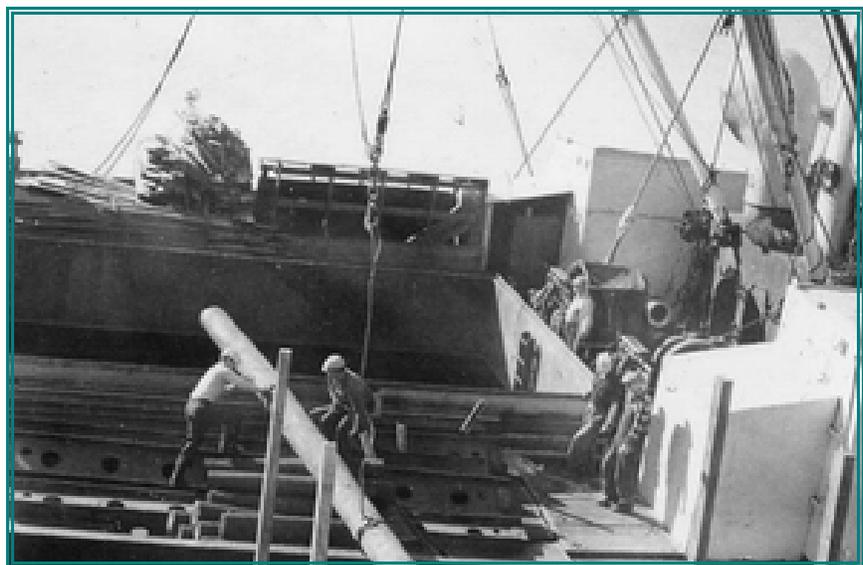


This Dick Hall (Left) with Freddie Richardson driving the "Euke". You see the tracks. Two men were teamed up on a spotter, one to drive and the other to guide him to the right location and to connect or disconnect the spotter from or two the rail car before moving. If the spotter weren't connected to the car, a push might send the car down the rails in which case it could cause injury or death. Freddie lived on the corner across from the Episcopal Church and was a nice man. He was married to "Jerry", a woman who was as nice as she was beautiful. I was too shy of her beauty to talk to her.



You can see that the work varied enormously in the demands it placed on the men. Some jobs like sitting and driving were easy but others were hard and dangerous. Here three men are guiding a sling of finished lumber onto a flat car, pushing it into place as the sling man lowered it. That's hard and dangerous. The sling man on the ship is positioned so that he can generally see where his load is so there isn't a spotter there guiding him, but in cases where the load is being put into a location he can't see well, he'll ask for a spotter - or the man-at-risk will ask. The rail cars obviously have to be positioned securely so their hand brakes are set before work starts.

Note the rough 8 x 8 beams that are standing vertically. Their function is to hold the load in place and they are tied together across the top of the load so that the load won't shift and come off. It's that kind of lumber that was frequently pitched overboard either by shipside or dockside men. They weren't supposed to do that but they did as a matter of convenience - and in the hope that they could retrieve whatever it was they somehow "lost". On the far side of the ship in this shot is lumber piled up from the hold as the load was being taken down for removal.



Now you know where all the crap came from that's lying here on the beach by south access to the City Dock:



The big chunk of something in the water is actually part of the City Dock that was blown off by a heavy storm. That's not what I'm referring to. I'm talking about the pallet and lumber lying about. Dad and us boys would go down and scavenge stuff sometimes when he had a project that called for something that he dint' have, a pretty darn helpful thing to be able to do, both for convenience as well as price. This stuff was called flotsam and jetsam and included drift wood, star fish, and rocks that were handy ammo when we were having a rock fight with kids who prowled along above the beach. Great place to hang out.

### Union Board & Dispatch

Dad had to call the Dispatcher every day that he was scheduled to work to get his assignment. This meant which dock he was going to work on and what work he was assigned to do, i.e. drive jitney, drive spotter, etc.. How he was scheduled for a shift was simple. Down on the west wall just inside the door to the union hall, there was a large board. The board had each member's name in alphabetical order from top to bottom. The names were written on strips that could be pulled out of slots and moved around as new members were added or old ones left.

Next to the left end of the strip with the names there were two columns of holes which meant two holes by each name. Each union member had a peg that he put into one hole or the other, depending on whether or not he wanted to work the next day. If he wanted to work, he put the peg in the left hole. He left it in that

hole as long as he wanted to work, even if that was more than week. The dispatcher would simply walk out to the board to see who was pegged in to work, indicate their names on his work list, and use that as his basis for assigning men to work the next shift.

I don't know how the shift assignments varied, i.e. how men were moved from day shift to night shift or back. But I do know that dad rotated shifts. These shifts were enormously long, covering something like 12 hours. I don't know if they actually worked 10 hours or how it worked, but he'd start work at 7am or 7pm and work through to 6 pm or 6am. I know there was at least an hour lunch so perhaps they had other breaks as well. There must have been. But in any event, there were no three shifts a day like I ran into in the hospital world. So when dad went to work for night shift, he was gone well before we went to bed and he came home about the time we were getting up in the morning. Dispatchers knew which men were scheduled for day and evening shift.

When a man was ready for a break from work, he'd go to the union hall, pull his plug and stick it in the right hole. When the dispatcher came out to see who was working the next shift, he'd pass over that name and go to the next guy. That way it was a simple matter for (1) each member to decide when he did or didn't want to work, and (2) for the dispatcher to tell who was "on". So when dad was getting ready for a vacation or break he said he was "going down to pull his plug." We understood that was a time of joy because that meant he'd be around the place and probably do something fun with us.

Of course getting work depended on there being ships that needed to be loaded or unloaded. Usually this wasn't a problem but I do have some memories of dad and mom being worried a bit when he checked in with the dispatcher and was told that there was no work that shift. It wasn't a frequent worry but I heard in their tone of voice when he hung up the phone and told her there was no work. That was a bad thing for us. Thankfully, it was rare that he didn't have work when he wanted it. I never had the sense that we were deprived for anything in Seward. Oh, I did have the sense that we lived a very controlled, financially tight life, but I didn't feel like I was lacking anything essential - only missing the luxuries and extras that I knew well I really didn't need to survive. Food was not as limited in Seward as it was in Vernal.

## 18' Sea-Going Freight Canoe

I'm going to spend some time on this canoe, first, because I loved it immensely, and second, because it was the thread that seemed to run through our 5 years in Seward from about the time we arrived in 1951 until we sold it a few hours before flying out of Holy Cross on the Yukon River in June 1956. This canoe was built by an artist and was the most beautiful boat in the small boat harbor. I knew it. I am sure its beauty was the selling point for dad.

I don't know today which dad bought first, the old car or the old canoe. For all I remember, he may have had this canoe before we even arrived. It would fit my expectation of him because he could walk to the small boat harbor and get out on the water with the canoe, but he couldn't go to the small boat harbor in his car and drive out on the water. His primary value would have been getting onto the ocean. My bet is that he had the canoe first.

Now I gotta tell you that using the term 'canoe' to refer to this thing is a disservice to you kids. Here's an excellent shot of this 'canoe' - I will always refer to it as a 'canoe'. When you hear the term "canoe" you all have an image of a narrow, double-ended boat that can't take an outboard motor, a thing that's tippy and unstable as the water itself. Right? Well, that ain't what this 'canoe' was like at all. I don't even know why the term was applied to it except that it must have been because of its basic construction which was that of a canoe. But



it's actual shape, design and function were totally different from your standard, boring, dangerous, run-of-the mill canoe.

This machine was designed to haul freight in the ocean. That was its primary function and it probably excelled. Imagine that. Hauling half a ton or more of gear out somewhere, like clear out to Rockwell Kent on Fox Island. This boat could do it and do it safely and well no doubt. It was shapely and sleek, unlike any other in the bay. I loved it dearly for its beauty and the service it gave us. When boats were referred to as "she", I could see this canoe as human. She was delicate but when handled by a skilled pilot, she was the match of anything else.

Note that the hull is constructed entirely of lath -thin strips of cedar in this instance because cedar is water-resistant- that was bent and laid on in three layers, totally different from the boats moored by it. A few other boards were added but that was the basic hull. The advantage of lath construction is that the shape can be skillfully adjusted and that produces a thing of beauty.

In this view of the canoe upside down, you can tell by the shadows how complex its shape was:

The 'beam' -the widest segment in the middle-swells to about 4.5 feet across. That's where the bulk of the freight load would be placed. Toward the stern -left- you can see that the hull pinches in tightly, just as



it does forward of the beam where dad's standing. None of those features was possible with a boat constructed entirely of planks. I suppose that if a boat builder truly wanted to reproduce this complex shape in solid lumber he could, but the cost and effort would be tremendous. This shape must have been created with an armature and access to lots of boiling water or live steam, lots of clamps, and

patience, skill and affection on the part of the creator.

The yellow strip in that photo is the cowl. No real canoe has anything like this, nor do the other boats moored by it in the small boat harbor picture. Its function has to do with spray from waves when the canoe was loaded and sitting deeply in the water. The cowling blocks the spray that comes up off waves as they strike the bow, and keeps it off the load. We'd kneel behind the cowl when running waves and peek just over the top, feeling secure inside the well it created, getting spray in our face but staying dry otherwise. The cowl worked well and you can see in the above photo that the other boats made of lumber didn't have this lovely looking device to protect the riders from the spray.

In this red photo, you can make out the main keel. It runs from the bow behind dad clear to the stern. The keel is molded seamlessly into the prow by the builder who loved this creation. Note also the lovely canted transom which probably wasn't necessary but was beautiful. The main keel was perhaps 4 inches high and 3 inches wide. Its function was to stabilize the canoe in any water. You can see how these keels work. As any boat runs diagonally over waves, there is a tendency for the boat to actually slip sideways, as if it were simply sitting on a ramp thanks to the effect of gravity. The main keel minimized that slippage tremendously by cutting into the water, preventing slippage from occurring as easily.

But in addition to the main keel that served a freighter well, the skillful builder/designer added two other keels to increase the stability and steering of the canoe. There were two "bilge keels" centered over the beam. You see them here. They were about 8 feet in length and ran parallel to the main keel about 16 inches to each side.

This meant that when the loaded canoe was traversing waves

diagonally, there were three keels cutting in to prevent the slippage that otherwise would have occurred. In a sense, the three keels provided the kind of stability that



a catamaran has and for the same reason, multiple edges cutting the water in parallel swaths. Old timers in Nenana told us with deadly earnestness before we embarked to head for shore any time we saw a tug coming, otherwise we'd capsize. That was true for their long, flat bottomed boats, but in this canoe we could run circles in the huge wake if we wished.

In the preceding photo of Dick and I standing by the canoe you can get a sense of its size. It was not a small boat. It was 18 feet long, was 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet in the beam and I don't know how "high" it was, but it was not a tiny boat. Its trim shape belied its size which you can see here. We were 14 and 13 years old and were dwarfed by it. (Something must have gone wrong this day - we are wearing different shirts.)

I have no idea who built this lovely thing, nor when it was built, but it was old when we got it as you can tell from the photo above of mom standing in it. Beat up and dirty like all of them. Yuppie-ness hadn't struck yet so people were real and when they fished and gutted fish in the boat, the results were visible. And not particularly offensive unless you ended up sitting in it. But in spite of its age and heavy use, it was sound. There was never a need for major repairs to this canoe that served us well for 5 years. The only major thing done to it was to replace the skin in preparation for taking it down the Nenana, Tanana and Yukon rivers in 1956. The advent of fancy shiny boats was in the future. Practicality was the word.

To return to the lath construction: the inner most layer is the one we walked on, the next layer was the middle layer that ran longitudinally parallel with the keel, and the outer layer repeated the inner layer. That is simple canoe construction - lath bent to a shape that is then covered with something. In this case the covering was heavy canvas layers. As I recall the time we tore the canvas off in about April 1956, there were 3 three layers of canvas tightly and carefully nailed to the outer lath layer. The outer layer was painted with a dark green, salt-resistant paint to make it impermeable to water. It was as water-tight as a boats on either side of it made entirely out of wood. True, we always had to bail it out when we entered it but that was from the constant rain fall. The painted canvas skin did not leak.

Since the canoe was more curved than the flat-bottomed boats, it did share one feature of function with a true canoe. If a load was not distributed evenly across the main keel, the boat tended to lean to that side when it was running. It was not unstable like a canoe but it would lean a bit, making steerage a bit more difficult than otherwise, causing the boat to veer ever so slightly in the direction of the tilt so the pilot had to keep making course corrections. Consequently, us kids

were used to orders from dad to "trim the canoe." He'd tell one of us as we set on the main cross seat to move to the left or right to trim it. Similarly, whenever one of us was walking from the front to the back, the movement of our weights laterally from the keel would affect the trim, so dad would tell someone to lean a particular way to maintain trim during the time the person was moving around. It was not an alarming thing at all, just an aspect of this canoe that would not be part of the usage of a "normally" constructed boat.

### Elgin 7.5 HP Outboard Motor

**A**s I remember it, dad bought the boat before he could afford a motor which meant he didn't go far because rowing it was tough for one man to go far. I expect he saved money and paid cash. In the first place, in those days there were no such things as "credit cards". No kidding. They didn't exist. Either you paid, cash, got a loan from the bank, used "lay-away" or worked out some deal with the store owner to pay on time. Loans for old boats and outboards weren't likely, "lay-away" was used for clothing and appliances, merchants had no incentive to let you pay over time because it was their capitol that was tied up, so cash was the way we went. It wasn't just a matter of having good principles you see. It as the reality.

So when he had saved up enough money, he ordered a 7.5 horse Elgin outboard motor through the Sears catalog. We participated vicariously in the selection process by sitting quietly, listening to dad chat to mom about the benefits of various motors as he perused the beat-up Sears catalog that we used to "read". We didn't have anything to contribute to the conversation because we were 8 and 9, but that didn't mean we didn't care. We did and we wanted our dad to get the best, the biggest motor he could.

After he and mom had saved enough money to pay for the motor and shipping, dad placed his order and enclosed a money order. See, checks weren't used a great deal either. Oh, they were around and everyone knew how to use them, but cash was really the basis for everyday purchases. One of the major motivations to use cash instead of cash was the fact that it cost money to use and since money had been really tight for 20 years, no one felt like "wasting" 10 cents for the privilege of using a paper check when cash worked just as good and didn't cost anything extra.

We waited anxiously like we did whenever we knew something had been

ordered to be shipped up by freighter. That was the only way stuff got to Alaska and virtually all of it came through Seward. The Coastline Shipping Company is the only one I remember. The steamers had two funnels that were painted a light blue color which distinguished them from other lines. One day it finally came and dad brought it home in its crate.

It was a small motor even in those days. Johnson and Evinrude were making 24 horse motors but they were too expensive for us. I observed them quietly when someone was running around the harbor or bay, making enormous waves and impressing the heck out of me. But it was what we had so that was fine. It's lying here on a pile of gear that was collected for another trip on the bay. The gas can would be filled up each time, and was outfitted with a mechanism to allow him to fill the gas tank on the motor through the narrow rubber tube that is draped around the top of the can. The clamps that secured the motor to the transom of the canoe are resting on the gas can, while the handle that was used to steer the motor is folded upward just above the clamps. It was a single cylinder motor that made a fair amount of blue smoke each time dad fired it up until it got hot and he was able to adjust the carburetor.



Dad took excellent care of it from the beginning. The remarkable thing he did routinely was to run it in fresh water after EVERY use. I vaguely understood the concept of rust and corrosion and that if the salt water was allowed to remain inside the motor, the aluminum would corrode and ruin it. He had a rusty 55 gallon barrel that sat in the back yard to the left to the gas can in this photo. It would fill with rain water that he would supplement with buckets of water from the sink if necessary. He had outfitted the barrel with a wooden plank so he could sit the motor down into the water and clamp it on the block. He'd fire up the motor just

like he did out the back of the canoe and he'd allow it to run several minutes to wash out the salt and minerals from the sea water. Then he'd pull it out of the barrel and store it securely, protecting it from the weather. The funny thing is that I can't remember today precisely where he stored it in either house.

The screw -propellor- was a fancy new design that was built with a clutch. Screws were secured to the power shaft by steel pins that held them in place so that they turned when the power shaft turned, but if a screw hit a submerged rock, the blow would either break a piece off the screw or "shear" that pin. To remedy this problem, the Elgin people had built a clutch that would engage the screw securely with the power shaft which also was able to let go if the screw suddenly stopped, i.e. hit something hard. It turned out that the clutch did not work as advertized and it nearly cost our entire family our lives, a story that dad has written that I will scan and insert later down the line about where it happened.

So this canoe was purchased in 1951 and was the only boat we used until we left in 1956. Dad salvaged a fishing boat one year and got into a huge legal battle about it, but he never repaired it and put it back in the water. He worked on it and finally sold it to some one. Otherwise, we had no other boats. We used this canoe to fish and to travel around on the bay on excursions or clam digging.

## Salmon Fishing

Fishing was a big deal in Vernal. It was a much bigger deal in Seward because the fish were much bigger. Because the salmon were much bigger. I'm sitting here by a bunch of fish, one of which weighed more than the entire catch from an afternoon's fishing in Vernal. Man alive. Look at the size of me compared to them. Imagine, if you will, standing by a fish that is half as long as you. Pretty amazing isn't it.



I look to be about 7 in this photo. I know I have to be at least 9 because this is taken in Homebrew Alley but to my eyes today, I look to be about 7. Odd how time changes one's perspective about things like one's own age in prior eras. Dad had decided early that day that he was ready to go troll for salmon so he came home earlier than usual. He roused all of us out of bed and got us excited about trolling in the bay for silver salmon. Those were his favorite salmon, both because they were large and because they were the best fighters of them all.

Notice the detail in the middle of the fish. There were cats, as well as stray dogs, in Seward and this mess of fish was unbearable.

Note also the kind of reel we used. This reel was made for heavy work because it was old-fashioned. It didn't have a mechanism to prevent back lash and it was a direct-drive affair so all the power of the twist came from the hand, not from an inner gear mechanism



that gave a mechanical advantage. Landing a fighting fish with this kind of reel was much harder than with the newer reels that we got several years later.

You can get a sense of the time of day this photo was taken by looking at the shadows. The sun is shining almost directly on my face from the east which is only possible very early in the day. It looks to be 7-8 am even by Seward standards. Then when you think about how long it takes to catch and land a dozen salmon you get an idea of how early we were out. Dad sometimes came home early from work when he worked night shift when the salmon were running. If the weather was clear and the bay was calm, it was too much for him to stand there on the docks and see huge silvers jumping simultaneously in the bay - while he helplessly watched. In this stimulated frame of mind, he'd either get off early or would come home on a dead run. Our house was close. The distance from the City Dock was a mere 300 hundred yards so he could cover that distance quickly - especially when he was in a sweat to get out there fishing.

We had the old Nash to haul us over to the small boat harbor where the canoe was moored. He'd holler up to us lazy kids to get out of bed and get dressed and come on down because we were going to go catch some salmon. His excitement was infectious and we'd tumble out of bed up in the attic, grabbing the clothes we wore the day before - remember, none of this 'change your clothes everyday' routine for us- and sort of roll down stairs to joint the hubbub he was creating. That was how it was with him.

He'd be on fire with an urgency to do some thing and that urgency which was almost painful to him which was communicated like an infection to those of us who stood around him. Come on! Come on! Let's get going! Get the gaff, get the net! Get the life jackets! Get the spoons and treble hooks. Get out to the car! Hurry. The tide will change if we don't hurry! Come on! Come on. We gotta hurry. All the time running about, grabbing things, examining them intently to see they were right, checking to see if he and mom had their licenses, wanting desperately to be out there on the bay in the instant where all those silvers were jumping. Hurry! He'd get sharp at us if we dawdled so we never did when fishing was the stake. Primarily because we were as excited to get out there as he was. We'd be out at the car, in the car, sitting anxiously, waiting to be off in a cloud of smoke and dust up the alley and over to the small boat harbor where our canoe was moored.

When we got to the small boat harbor the same intensity and urgency was felt and I think it was compounded of two things: one was his having observed the salmon jumping for hours and the second was the reality that the tide would indeed

change and create mud flats out there where the salmon schooled. If we had been going out in to the Alaska sound to fish, the tide would not have created any urgency but we fished right there in our front yard so to speak, where the tide moved swiftly, so we had to do that same.

In this image that you've already seen, note the mud flats at the head of the bay, and the rivers that are draining into the bay. The tide is out which is why the



mud flats are visible. I am making several points with this photo. First, the flats are exactly where we trolled for salmon! Second, that gives you an idea of how shallow the water was when we were trolling. Third, the small boat harbor is the top-most dock. The long narrow line sticking straight out into the bay is the jetty created of huge boulders and the small boat dock is the small line facing the jetty. Fourth, our canoe was moored in the small boat harbor, so we were immediately in trolling area as soon as we cleared the harbor created by a shorter jetty on the other side by the San Juan Dock. Fifth, Home brew Alley is just behind the mountain and the bottom edge of the photo so you can how short the distance was

from the harbor to our house.

We'd park the car as close as we could to the ramp that went down to the dock. Doors were opened and gear was pulled out on the ground for us kids to haul like little coolies down to the boat. We didn't care. We loved it. Get us out there fishing! Get us on the water! Get us out in god's beauty with Mr. Alice standing tall above us, sun shining fiercely on us. Dad would have to carry the Elgin motor because it was too heavy for mom to carry. The nice thing about the tide and the small boat harbor and these fishing trips is that these trips only took place at a high tide and when the tide was high, so was the dock which meant that the ramp was much flatter than otherwise. That meant he didn't have to carry it along such a steep slope.

We'd get the stuff down to a spot on the dock close to where our canoe was moored anxiously waiting for dad to make it down with the motor. After he was down, he had to get the canoe up to the dock because we didn't always get to tie up right on the dock. I suppose dad chose to not tie up right at the dock to avoid the hassle of having other boats tied outside his. This is just speculation because as I actually try to think today about why he moored where did, I don't know why did but there were usually several reasons for anything he did.



In this shot he's gone out on someone else's boat to use a long pole to pull the canoe into the dock, or to another boat that we'll use as a bridge to get to the canoe. You can see the breakwater there in the background and the head of the bay beyond that.

Then there were a few solemn minutes when he had to board the canoe, gingerly lift the heavy motor off the dock and into the canoe and then carry it the length of the canoe to the transom. Then he had to carefully lift it over the edge of the transom, over the water, while he carefully fitted the clamps over the transom. Unexpected motion could shake him up and make him drop the motor which would have been a disaster. No one said anything during those tense expectant moments.

When the motor was secured to the transom, we were told to get the stuff on board, hurry now! So we did, handing things up to mom who stood inside the cowl to take the life jackets, poles, gaff, rain gear and whatever else was taken along. Food was not part of these salmon fishing trips because they were so short.

While dad was firing up the outboard motor, we put on our life jackets and tried to stow the gear so that it was distributed equally, side to side. This was essential to keep the canoe level. We could personally see that problem so were glad to do a little thing to remedy it. Finally we were all set with the outboard engine idling, at which point dad would put the screw in reverse to back us out of our moorage away from the boats next to us. The motor sputtered and made blue smoke bubbles in the water as dad slowly and watchfully pulled us out. Once we were safely outside the other boats dad would throttle back, shift to forward gear and then sit back, looking intently in front of the boat as he increased the throttle slowly and turned it gently to head out to open water.

On this morning, we were highly successful. This mess of salmon numbered 12, probably three for each of us. That's an enormous number of salmon to catch

so quickly and so close to home, right there in the tide flats at the head of the bay. There are several kinds but I don't think any of them are silvers because they



are too small.

## Mom's First Silver Salmon Derby

We went fishing many times but I don't have any idea, really, how often. These fishing trips were highlights of the year, partially because the fish were so large and fought so hard, partly because we were out on the scary ocean in the boat, and probably more because all of us were together doing one thing. That is what made the time so special I think.

On another trip, mom did most of the fishing. Dad liked to troll while she fished because she got such a kick out of catching these huge fish. Everyone who was on the bay, and I mean everyone, knew when Marie Jensen had hooked a salmon. For reasons I don't understand, she was more successful than anyone we encountered. As a result, those other boats for some reason tended to follow dad's course "just in case". It didn't matter where he went, however. She would catch salmon and others wouldn't.

This time she caught seven fish, all large enough to be silvers. It may be that in the preceding photos some of the fish were pinks which are smaller but in this mess they are all silvers.

Note that the weather was wet this day. We fished anytime dad wanted to regardless of the weather. Those are Alley B houses behind her.

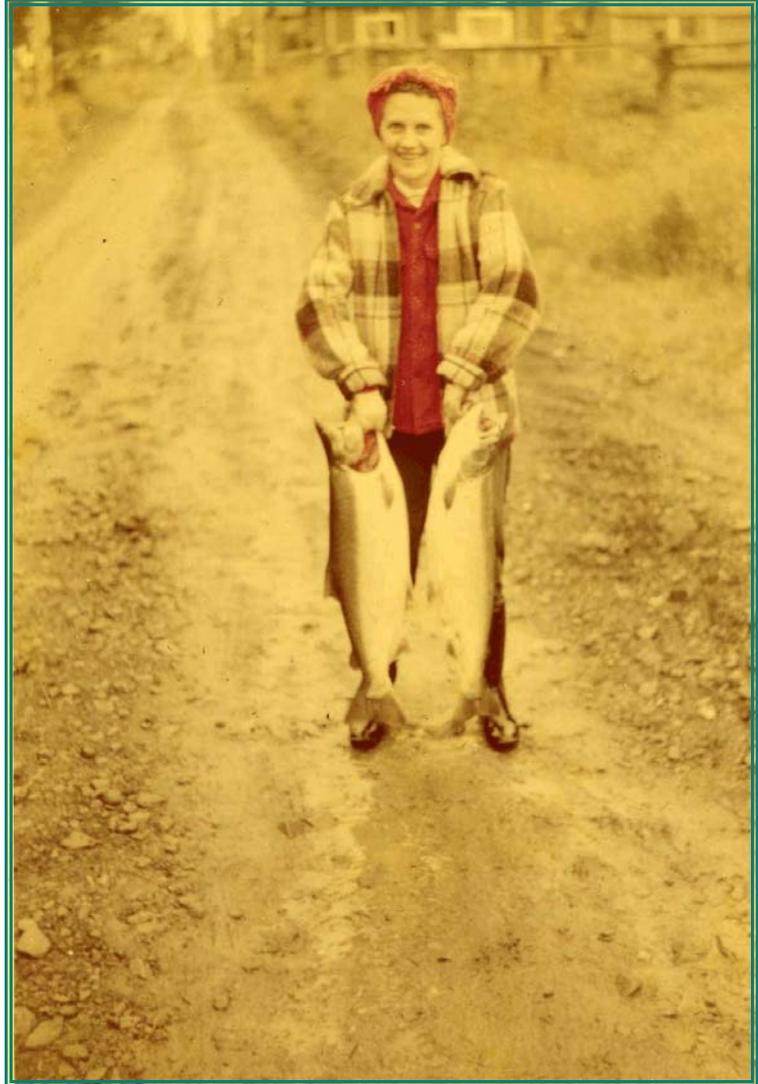


### Next Marie Salmon Derby

This time the weather was obviously rainy and it must have been a bit cold because she's wearing a wool jacket that I believe is still at 2821 N. She loved it. Her catch this time was only two but they are silvers as you can tell by their size. Enormous fish and they are the funnest to catch because when they are hooked, they jump clear out of the water and seem to dance on the surface with their tail before they fall back. Compare these to the 2003 salmon.

The most memorable catch mom ever made had to do with her technique and noise. The head of the bay always had perhaps a dozen boats slowly trolling in large circles, each boat crossing where others had just been so we were all fairly close but not so close as to snag each others lines that were let out several hundred feet. We were all paying attention to who was having any luck and were aware of each other's techniques, commenting quietly to our boat mates about a particularly good or bad technique.

On this particular occasion, mom whooped when she hooked a big silver, standard response and everyone started paying attention to her because she was pure entertainment. Things were about normal for a while with her yelling and hollering as she fought the game fish that was as intent on getting away as she was



in landing it.

Typically, the fish would run away from the point where the line was fastened but this particular fish had a different philosophy. He made a run straight at the boat at which point dad became panicked because he was afraid the line would get snarled in the screw so he was madly shutting down the motor and trying to hoist it up on its blocks to get the screw out of the water. He succeeded and the fish passed clear under the boat. Now mom was standing with her pole over one side of the boat while the fish was running under the boat in the other direction.

She lost her perspective at this point and did the only thing that seemed natural because she had never had a fish do that sort of thing so had no standard response. Instead of letting out line to keep from breaking it and playing with him to tire him, maybe working him around the boat slowly, she laid the bamboo pile down on the gunwale and used it as a fulcrum try pry the fish back to her side of the boat. Dad was yelling at her to not do that because she was going to break the pole and so on. She didn't hear a thing. She just leaned on the pole that bent into a "U". Dad only settled down after the fish made a run back in the other direction and she finally landed it. Everyone of the bay was laughing and pointing at mom, all 100 pounds of her, yelling and screaming as she fought the fish, trying to pry it back under the boat.

### The Railroad Gang

When I went down Homebrew Alley to go to the beach, I crossed the road that went right to the Cannery Dock or left to the center of town. Straight ahead was the railroad spur in this photo that was outfitted with a more or less permanent set of cars. There were for example, sleepers, a kitchen/dining car, an office car, storage cars, a blacksmith car and I don't know what else. The installation was basically permanent so was outfitted with storage sheds along side for their



supplies, equipment and materials. This string of cars starts from the bottom and curving up to the access to the City Dock.

Near the bottom on the left you see the curved ends of two Quonset huts that were used for storage. They were left over from WW II days and had been moved from the area over near the Army dock. Two more of them are visible near the top of the photo, not far from the Seward Train Depot just to the left of the top of the telephone pole.

On the right side is the hulk of an old barge that had been grounded many years before probably after dad and mom left in 1941 because dad's photos of that era don't show it. The barge was left where it was grounded and finally was appropriated by this gang as their personal dock. They constructed a small lean-to sort of shed on it to store their fishing gear. A privy sits next to the barge, used to supplement the primitive toilets on some of the train cars.

To supplement their diet, this creative group bought a boat and started to set crab pots out in the bay. The ones they used were enormous, rectangular heavy duty ones that held dozens of Dungeness crabs. They'd leave them out for a week or so and when they brought them back they had hundreds of crabs. They pulled them out of the pots and prepared them on the barge. They set up wash tubs filled with seawater over some kind of flames. They'd throw their catch into the boiling water and turn them orange. We'd be handed one to take home if we were there while they were doing the job.

There is a tree in the bottom center of the photo that blocks the Kitchen/Dining car. We'd go there to hang out occasionally, hoping that the cook had something good to offer us. We were actually pretty hesitant about accepting food because we knew that mom frowned on accepting things from strangers but what difference would one little cookie make. The cook, and his wife who lived there with him, was always busy, working hard in his humid car and kitchen. There were tables for the gang to sit at but we never went there when they were actually having a meal. It was a bit overpowering to think of being near a bunch of people we didn't know so we restricted our visits to familiars. Just how certain of the crew became familiar is something I don't remember but over time as we wandered down to play on the beach, we got to know some of the men and struck up friendships. The most interesting thing I learned in the cook car was how to dry table ware quickly. They had a commercial dishwasher device to process large quantities of china and flatware, but the flatware needed to be dried. Their technique that impressed the heck out of me for its efficiency, was to throw all of the wet

flatware in to a clean four sack and to sort of throw the stuff around inside which did effectively dry it. When I told mom I wanted to dry stuff at home that way, she put her foot down so I never got do to that. But it looked so neat and saved so much time.

### Bailey the Blacksmith

One of the guys who became a good friend was the blacksmith. I'd stop by his shop to watch what was going on and he was always a friendly sort of guy who'd chat with us kids like we were worth the time. Probably had small brothers of his own and missed them, up there alone.

I don't think it's just an accident that of all the men who worked on this line, the blacksmith was the one I liked the best. His work was what my own dad did. In this fuzzy snippet you see a shed with the door open. (That's a good sized fishing boat sitting behind the shed, prow facing left, pilot house painted white. These guys were going to repair it and fish in it.) That was his personal storage place for things that wouldn't fit in the adjacent box car where his forge was, where his tools were located. He only worked inside the box car but had to make trips back and forth for stock. He'd talk to us as he worked, asking questions, telling a bit about himself.



Mom and dad became familiar with Bailey through us, perhaps more out of concern than interest. I don't know. But they all became such good friends that Bailey came to our place for dinner several times. In the end, he gave dad a large "Hunting Encyclopedia" as a gift, with an inscription to him. The book was thick and expensive so it was a measure of his appreciate of the kindness of my family taking him in. For us, he was a friend and a source of entertainment.

The other memorable character on the gang was the superintendent or whatever the boss was called. He was a cut above the others. Most of them were common laborers who were paid a wage to bend their backs, but this man was different. He set in an office at a desk in the office car and dressed like he had

important work to do and wore a fedora. He was tolerant of us and came to enjoy having us around.

The important contribution he made to my personal life was to introduce me to the postmistress whose name was something like "Miss Peacock." She was a classy dresser, with this neat hat and gloves, and intimidated the socks off me when he introduced us one evening when she was at his office and I happened by. Remember - I was 9 years old off a farm. During the conversation it came out - probably as the result of his planning it- that she was also a stamp collector. She had some Australian stamps that she'd like to give me if I was interested. Man alive, I nearly wet my pants! I would love to have them so at some future point she gave me some stamps that are still in my collection.

So that man impressed me as a business man, and added something to my upbringing by introducing me to his important business partner who shared some of her personal wealth with me. I loved going down to the rail gang.

## 6. LDS & Oddfellows Hall

One day mom or dad saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a meeting that they decided they wanted to attend. It was for LDS people interested in starting up a branch and was to be held at the Carroll family residence. On the appointed Sunday we went to this place and met a number of other LDS who we didn't know lived in Seward. The net result as far as I was concerned was that a branch was organized and dad was appointed the priest in charge of the operation which has certain serious and not entirely pleasant consequences for me

As a little kid I obviously had no comprehension of who was doing what or how this all came to pass but I learned the truth this summer. Wilford Woodruff was one of the men we met and he later married my Aunt Ruth. I found this out because my cousin Bonnie, daughter of my Aunt Ruth telephoned me this summer the only time in my life I have heard from her. She said that Ruth and Wilford were celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary the summer of 2003 so the kids were putting together a book to celebrate the occasion. She asked me to send something to include and gave me the address. I wrote something up but then became uncertain about its suitability so I didn't send it in time. However, I decided, what the heck, and mailed it later. That way it got to Ruth but didn't go in to the book where it might not have really fit.

### Wilford's Letter

In response, I received a letter from Wilford with two photos. He explained what he was going in Seward and how this meeting at the Carroll's took place. Here's his letter, followed by one of the photos. Now you have it from the horse's mouth how that meeting was called which lead to so many parts of my Seward life.

"Aug. 9, 2003

Dear Jim,

Your memories to Ruth were most interesting. Let me add a little to your mystery. As you know I am one of those mystery fellows. Another was Darrel MacArthur (sp) from Idaho. He ran the marathon up Marathon mountain on the 4th of July. I will have to think about who the other one was. He will be in my journal. We were all returned missionaries and came from different places and didn't know each other till we got to mile 17 working for the Bureau of Public Roads-known as the BPR. We were there working on building the road between Anchorage and Seward. We were just plumb bobs-holding the plum bob while others used the instrument. The big earth moving was done by big companies-like Morris / Knudson and others.

There were camps all along the hundred and twenty-one miles doing the work. Ours was the first one out of Seward. We were able on occasions to get a government Chevy Carry All and go into town. We liked Seward. There was a store in town that had and sold music records and would play them loudly so they could be heard on the street. It also had a milk bar where we bought ice cream etc. It was kind of a hang out for the town's youth.

As you know, your dad was a longshoreman. He encouraged us-me anyway, to come in Friday nights and sign up at the union hall. In a little while our names would be called and we would get a night's work. It was easy work. Mostly we just walked along side of the flat cars that received the cargo from the boats, and unloaded them in the big warehouse.

We would always go to your place and visit when we were in town. I too remember the sloping floor. You were right close to the red light district. Not that it made any difference to us, mind you. Your mom and dad were so great to us. I have often thought how fortunate for us it was that your family, and the others were there.

In the boat picture I am the one on the right side sitting down. In the picture with all of you, I took it. Let me tell you a little more .

I met a very beautiful girl in Salt Lake one night on a triple date. She was with another guy. This was a year after I got home from my mission to Australia in 1949. I was infatuated with her big beautiful eyes. -and besides, she listened to my explanations about Anthropology, which I was taking at the time at the University of Utah. She was also attending the University. (She had two jersey sweaters that she often wore. One was red and one was green. Now why should I remember

those?) On that first(triple) date I decided to ask her out-which I did, later.

We went out quite a lot. She, of course, was dating others as well. At the time she was living two blocks from the UofU with Viola and Conrad, and little Connie & Raymond.

Spring quarter was just about over, and I knew I needed a summer job. One day I was sitting on a couch that was back to back with another couch. I became aware of a conversation going on between two fellows who were talking about getting a job in Alaska with the BPR. They were civil engineering students. I had just finished a three hour class on mapping using a level. The class was especially designed for Archaeology students. The area has to be mapped before a dig can start so everything can be related etc. With that one class I decided to give the BPR a shot at me. They took it and I was soon flown from Seattle to Anchorage at their expense to work for the summer and then return for my last quarter in the fall at the UofU. My assignment was mile 17 and I boarded the train for Seward along with others.

It was easy getting acquainted with the other returned missionaries. After a week or so we heard of a community dance that was to be held in town. Great! What a break. We got a vehicle and headed over the rough dirt road. At the dance I saw this pretty girl standing waiting to be asked for a dance. I mustered the courage and she accepted. Conversation quickly turned from subject to subject until I revealed my mission to Australia and in return found she and her family were also LDS. She said there were no church meetings in town. Her parents were there too, and we soon decided to put a notice in the paper of a meeting in their—the Carroll'—home.

We were delighted to have show up at that first meeting two families who had just arrived in Seward. They, of course, were yours and Schaefermeyer. There also was a couple by the name of Bennett, as I recall. After just a week or so the Odd Fellows hall was rented for our meetings.

One Sunday Marie told me that Jim's father had written and said that one of Ruth's friends had just gone to Alaska to work for the summer. It was at that moment that we discovered that the girl I was dating was Jim's sister. Ruth and I had communicated by mail, but I hadn't put the two Jensens together. Jim had even asked Ruth if she would like to come to Alaska and live with them and get a job, but she declined. Wouldn't that have been a surprise that Sunday morning.

I also had a fifteen minute radio program where I read poetry and played tabernacle choir music and talked some about the church. After I left Jim and Art

carried on for a while.

At the end of summer, the resident engineer asked me if I would stay until the season of work ended. I asked when that would be. He said when it freezes hard enough that they can't get the gravel out of the pond beds. "When will that be," I said. The answer led me to believe it would be late October or early November. I had only one quarter to finish, so I decided winter quarter would be O.K. I would get two or three more month's pay and they would pay my way home. Otherwise I was responsible for my own air fare home. The frustrating thing was it didn't freeze over until the 8th day of December. I was there six months to the day instead of about three months. That would have been O.K. except that it was cold enough to quit from October on. Every day we thought this would be the end, but they just kept breaking through the frozen crust.

I grew a beard while I was there and didn't tell anyone at home. When I got off the plane in Salt Lake I walked right by my family who had come to greet me. It was quite awhile in the airport before my sister Colleen got up enough courage to walk by me and ask in a questioning voice-"Wilford?". I said, "Yes!" After that I went to see Ruth and shocked her.

While I was away she had moved into an apartment on First Avenue and B Street with three other girls. She called them to come and see her " hairy" friend. After returning home, eating, and shaving off my itchy beard I went back to her apartment with a friend of mine, who had a car, and picked up Ruth-and one of her roommates-for a nice evening out.

Well, there is much more that could be told, but this is far more than you probably wanted.

Wilford "

So that is Wilford's letter and on the next page is the photo I wanted to include. This is an odd sort of photo that I imagine someone cooked up because Wilford had a beard so a polygamous family image came to someone's mind. Today I look at it and chuckle and wonder what in the heck was going on in those people's heads but it certainly was innocent. Just seems so odd today.

From left to right in the back row is Mom, Mary Schaefermeyer (the ONLY photo I have of her), a woman who I don't remember, and Mrs. Carroll, all standing around Wilford who sits in a chair like a patriarch holding a child with the rest of "his" off spring spread out on the steps.

On the front row, left to right, are Ross Carroll and me. In the middle by himself is "Mikey", Mary Schaefermeyer's son. On the third row there's a Carroll boy on the left, then Billy Schaefermeyer, Dick and a boy who belongs to the woman whose name I don't remember.

This is the place we had church meetings in for the 5 years I lived in Seward, the Oddfellow's hall. It was odd, and I'll tell you a lot about it later in the right spot in time.



I mentioned this photo to mom last week on the phone and she startled me. She said without any hesitation, "I remember that photo!" That naturally interested me because she has such a hard time remembering anything these days. I asked what the occasion was and she said it was after a dinner there in the Oddfellow's hall. When I asked for more details, she had none but asked me to send a copy of it to her because she wanted to see it.

## Big Bear Cairn

I wonder if it's still there. One day dad got a wild hare and decided he needed to climb Big Bear Mountain again. His photos show he did it at least one time in 1941 so this was at least his second trip. On the day he was ready to do it, he grabbed a small pack, put some grub in it, and took off for the top. He never walked. We got to the top and spent a couple of hours there and we built a cairn. Know what that is? A monument sort of affair made out of rocks that you pick up in the vicinity and just pile as high as you want. Ours was probably three feet and probably got pushed over many years ago but I still wonder. There were no other cairns up there and I like to think ours withstood the tests of time. Silly me.

To give you a sense of Big Bear I have to go to my 2003 photos to get a perspective that will show specifically what this day climb was about. This image was taken from the artificial landing created where the Fourth of July Creek USED to run.



My apologies for the fuzziness of this image. The day was too bright for the settings I was using on the new digital camera that I am still learning to handle. But this image does the job. Right in the center of the image is Mt. Marathon. However, it is not the tallest mountain, rather is the peak in front of the highest peak. To the left and at almost the same altitude you see Big Bear. Once more, there is a taller peak behind it but Big Bear is approximately the same altitude as Marathon, except a bit taller.

Here's a blend of 2003 photos, Big Bear is the left peak and Mt. Marathon the right one, that gives you a clearer perspective of the situation. Notice that



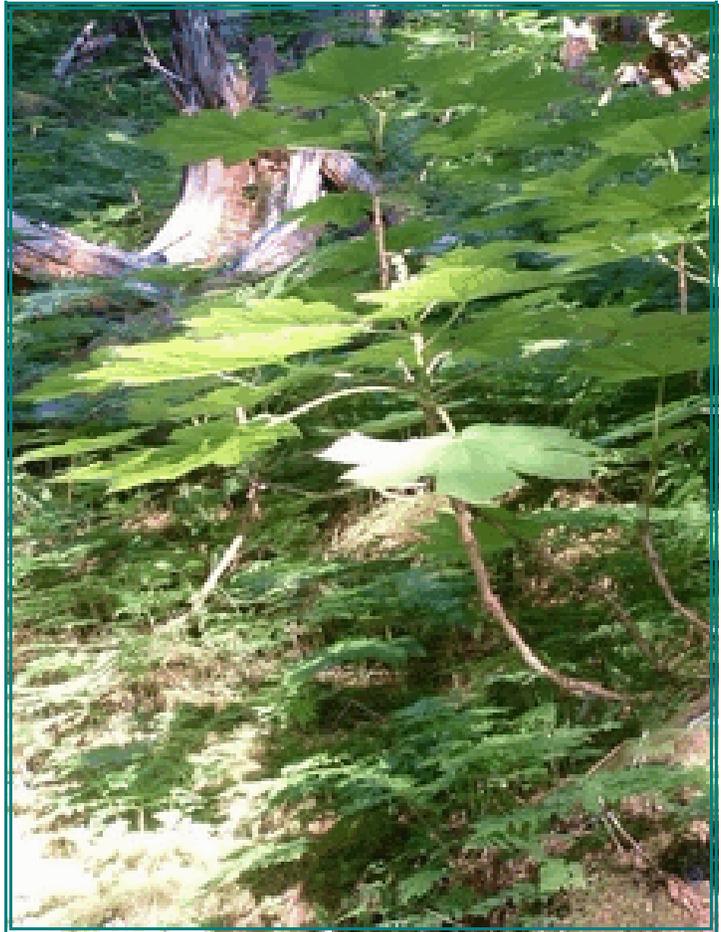
ALL the docks are gone. In this pair, Bear doesn't look quite as tall as Marathon but in reality it is a bit taller as you could see in the single image of both above. The dark green mountain in the middle of this joint image is Little Bear, though it obviously runs into Big Bear. Just where would you draw a dividing line? Homebrew Alley, that no longer existed when these photos were taken, would have been somewhere to the left side of the vertical lines.

Now you know where the peak is that dad, Dick and I climbed that rainy gray day. Our house was obviously the starting point. Grayness and rain didn't make much difference to us in those days. If we were going to do something, we did it. Gray and wet was the nature of that universe and to have hoped or waited for something different would have been a little bit like waiting for a monsoon in the Mojave Desert. We just decided when we were going to do something and dressed appropriately for the weather - which was basically gray and wet anyway.

To get underway was disarmingly simple. We just stepped out the door from the back porch and we were standing on a steep slope of Little Bear. We climbed up a short distance and found a trail that ran horizontally and followed it to the south (left). Dad knew where a good vertical trail was to get us up onto Big Bear which he did. There was the usual underbrush consisting of berry bushes, bushes I didn't

know what they were named, devil's club, scrubby alder along with spruce or pine or some kind of evergreens. Dad tried unsuccessfully to teach me how to tell evergreens apart but I never learned. Blue spruce I could tell because it hurt the back of your hand if you slapped it that way, cedar I could tell by the unusual shape, and hemlock I could tell by its lacy branches, but pines? Not on your life.

Take a break and look at a 2003 sunshine photo devil's club. It is properly named. These inch thick stalks that love the shade under the forest run 3-6 feet in length and are covered with sharp spines about a quarter of an inch long. They are needle-like rather than fat at the base like rose spines. That is one difference, the other difference, the big one, is the fact that each spine is tipped with a chemical that is injected when your skin is pierced. The first effect of the chemical is to make the hole burn fairly badly, more than from stinging nettle that abounded. The second effect was slower manifesting itself. A pustule develops over night, whether from infection of chemistry I don't know, but I know they are real. So you did your best to avoid the stuff.



This stuff was omnipresent, part of the background so we never got away from it which is why I spend so much time emphasizing it here. We were getting exposed to the darn stuff most of the time we were hiking. The leaves were beautiful, like tiny flat umbrellas but they were as treacherous as the stalk, covered with nasty spines.

Dad took a set of six photos that I'm going to include because, first, they are so dramatic, and second, they show so much important information about the locale, give perspectives otherwise unavailable. They actually are the best

documentation in dad's things of what the head of the bay was like, how big the town was, what the docks were like and so on. You'll see these many times.

Dick and I are sitting on top of Big Bear, looking due north, straight across Lowell Canyon to the top of Mt. Marathon. This shows you the route of the marathon race run each Fourth of July. The trail is a light gray scar that follows the rim.

The wide 'scar' is a shale slide. It serves as a chute for runners who get from the 3,000 foot peak to the foot in 15 minutes, taking 20 foot leaps. Woe to the runner who falls in his shorts, because his legs are lacerated by the sharp shale rocks.

This chute was also served the source for snow slides every winter that put a permanent pile of snow on the floor of Lowell Canyon, right next to the trail. We used this snow all summer for cooling home made root beer.

On the right side of the image you see a sliver of a River that appears to be flowing out from where the Exit Glacier is, though we'd never heard of the thing.



The pack we're holding was small, and military, being marked "U.S.". It was made to be worn like a sandwich board over the head, one pack riding on your chest and the other riding on your back. It had ties on both sides of the bottom so it could be tied into place. That way it didn't slip around when you were running or twisting over difficult places in the trail.



When we did these kinds of outings the food we took was standardized according to dad's preferences: a loaf of sliced bread, a pound of sliced baloney in white butcher paper with paper tape holding it closed, and a few oranges for juice. We didn't take water with us because it was safe to drink from any of the streams that were clear. When we got hungry we'd ask for a sandwich and if dad was in the mood at the moment, he'd take the pack off, open it up, pull out the bread and baloney. He'd tear open the paper package of meat and put one thick slice between two slices of bread. That was a sandwich. He handed it to us and we ate it. That simple. No condiments and no complaints. We learned real early and real well that if we complained about the grub we just didn't need to eat any of it. So there. When you were (1) trained this way and (2) hungry, these dry-sounding sandwiches were wonderful and we'd eat a second one some days.

Dad was obviously enamored of that peak. He took more photos from that one spot that I remember him taking from any point I ever went to with him. His appreciation of the site was well founded as you can see.

Dick and I are sitting, posed which was not his preferred method of photo taking in his later years, on a pair of granite boulders in front of this astounding backdrop. The canyon or valley is Lowell canyon that was created by Marathon on the right and Bear on the left. The snow in the background stayed year round. It wasn't deep enough to qualify as glaciers but was basically glacier.

This is the source of the water that wreaked havoc with the town each spring for obvious reasons. When all those steeply angled surfaces let go of their snow cover at the same time, there was a torrent of water, and it raged down that steep canyon. That's why the town never did succeed in taming the spring floods in spite of elaborate expensive attempts. And that's why the Army Corps of Engineers was finally called upon to bore the tunnel through little Bear to divert the water entirely out of this canyon. You've seen the outlet discussed above and here you see the business end of the river that seemed pretty innocuous most of the year. Deceitful little thing.



This image is going to pop up all over the place below because it is astonishingly full of details about the locale that I can't find in any other images. I'll only point out here the steepness of the slope. We stand there on that outcropping of rock in front of the town.



This place confused me in a particular sense because it was so open and so close to town. Odd reasons for a location to be confusing. I was used to climbing all over the place, hiking through weeds and brush and so on, but this setting presented a new challenge. I needed to pee while we were building the cairn and held it as long as I could. As long as I was focused on finding rocks to build a cairn, I could ignore the pain but finally that didn't even work. I looked around but there was no obvious place to do the job, so I whispered to dad that I "had to do number one". He gave me an odd look which prompted me to explain as I looked sideways at the town, "They might see me." He didn't really demean me though I knew by his response that he thought my modesty was excessive. He simply said, "Just go anywhere and turn your back." I did but the whole town was down there watching and I still had some anxiety about being seen do the deed in spite of dad's calmness about it.

The steep slope was obviously a lot of work while we were hiking but it provided some great entertainment later. Part of the reason the entertainment was entertaining was because it was unpredictable that my dad, my own personal dad, would do what he did. Our take on him was that he was a hard a.. and stingy and cheap and hoarded food and so on. A miser, humorless so on. Sound familiar?!

Well, you've seen the photos of him hamming it up so you know that in fact he was also a joker, a trait he concealed from his kids - why? I don't know but I wish he hadn't. In any event, he let his hair down as the saying goes when we got to dessert. We were sitting on the steep slope, practically sliding, looking down to the bay, across to Mt. Alice, Fourth of July glacier, Fourth of July creek, the mud flats and rivers, Mt. Marathon, the town, Fox Island, the Sound. After we had finished our sandwiches -without anything to drink- dad re-wrapped to baloney and bread and stowed it in the pack. He pulled out the big naval, expensive oranges and took one for himself. Then he handed each of us our orange and did the most astounding thing. He gestured to the steep slope and said, "Go ahead." He mimed throwing the orange down hill. Man alive, the man had lost his mind. My DAD? Telling me to waste food that way, telling me to do something outrageous, telling me to do something for the pure hell of it, all while he was right there to observe it?

Well, it didn't take a second offer. One of us cocked his arm back, looked one more time at dad just to be sure at which point he sort of nodded impatiently, and then the orange was rolled down hill. Dad had suggested rolling as opposed to throwing because he knew what was going to happen. Most kid would have just pitched the thing like a baseball. We all sat still watching this little orange ball roll, gathering speed, starting to bounce, bouncing higher and higher until it reached a sort of cliff at which point it exploded into pieces which disappeared over the edge forever. We were transfixed. Then the other kid repeated the action. Note the parsimoniousness of the occasion. Instead of squandering two oranges simultaneously, we each, without any order from the lord, understood that the best way to do the thing was to do it serially. That way we got to watch the whole event unfold two times. It was sort of a reprise of our Easter Egg rolls in Vernal that we couldn't do anymore on account of the water and vegetation and general nastiness of Easter Sunday.

After it was over, there was no complaint or criticism. I don't remember whether we dared tell mom about wasting two pricey oranges that way.

There are the last two photos that repeat what we saw.



This last photo of the set is particularly interesting in light of future developments, things that we would not have dreamed would even be considered, much less accomplished.



This shows the omni-present Mt. Alice above our heads and on the right side across the bay you see the Fourth of July Creek. Here it is flowing out the left side of the delta it created. It is spawned by the Glacier we knew as the Fourth of July Glacier though today it's called "Godwin's Glacier."

The interesting point is this: Darrell Schaefermeyer and a consortium of people decide that after the great Tsunami had destroyed all of the docks that Seward needed a new facility to repair ships. As a result, they obtained funding to finally divert the river to the right side of that delta! And they did it.

## Dick's Broken Glasses

For some reason Dickie seemed to have chronic brokenglassitis. I don't think there was any intention on his part to break his bifocals because he paid a pretty heavy surcharge each time they had to be repaired or replaced. But for some reason he constantly broke them. New ones, old ones. He broke them.

Well, coming down from Big Bear that day poor Dick was a victim of circumstances that broke his glasses and simultaneously saved him the pain of a lecture. The underbrush was so dense that none of us could see more than five or six feet in front of us because branches were right there. We could tell when to change course by the change in the direction of the sound that we were homing on. Along the way as we did these sort of outings, we were learning the lore that went with them. One of the adages that we probably should have learned, and probably did hear multiple times, was, "Don't follow too closely!" As we neared the bottom of Big Bear, headed like horses for the barn, Dick sort of closed up on dad. Dad didn't know it and Dick didn't really understand it. In an instant as dad passed through some branches bending them forward to pass, he released them, focusing on getting down before it got too dark.

As the branch flipped back, Dick came forward and presented his glasses to the branch, which broke the glasses and inflicted an injury to his face. His yells stopped everything as we re-grouped to see how badly hurt he was. He was bleeding badly and his glass parts were hanging about his face. He knew better than to compound the problem by losing them. Dad didn't criticize him much because of the extent of the injury. Dick's eye was spared and so was he. We got down off the mountain and mom did her usual exam and repair job. She might as well have been a trained surgeon for all the emergency repairs she had to do.

Money was short, as usual, so mom and dad weren't too excited about spending any on repairing Dick's glasses. Given the fact of his constantly breaking them, dad decided that he'd find a way to repair them himself. He contacted the dentist and arranged to get some of the plastic material that was used to make dentures. After learning how to mix the stuff and how to work it, he took Dick's glass parts and re-constructed a set of glasses that never broke again.



## Wind Skating

That isn't what we called it. We didn't call it anything in fact. We just did it. Winds in the winter could be really strong. And cold. I don't actually know how cold the temperature got, just that it was really cold, that things froze in the late fall and stayed frozen until May, that snow stayed around, and that ice was everywhere. So we dressed warmly. Our first winter coats were navy pea coats that mom bought at Andy's Army Surplus store.

They were made out of navy blue wool and had the double-breasted front with large flat buttons that had an anchor engraved in the center. In addition to the coats, mom bought us warm hats made out of sheepskin. The leather was on the outside with soft clipped wool on the inside. There were flaps to pull down over our ears and tie under our chin with a short visor we would pull down over our forehead. Wool mittens and galoshes over our shoes completed our winter outfits. They did a reasonable job keeping us warm most of the time but if we stayed outside a long time, we got cold, particularly our hands.



Over on Second Avenue on the block just east of Homebrew Alley, there was a long steep slope that wasn't traveled too much. Fourth Avenue was main street so had lots of traffic, but Second Avenue was a side street that was only used by people who lived on Second Avenue. This meant that it was pretty safe for us to sled if we wanted to. But on some days the winter blew so hard that we'd about freeze our faces in half an hour, hardly able to move our lips when we tried to talk, just because of the wind.

When the road was covered with smooth ice, we would find large pieces of cardboard and try to use them as sails. We'd walk up to the end of the block and turn around to face the bay. Then we'd hold the cardboard sail up behind our backs and allow the wind to push on it. Most of the time it either blew the cardboard out of our hand, or it pushed us over. The amount of force created by the wind on that large surface was too much for us little kids to handle so we didn't. But on rare occasions, we would succeed in getting everything to work. We would sail on our feet down the road, faster and faster, becoming fearful about how we would crash, so we would lie down on the ice and slide to a stop.

## 7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Place

After living at Homebrew Alley for a year and a half, mom and dad rented this little house up on Second Avenue. The motivation to move is probably evident from the things I've told you already. Homebrew Alley was not the nicest place in town to raise a pair of boys. It was interesting and eventful, but there were other places more suitable for raising families so we moved. The geographical distance between the two houses wasn't great, perhaps a quarter mile at the most, but socially it was a different dimension. Homebrew and prostitution versus living 3 houses away from the Episcopal Church. The move was an event of great interest and I remember the excitement of going to live in a house that had a basement, the first one I personally lived in. As noted above, I don't know why dad didn't rent this kind of place straight off when moving to Seward but I suspect it had to do with money, which was in real short supply, and probably the supply of single-family dwellings. I couldn't remember the address of this house until I visited it again in 2003. But the problem is that the address has been changed. It's now 309 instead of 307 Second Avenue. Dick and I both agree that it was 307 even though the number on the house today is 309. I don't know what happened.

The amazing thing about this house was the discovery I made in 2003. I



found this photo in mom's and dad's stuff and I was stunned. That's the house and that's mom and that was in 1941 just after they were married. It was shock to be sifting through photos of SLC, Naples, Hawaii and Seward and to see this come to

the top. I had no idea that they had lived in that house back then. (Of course, they probably told me the story when we lived there but it was completely gone from my memory.)

As I got the story from mom in 2003, this house was owned by Luella James who owned the Alaska Shop, McMullins, and a variety of residential -that's about all there were- properties in the town. Luella lived up the road from this house. I remember Luella's house because I did some yard work for her there. Next to Luella's place there was a large 2-story house that had been converted into a boarding house where single men lived. In those days there were no such things as co-ed facilities. Any woman who might have dared live in an all-male boarding house would have been advertising that she was wanton and loose and fair game. The counterbalancing part of this equation is that any men who remained in such a facility would also damage their reputation. Any self-respecting man wouldn't be caught in the same sleeping facility as a jezebel. Things have changed but I'm not sure for the better but I'm just an old man.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Boarding House

I couldn't find any photos of the boarding house back then and when I saw it in 2003, it had gone the way of the world. There was an American Flag that suggested someone lived there and the roof was new but otherwise it was pretty run down. There used to be a porch on the front that men sat on in the evening. Luella's house was to the right of this house and the post master's house was to the left where we played with his daughters. That's Mr. Marathon in the background. There is now a huge trail worn into the mountain from the climbers.

Anyway, dad lived in this boarding house in 1941 and about the time mom was headed up to get married, he arranged with Luella across the yard to rent the little house at 307 from her so that when mom arrived he'd have a house for her to live in. That's how they came to live there. So our living on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in 1953 was just a continuation of their prior life there. It isn't unlikely that mom told us that fact but if she did, it didn't stick. What meaning would that information have to a little kid.

When we returned to visit in 2003, I obviously was anxious to see this house, see if it was still there and so on. It was there and I was able to go inside thanks to the good grace of the owner, who lived in Schaefermeyer's house next door.

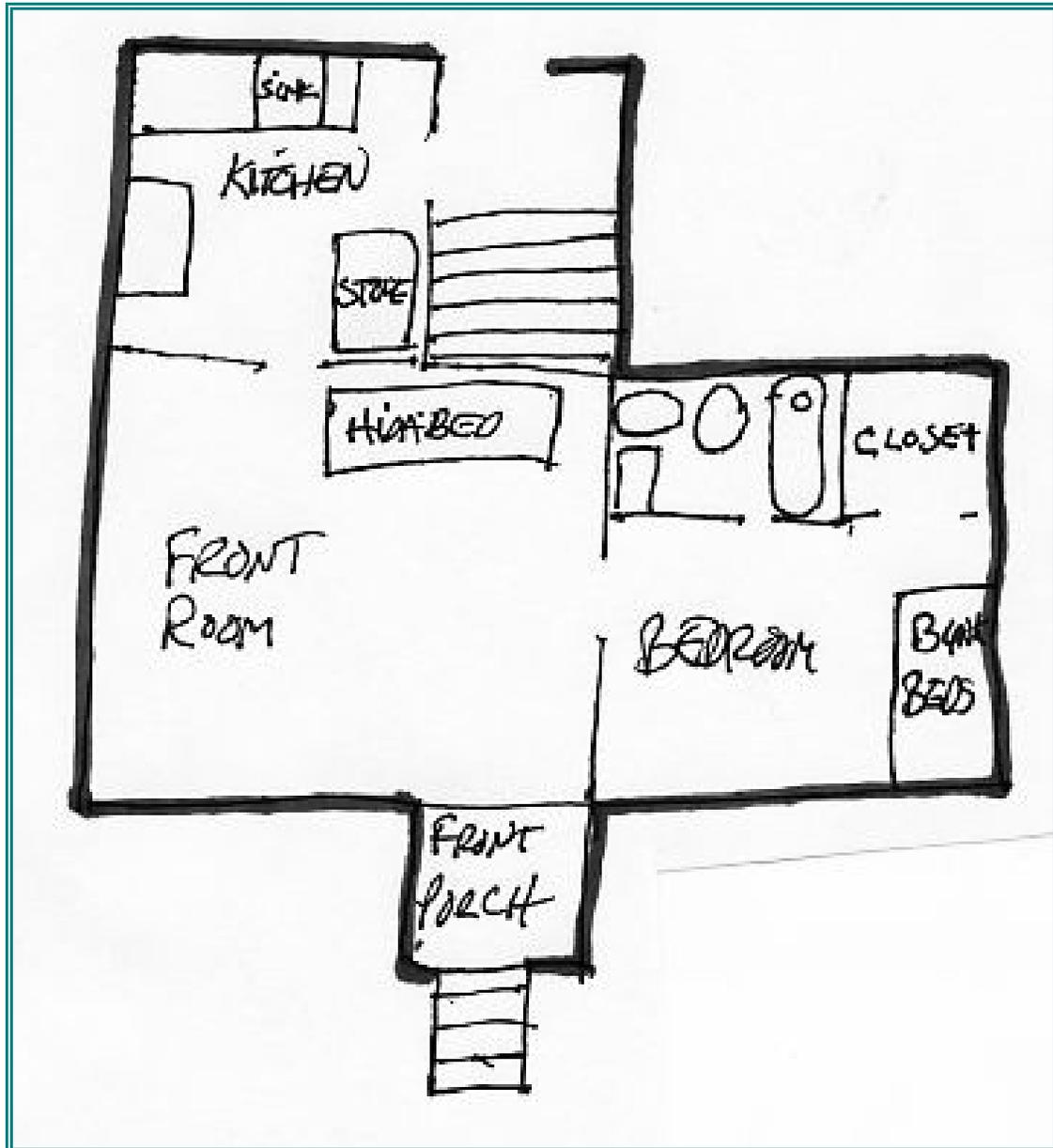




This photo is also slanted so I am guessing that the steep slope of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is what causes photographers to tilt their photos. Anyway, this is the same house but with modern siding. Dave Fleming's house also has siding as well as a dish. The house across the alley from Dave's place had been missing for a long time.

The house was not really any bigger than the one on Homebrew Alley but instead of an attic, it had a full-size basement, a musty damp smelling place that only had two tiny windows.

Here's a crude drawing of the main floor of the house. I haven't included measurements but look at the photo of me above and imagine how much of the front



of the house would be covered by my 6-foot reach if I had stretched out my arms - perhaps 25 feet wide, the large dimension.

The first floor consisted of an enclosed porch entry way, a living room, a bedroom, a narrow closet, a bathroom and a kitchen. The house was probably no more than 500 square feet. I look back and see that my folks actually did a little

self sacrifice for Dick and me, which I didn't recognize at the time. They put us boys in the only bedroom and chose instead to sleep in the front on a hid-a-bed. My experience with hid-a-beds is that they are equivalent to mild torture and sleeping on one for 3 years must have been pretty awful. Let's go through the rooms in no particular order.

### Front Porch

That entry way was sort of a large walk-through closet where coats and boots were kept and it served the function of keeping the main part of the house closed when the outside door was opened. That way the cold wind didn't blow into the house. It was sort of like an intermediate lock to come in or to go out in the winter. Most houses had that sort of entry way. On one side there was a bar from wall to wall to hang things on, basically our coats. Boots lay on the floor underneath, a shelf over the top of them held hats and miscellaneous things. There was a small table with a box on the top for gloves, most of which seemed to be missing a pair. This porch thing has now been given a yuppie name now. When I was there in 2003, people referred to an "arctic entrance." How cute. The damn thing is an unheated porch and is used other places than the arctic. <Growl>

The challenge of that porch was its steps, in the winter. The snow obviously collected during the night so it needed to be shoveled off in the morning. Simple enough thing to do but somehow the snow didn't always get scraped off sufficiently and then ice built up. And the ice was slippery so we could fall and so on. There was a sack of rock salt in the porch the we could sprinkle on the ice to melt it which worked pretty well. The best solution was to take the spud an chip the ice off so the wooden steps were exposed and we'd do that - when ordered by mom or dad. Otherwise we'd use the salt.

### Dressing for a winter night's work

Sit close my children and let me tell you an extraordinary tale of what my dad did for me. He worked all night on the dock to put food on the table for me. If you think that's trivial, then you don't really understand what this entailed in those days. I understood it because when I walked from Homebrew alley up the hill to school, the wind blew so hard it would knock me down some times, the cold was so bad that I couldn't move my lips when I got to school and in spite of my

warm coat I was frozen to the bone. I knew what it was like in that weather for 20 minutes and knew it was horrible to spend 10 hours outside in it. My dad worked it when assigned and I never heard him complain once. He was stoical and carefully prepared for it. The things that made dockside longshoring so tough in the winter included:

First, the work was outside. Second, all motor-operated equipment that longshoremen used was open and unheated. Third, the weather was cold, really cold. Fourth, the weather was wet, even if it didn't rain or snow. Fifth, the wind blew hard and sixth, the night shift ran from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. so there were long long stretches of darkness in that bitter wet cold with winds that would push you over.

Dad went out there at night and worked. It was not a fool's errand.

Dad's work clothing hung out in the closet because it was so bulky. There was only the one small closet in the whole house and it was filled with mom's nice dresses and dad's suit. In the winter if dad was working night shift, one of us kids would be sent out to the closet half an hour or so before dad had to go to work. That kid was assigned to bring in whatever things dad was going to wear to work that night because he wanted them pre-warmed. It was bitterly cold in the daytime and more so at night.

When he was assigned to drive spotter or jitney, he had to sit. Just sit. All night, for hours on end. Just sit. No chance for exercise to warm him up, so he bought heavy, fleece-filled pants to keep his legs warm. He wore two pairs of real, knee-high, wool socks inside of large rubber boots that had a thick woolen felt insole to keep them as warm as possible. He wore at least one pair of long-handled underwear under heavy pants and a long-sleeved flannel shirt. Over the top of it all he wore a heavy, quilted coat.

### Vat skin

One of dad's quilted coats was wearing out the fall of 1953. He needed a new one with winter coming, but liked this one because it was an old friend and so warm. To buy a new one as good would cost a large sum of money which he didn't really want to do, so the ever-resourceful Marie looked the old one over. She considered how it was constructed, and being a highly skilled seamstress, she decided that she could take this thing apart and rescue the important parts, the quilted body and arms. The frequently-patched lining and outer cover were

shredded beyond repair this time, so she would just discard those as she disassembled the garment.

She took her seam ripper and ripped the seams. The whole thing came apart, dusty and greasy on the outside, but the quilted portions were intact. She cleaned up the edges and prepared them to be rebuilt. Meantime she had taken James A. in hand and persuaded him to pick the cover she wanted. She wanted him to have what he wanted, her only reservations being (1) cost and (2) durability. He passed both tests by picking out an unusually heavy corduroy piece that was patterned like an animal pelt. I doubt that the pattern mattered to him. Sitting out there in the night, appearances were of no interest. Just keep me warm. I have to wonder today whether his choice was as free as it was represented. Marie had a way of funneling you to making a choice that you thought was your choice which was the choice she wanted you to make.

So she took this heavy piece of brownish-orangish pelt-patterned corduroy and laid it on the table where she decided how to get the greatest economy out of it as she cuts the pieces for the arms, yoke, back and fronts. He had also picked out a heavy satinish fabric of a nondescript color for her to use as the liner. She finally cut all of the pieces out and carefully began the process of reconstructing this heavy quilted coat. Not surprisingly, she succeeded. There was never any surprise about her finishing a job and doing it well. The only surprises were what projects she picked.

Dad started wearing the coat that fall and loved it. He got the same warmth from it as before so had a real affection for this old coat that was given a new lease on life, saving a bundle to boot. It was given a name by one of the rugged old Scandinavians who infested the docks. This man whose name I've forgotten approached dad one night about this "new" coat. In the darkness he could see the pattern that resembled that of some sort of animal but couldn't tell whether it really was from an animal. In those days people proudly wore animal skins. He squinted at the coat, took his glove off, and fingered the fabric, and asked, "Vat skin is dis?" Dad loved it. As a result that coat was christened his "vatskin" and he repeated that story with gusto. When he instructed us to get his things for the night, he'd tell us which quilted pants and so on, and say to get his 'vatskin'. It hung in that closet until we left.

## Front Room

The front room was the multi-purpose room. Everything happened in that room, primarily

because there was no where else for anything to happen. This was a really tiny house. There isn't a really good photo that shows the room, primarily because it was so small. This shot gives you about as good a view as any of the tiny room. The door on the left is to the kitchen, the pictures on wall are above the hid-a-bed that doubled as the living room couch during the day and mom's and dad's bed each night. The lamp is sitting on the north wall with the



doorway into the small bedroom just out of sight of the right edge of this photo. A tiny tiny room. The lamp is sitting on mom's sewing machine.

I later found another photo that actually showed the hid-a-bed and gives a different perspective on this room. These are four missionaries who visited us as often as they dared. The only name I remember is "Wood" who is the supercilious second from the left.

More of Dad's pictures hang on the wall and sit on the back of the hid-a-bed. He had a never-ending stream of pictures. And his electric guitar case is on the right side of the couch, next to the sewing machine.



The doorway shows the west wall of the kitchen. The window with sun shining through the curtains sits above the sink where I washed a lot of dishes. A cupboard is to the left of the curtains on the wall which was where the dishes were stored. The man on the right could reach his left arm out and touch the wall to the bedroom.

The hid-a-bed sits on one side of the kitchen door and on the other side of the door was an easy chair. Mom's sitting in it with "Andy", the Eskimo baby that we took care of for 6 months while his unwed mom was finishing treatment at the TB San. There's a steam radiator here that illustrates how our house was heated. These radiators experienced "Steam hammers", blew off steam and made the floors wet but they heated the house. Just don't sit on one.



## Bedroom

The single bed room in the house was a narrow room with two doors on the west end. The first door was to the bathroom and the second was to the closet. On the north wall there was a pair of bunk beds that dad built out of 2 x 4's that he scrounged from the docks. We bought straw tick mattresses from Andy's Army Surplus store and slept on them. I don't know whether they were comfortable or not because in those days or conditions comfort was not a consideration. Just having a place to sleep was the issue. Dad build a ladder to get to the top bunk. It was notched so that it would hang on the edge of the top bunk. He also build a railing about 10 inches tall about a bout a yard long along the top end of the top bunk to keep the sleeper from falling out. It worked, most of the time. I usually slept in the top bunk but when I had surgery on my leg I slept in the bottom bunk. One night I was awakened by a loud crash. Dick had fallen out of the top bunk onto the orange crates, destroying one of them. The next day he couldn't

remember anything unusual.

Next to the beds were two wooden orange crates sitting end that held our toys and books and play things. They were excellent cases to use for storage because they were about a yard high, about 18 inches deep and 18 inches wide. They had a sturdy shelf across the middle, so when these cases were turned on end, there were three shelves to put our stuff on.

When I practised clarinet, I sat on the lower bunk and read from a music stand we bought from Sears & Roebucks.

### Closet

The only closet in the house was a narrow one at the foot of the bunk beds. It was where mom and dad hung their clothes, us boys not having any particular things that required hanging. The arrangement didn't strike me as inconvenient probably because the house was so small that there was no distance to go for mom to hang things. We kept our shoes on the floor of the closet if we didn't push them under the bottom bunk.

### Kitchen

The kitchen was wide enough for a narrow table, a narrow stove and a narrow path between them. And long enough to add cupboards are each end. You see one bit of the kitchen in the photo above and this photo shows mom standing at the propane stove we cooked on. It's hard to make out the details in this poor photo but to mom's left is the refrigerator. The wall she is facing has a door in it across from the refrigerator. You can see the crotch of the wall and ceiling over her head which gives you an idea of how short this room was.

The stove is on long skinny legs so we could lay on the floor under it. That's where I was laying one day



reading the local paper. I must have been about 12 or 13 and I ran across a word I'd never heard. I couldn't see mom's face because I was lying on the floor under the stove looking down at the paper. I was a completely innocent kid and read an article about two men who had been arrested by the police for an activity out by Gabe's Place. I didn't understand all the words so I asked her, "What does 'rape' mean?" Whoa.

Her response was one of those that kids get when asking about sex, sort of a guillotine. The conversation is whacked off right then and there. I knew that whatever it was I wasn't going to hear the answer nor did I care to hear it. It wasn't the words themselves that conveyed the message because the essence was, "Oh, you'll have to wait till you're older to understand what that is." It was the emotional baggage that came with those words that were sort of a slap in the face, a message that I was pretty damn presumptuous to talk that way, to ask questions like that, so shut your mouth please and don't embarrass me like that again.

The oven is the higher part of the stove to her left, and the drawers underneath were for pots and pans. The stove was new at the time, a modern appliance compared to the coal stoves we used in Vernal and the old stove we used in Homebrew Alley. It was "down town" - or "uptown" as the case may be. She prepared good meals for us

## Basement

The stairs to the full-size -which isn't saying much- basement were steep. The walls were the concrete foundation for the house. The concrete hadn't been sufficiently jiggled so the surface of the wall was basically a curtain of rock indentations. They were constantly moist from all the rain so the basement smelled wet and moldy all the time. Since it was the first basement I'd lived with, I thought it was pretty nice. The idea of walking down wooden steps into the ground where things we needed were stored pleased me.

The original heat source for the house was a coal-burning furnace. It must have been in place when mom and dad lived in the house in 1941. It had been replaced by the time I moved in with an oil-burning furnace that was supplied from a 150 gallon tank that sat above ground on stilts. The line down into the basement is visible here in the middle left side, an inch thick line going into the wall. The storage tank set to the left of this photo and was filled several times during the

winter by a truck that made the rounds, driving up the alleys to more easily reach the backyard storage tanks. This furnace made a fair amount of noise when it was operating. There was a constant smell of fuel oil in the basement in particular from spills over time, a smell that was faintly present upstairs as well. The old coal storage room was too dirty to be used for anything so it sat empty, covered with a layer of fine coal dust. We played a bit in it but it was too much of a hassle upstairs to hear about it.

This image shows both the back door and the entrance to the basement. This is the backdoor. The steps down into the basement are to mom's right and the door into the kitchen is to her left. Notice the things standing against the wall, a board, a sled, and on the ground are other pieces of wood, and an old tire. The back step wasn't there. You can see under the door jamb where there is missing siding. That's because the steps were removed before we moved in, so dad just put a heavy board on the ground on top of a pair of 2 x 4's to hold it up. Long step down.

There were three long narrow windows in the basement. Two were on the east end and one on the south side. Dad built a work bench along the east wall where Dick and I learned to do some woodworking. The remainder of the basement was basically used for storage of things since the house was so small.



We had a cat who enjoyed those stairs. In the dark the cat -the one who freaked out regularly and tore up the drapes to the top of the windows- would take a marble and push it off the top step. It would roll bumping down to the bottom. The cat followed it down and if it stopped, would push it again to make it roll. Then, the surprise was that the cat would take the marble in her mouth and carry it back

to the top of the stairs and repeat the performance. While we were trying to sleep.

## Backyard Yard

The backyard was just a piece of ground that had lots of junk lying around, a barrel, pieces of logs and so on. It looks OK here because it's

covered with snow. Dick is holding onto Kobuk's chain for this photo. The chain was connected to the clothes lines over his head to allow him free run end to end. In the summer we could hardly reach the lines.



When the men who ran the Marathon started preparing for the run on July 4<sup>th</sup>, some of them would come through this back yard, looking at the junk lying around. They would rearrange it so that they had a clear course if they chose to run that way on the race day, otherwise it would have been an obstacle course.

The black structure on the left of the photo is the tar paper covered porch on the back side of Schaefermeyer's house and the shed on the other end of the yard with torn tar paper was also theirs. The little house in the middle is that of Mr. Leonard, the plumber who lived alone. The spire of the Episcopal church is sticking up above his roof.

## Front Yard

Summer in Seward was characterized by three things: lots of rain, lots of daytime (though not lots of sunshine) and cool temperatures. These conditions encouraged the plants in our yards, front and back, to grow. 20 hours a day. This front yard had a bumper crop of dandelions. Some of them reached a yard in height and had blossoms that were as large as the end of a



Carnation Condensed milk can. On more than one occasion people came through our yard as they were picking dandelion blossoms to make dandelion wine.

The back yard in this photo had a great crop of a grass that grew enthusiastically in those conditions. The only time these weeds were "mowed" was when us kids decided that we needed to make secret pathways, or needed something to build forts. Lawn care was not on anybody's list of things that absolutely had to be done. There were some homes like the Lilly James and the Blues where lawns were mowed and I even mowed Lilly's yard up the road. But I think more homes dispensed with such niceties. Spending money on gas to cut grass? Spending money on chemicals to make grass grow? Plain Nuts.



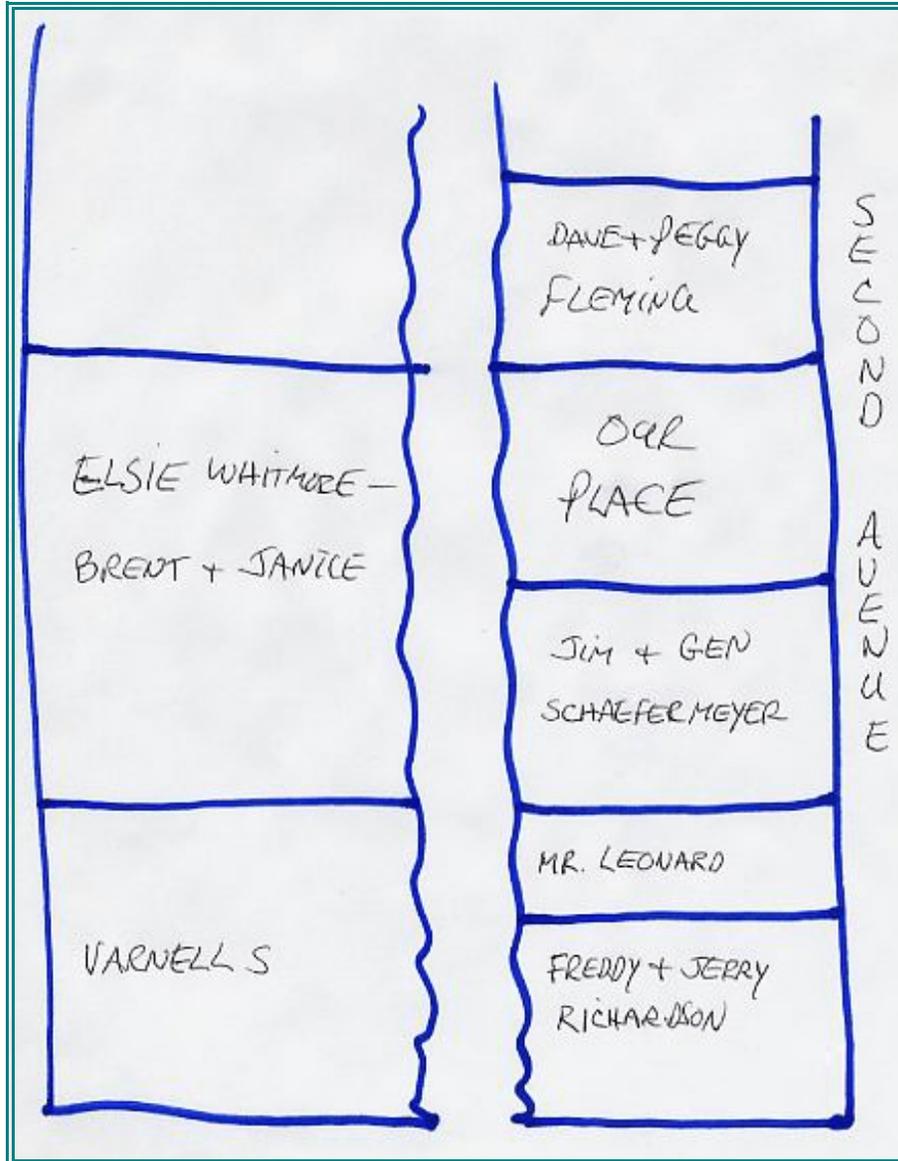
## Neighbors

**L**et me introduce closely to the neighbors who filled the points of my compass on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Our neighbors were:

- 1) Dave and Peggy Fleming to the north,
- 2) Jim and Gen Schaefermeyer to the south,
- 3) Whitmore behind us to the west over the alley,
- 4) Mr. Leonard by Jim and Gen,
- 5) Freddy and Jerry Richardson next to Mr. Leonard,
- 6) across the road was an empty lot with a house on the north filled with people that my mother distrusted,
- 7) the Episcopal Church, and
- 8) A partially built log cabin across the road.

The map on the next page shows the locations and approximate sizes of most of these lots. North is toward the top. The alley running through the lot is the extension of Homebrew Alley.

I'll talk about each of these places, the people and include some photos when I can find them. They constituted my universe for several formative years.



The house of ill-repute sat about here.

The log cabin sat about here.

A more or less empty field was here.

A house set here with a vacant lot in front of it.

### 1. Dave & Peggy Fleming

**D**ave and Peggy had no children at home. Whether they never had any or they were grown and moved away I don't know. My sense was that Peggy was childless. She kept a Budgie Bird that entertained us, and treated us like nephews. Dave was a longshoreman with dad so they knew each other on the docks and at home. In this 2003 photo you see our house by Fleming's house.



And here are clips of the back and front of that house from that era. The basement wasn't occupied. It was a work shop and garage.



## 2. Gen and Jim Schaefermeyer

Our house is in the middle of this photo, Schaefermeyer's is on the left and Whitmore's is behind us. For the record I should point out that the Schaefermeyer family that lived in this house is Jim and Genevieve, not Art and Mary. They came up a year after we moved there. Their house was two stories and they had five children, oldest to youngest: Gloria who married Jack Parrett, Jeanie, Vonnie (my age), Darrel and Susan. Jim was a mechanic who didn't much hunt or fish and Gen was into everything. Little Bear is there behind everything.



It looked like this in 2003. The old outbuildings were torn down, the house was cleaned up with new siding. You can see Mr. Leonard's small house peeking around the left end. It is funny to see lawn and concrete stairs.



This is Darrell Schaefermeyer who was a little kid when I left in 1956. He served most successfully as city manager for various years and helped develop the Exit Glacier and the shipbuilding yard at 4<sup>th</sup> of July Creek. It turned out that the house we spent the week in during July 2003 was 3 houses away from his house so I spent 15 minutes chatting with him. He got a funny look on his face when I referred to my beloved ammunition collection that I gave to him -under duress- when I left in '56.



This 2003 photo shows greatly cleaned up Schaefermeyers, our old house and Flemings. Ours was the only single story house. When we lived there, the yard were rough as I pointed out and the houses wore old asbestos shingles with shabby paint jobs.



### 3. Whitmores

I actually don't have a single good photo of Whitmore's house, either from 1950's or 2003. I am amazed to sit here right now and realize that since I was standing there a few months ago, I walked through my house, entered Whitmore's house and spent an evening talking to Brent and Elsie. But I didn't. Too much excitement in re-meeting my history.



In the left clip, dad's salvage boat sits under a snow covered tarp, awaiting his work on it in the spring. He finally sold it. In the right photo, Dick and I are digging out the old canoe that was inverted under the snow for the winter. Janice Whitmore is in the red coat and she's looking at the backdoor of the Whitmore home.

I just noticed that the Whitmore back porch is different in the two photos. On the left the door was positioned between two windows and on the right the door is on the right side of the porch. I don't remember the construction that obviously took place as shown by the black tar paper on the right which was in 1956 just before we left. They must have extended the porch. Now I do have a memory of construction but only of the idea of construction.

#### 4. Mr. Leonard



Mr. Leonard was a plumber and seemed to live alone. In the depression in the left photo, there was a long narrow building about 6 feet tall that he stored his pipe stock in. Us kids would crawl through the place for the heck of it, sort of an adventure because we imagined we weren't supposed to do that. He didn't seem to be an angry man but he was an adult so was one of "them" to be feared and respected. Taking advantage of his stuff to play seemed a reasonable thing to do, particularly since there was a dearth of things to do in that unadorned little town.

He drove a Crosley truck around town with his tools and supplies sticking out the back-end.

The Richardson's house stood in the lot to the left of Mr. Leonard's place. It was separated at the time by a picket fence.



Figure 150

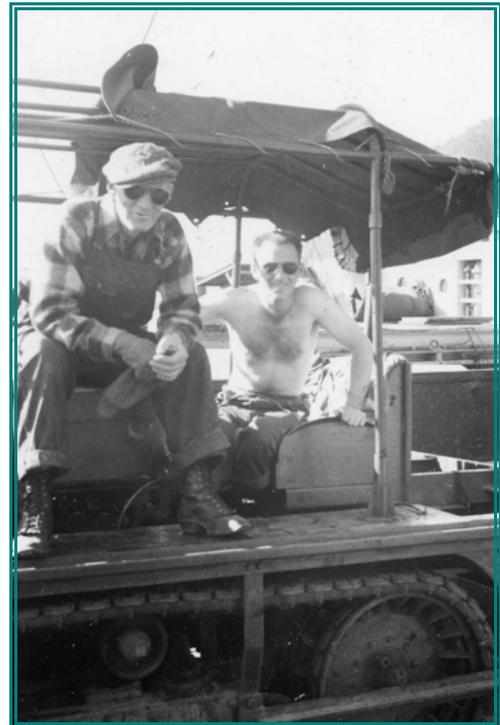
[http://www.lovemontana.com/collectible\\_cars/crosley\\_truck.html](http://www.lovemontana.com/collectible_cars/crosley_truck.html)

## 5. Freddy & Jerry Richardson

**J**erry and Freddy Richardson were good friends of my parents. I don't have any idea how they met but since Freddy worked on the docks, I expect they struck up a friendship there. One of the problems I had if I bothered to think about it was to figure out which friends were left over from 9 years earlier and which were new ones ginned up on this visit.



I think that one of the things that dad liked about Freddie was Freddy's love of tools and equipment as shown by these photos:



In the right photo, Freddy is on a spotter and in the left one he is working out at the airport on a dual-engine plane. It probably belonged to the Bear Paw Airline or another of the pilots who housed their planes at the tiny airport. In this image you see Marathon on the left side. Dad was either helping Freddy work on the engines or was working another one, perhaps painting logos like he did on occasion.



Freddy and Jerry shared an interest in hunting as shown by this image of Frances Aylene (Left) with Jerry and Freddy at Ptarmigan Lake on a moose hunt. She was a pretty woman.

Frances Aylene was married to Jim Aylene who was one of the committee men for my scout troop so I'll talk about them later.



## 6. Suspicious Neighbors

**A**cross the street, and up a short distance was this house. I didn't pay a great deal of attention to what went on there because the kids were older than me and mean. I knew better than to stick my nose where it would get bloodied so I ignored those kids and the adults they were with.

But mom was more bothered about what went on in this house than about anything else in the neighborhood. To this day I don't really know what

her concern was because she didn't voice it. But I know that her hot button was sex above all else. Since there were "old" men and "young" girls coming and going, I opine that mom thought there was some sort of prostitution or something going on. I knew who lived there so I knew that some of the teenagers who went there to see the older men weren't residents.

Mom's concern for the place was severe enough that not only did she forbid us from having anything to do with the bunch, she started to do her own detective work. By that, I mean that she made a point of watching to see who was coming and going at that house. She took a note pad and started to keep track of dates and time and names of people who were at the house. She stored this pad underneath a decorative dish that set on top of our large radio by the front window in the living room. Nothing ever came of her anxieties but there were abundant and manifest.



## 7. The Episcopal Church



Imagine that the Richardson house is just off the right edge of this photo. That's where it stood in real life, across Adams Street that traveled east-west here. This church is the Episcopal Church -it had a real name of one of the early apostles but such a name didn't mean as much as "Episcopal" so none of us kids referred to it as anything but Episcopal.

The rectory is the low building. It has a full basement which was populated by several kids of the pastor -or whatever you called the religious leader of this brand of Christianity. His name was "Clapp" and was referred to as "Father" which always struck me as a funny thing to call him. I knew two 'fathers' and he wasn't either one. Coming from a primitive religion, his brand of liberalism was shocking. After he had dismissed his flock at the front door, he'd go over to the rectory, get a cold beer out of the fridge, get a cigarette and stand there on the front porch of the rectory, smoking and drinking.

Father Clapp had a son my age named "Jay". He became one of my three best friends in Seward along with Brent Whitmore who lived behind us, and Clayton Frampton whose father was the principal, poor man, of the 12 grades in one building. I'm on the left, Jay is in the



middle and Brent is on the right. Brent told me in 2003 that he didn't know where Clayton was the day this photo was taken.

Jay was an unhealthy specimen who struggled in that rough environment with the climate and rough kids. His family tended to be what you might call "genteel" so his attitude didn't exactly win him friends from the bullies he patronized. I saw the effect of such attitudes and didn't repeat the mistake. I was basically a chicken - but a smart one.

### 8) Incomplete log cabin

**S**traight across the street from our house was this log cabin. It was in this condition when we moved there and it was in that condition when we moved away. The owner had no rush or no money.

The house of ill repute is there on the left.

Just inside the right edge of the picture you can see a two story building. That's where



Figure 159

May Titus lived who we helped on occasion. She was an Eskimo who spoke good English who was less than 4 feet tall because she got TB of the spine. Mom and May had a great friendship so us "boys" were marshaled in the direction of 'charity' which was usually OK, though some of the demands on us went beyond what I liked. I'll tell you about her and those stories later.

Of course, that's Mt. Alice towering up in the background. She was everywhere. Just an amazingly tall overpowering thing.

## 8. Sunbeam MixMaster

Around the time we went to Alaska, dad bought mom a Mixmaster so she didn't have to mix everything by hand or with an eggbeater. That's how it always was. If she needed an appliance or something for the kitchen, he'd buy it as a 'present' for her, Christmas or Birthday. Seemed sort of unfair that she didn't get to have frivolous gifts but she was satisfied, probably because it saved money. I don't think she would have been any happier with a frivolous gift anyway.

The model was this exact one, a black and white Sunbeam MixMaster with milk glass mixing bowls. It weighed a ton. There was also an attachment to make juice out of oranges or whatever but we didn't use it. Fruit was too expensive. The long black handle arcing over the top also served as a lever for releasing the beaters. It was fastened to the narrow white segment of the body of the mixer on the left side. When you pushed the handle sideways, it rotated the mechanism that clamped the beaters in place or released them. The black knob on the other end was the control that turned the motor on and adjusted the speed. On the right end of the base is a small black lever. You



Figure 160

<http://www.fiestajim.com/kitchen/10-1-mixmaster.jpg>

pushed that to adjust the base depending on the size of bowl you used because the beaters had to be working along the outside, instead of the center of the bowl.

This thing weighed a ton because most of the parts were made of metal. Plastic still hadn't taken over. The motor frame was steel as was the base and the arm that held the motor so the whole thing was heavy. I imagine it was possible to release the motor and hold the thing by its lever and mix like modern mixers but it was so heavy that you had to be a weight lifter to do that for any length of time. It used as you see it.

These things were made to be repaired, however, also a contrast with modern stuff. For example, you see that black button on the side of the motor? There's

one just like it directly opposite it. You could easily unscrew this button and as you did, a spring-loaded 'brush' was released. These brushes rest on the armature of the motor which obviously spins and in so doing gradually wears down the end of the brush, so with this system the user could easily check the state of the brushes and replace them. Try that on your mixer today.

### Jap-A-Lac

**A**bout this time I became aware of finishes on wood as something of interest. It was a good thing, apparently, for wood to be smooth and protected. Various products competed for your money and one of them captured my interest because of its name that made an obvious connection with Japan, "Jap-a-Lac." Whether the product actually was related to Japan is not an issue. The name said it, so it was obviously the case. The product is still made today and it is interesting that it has not been censured by various rights groups.



Figure 161 Glidden Jap-a-La Varnish

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/ea/printlit/Q0039/Q0039-17-72dpi.jpeg>

### Tree Houses and Forts

**L**ittle kids have an atavistic love of cave-like places. This love manifests itself in their fascination with tents, tree-houses and forts. The Alaskan frontier afforded the optimal environment for expression of this fascination. We had a clear sense of it being the last American frontier, particularly in a tiny town that was perched between the ocean and mountains, 130 miles from Anchorage, with terrible weather, lots of rain, lots of grey weather with low clouds scudding just

over our heads, coldness that chilled you to the bone, particularly when a fierce wind blew. A fort was what was needed since there were no trees in our yard. The few trees that had managed to grow on the sterile alluvium deposited by the Lowell River had been logged off years before and few had been planted in their place. So forts it was.

The north edge of our yard was lined with Elder berries, and in the back of the lot we scraped out a flat space under them bushes. You can see the elder berry bushes behind me in this photo.

The place we made the fort is where the boat is sitting here. The dirt was rocky but soft so we managed to make a level area about 8 feet square. It was important that the bushes hung over it. That made the difference. To have scraped a flat place in the middle of the yard would have been pointless because there was no natural barrier on one side and nothing hanging over it. The overhanging bushes stopped the rain and gave a sense of being protected, a sense of being in a cave, secure. Just sitting on this cleared space in the grayness while the rain fell was comforting. I felt like I was safe and protected from the elements. It was a powerful sense that I sought all the time we lived there, a sense of being able to take care of myself in the elements. That was a frontier and I knew it and I wanted to learn to be safe on my own. These forts were one of the exercises I went through to achieve that end. I am not exaggerating.



After we had cleaned the rubbish out of this space, throwing it in little piles just anywhere around us because it didn't matter what the rest of the yard looked like, we were ready to construct the fort. This was a serious undertaking because we knew that our lives depended on the security it would provide from things like the bad weather, and marauders like our neighbors.

We discussed the plans for the walls, where to put the corner posts and how to construct the wall between them. A certain amount of squabbling was inevitable in these exchanges where we lay on the ground on a fluffy pile of branches, resting on an elbow, or sitting on the ground leaning back against the narrow elderberry trunks.. We'd talk about the deal while we picked up bits of wood or rocks which we'd toss away, listening quietly most of the time. But when we had a real difference of opinion about what should be done, we'd get louder and sit up to argue a point. Most of the time we really didn't care too much about our position. Sitting up was because we were tired of laying down.

One summer we managed to scrounge enough pieces of lumber to built a low wall a foot and a half high around three sides of the square. The fourth side was protected by the elderberry bushes so didn't need a wall. We struggled with getting this wall to stand alone and stand straight. We tried sharpening pieces of wood and driving them into the ground in the corners but didn't really succeed. In the end the rudimentary wall tipped over and we stopped worrying about it. But during the time we were focused on it, it was thrilling to have a project of that magnitude to work on.

Tree houses were rare in Seward but there was one up the alley in a tree behind the house of the post master. He had two daughters about our age who played with us. The tree house was about as rudimentary as the wall of our fort but imaginations made up for whatever deficiencies there were.

### Five and Dime stores

They are defunct now. I understand why. No one today would dare trust the public to paw through shelves of tiny, fit-in-your-pocket toys. The cost in shop lifting would bankrupt the store in 6 months. But back then when a nice moral ethic really did prevail in the US of A, although it, too, was fractured in locations, these stores were a garden of Eden for little kids with a few cents, a nickel or a dime to spend. Hours could be devoted to poring over the various things that could be purchased for these small amounts of cash. Of course, to put it in perspective, a gallon of gas cost 12 cents, so 5 cents was not an inconsequential amount. For a dime you could go to the soda fountain and buy a large frosted mug of Hires Rootbeer and a candy bar! Or go to a movie. But whatever, it was a wonderful way to kill part of an afternoon wandering through the store examining

all of the small things there beckoning for your cash.

Seward had two. One was in a private residence and the other was either a Franklin or a Woolworth 5 & 10 Cent Store like this one. It set on the west side of Main street, about 6 stores north of Warner's Market and south of the laundry.

There are probably a lot of reasons that this kind of store doesn't exist today, and hasn't for many years. One of them, I personally believe, is a degeneration in the public values of this country. Once you understand what these

stores sold and how they were displayed you will agree. Your first reaction will likely be that I'm over-stating my case but you see the evidence her and can form your own opinion after reading more.

These stores catered to kids and to families with little money. There actually were hundreds of small items that cost a nickel or a dime, things like key rings, sets of jacks and a ball, yo-yos, all sorts of small toys, caps for cap guns, small plastic guns, sets of small playing cards, and so on. The way the items were displayed was astonishing. The things were laid in bulk out in the open in small compartments on the top of a counter. The compartments were an inch or two deep, made of glass, and were perhaps 4 by 6 inches in size. Stuffed with whatever item was assigned to that small bin. Things just lying loose there for you to pick up and feel and inspect and consider. Small signs with the name of the item and the price were affixed to each bin, so you could tell how much you would be spending if you bought any item.

When we had change that we could spend, we would get permission from mom to go "shoppin'", i.e. spend 15 cents or whatever we had. When we lived in Homebrew Alley we went to the private residence because it was closer. When we opened the front door, the store keeper who was in the back of the house or upstairs would come into the store area, wiping her hands on a towel. She would greet us and ask if she could help us and we'd politely reply that we "were just

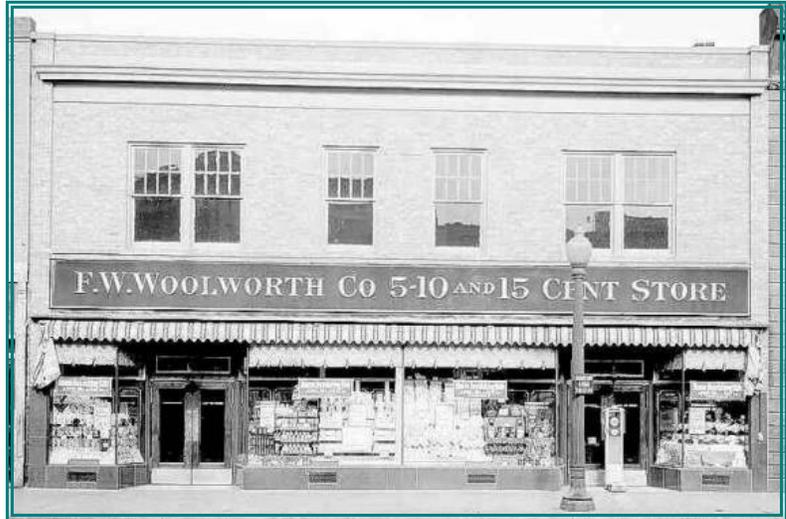


Figure 163 <http://www.laramiemuseum.org/Images/Woolworths.jpg>

looking." But she knew that whenever we came in, we were going to spend some money because we never went in for any other reason.

We would paw through the piles of things, wanting everything but knowing we could only spend a dime or 15 cents, so we chose, and put back, re-chose and put back until we had finally chosen the one thing we had to have that day. We gave her our purchase, paid her the money and she put it in a small sack for us and thanked us for coming. She waited for us to exit and then went back into the house I suppose.

It is the size of the items and their unprotected display that persuades me that no storekeeper in his right mind would consider doing such a thing today. Too many people, kids included, would just pocket these things and pay for a nickel candy bar on their way out the door. But they were wonderful places to see a wide range of things to spend your money on. Very different that the bubble cards, and shrink wrapped toys that are secured to cards to make it more difficult to shop lift. There was something satisfying about being able to actually handle and play with the things.

For example, there was a pair of plastic Scotty dogs, inch long, secured to the top of equally long bar magnets. This pair was always sold in a wonderful matchbox type box that you had to slide open to get to the dogs. Then you would sit them on the counter and push them back and forth to see what happened. The same dogs may be available today but they will be secured in some manner, probably on a large card so you don't have the tactile experience of feeling them push or pull on each other. They also offered infinite enjoyment



Figure 164

<http://www.magicbilly.com/magic/spunkydogs.htm>

because the magnetic field could be used to collect filings, pick up small steel or iron objects and so on. The concept of "north pole" and "south pole" was easily understood, as well as the concept of "opposites attract". Pretty persuasive evidence as far as I was concerned. Of course, having a dad -and a mom, the truth be known- who believed in the 'scientific method' and were both naturalists, Dick and I were naturally susceptible to anything 'experimental', anything 'scientific'.

There were no postmen in Seward who walked from house to house delivering mail, at least none that I knew. They may have been someone who delivered to the businesses down town and there was rural postal delivery out the highway and along the Old Nash Road, but private homes in town didn't get that service. We were assigned a post office box in the post office in the federal building and had to go there to get out mail.

The post office was located in the building I knew as the Federal Building. It had a different name I know but can't remember what it was. To me it was the federal building because that's where the post office was which was a federal thing. I wasn't too clear on this business about federal and government but somehow I knew the postoffice was the thing that Benjamin Franklin started back in the east and it got to be part of the national government.

There were two routes that we could take to the post office which were naturally parallel and they were about 50 feet apart. One of them was a sort of mini-alley that ran east-west behind the row of buildings on the north side of Adams Street, also an east-west street, the one that ran across 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue by the Episcopal Church. The other route was Adams Street itself. The advantage to the alley was that it was rougher and unpaved with some small drop that you jumped down over or had to climb up on going back. Remember that there was no flat ground. Everything sloped two ways so you had the benefit of the slope going in one direction. In the winter this back alley route was fun after a new snow because new snow is always fun to play in, to be the first to make a trail in.

The Adams Street route was clearer when we got near the center of town because there were a couple of sidewalks if we were on the right side of the street. For example, there was a sidewalk in front of the Van Gilder Hotel and the bank, but directly across the street there was an empty lot shaded by a large tree, and there was no sidewalk there, just a dirt path.

This is the modern version of Adams street, a far cry from what I lived with. For example, this street has sidewalks on both sides and they extend clear up to the Episcopal Church. In addition, the street here is paved. Imagine that, paved. There was only one short strip of pavement on the main street, Fourth Avenue. None on any of the cross streets like this.

There in the background is Little Bear wearing dark green and on the right is Mt. Marathon. Adams runs straight up -up hill- to the Episcopal Church which sits on the corner of Second Avenue. We'd walk up that street and when we got to the Episcopal Church, we'd turn right and go four houses to our own.

The building here in the foreground one the right is a new building that was built after the old federal building was torn down. I don't know whether the 1964 Tsunami destroyed the federal building or whether "urban renewal" got it. In any event the "city" of Seward build its City Hall on the same corner.

The old building we went to is this, the one I showed you in Volume 5 - Seward 1941. That's where mom and dad went for their wedding photos.



The street running in front of this old Federal Building is Fifth Avenue and the one running along the far side of the building is Adams. The little alley I talked about using sometimes to get to the postoffice runs along the near side of the building. We used Adams most of the time but sometimes used the rough unimproved alley. The two routes were close but to me as a little kid it seemed like a long distance.

Whichever way we came to the federal building to go in to the postoffice, we'd have to go in through the main doors on the front of the building between the cars. We'd go up a few steps and enter a high lobby. Directly across from the entry way was a counter that had two windows that were opened to serve postal customers. The place had the smell of old wood since the floors were wood, and old polish. Cigarette smoke mixed with these wood smells to create a unique odor unlike any other in the town.

All of the mailboxes were to the right of the rightmost window. The lobby was shaped like an 'ell' with the short limb on the side where the windows were and the long limb running back along the room that the windows were in. These small mailboxes lined the wall it seemed from top to bottom, though they couldn't have been too high obviously. Dick remembers the number of our mailbox and he remembers the combination. The door had a small glass window so you could see if there was any mail inside, thereby avoiding having to unnecessarily open the door. The small knob that was knurled had to be turned a certain number of turns to the left, a couple to the right and then back to the left.

If you managed to line all three pins up correctly you were lucky, and got to twist a little fin-like affair that released the pin that constituted the lock. At that point the little door swung open and you could reach inside and grab the mail. If there was one of those special slips that said there was a "Parcel Post" you took it back to one of the windows and stood in line until it was your turn. Then you stepped up to the counter and handed the slip to the man who was there. It was always men in those days, no women anywhere in the postoffice itself although there were women secretaries in the offices. You waited anxiously while the man went back into the bowels of the place and muttered to himself while he rummaged around in boxes and sacks to find the package. Finally, he'd return with it and hand it across with a cheerful comment about "Been waitin' for this long?" or something like that. They were always nice.

Any other kind of post office slip we had to take home. If there was postage due, we had to take it home to get the money necessary to pay the amount due. If it was a COD, 'Collect on Delivery', something that went away a long long time ago

since no one trusts anyone these days and for good reason, you'd have to get the right amount of money and go back to pay the amount due. In both cases, the man would do the same routine hunting up the package or the envelope to hand over.

Sometimes mom would give us money to buy stamps for her. That was an important task. I felt grown up when I took a dollar bill and went to the counter and told the man that I wanted a sheet of one cent stamps, which cost something like 50 cents, or ten nickel stamps that also cost fifty cents. That was a lot of money in those days. We obviously had to be particularly careful when we were carrying stamps home. If we got them wet, they'd stick together and we'd get another lecture about paying attention and how much work we made by being lazy and so on. I could have repeated the lecture actually but learned early on that it wasn't wise to mimic mom when she was 'het up'. That only earned ANOTHER lecture that was pepperier still. No, just let her run down and go back outside to play. That as the best way to deal with the irritation that was always on the surface.

### Allowances, Washing Dishes & Cleaning the Kitchen

**A**ny idea how hard it is to stand in the kitchen trying to wash the dishes at 8:00 pm in Seward in the summer when the sun is still high in the sky after a long dark winter? And school is out. And the neighbor kids are loudly playing "kick the can", or "Find the candy bar"? And you need to go pee, and the dish water is running down your elbows into you shirt sleeve? And your mosquito bites need to be scratched. And there are a bunch of pots and pans to scrub with a worn out scrubber. And the water is dirty and needs to be changed. And you are so frustrated you want to cry. And your brother won't wipe the dishes like he should. But I knew. If I didn't do precisely what I was ordered to do, if I complained, the consequences would be even more uncomfortable than this list of irritations I just enumerated. Mom had her way to make sure you agreed that her instruction was reasonable.

Then when you finally think you're finished, ready to tear out the back door to partake of the shouts and sunshine your mom comes into the kitchen and asks, "Why isn't the counter clean? I told you to clean the counter." So. You have to come back, take out the dishrag from under the sink, and clean the counter. But worse now, it's under her direct supervision. So any thing you would be sort of inclined to overlook, any crumbs you might have surreptitiously brushed on the floor

go carefully into the trash. Things she might be inclined to ignore in different circumstances now receives the white-glove test. Oh boy. And the sink better not have any grease around it, or even soap foam. Gotta get it absolutely sparkling and dry. But the dish cloth is now soaked so won't really polish the sink. Oh my, agony, the sun's going down and I can hear those kids and they are having a lot of fun judging by the squeals and yells. Get me out of here!

This was the kind of work performed around our house to "earn" an allowance. Let me tell you, that allowance was fully earned. And you were held hostage by it. With a word mom could cut it off for a week, and there you were without any money at all. When the neighbors always had money to buy a nickel candy bar for "Find the candy bar."

Storage of this allowance was a weighty matter, but not because one of us would steal from the other. At least not at that point. I am sure that we each experimented with the principle of "Permanent loans" of each others cash money at some previous time. And I am just as sure as the sun will come up tomorrow, that mom visited a punishment on us so severe that we would have preferred to be put in the granary alone for a week. She left nothing to chance in her punishments. She was diabolical. The thing I know she did even though I don't have a specific memory of it, is that when we each stole some of the other kid's money, she made the robber do two things. The first was reasonable. Just hand back the 1 dime, and 1 nickel and 3 pennies to the other kid. Who by the way, was standing there with a big grin looking you right in the face, and heaven help you if you snarled at him for "Laughing at me". That would earn you a whack on the behind that would jar you molars loose. Nope, you walked over to the other kid who stood expectantly with his hand out to receive his money back. That was the easy part.

The next part was the nasty part: while she stood there looking over the whole proceeding like the Lord High Executioner, the offender had to go get his own piggy bank. And while everyone waited silently -including any neighbor kids who just happened to be hanging around for the hanging- the offender had to remove the same number of dimes, nickels and pennies from his own piggy bank, and hand them to the other kid. That's why the other kid was grinning. He knew. He knew because HE had done the same thing and more than once. Mom was merciless when she was in the punishment mode and woe be to the wrongdoer, for his is pure pain, sometimes purely physical, sometimes purely psychological, but when she was in high dudgeon, it was inevitably an admixture of both. Don't make mom mad. That was my cardinal rule. If only I had been able to observe it, my life would have been a lot

less painful.

### Soap, Washing & Beans

Fluffy sweet smelling soap powders or liquid detergents fill supermarket shelves today, but grandma made her own and we used it in Vernal. Lye soap which was harsh and generally not sweet smelling. The recipe is simple. Take fat, mix it with lye and water and chemistry will do its job, producing soap. The trick, of course, is in getting the right proportions.

Grandma would put a large kettle on the stove, or over an open fire outside, and would throw in all of the fats she had collected specifically for this purpose. The fat could be congealed ham fat, grease from frying bacon, fat from a venison roast, lard or tallow, the globular accumulations of fat from the stomach cavity of a cow. The kinds of fats determined the nature of the soap, tallow producing the lightest finest soap but any fat worked.

The basic process starts with mixing lye with water in the right proportions. Gramma always poured the lye slowly into the water to keep it from splashing out on us. This mixture produced an enormous amount of heat as well as irritating fumes. The fats were then heated to melt them all and then the lye water was slowly mixed into the fat. To evaluate her mixture, Grandma would get a small amount of it on her finger and then touch it to her tongue.[ Or she would just rub it between her index finger and thumb to see whether it needed more lye water. She kept adding lye water and stirring the mixture until it had the right 'feel' at which point she would pour it out into wide shallow dishes or enameled pans.

Then magic happened. The mixture was let sit overnight during which time it turned into soap. Grandma would then take a large butcher knife and score the surface of the fat to divide it into equal sized bars and then would cut it out. These bars of soap were her laundry soap so she made them about 2 and a half inches square and three or four inches long. They were set out in a dry place to cure for several weeks after which she would put them away in storage.

The laundry was done by heating water on the coal stove in large copper kettles made to fit over the two burners after the lids were removed. The hot water was poured into a large galvanized tub with one bar of soap that was cut into pieces so that it would dissolve rapidly. This was the washing tub. After clothes were stirred around in this hot soapy water and rubbed on a corrugated scrub board, they were wrung out and put in the first of two rinse tubs. After rinsing and

wringing out the clothes in the first rinse they were put through the same process in the second rinse tub that had bluing added to the water to make white clothes appear whiter than they otherwise would be. The bluing came as a liquid in a bottle or as blue marbles that she dissolved in a pan of water on the stove before pouring it into the rinse water. After putting the clothes through that process, they were hung outside, even in the winter, to dry which produced a wonderful smell in the clothes.

This is how the process looked before the advent of electricity, an entirely manual process. A washboard is lying on the tub, resting on the woman's thighs. She would scrub the piece on the washboard, rinse it in the water, run it through the manual wringer, and then drop it in the white enameled pan. The pan-ful of clothing was then hung on the lines to dry.

Later the process was mechanized. The first washing machines on the farm were powered by small gasoline engines since there was no electricity. These motors that were fastened to the frame underneath the tub and agitator smoked and clattered but were interesting to a kid. Later after rural electrification reached the farms, electrical washing machines appeared. The gasoline motor was replaced by an electric one.

My mom's first washing machine was electrical and looked like the one in the preceding photo. There were two selling points to mechanical washing machines. First, the agitator relieved the women of having to do the strenuous work of rubbing the clothes against a washboard. Second, there was a mechanized wringer that also relieved the women of the work of wringing out the clothes. Plus the agitation and wringing was probably superior to



Figure 167 Manual washing machine with wringer



Figure 168 Wringer Washing Machine being filled with water

<http://newdeal.feri.org/images/s36.gif>

manual work, at least by the end of the long wash day.

I had to help do laundry I got old enough. Saturday was "wash day", a special day of the week during which the house was filled with steam and the smell of wet clothes. In the winter windows dripped with dew flowing down on the casements. Lifting dripping clothes out of a tub of water and holding them up to the wringer always wet my shirt front, a miserable feeling that was cold and prickly but as much a part of wash day as the wash itself.

The wringer presented a special risk to any user. It earned your respect quickly. The dripping shirt or pants had to be held up to the slowly turning wringers in such a way that an edge of the cloth caught between the rollers after which the entire piece of clothing was slowly but inexorably pulled through the wringers, squeezing the water out. Simple enough process but various problems could develop so the manufacturers had built a safety release on the top of the wringer.

The safety release was a long narrow handle on top of the wringer head that you could slap to relieve the pressure on the rollers. The top one would just pop upward because it was sitting on a powerful spring built for the purpose. The pressure ceased immediately when you hit the release. I used this release if a large lump of clothing was trapped between the rollers and couldn't pass through. The other time it was of vital interest when putting clothes into the wringer was when any part of my anatomy threatened to get trapped between the wringers. Mom made us use a long narrow stick to lift the clothes up to the wringer to prevent us from getting our fingers trapped because the wringer would bruise them badly or even break them, but sometimes we would be impatient with the stick so would hold clothes up by hand. More than once I whacked that lever when I felt my fingers being pulled into the wringer. A very famous saying also refers to this problem, alluding to a particular part of one's anatomy in the wringer. Painful thought.

Some washing machines had the wringer head rigidly fixed so that it could not be turned. We had one of the machines that were built with a wringer head that could be rotated 360 degrees around the column it set on. So when you set your rinse tubs next to the washer, you would wring clothes out of the wringer into the first rinse tub, agitate them by hand there, then rotate the wringer head 90 degrees, and wring them into the second wash tub, agitate them some more and then rotate the wringer head 90 degrees again and wring the clothes out into the dish pan.

The house was so small that mom didn't like to use the wooden drying rack she stored in the basement. She preferred to hang the wet clothes outside on the clothes lines. She

would set the wooden rack up in the front room if it rained all day but a week's worth of washing took more than one day to dry. Our clothes lines were in the back yard by Schaefermeyer's wash lines. (You can see the top of the Episcopal Church



steeple over Mr. Leonard's house) Dick as a pup is holding Kobuk as a pup as he squats below the clothes lines. Kobuk's chain was secured to one of the lines so he could run back and forth. This image shows the problem we had when we hung the wash out in the winter. In the summer we had to reach over our heads to reach the lines but 2 feet of snow created a different problem. Instead of hanging a shirt by its tail, we'd drape it half way over the line to keep it from touching the snow. The temperature was so cold that it froze the wet clothes into sheets. You could take a dish towel off the line and hold it flat so it looked like a crusty piece of poster board. That probably makes you wonder why we bothered hanging the clothes outside at all.

Ice is funny stuff. It shares a characteristic with solid iodine because both of them will "sublimate". I suppose other substances do this but I don't know which ones they are. To sublimate means that the solid stuff does not need to turn into a liquid before it can boil off. You know that water has three "phases": it can be (1) molecular vapor in the air like humidity and steam, (2) it can be liquid, and (3) it can be solid ice. So does iodine. Most substances have to pass through those three phases, if they change at all, but these two substances are bizarre. For reasons that I don't know, they can skip the liquid phase and simply go from the solid phase into the gas phase. This was very convenient for our laundry. What happens is

simple. Molecules of the water -or iodine- simply 'evaporate' out of the solid mass and if this process is allowed to go on long enough, the constant departure of those individuals molecules will eventually reduce the solid mass to nothing. In the end, we had soft, sweet-smelling clothing that smelled no different that they did when they hung outside to dry in the sun.

Wash day beans. The day was focused on doing the washing, and took all of mom's attention and energy. That meant that she didn't want to spend a great deal of time or attention on dinner. On Friday night, she would pull out a bag of beans and open it on the counter. She'd set a pan by the bag and the lift out a left handful of beans at a time and let them pour slowly out of her palm into the pan, watching carefully for bits of stems, pod, dirt and rocks. After she had "enough" beans in the pan, she would put it under the tap and fill it 3/4 full, reach into the pot and swirl the beans around to wash them. This caused the remaining bad beans and debris she had missed to float to the top so she could skim them off with her hand and throw them in the trash. After this process was completed, she'd pour off the water, refill the pot, cover it and set it on the back of the stove to soak over night.

The next morning as the washer was being set up in the kitchen with two rinse tubs, a major undertaking, she would prepare the pot of beans. She'd take a ham hock she saved in the fridge and put it into the bean pot. She'd light the burner with a match -automatic lighting of propane burners was the stuff of science fiction- and then set the pot on low heat to cook all day. During the day she would stir the beans to keep them from scorching and would replenish the water as needed. As a result of the steam generated by the boiling beans and the washing, the windows were constantly covered in steam that would drip down onto the window sill. The smoky smell of the ham bone or joint mixed with the smell of the cooking beans to produce a distinctive smell that made my mouth water.

After we had finished washing we had to drain the tubs and washer and put them away. It was a major production to assemble the washer and tubs in that small kitchen and do the work.

## Ambulatory Toilet Seat

My brother Dick has a special talent. He can sleep walk and I envied him doing that. And he has the added feature of not remembering a thing about what he did. So it works out really nice in some instances for him. This story is true but I still don't really know the truth about what happened in the first place.

It all started one morning when mom got up and went to the bathroom. She was shocked first at the fact that the toilet seat was entirely missing. There was nothing but the enameled porcelain toilet bowl to sit on which was a cold proposition. Then she started to get angry. I guess I understand that anger but I'm not able yet to comprehend why what happened did. She confronted us to kids immediately. She opened the bathroom door that was one of the walls of our small bathroom and asked with her usual sharpness, "OK, which of you kids took the toilet set."

In our sleepy state of mind we had no answer. No one took the toilet seat. It was there last night and no one came into the house so it should still be there this morning. We each said we didn't take it, believing that we hadn't. That of course didn't sit well with her. She was standing there by the toilet and she could tell that the seat was missing so we didn't win any points for our answers. Then we were ordered out of bed to come and look. We looked and sure enough, mom was right after all. The toilet seat was missing.

The problem was the neither of us kids said he took it. Why, I wonder, did someone take the toilet seat? It was risking one's life to play tricks on mom in the first place, and somehow a toilet seat trick seemed about the least likely thing I'd consider. As I got dressed and ate breakfast and got out the door for school, I continued to believe I didn't take it. And Dick said he didn't take it and he seemed to believe it. The unfortunate thing for us was that mom believed that we were just lying to her and that we both probably were involved in this prank and she was going to have her revenge. She did one of those horrible imprecations that I hated. She said, as we got our coats on and started out the door, "Just you wait till your father comes home."

Oh man. What a way to start a day. We had to go to school and sweat the whole day about having our own personal inquisition. We never quite knew what form the attack on us would take because these two were really creative. I guess they believed the punishment should match the crime so they devised alternate methods of torture for us. We had a hard time concentrating on school, and when

we got home we were sick to our stomachs as 6:00 p.m. approached because dad would be home about 6:15 p.m.

As soon as he walked in the front door and got his coat off, mom announced to him in her best queen voice, "The toilet seat is missing and neither one of the boys will admit he took it. I need you to take care of them". Oh boy. But true to form, dad surprised us again. He said we should eat dinner first after which we would look into the matter of the missing seat. Fine torture that was. I would have preferred to just get it over with and be sent to bed without dinner which was one of the versions of torture they practised.

After dinner was over and we did the dishes, we were ordered to get our pajamas on and to come into the kitchen for a family council. Those were pretty ominous words after this particular edition. We got undressed around the corner in our bedroom, got our summer pajamas on and marched to the kitchen, feeling like the executioner was waiting there with axe to behead us. Mom sat at one end of the narrow kitchen table, dad sat at the other end, and we stood with our backs to the stove.

The inquisition began with the usual sort of quiet observations and comments and a request for an admission. The thing to have done would have been to immediately confess and take the spanking or punishment because the longer we waited to get to that point, the madder they got and the harsher they were. But I knew I had not stolen the toilet seat. Did they think I was a moron?! And Dickie maintained steadfastly that he hadn't stolen the toilet seat. I didn't know what to think because someone obviously took it because mom sure didn't.

Mom's and dad's logic was infallible and irresistible. They knew that no one had come into the house last night, that only the four of us were there, that the toilet seat was taken during the night, and that neither of them took it, so that meant that either the seat walked off by itself which they were skeptical about though I wanted to believe it, or that one of us was the miscreant. So confess! Which one of you took the toilet seat!

We were standing so that we could see out the kitchen window to the Schaefermeyer's house. This was summer evening so those kids were playing in their back yard which meant they could see us standing at attention there in our pajamas in front of the stove. They knew something was up and watched surreptitiously to see which one of us was beheaded. I don't know how long we really stood there but it seemed like far longer than we had ever had to do this thing. I was sleepy, I was embarrassed to have the kids watching us in this

unpleasant position, so I did the only thing that I could do under the circumstances to bring this meeting to a close.

I finally told them that I had been lying, that I had taken the toilet seat. I hadn't but I was through with this silly inquisition so really did lie this time - a bizarre way to end an inquisition about lying. I don't remember what punishment was meted out for this transgression but I am sure it was terrible and that's why I can't remember it. They had such a way of abusing their kids all in the name of honesty and truth. Love was always absent in these transactions that had the quality of the sad scenes from a Charles Dickens' book.

To this day I don't know what happened. I didn't even know where the toilet seat was. I entertain the possibility that Dick had been sleep walking and that he removed it. But that seems so far fetched because removing a toilet seat requires that two nuts be removed in order to lift the thing up. It seems doubtful that he would be able to remain asleep through such a process that required him to lean down and under the toilet with a wrench of some sort to do the job. I just do not know what happened. But I didn't take it.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> of July Creek and Hermit

When the salmon were running, dad took another trip across the bay to Fourth of July creek to see how they were doing there. He took Art, Dick and me. No other kids went which is surprising. After we moored the canoe at the mouth of the creek, Dick and I started chasing salmon. They were all over the place and the river was only a couple of feet deep in most places, shallower in some, so we were convinced that we would be able to catch one. But they are amazingly fast and managed to find routes we couldn't anticipate, even if their bodies were half out of the water. They just flailed away with their tails and propelled themselves out of reach again and again. In the process of accosting a bunch of salmon this way we both got really wet, through to the skin which made for a cold time.

Seward was never warm even when we were dry but when we were wet, we were really cold. To remedy this problem, dad and Art built a fire for us to get warm. Art got wet too so he took his socks off and held them up to the fire to dry while Dick took his levis off and held them over the fire. Which looks sort of funny since we are all wearing coats and hats.



While we were there, we visited an old man

who lived permanently on the north bank of the mouth of the river, above high-tide line in the willows. He had an old log cabin that was well chinked in the part he lived in but it was not a really well-maintained log cabin. No reason I suppose because he went over to get away from people, didn't care what people thought, and probably did what he wanted just to spite them. We approached the place together and dad or Art called out to alert the old man that we were coming. His whereabouts was known to the town so it wasn't a surprise to find him over there.

He was probably used to having a nose-poke now and then because he was civil to us. He invited into his cabin to sit a spell. We followed but as we entered the place, we encountered a cloud of smoke from his stove that made it impossible for the adults to stand up so they stooped over and found a rough chair to sit on. The old man had manners still and was apologetic about all the smoke that was so obviously uncomfortable for his guests. He explained that he had a problem with is draft and that one of these days when he wasn't too busy he was going to go up on the roof and take a look to see what was wrong and repair it. That killed dad and Art. The man lived alone, did nothing except fish, cut wood and cook but he was too busy to take care of the draft that made him as uncomfortable as us.

## Janitoring

Dad was the Presiding Elder for the small branch of the LDS church in Seward, it being too small a congregation to qualify as a true "branch", let alone "ward". It was his -hence my- duty to set up the meeting place each Sunday. The group of 4-5 families that constituted this branch paid some amount of tithing that dad sent to the HQ in Anchorage at which point Anchorage returned money to dad so he could rent the Oddfellows' hall for meetings. It seemed to odd that he collected money that he could not use to pay the bills, but that he was sent money to do the job.

Renting the Oddfellows hall sounds fine enough until you realize that this group had a penchant for Saturday night parties with lots of booze and cigarettes which was practically anathema. The natural result was that dad had to go down to the hall at 6 am on Sunday morning to pour the booze out, clean up the cigarettes and spills, open the windows to air the place out and set up the chairs. Dick and I were fortunate enough to be allowed to help. Every Sunday. In the summer this wasn't too bad, though I didn't ever like getting up early. But in the cold dark snowy winter it was horrible. We didn't drive the half mile to the place. No, we walked. And I think it was intentional on dad's part, almost punishment. (Although, looking back from today clear through my childhood to his, I am open to the possibility that it didn't really occur to him to drive that short distance. In his youth, I don't get the idea that he was given any of the advantages of this kind. He had to just tough it out so that became his view of the universe. That's what he expected of us because that's the only thing he knew.) In the dark and the snow, without any words of encouragement or pleasantness. Indeed, he always was critical of us and threatened us always to work hard and not be lazy. He actually gloried in being rough and loud about waking us up, clapping his hands, stamping his feet, loudly singing some song, for the sole purpose of irritating us. It did. It was not a fun time. Did we learn anything? I don't know, but I learned not to talk back to him, not to say I didn't like doing what I was assigned to do, not to have an opinion. Sound familiar? I bet it is.

## Shoveling Snow

Even harsher than this assignment, for which we were promised "blessings" -that never came and which I would have willingly dispensed with- and "learning to work" that never seemed happened, was the "opportunity" we had to shovel walks for Lillie James who owned a dress shop that Rachel Puckett worked in - McMullins was the name of the shop.

In terms of snow, remember now that Seward has an average precipitation of 62 inches a year and 40 inches of snow. My brother and I were to be paid the princely sum of 50 cents a piece to go down to the shop and shovel the new snow off. However, the problem was the snow often fell during the night, even week nights. And guess what - we had to have the snow shoveled off the next morning before the shop opened. And before we had to go to school. So you can imagine that we were unceremoniously roused out of bed at 5:30-6 am and sent on our way down to the shop, groggy and cold with our shovels to be responsible.

Some mornings it was still snowing when we arrived there in the dim light from a small street light on the sidewalk, no one about except for an occasional man going to work. And we had to shovel and get the sidewalk clean. That is tough, particularly since people walk on the sidewalk all day, packing down the snow with their feet as it fell. So many morning we were frustrated as we could be, hating the work, feeling tension about getting done and getting home in time to go to school, because we would catch heck from mom if we were late, etc. It was a grim job and half the time I was so depressed I felt like crying. I could just feel tension well up in my shoulders with anger at being forced to do that job that was so hard to do. BTW, I NEVER saw another kid on those bitter cold mornings out there shoveling snow. Never. Go figure.

Most of the time we didn't actually clear the snow down to concrete. We just cleared the loose new snow down to the layer of ice. A few times in the spring on a sunny Saturday we used a spud that dad kindly bought specifically so we could do this difficult job, to get down to the concrete, but that was such a tough job that we rarely did it. When we got home from shoveling, all we heard was to hurry and eat breakfast so we could then walk half a mile through the unshoveled streets and paths to school. In the snow. Uphill both ways. Never a thought of a ride. I would probably have fainted if mom had offered to drive us. And if dad had offered? I would have passed out for sure. Dad. Impossible.

## Manikins

While Dick and I were working for Lilly James, who owned McMullins, and for Rachel Puckett who was the manager of the place, Rachel would have us do all sorts of odds and ends just to keep us busy so she could hand us a quarter. She was really like a favorite aunt who doted on us kids, probably because she never had any children. She'd send us across the street to get something for her, or would send us down to the basement to get a package. But that basement was a revelation. Absolutely shocking. I can remember what it was like. One time when down the stairs I happened to look beneath them into a closet sort of place that I hadn't looked in before. And I was shocked at what I saw under the stairs. Undressed store manikins.

We were used to seeing the Manikins in the store windows modeling dresses and coats but we hadn't thought about what was implied by the fact that the clothing was changed periodically, that the pose of the models varied and so on. Never. So when we went down there innocently one day to fetch something, we returned wiser. It was indeed a shock for a 12 year old to be exposed to nudity. Given the puritanical upbringing I had, I was protected from the female form. The only time I had a glimpse of it was in National Geographic magazines or the Sears or Montgomery Wards catalogs. But here they were, life-size, life-shape, just standing there.

The basement of McMullins was basically a dimly lighted warehouse affair with one large room down the center and a few smaller rooms like closets. The place had a distinctive odor that I couldn't identify because it was compounded of unfamiliar odors. One of the scents was that of unwashed fabric that has sizing in it, I knew that from mom's sewing, but there were faint perfume odors, the odor of leather shoes, and the smell of cardboard boxes blended together with whatever wood smell was still present. It was a lovely scent that was apparent when walking into the front door of the store. The basement was lined with shelves and filled



Figure 171

[http://www.goldsmith-inc.com/g\\_torsos/ft1004.html](http://www.goldsmith-inc.com/g_torsos/ft1004.html)

piles of boxes and the general clutter that must accumulate in any business over time. The place was clean and dry so satisfied the two principal criteria for my approval. I had no idea that it housed these shocking creatures.

Some of them were a sort of flesh color like the one in this image but the ones that were really troubling were clear like glass. These were made out of a Lucite type material. Most of them didn't have head, arms or legs which was bizarre and the weirdness of the situation was compounded by the fact that there was a pile of arms and legs sitting in the corner, as if the bodies had been dismembered. While I had been exposed to butchering of livestock and deer and moose and game birds, I had never seen a dead body. And I certainly had not seen anything like this, torsos in a pile or on stands, with a disconnected set of random arms and legs lying on the floor. Obviously the limbs could be affixed to the torsos but that didn't make the deal any simpler to grasp. It was too much.

But the quality of the experience that was transcendent was the sexual dimension of the whole thing. Do you remember when you were entering puberty and were in puberty how shocking sexual things were to you? It's that way for all of us. There's no way around it, particularly since sexuality seems, for most parents and children, to be a forbidden thing that cannot be talked about which of course makes it even more powerful in a vicious circle. So when we finally face it face to face, or body to body or however it is, the event is just mind-boggling. I thought of those darn bodies a lot both from a mechanical point of view as well as from a sexual point of view. In fact, I was confused by it all.

I had not been prepared for sexuality in any manner, so exposure to my own burgeoning sexuality was a shock. I did not understand where those feelings and senses and sensations came from. I hadn't changed - so I thought. I was still me, but here are feelings that cannot be denied that are astonishingly powerful. I was confused and upset by the whole thing. And of course, I didn't say a peep to anyone about it, not even Dick. I had to go down into the basement other times and would always sneak a peek at this collection of body parts and be troubled by them.

## Whales and Seals

The deep bay was attractive to a wide range of sea life, the largest of which were seals and whales. I don't remember what kind of whales entered the bay other than the killer whales. Dad or mom would point out the dorsal fins of a small pod of killers as they cruised around across from the docks. They didn't go up over the mud flats but were directly across from the city dock so were easy to see. This is what we would see, several at a time, though we were never this close. It was an exciting time to be called to watch the killer whales because they were unusual and because they were so dramatic with their fins sticking out of the water and with their beautiful dives and they arched their backs up and disappeared.



Figure 172 [http://landsendlodges.com/homer\\_photos/orca.jpg](http://landsendlodges.com/homer_photos/orca.jpg)

Larger whales occasionally entered the bay and caused as big a stir as the killers. People would be pointing and explaining as we all watched for the spout. These whales did not have dorsal fins that stuck out of the water so about the only way to identify them on the gray days in the waves was by their spout when they surfaced. Dad doubtless told me what kind of whale they were but I don't know, probably Right or Bow.

Seals were common in the bay which was an indication of the suitability of the habitat to them in terms of temperature, food and scarcity of predators - except for the killers. The only one that I ever saw was the common harbor seal that seemed to hang around where they thought they could get food. They were afraid of humans and didn't come close enough for me to ever see them well. But I had experience with them closeup when dad bought several pelts from harbor seals from Eskimos who had killed them for the meat and blubber.



## Andy's Army Surplus Store

You all know what "army surplus" stuff is, don't you. It's some cheap, khaki colored stuff made in Pakistan that you get in cut-rate stores. But that's not what real army surplus stuff was. The real stuff was the real stuff. Literally. Army surplus in those years was stuff that had been manufactured under contracts with the federal government for the various military services, which was not consumed. The federal government in its infinite wisdom decided to sell the stuff off so it didn't need to store and care for it. It went to enterprising civilians for pennies on the dollar who then took it off the army's hands. It was a good deal because items made for the military truly are first rate. They are designed and manufactured to survive tough conditions and wear well and do their jobs.

I have a mosquito net in my closet that was made in 1945, the one I used on the Yukon River. It will last longer than I will and it's only a few years younger. It was real army surplus that we bought from Andy's Army Surplus Store.

Now it is really important that you remember when I lived in Alaska in relationship to World War II. I went there in 1951 which was only 6 years after WW II had formally ended, after the Armistice was declared which signaled the end to hostilities. But the whole thing was not over in an instant. It gradually wound down. In the era when army surplus stores really did traffic in army surplus gear. None of this khaki-colored "Made in Taiwan" or "Pakistan" sort of stuff, just genuine war materiel that was left over.

Seward was luck enough, though it is not surprising, to have a man who trafficked in army-navy surplus gear. I have no idea where he bought it, but he had a store filled with it, stuff I recognized and stuff I would never understand. These stores always bought by large lots and there was little control of what was included in a lot. The guy would see that a particular lot had a bunch of mummy bags that he wanted so he'd bid and buy it. But in the same lot there might be canteens, life jackets, dummy ammunition, boot liners, toilet paper, parts for a diesel engine, gas tanks, shoe laces, Vaseline, candy, K-rations, and so on. Since he bought the stuff, he displayed it which meant that the place was like a museum and could consume hours and hours of time.

The store was called "Andy's Army-Navy Surplus Store." The store was located in the first floor of the Oddfellows Hall. This image shows the stairway to the second floor where the Oddfellows met, which is also where the Seward Branch held its meetings. The end of Andy's window shows here, with a gaff, a flag, lantern and I can't tell what else. That wall was covered with old rifles, including a bunch of musket loaders. That's where dad bought the one that he carted across the country and back to Utah.

Andy was the owner and he struck me as an old man when I met him. He was probably 30, but to a 10 year old, that's about as old as Methuselah. The two things in his favor were first, the wide range of fascinating stuff he offered, and second, his kindness. We could go in there and prowl around to our heart's content and not be sent packing in the early years. However, in later years kids began to pilfer stuff which understandably upset him.

Whenever you asked him about a particular item, if he had it, he knew he did, and then he'd pantomime where to find it. He'd turn to the quadrant of his long narrow store where the item was located, waving with a hand in the general direction, giving explicit instructions, "It's on the right side of the aisle about this high." He'd indicate with his horizontal palm the height of the item, chest-high, knee-high, and sure enough, the thing was right where he said it would.

The stuff ran the gamut. Weapons, clothing, tents, uniforms, medals, service bars, K-Rations in cases and K-Rations broken down, canteens, blankets, tents, boots, puttees, ammunition, books, flares, cooking ware, pots, pans, maps, rope, tools, netting, socks, underwear, etc. Anything that was used in a military service was likely to be there. If it wasn't he had an explanation.



We managed to get into some C-rations several times and they are a really mixed bag as far as palatability goes. They came in cardboard tubes that were sealed that were packed with different contents that were printed on the outside.

Some of the containers held wet foods that us kids didn't really want. We were looking for the candy and the crackers like the ones shown here. They were like small pilot breads, hard and dry. The candy was individually wrapped.

During the war a variety of 'rations' were prepared for the military and I didn't pay much attention to the differences. The malted milk found in the K-rations was sought after as were the chocolate bar from the emergency D-Rations. These kits all included one of the small ingenious can openers that I used for years.

It's the odd flat object in the bottom row. It was durable and effective on any cans, and had a small hole so it could be put on the chains that held dog tags.



Figure 175 <http://www.ww2rationtechnologies.com/crationtew12oz.jpg>



Figure 176 <http://www.ww2rationtechnologies.com/kratlate.jpg>

The medals were the most prized things from Andy's store. We all coveted having them. This collection from the Ninth Armored Division. There is a cloth patch on the top left, collar insignia on the top right, marksman badge with one bar hanging from it and at the bottom were the campaign ribbons. Each ribbon was earned in a particular way and could only be worn by the soldiers who earned them. After the war there was a surplus that found its way into these stores and we loved to handle them and dream about what they meant.



Figure 177

<http://www.mindspring.com/~sgasque/army/army.htm>

### Oddfellows' Hall

The time that Andy started getting cranky was probably when the school started warehousing kids over his store in the Oddfellows' space on the second floor. He became cranky about browsing and wanted to know just what it was we wanted to see. He practically asked to see our money then. So by then kids really weren't welcome to drop in to kill an hour handling the goods.

Dad didn't have a photo of the building so here's a 2003 image in B & W. Too bad there's a trailer in front but you get the idea. You can see the stairway on the front, the same one in the photo above. This long building has two stories and it was



named for the group that occupied to top floor which is probably the bunch who built it in the first place, the Oddfellows. They did their deeds on the top floor and Andy rented the bottom floor. In 2003 the bottom floor had reverted to some sort of private residence. The plate glass windows had been removed and a wall installed so the first floor here doesn't really give you the sense of what it looked like when Andy was holding forth. But the building is the same other than the doorway on the second floor that you can see and all but one the windows in this image. That wall was just smooth stucco.

The fascinating thing about the building that I learned from snooping around when waiting for dad to finish his janitoring was that on the back of the building - the right end of this photo, there was a secret staircase that went down to the back of Andy's Army Surplus store. I know it was secret because first, it was difficult to tell when you looked at the wall in the little backroom that there was actually a door there, and second, the staircase was narrow, steep and unlighted. There was even some rubbish on the stair treads so obviously was not publicly used or known. I wondered over the years what it was for and I believe today without any evidence that it was probably used by the Oddfellows when they had secret rituals that required people to appear and disappear magically in the main hall.

If you doubt that, you haven't seen the astonishing costumes that were stored in the other locked room on the other side of the building. The room with the door was on the far side of the building as you look at this photo and the one with the costumes would have been on the near side. They were incredible. I sneaked in there, too, using dad's key that let him into any room. He was more trustworthy than I so while I waited for him I really did wander around and test everything that was testable. In this costume room were incredibly bright, colorful, scary costumes, beards and accessories.

I remember a white costume that was either a god, a wiseman or a conjurer. There were several that looked sort of like pirates, made out of bright satiny fabrics, hanging there on hangers. There were also masks made out of paper mache that were large enough to cover a person's head, also scary or sobering. But the most sobering things in this secret closet were the swords. There was perhaps 6 of them. I don't really remember how many, just know it was more than two and that they looked real enough to do some damage which gave me cause to the extent that I didn't even mess with them, which is out of character for me. I wasn't against trying anything once - as long as mom didn't know. She was so dang harsh, bless her wrinkled hide.

I talked to her today and when I told her good-by I started crying again. It is such a sad thing for this extravagant woman who took the whole dang world on by herself, 17 years old, to be in this condition where she can't remember what she had for breakfast half an hour ago. I will take care of her to the best of my ability for as long as she survives. She is completely unable to take care of anything now. She can't even address an envelope properly anymore so I will care for her. I will repay the debt I owe her for being my mom, the best damn one there were was. Thank you very much and don't you forget it. I love her and would take her confusion on as my own if I could to spare her the ignominy of her end.

Back to the Oddfellows hall: in the front of the main meeting room, the north half of the top floor, there was a three-step podium constructed against the wall. That's where the big shots sat. But the really fascinating aspect of that wall above this podium was a frame set squarely in the middle. It was about 2 feet square and did not open from this side which meant that it opened from the other side, i.e. the costume room which would be to the left side of this image. This door and the secret stairway suggest something about the activities that the oddfellows engaged in.



It never occurred to me that the Oddfellows had anything to do with Freemasonry but I just found that out. These guys were masons after all. I don't know anything about the masons other than the fact that the LDS rites are claimed by certain parties to have been borrowed from the masons, in which case the costumes and secrecy ring a familiar note. When I looked on the internet in Goggle at the images for masonic regalia I was astounded to see white shoes, white ties, white belts, white robes, aprons, white hats and so on. The similarities between the two groups is actually amazingly strong. What that means I don't know but it lends credence to the claim that Joseph Smith "borrowed" some of his "inspiration" from the Masons with to he did have a formal tie.

## 9. WW II Military trails & Quonset Huts

Fort Raymond had been disbanded -or whatever the word is- around 1946, only 5 years earlier than the year I arrived so it is not surprising that there were many evidences of that occupation. For example, Fort Raymond itself remained basically intact, its barracks



and buildings converted into the TB San north of the bay, the Army Dock was still standing, and a large field across the Army Dock still had Quonset huts. Most of the Quonset huts had been taken down by the time I moved there but the evidence showed that there had been structures in place.

Some of the quonsets were probably taken out of Seward but others were purchased by locals and moved to different locations in town to be used as storage sheds or homes as was the case with this one over by the school.

In addition to these signs of the military occupation of the town, there were more interesting things running along the bay. There was a rough road that looked more like a trail than a road that apparently ran out to Caines' Head where there was the remnant of a gun emplacement erected to guard the entrance to the bay during the war. In addition to the road, there were also foot trails along the bay that were used by soldiers assigned reconnaissance duties that required



them to leave the fort and reconnoiter down the bay. Where the trail ran along the cliffs that constituted the walls of the bay, these foot trails were actually wooden staircases that had been constructed on anchors drilled into the cliffs. They had

rotted so much that mom and dad wouldn't let us climb on them but I looked at them and wondered what things must have happened on them during the war. There appeared to be the remains of electrical conduit secured to the staircases that must have been the source of land communication between the Caines' Head outpost and headquarters. I expect that the wooden trails are gone now but Caines' Head remains. These elements combined with others like the camouflage of the Jesse Lee Home to create a powerful awareness of the role of the military in our lives.

Art Schaefermeyer and his family even set up residence in one of them as shown in this photo of Christmas that year. It is not unlikely that dad and mom saw the start of this encampment of Quonset huts. Here the modest Christmas tree is shorter than dad, lighted by a string of lights plugged into the wall on the left. This must have been the first Christmas judging from my age. I'm wearing corduroys that are worn at the knees and a coat identical to Dickie's. The little kid in the front was Mikey. He was the baby of the family at the time and was spoiled so got to do things that the other kids didn't. This was across from the Army Dock and had been occupied by military families 5 years earlier. Dick appears to be eating a popcorn ball and I'm holding bootie.



## Wreck of the Quackenbush

During the 1940's, a ship named the Quackenbush served as a transport vessel to ferry soldiers between Seward and the Aleutian outposts. In 1945 the ship scraped on rocks that ruptured the hull to the extent that it could not be repaired. No lives were lost but the ship was towed back in to Seward. According to Mary Barry, it was surrounded by empty, sealed oil barrels and placed in the breakwater until 1950 when attempts were made to burn the hull. The attempt was partially successful. The remainder of the hull was towed away from the breakwater and deposited on the mud flats where it sat for most of the time was there. In 1954 1,100 pounds of dynamite were placed and detonated, exploding the hulk into pieces that floated away as drift wood.

When we went onto the flats at low tide, we could have walked clear out to the Quackenbush but I was afraid. The distance from the beach to the wreck was so great that I feared that if I went out there and the tide turned, I might be trapped in the hulk, or I would be drowned by the advancing tide. I don't remember whether or not mom or dad talked to me about how fast the tide could come in on the flats but for some reason I understood that the tide in that location moved extremely quickly. Looking back today, I have to admit that it probably did move usually fast for a tide in most locales, but even a kid probably could have outrun it if it became necessary. But I survived by not being too foolish so I didn't take the chance of going out to explore.

### Searchlights, Dead Climber & Mt. Marathon

Dave Fleming rented the back half of his lot to a family of Nazarenes from Nampa, Idaho who moved a trailer in and set it up on blocks. You can see the end of the trailer in this photo to Dick's left. Dave's house is there on the right and there was a wire fence between the yards. This family was active proselyting and being devout, attracting other families from the lower 48. As I remember, this particular strain of Nazarene was fairly strict in that the woman had to do special things with their hair which Paul described as the crowning glory of woman. They were as rigid in their morality as the LDS but the teenagers sowed their wild oats. I remember hearing stories about them going to the dock, like many people young or otherwise as a form of entertainment in a pretty dull town, to meet ships but ending up doing things they shouldn't. The saying was, "Nazarene girls don't smoke and don't drink, but that's all they don't do." I've heard that said about LDS as well. Whatever the case, the leader of the little congregation lived in this trailer next to us so we knew them well.

But tragedy struck the group. In the fall of ~1954, the old man decided that he was going to go up on Mt. Marathon for some reason. I never did understand if he was hunting, which would have been unusual because people didn't hunt on Marathon, or whether he was just on an outing for the day. Whatever the case, he was inexperienced in rigors of the climate. It was rainy and wet, as it usually was, on



the day he went up. He apparently went alone, which was his first mistake, and his second was to wear shoe-paks for climbing in rocks, a serious mistake. The rubber soles were not suited to climb rocks because they were too slippery but he didn't know that so took of on his errand.

In the evening, his failure to return alarmed the family. Night was falling and it continued to rain. The family consulted with those in town who would mount a rescue attempt for the man because at least they knew he had gone up on Marathon and was going along the bench, perhaps to the falls. Since night was falling, artificial light was necessary if rescuers were going to be able to get out before daylight. Contact was made with the ships tied up at the docks. The skippers understood the gravity of the situation and agreed to fire up their enormous search lights.

The lights on the ships were the carbon arc lights used during WW II to light up the night sky searching for aircraft and they did the job here. I remember vividly the image of these wide, enormously bright beams of light that were shined up on the side of Marathon during the night, moving slowly as the rescue team made its way along the path they anticipated that he had taken. This is the shape and strength of those beams.



(From <[http://www.absolutehollywoodworld.com/outdoors\\_advertising\\_searchlights\\_xenon\\_sky\\_trackers.htm](http://www.absolutehollywoodworld.com/outdoors_advertising_searchlights_xenon_sky_trackers.htm)>.)

I believe it must have been dad's success in the solo discovery of the Mahurrin boy that dad got involved in this rescue as well, which is part of the reason that I was allowed to go outside late at night and watch the extraordinary spectacle of wartime technology at work. He later reported that the man had obviously lost his footing on some rocks and fallen over a cliff to his death. And was undone by the ordeal again.

### Hooligan Fishing

This was one of the strangest things we did that I loved. Fishing for fish with dip nets. What an amazing concept. Put a net of a pole, dip it into water and pull out a bunch of skinny 8 inch long fish, dump them into a wash tub. And do it again. The fish was called



"hooligan" locally. The scientific name was eulachon, more dignified but less interesting. The term hooligan was an anglicized version of an Indian name for these fish that started "oo-" so it's easy to see how an "h" could be put at the beginning to create a word that came out "hooligan".

The fish is also known as "candle fish" because, it was claimed, you could light one and use it like a candle due to the amount of oil in its flesh. They were used by panhandle Indians for food and

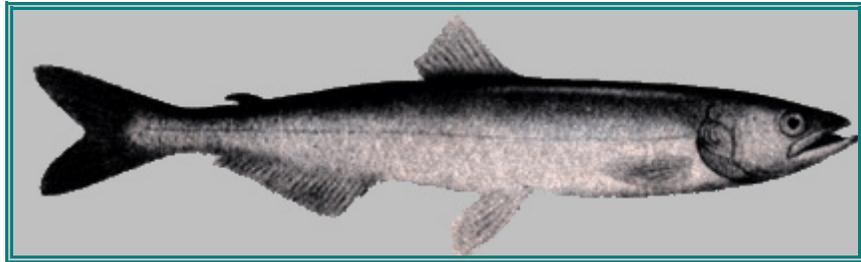


Figure 187 <http://fishhotline.com/jpeg/eulachon.jpg>

hooligan oil was extracted from the fish by fermenting them first, which must have been a pretty odoriferous process. They ran in the spring for several weeks because they needed to spawn in fresh water. It seemed their numbers were endless. People would catch wash tubs and buckets of these little fish.

We fished for them every spring over on the Resurrection River. Here a man is fishing in water that is fairly clear. The water in the Resurrection was clouded with silt so you couldn't see anything. You just dipped into the water with the net, made an arc as you pulled it through the water, twisted it so the opening was parallel with the surface of the water and lifted it up. The technique required that you sweep downstream with the net, not upstream. That was because the fish were swimming upstream.



Figure 188

X\|||lll●●● / / ●=Hx|| || \x●|| -●x-●x\●●≡●●x|| |  
▼●-lllx

This photo of Chilkoot Indians shows just how many hooligan could be caught this way. It wasn't unusual to bring up two dozen or more in one scoop. The surprise was to catch a salmon. On rare occasions, someone would net a salmon which of course caused a lot of excitement and made everyone else hope that they would have the same luck.

We used all the fish we caught, in contrast to some other families who just did it for sport. The intestines of the fish were negligible as in herring so we

didn't have to clean them before preparing them for smoking. We'd just wash them off, and lay them out one layer at a time on the trays that we put into the smoke house and then fired up the alder fire in the fire pot.

After the fish were smoked, mom put about a dozen into a plastic freezer bag and sealed the bags with an iron. Then these packages were taken down to Warner's freezer where we had rented a locker for our meat. These bags then sat there to be retrieved one at a time when mom sent us down. We'd thaw the bag out, open it up and pull out a hooligan and then eat it. I'd bite the head and tail off and throw them away and then eat the rest of the fish. They were good, though very oily compared to salmon.



Figure 189

[http://www.yukonweb.com/business/lost\\_moose/big\\_gifs/chilkoot/20\\_eulichon\\_fishing.gif](http://www.yukonweb.com/business/lost_moose/big_gifs/chilkoot/20_eulichon_fishing.gif)

## Cold Storage Locker

Jack Warner had a really scary place across the street from the Federal Building. It was a cold storage locker where we rented a medium sized locker. We stored our moose, fish and clams there until we needed them. The moose meat was cut and wrapped for a small charge by the butcher but mom wrapped the smoked fish and clams using plastic bags with paper covers that had little round windows to help you identify what was inside. Frozen packages are as hard as rocks and even seeing the contents didn't really help you know what was inside. It was the handwriting with a black wax pen that helped you find what you were after. The smoked fish was hooligan and salmon and the clams were primarily huge razors from Clam Gulch on Cook Inlet by Ninilchik.

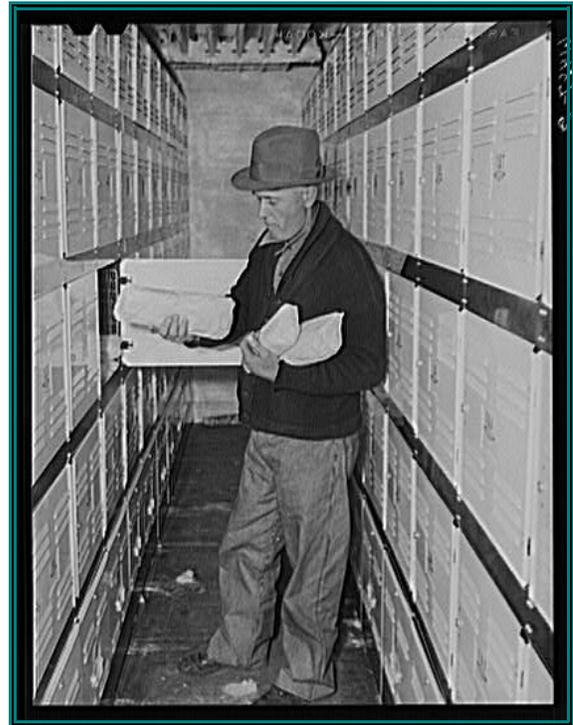


Figure 190 Lost URL

Mom would decide when she needed something from the locker and would summon one of us and give us the order. It was easy for her in her warm kitchen to just say, "Ron. Here's the key. I want you to go to the locker and get a package of razor clams, a package of hooligan, two packages of mooseburger, a package of steaks and any kind of roast." after which I knew better than to talk back, but it was not an easy thing in reality to go there.

I trudged down along Adams past the Joe Guthrie's Bakery, Liberty Theater, the Flamingo Bar, the Van Guildler Hotel, the empty lot by the cleaners, and across 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> where Jack had his cold storage unit, a single level nondescript building with an entrance on 5<sup>th</sup>. I would go in the door and say something to the adult standing guard about having to get some meat. Then I opened the heavy door into the locker section. It must have been a foot thick and had a peculiar handle that you pushed to unlock. When it shut, it made a quiet chunk like a boulder had fallen onto the concrete floor.

I had nightmares of being locked in it and forgotten over night, freezing to death. No kidding. It was frightening to be sent into the locker alone with the key

to our locker with those orders. I wasn't tall enough to reach the door so I had to drag a set of steps over to the locker first, then climb the steps, stick the key in the lock, turn and open it. The meat was thrown helter-skelter inside. There were no shelves so things were randomly placed. That meant that I had to lift packages out one at a time and sort through them to find what was ordered. After while I would have a pile of them sitting on the edge as I reached deeper into the pile which made it harder to get the next packages. It was hard to interpret the handwriting on the white butcher paper, and while I was searching, I could hear someone open the heavy thick freezer door and shut it with a ka-chunk. I was petrified that someone was going to turn the light out on me and could hardly breathe when someone opened the door.

When I had the meat I was ordered to get, I threw the meat packages I didn't need back into the locker, quickly locked it and literally ran for the door. As I reached it, I slowed down because I knew I had made it and then walked slowly out as if nothing had bothered me. But it did. The thing was like a tomb and kids told scary stories to each other about how they knew someone who got locked in overnight and froze. Probably a lot of nonsense but I believed it fervently and hated to have to go down there.

## Smoking Salmon

The hardest part about smoking salmon is getting them lighted.  
[I am not sorry.]

Once upon a time, Dad built a smoke house That's the beginning of a story about the fire chief's salmon but we need to dispose of the description of the thing first.

This is what the thing looked like, an outhouse with a stove pipe sticking into the side near the bottom. On the other end of the stove pipe was part of a wood

stove that dad appropriated from the dump and installed here to be his smoker. He had to cut a piece of sheet metal to make a seal over the top of the stove so that the stove pipe could be connected to it. You can see the silver surrounding the stove pipe. It was sealed in place with a substance that resembled concrete and it did prevent smoke from escaping. The wooden piece on the right side of the stove pipe was to keep people from knocking the stove pipe loose. That's Whitmore's house in the background, obviously under construction. In the very top left corner you see a whitish tree trunk. That is the place that Dick and I would to for picnics in the early spring when it was still snowy. Mom would make sandwiches and put them in our nice Easter baskets, put in a pint jar of milk and a cookie and off we went. We'd sit up there on a



log, feet in the snow, looking down at the world. To the left and behind the smoke house you see the garbage cans on a stand. The garbage truck came through regularly to pick up the trash and haul it out to the city dump just beyond the small

boat harbor and across from the lagoon. Notice again the kind of vegetation in the yard. No grass.

Here's a great photo of Dick and a silver that's headed for the smokehouse. His bamboo deep sea pole is leaning on the smoke house and he's wearing a rain slicker and shoepacs. The smokehouse has smoke oozing around the top as it was intended to do when in operation. Dick's holding the salmon with the home-made gaff prepared by dad, of course. Dad took a cedar 2 x 4 -which in those days was actually 2 x 4- and carved a long narrow handle. Then he drilled a hole for the spike end of the heavy metal hook, and after inserting the hook, he wrapped the shaft with a heavy cord, as neatly as possible and tied it off in such a way that the ends of the cord disappeared under neath the wrapping, a slick trick.

Here's how you do it in case you want to know: take a length of string, cord or rope. Lay one end along a dowel to have something to work on. Leave about 8 inches of cord and carefully loop the cord back along itself, holding it carefully in place. Then when the cord is about an inch and a half from the loose end, carefully start wrapping the cord around the dowel and first segment of string. Wrap all the way back to the loop, being sure to make the loops tight and keep them pressed against the preceding one. When your cord wrapping reaches the end of the loop, just insert the end of the cord through the loop. Now grab the loose tail of that loop which is sticking out of the other end of the wrapping, and pull hard enough to make the loop shorten underneath the wrapping. This will pull the end you had been wrapping with down under the



wrapping. Pull hard enough to center the two ends in the middle of the wrapping and then cut the two ends of cord loose. You'll have a tidy neat wrapping with the ends out of sight so they won't come loose or unravel.

We smoked a lot of salmon in our days, and preferred silver. I doubt we smoked any other kind because no specie was as good to our mind as the silver. Mom would gut the fish, behead and fillet it skillfully. She became adept at filleting. Then she'd cut the fillets into 3-4 inch lengths and put them into a pan of brine overnight. I'm not sure what the brine really did but it was part of the process. The next day, the brined pieces were laid on trays that were constructed like picture frames with chicken wire fastened tightly over the opening. These were naturally designed to fit precisely in the smoke house about 8 inches apart, which means you could smoke a lot of salmon at once as you can tell by the size of the thing. After the salmon was carefully placed inside the smokehouse, the door was shut and secured. There were openings around the roof such that smoke could rise from the chimney, passing over the salmon and then exit. The opening under the roof was basically the draft so it was the heat that caused this flow to happen.

A fire was started in the fire box, using alder that had been dried. It never burned with a bright flame because there wasn't enough draft to do that. I think that he did have a damper in the stove pipe to further regulate the fire so that he could keep enough air flowing to make the alder smoulder and would leave it overnight that way. If the fire went out there was no harm, the fire was just restarted. Since the salmon was on chicken wire, it was smoked simultaneously on both sides so it didn't need to be turned over. When it was ready, the fire was allowed to go out and the door was opened.

The racks were taken into the kitchen where the salmon was pulled off and packaged for freezing, eating and giving away. We preferred a dry smoke which took longer than otherwise. Part of the reason was that salmon that was dry would not spoil, something my parents always paid attention to. The other reason was that it was chewier than the moist smoke. At some point in the season, dad would make some "squaw candy", which was strips instead of pieces of salmon that were smoked so long that they were hard. You could carry this in your pocket and it wouldn't crumble. Today I think it would be called 'salmon jerky.'

## Cramming and Clabbing

**C**lamming and Crabbing. Billy Schaefermeyer and Dick and I thought we

we  
re so funny.  
We had  
been  
nagging our  
parents to  
let us go dig  
clams on the  
mud flats.  
We just  
knew that  
there were  
a lot of  
them out  
there  
because no  
one went



out to dig them. That meant they were still there. The perfect logic of a kid that sort of missed another interpretation of the fact that people didn't go out there to dig clams.

One day they relented, probably to shut us up so Billy came into town from his place out at 5 Mile and mom hauled us and our gear over to dig clams. She naturally drove along the Old Nash Road that skirted the bay and dropped us off anywhere. We all wore what we called hip boots. The bottom foot part was a rigid boot that extended up to the knee. Then there was a soft part made out of rubberized fabric sort of like canvas. This could be pulled up another foot and a half to provide additional protection when needed. In this photo I have that segment just turned straight down, and Dick has his folded down and then folded back up on itself. Dick's carrying a 'clam gun' designed specifically for digging fast digging clams.

We walked out from the beach on the flats, looking at the sea lettuce, 'things', and detritus that always covered the bottom. You had to walk quietly as you were searching because the clams could "hear" loud noises and might dig down

deeper into the sand. We knew what to look for, inch-wide depressions in the sand that had small holes in the center for the clam's siphon. The siphon has an intake tube and an exhaust tube so there were two holes. When you saw one of these unique holes, you were pretty sure you had a clam so you did the deal then and there.

Ah ha, we found one. Success right away. I don't remember who it was but he found the thing and dug the clam. Except that it wasn't a clam. It was a dungeness crab. That was a strange thing. We'd never dug crabs before when we found these little depressions but there it was. So we kept searching for more depressions and found some. Sure enough, it was another crab. We spent an hour and a half out there digging up the clam depressions but always getting dungeness crabs. We each brought home a bucket of crabs and not a single clam.

### Cat Marbles

Cat marbles are different than marble cats. I have always loved cats as shown by the evidence. This particular cat was one of the weirdest I'd ever lived with. We got her as a kitten so she grew up knowing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue house well. Winter being as cold as it was, cats didn't do well outside so she was basically an indoor cat which was a novelty for us because mom and dad did not generally tolerate pets inside the house, probably from personal experiences of a certain kind. This cat went outdoors to do her duty, however. In those days, at least in my life, there was no such thing as a "litter box". What a strange name when I heard it. "Litter box" that you put inside of your house for a cat to crap in. Smelliest crap in the world, who would let a cat do that? So she went outdoors several times a day, even in the snow, and took care of business.

She had several peculiar habits that manifested themselves early in her life. When she was you, something would come over her. Upon being allowed in the house she would streak across the floor into the front room which was ok. But at that point, she'd head for the drapes and climb them, floor to the top, in a second. Then she would look around to get her bearings, walk across the curtain rod to the other side, and then descend down the other drape. That did not earn points with mom but she was so fast that it was hard to catch and stop her. Fortunately, she got over this habit before mom got rid of her.

The oddest thing she did was carry marbles in her mouth and then play games

with them. Cats in my experience don't normally pick up inanimate objects in their mouths like dogs do so willingly. They are above that sort of pedestrian behavior and only take food or creatures in. This one had a fetish for little round marbles and would bite and hold them. That was unusual enough, but then she taught herself a game that didn't win any points either. She discovered that if she stood at the top of the stairs, set the marble on the floor, and pushed it with her paw, the marble would roll down the stairs, one at a time, clicking and bouncing slowly until it reached the floor. This was done, of course, in the pitch blackness of night when we were all sleeping. Then she would repeat the process, picking the marble up in her mouth, carrying it back up to the top of the stairs, setting it down, pushing it with her paw, sitting and listening, click, click, click.

The other pet in the neighborhood was Peggy Flemming "budgie bird", or parakeet. We fell in love with it first because it was a beautiful bird, but more because it learned to talk. So mom and dad bought us one, which was a challenge in a cold climate like Alaska.

### Pepper the Parakeet

A salt and pepper green parakeet took up residence in our front room one year in response to the pleas of Dickie and me. Peggy Flemming had one of these little birds that fascinated me. Hers was a blue and white bird that chattered in a wire cage into a mirror, pecking at a cuttle bone, popping small round seeds. The bird was exotic, a bit of bright color that she would take out of the cage and had to me on a finger to hold. It was tame and tolerated handling well. It became a friend and would climb up my arm and perch on my shoulder, fluffing out the chin feathers and muttering to itself quietly. It would reach up to my ear lobe and softly bite it as if testing its flavor but it didn't bite. It loved to chew on the frames of my glasses as if they were a toy. Eventually, it would reach up to the bow of my glasses and quickly hoist itself up and perch. At this point, it would chew strands of hair, testing and



Figure 194

<http://www.crystal-parrot.com/about.html>

tasting, walking back and forth from my ear to the hinge. It would sometimes look down into the lense and peck at it as if it were a mirror, and walk across to the other side. During these 5 minute interludes its GI tract inevitably overloaded so a little gray-white deposit appeared on one of my shoulders. Peggy taught me a fancy new word, that sounded like an antique, when she said, "You mesmerize him!". I asked what that meant, not sure whether I had done something wrong. She explained that the word meant 'hypnotize'. That was OK and I was relieved.

We pleaded with mom and dad for a parakeet, a foreign jungle creature and they relented. I think I was as surprised as I was pleased. I believe Peggy was instrumental in getting this young green and yellow bird and cage with all the furnishings, cuttle bone, trapeze, mirror, hanging balls, water cup, seed cup and treats. The most novel thing about the bird that we named "Pepper" was its sleeping habits. When the end of the day came, we would put him back into the cage because he had the run of the house most of the time. Then we would slip a cloth cover over the cage. He magically quieted down even though he had been protesting a moment before, clinging to the wires, chattering to get out. He returned to his perch and muttered quietly to himself, and finally was silent. That amazed me because the lights were still on so his cage was still light but the enclosure transformed him.

Our main objective with Pepper was to teach him to talk. I'm not sure why that was so important but I had always been fascinated with birds that talked. I think they were like bits of cartoons that were alive. So we earnestly undertook teaching him through repetition like Peggy explained, short words, again and again. The first words we taught him were "Pretty Pepper". Again and again and the day came when he repeated them. Amazement! Our bird could talk! That inspired us and energized us. "Happy Birthday", then "Pretty bird" and "Pretty Boy" and a wolf whistle, a total of 14 words were acquired by Pepper.

The biggest surprise was "Merry Christmas". We had been trying to teach him to say "Merry Christmas" for weeks, immediately prior to Christmas but he refused to say it. He would say his other words, even mixing them up on occasion which was amazing. We got up Christmas Morning intent on opening our presents under the tree. At some point one of us became aware that the bird was talking quietly to himself under his cover, saying "Merry Christmas".

He had a sad ending that was unnecessary and preventable that winter. Dick and I were squabbling like we often did. It was a tiny house and being cooped up all winter was tough on everyone's nerves. On this particular morning, he and I were

getting ready for school. We must have been feeding Kobuk because we were in the kitchen and had the door open to the landing of the stairs. While we quarreled, each focusing on winning the argument, one of us opened the outside door. At that instant, Pepper who was sitting on one of our shoulders, took off. He saw the door open and the whiteness of the outdoors and flew away so quickly that neither of us even moved. By the time we realized what had happened, it was too late. We naturally became instantly quiet and stepped outdoors quickly to see where he was, in hopes he would perch in a bush so we could catch him. But he didn't. He was not used to the vertical freedom so he flew in a widening spiral ever upward until we lost sight of him.

## Paperboy

**I**n addition to these jobs, we were forced to pedal newspapers down town for which we made 2 pennies apiece and to deliver some up our street. This is an area you have some experience with, isn't it. Pretty rotten deal isn't it. And pedaling papers down town directly to the public was just plain humiliating. But that was less painful than the alternatives. We saved our pennies, literally, in a metal Curad bandage can.

We didn't use bags to carry our papers. We'd go pick them up at a location I can't remember and then start pedaling them down town or delivering them. I hated the pedaling part because I was embarrassed to approach people, asking them to buy one of my papers. I don't have any memories of hostility to me, rather it was the inborn hesitation I had about approaching people, fearing rejection and humiliation. Each time I did approach a man with a question, "Wanna buy a paper?" and received "No" for an answer I did feel rejected. It made it harder the next time to try. But mom was implacable. She decreed that "Thou shalt pedal papers on main street for 30 minutes!" and I understood that was about like Moses coming down the mount with his arms full. So I would wander up and down the main block and Adams hoping that someone would notice my papers and ask for one, occasionally daring to approach a kindly looking man. But those offers were sparsely distributed over that 30 minutes. I probably spent more time trying to figure out the time than I did trying to sell. When the time came that I could go home, I did with trepidation, dreading the inquisition that would follow, "How many papers did you sell?", "How many people did you talk to?", "Where did you try to sell papers?"

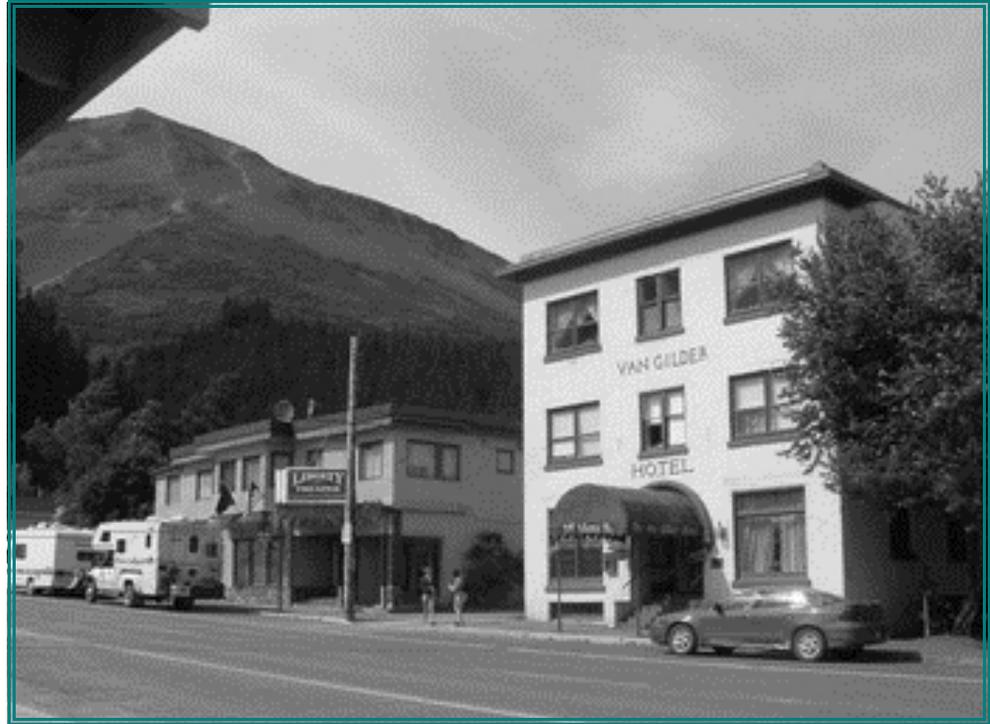
and so on, in a critical weary voice, like I was a failure. Which I was. I hated doing that.

The other version of paperboying was the home delivery kind. I was ordered to go door to door on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to ask people if they wanted to subscribe to the paper that I would deliver. It was a dreadful experience at 10 to walk up to a door, knock, and stand there dreading that someone would answer. When no one came, I felt a wave of relief and the reprieve and walked away. But as soon as I approached the next door, the relief evaporated and the dread set in again. When someone opened the door and looked at me, I said my piece as best I could, which wasn't very graceful I know. I didn't want to be doing this job plus I was just a kid, inexperienced in sales so I was clumsy and awkward at approaching people.

A few people actually did like the idea of home delivery of the paper so signed up. It was a good feeling to go back and tell mom that "Juanita said she wants to take the paper," "The postmaster said he will take it." A list was prepared of the customers and a tally was made so I knew how many papers to ask for when I went to get them. As I remember the drill, we would ask for a certain number of papers which were handed to us without payment, but we had to return with payment later that day or the next day. At that point we had to account for each paper we had taken out by returning it, which earned a deep sign from the distributor, or by payment of 3 cents per paper. That meant that we had to collect the money from the customers, figure out how many papers we sold, how much we owed the distributor and then had to make that payment. 3 cents doesn't sound like much but for a 10 year old who was expected to handle all of this alone, who had no preparation for doing it, the job was tough and discouraging. Even the delivery to homes was unpleasant, but that is normal for most paperboys I'd guess so wasn't different than what you kids experienced when you had to deliver papers. I kept my profit in a white, metal Band-Aid box with a lid that you pulled off, not the hinged variety, and I kept it in the cupboard on the east end of the kitchen on the first shelf. The other opprobrious dimension of this working for money business was the 10% rule. Mom was absolutely rigid about it. I had to count my money out for to actually see at which time she offered about the only help she offered: how to figure 10%. Then it had to be set aside to be given to the presiding elder, my dad, in the proper envelope. I did it but I didn't really want to give away part of my hard-earned money.

One of the most puzzling events of my time is Seward involved pedaling newspapers downtown. It had to do with this hotel, the Van Guilder.

This 2003 photo shows the hotel, although it is painted, there is pavement and so on. But it is the same hotel that did hotel business I suppose but it was also used as a sort of boarding house



as best I understand. There were several old -to me, then- men who sat in chairs on the front entry way. They seemed to be there often so I assumed they lived there.

One day I sold one of these men a newspaper. That was a fine thing to happen. As the man paid me, he tipped me, something that always surprised and puzzled me. His tip was two shiny new quarters. As I walked away, I was stunned. 50 cents! Man alive, this was like getting a brick of gold bouillon. I practically ran home to show mom my good fortune, planning over and over again how I would spend it -after I put the 5 pennies for the 10% aside. But I was stunned at her reaction. Instead of happiness, or congratulation for my salesmanship abilities, she got angry. She said, "Where did you get that money?" implying, I thought, that I had stolen it. I assured her that I had not stolen it, that it was given to me by this nice man. "Where did you find this man?" I told her he lived at the Van Guilder Hotel. That was it. That was enough. She said, "You are not to take money from those men. You go back right now and find that man and give him his quarters back."

I thought she had come unhinged. The best luck I'd ever had! It was like having sold 25 papers and she wants me to take this money back to that nice man.

Now what will that man think about me, I wondered as I wandered back along the dirt road to the Hotel. I dreaded finding him but I dreaded more going home without having done the job. The odd thing today is to realize that the thought never crossed my mind to just hide the money for later and lie to her and tell her that I had given the money to the man. That would have solved several problems in my favor. It's like I was positive that she would discover my dishonest and abuse me more. It was simpler and easier to just do what she said, so I found the old man, gave him his money back saying, "My mom told me to give you your money back." I don't have a memory of his response because I was turning and headed back out the door. I did not know what was going on, I knew I had stepped into one of those nasty spaces that I did not understand and I never returned to the Van Guilder Hotel for any reason.

Today I see that she was concerned that the man was a pedophile, something that was absolutely outside my scope of understanding. Since she was an adult in that tiny town, it is not unlikely that she knew things about goings on of various unsavory characters thin which case she was correct in what she did. And the fact that she was so harsh would not have been harshness at me, rather irritation and concern about what that nice man was doing. If only she had somehow managed to convey her message to me in a way that didn't make me feel like I was the one who had done something wrong. It's true I wouldn't have understood what she was concerned about but I would have understood fine that there was a problem for adults that she knew about that I wouldn't have understood, and she was happy for me, but that I needed to give this money back to the nice man and not go into the Van Guilder again.

There weren't a lot of other forced labor projects pushed on us in Seward. Probably because there were few to push on kids our age. It was a town of around 2,000 on a narrow beach on a wonderful bay. What are you going to find for kids to do? No farming, no crops, nothing like that. So we were more or less safe other than the snow business and the church business.

## Halibut Lines

Dad wanted to try his luck at catching halibut out in the bay. He came by a roll of several hundred feet of old halibut line and a box of large halibut hooks. I was surprised at the size of the hooks and at the way they were secured to the line. These hooks didn't have an eye for line to be inserted through. In place of the eye was a wide flat shape like the eye had been smashed flat with a hammer. This wide flat end was laid on the line and secured in place by being wrapped by a stout fishing line. I remember noting that this line was aged and wondered quietly to myself about its suitability for fishing for big fish like halibut.



After he had prepared two lines with hooks, he coiled them carefully and tied them so that they wouldn't get messed up while being handled. He loaded them with a bucket of herring into the freight canoe on a sunny morning and headed out into the bay. We went further down the bay than we ever had, perhaps half way to Fox Island. When he was satisfied with his location, he shut off the Elgin motor and started to bait the hooks with the herring as he unrolled the line and hooks overboard. When he had let one line out completely, he secured it to a float to keep the end on the surface and serve as a marker for the location. Then he repeated the process with the other line. After both lines were lowered and suspended from floats, dad carefully examined the distant shores to find prominent landmarks that he could use to triangulate this location again. After marking the spot this way, he restarted the engine and we headed back to Seward.

I don't remember how long he left his lines out before returning to check them, but I remember returning with him after a day or two. The floats were either not there any more or dad couldn't find the spot where he set them. In any event, we returned to Seward empty handed and he never tried his hand at halibut fishing again. And I didn't say a word.

I found out from one of Deanna's clients this summer who fishes halibut commercially on Kodiak Island that he never leaves his hooks out more than 4 -6 hours. He said that out there a small bottom creatures called "sand shrimp" cover

the halibut and devour it. He said that they actually will strip all the meat off if given enough time. So I wonder if dad would have had any halibut anyway.

### Elsie, Slugs and Nails

The Home Brew Alley house sat on an alley that was actually the north end of Homebrew Alley. Like all the roads in town, except for a few blocks of the main street, alleys were not paved. And this alley for some reason was filled with rusty nails, probably the result of construction though that never occurred to me. They obviously made drivers nervous. Elsie and her husband both worked and were willing to hire us kids to help deal with the risk. She paid her son Brent, his sister Janice, me and Dick a nickel for 10 nails that we picked up out of the driveway. I remember that there was some sort of requirement about where we discarded them so we didn't show her the same ones, but it was sort of a fun thing to do. Not unlike beach combing that is actually fun.

In addition to getting compensation for picking up nails, we could also earn money by going after snails in Elsie's flowers. The climate encourages slugs, something I had never seen in Utah. Dad said they were basically snails without shells which made sense if you looked closely at them. They all had tiny horns, slick skins and a large flat foot to walk on. The problem with them, which surprised me, was that these little slimy things ate green plants. I don't know what I expected them to eat but I did not think they would eat plants, or I was surprised that they could actually eat enough of a plant to damage it. Elsie wanted to grow flowers so had several flowerbeds that were magnets for slugs, so she paid us the same rate for collecting and killing snails.

As a sidelight to the collection process, I learned something about solutes and osmolality, though I didn't know it. Someone told us that if we sprinkled salt on a slug it would kill it so we did the experiment. Sure enough, the slug was really unhappy about the salt on its skin and shed masses of slime in an apparent attempt to sort of wash it off. But once the salt was on the creature, it was done for. It squirmed, made heavy slime trails and finally died but the interesting thing was that the slug shriveled. Why would that happen? I understood that poisons would kill animals and birds and I viewed salt as a poison, yet it induced shriveling which other poisons didn't. Dad explained that the salt absorbed water from the slug. What a novel idea. Salt absorbing water. The correlation was the realization that the

Morton's Salt girl on the circular salt box was advertising that HER salt continued to pour when there was rain, which wasn't always the case for salt. I learned in Ann Arbor that if you want to prevent salt from absorbing water across a semi-permeable membrane, you have to erect a column of mercury 10 feet tall on top of it.

### Breakfast food Ads

This was the time in our country when Madison Avenue kicked into high gear - from which it has never disengaged. Of course, advertising has been an American past-time since colonial days but it seems to me that it became more prominent and intrusive at the same time the print and electronic media matured in sophistication which started in the 1930's. One of the most prominent food categories to benefit from this media grown was breakfast foods - at least from the perspective of a little kid who was taken in by the ads. I say it that way because I do know that a lot of other kinds of products were aggressively pitched but they didn't relate to me, had no appear to me like breakfast food did.

Mom continued to make cooked cereal for us in Seward but prepared breakfast foods found their way to the breakfast table more and more frequently. All-Bran was one of those cereals which is interesting because it was also advertised as a cure for constipation. I don't know whether or not that's true but dad had a chronic problem with constipation which is probably why I was aware of this aspect of this cereal. I have wondered if his problem was evidence of the genetic traits that manifested in your generation in the gastrointestinal problems experienced by several of his grand-children.

I do know that if the stuff was left sitting in a bowl of milk too long, it turned into a homogenized mass of grey goo that was not appealing. We ate it if it was all that was available but preferred other kinds of foods. Our



Figure 197  
<http://theimaginaryworld.com/zow28.jpg>

preferred method for eating any breakfast cereal was to pour a batch into a good size bowl first, then pour milk over it and finally to spoon several teaspoons of sugar over it. The latter was only possible when mom was out of the kitchen or turned her back, but she knew that we did it. I think the evidence was the slurry of dissolved sugar that remained in the bottom of the bowl after we had finished the cereal and milk.

Manners, always manners. We were constantly assailed with her corrections, "Don't do that," "Do this", etc. Even breakfast was infected with her manners. The object of her lecture was usually drinking out of the bowl. I didn't see why that was a problem. In fact, it struck me as silly to lift all that milk to my mouth a teaspoon at a time, particularly since I frequently managed to spill it on the table, my chin or the front of my shirt. Much more efficient to just lay the spoon on the table, lift the bowl to my mouth, and pour the milk in, but mom didn't approve and since she had a way of popping unexpected into the kitchen we actually observed her order to the point that it became a deep-seated prohibition such that if I were to lift a cereal bowl to my mouth today I would feel guilty. She was really good.

Some of the breakfast cereals earned mom's scorn and criticism, but that didn't prevent us from begging. One of our favorite worthless cereals was puffed wheat. The fluffy dry texture with the milk was an interesting combination that had a mild nutty flavor. But mom claimed that it didn't have any nutritional value for which reason she didn't want to waste her money on it. But we were relentless about the matter so she apparently caved in now and then. It came in boxes and in long narrow plastic bags. We preferred the latter but would take either. The notion was that rice was 'shot from a cannon' was fascinating.

What a way to make cereal but it didn't cut any ice with mom. This was a great cereal to make sugar syrup in the bottom of the bowl, a great combination of tastes



Figure 198 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/ikk201.jpg>

and textures because, as you know, the puffed rice kernels quickly dissolve into nothing. Gabby Hayes in this ad was a famous movie star cowboy who played comical roles in general, so he was appealing to kids, hence a good carney to put on the boxes to get us to buy the things being pedaled. But don't be fooled. Even in those days one didn't buy anything but small plastic replicas for 20 cents although the drawing made them appear to be full size. The wonders of advertising. One box top and a quarter. That's where the saying originated.

Perhaps our favorite breakfast was this one, which was never purchased except for holidays. The reason thrown out was that it was too expensive which is probably true. The cost of pouring a tiny amount of cereal into a waxed envelope that was enclosed in a cardboard box was doubtless high. The customer always pays for luxuries. But a variety pack was the ultimate in breakfast food.

The idea that we could choose a package from a set of 10 was attractive for some reason, but what was most appealing was the fact that the cardboard box could be converted into a bowl. That naturally required some skill but when it succeeded, it was great to be able to pour milk into a paper box. Naturally, one box was not enough. We had to have another one so we pestered mom for a second one. Generally, we were denied that pleasure but it happened enough times that we persisted.

The ad on this box was obviously directed at the mothers instead of the kids. Kids don't want to buy chrysanthemums.



Figure 199

<http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp82.jpg>

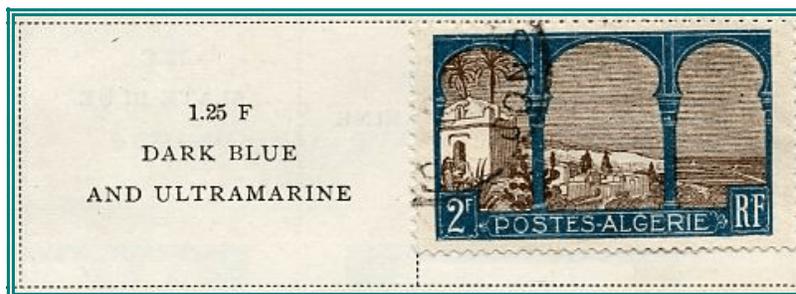
## Stamp Collecting and Postmaster

**A**ren't these gorgeous? Just startlingly lovely.



I fell in love with stamps first because they were so beautiful. These Austrian stamps exemplified the style that I loved the most, an ornate picture frame of a solid color inside of which was a simple image in another color that complemented or contrasted with the frame.

Some Algerian stamps were similarly designed. This stamp is slightly different because the frame creates a triptych with a panorama. This also shows an empty block reserved for a stamp of a different value and different colors. I loved the names for the colors, "Carmine", "Lake", "Ultramarine." Gorgeous words and suggestive.



I associate the name "Miss Peacock" with stamps and have specific memories about her, but I doubt that all of my memories about her are accurate. Part of me says that she was the postmistress, an impressive position to a little kid, but I know she couldn't have been the postmistress because the postmaster lived 5 houses above ours on 2nd Avenue and I played "Hide the Candy bar" in the alley with his two daughters. So perhaps she had another position at the post office and I misremember it because I met her when I was younger, still living on Homebrew Alley.

The way I remember meeting her is remarkable for a little kid of 9-10 years.

The manager of the railroad gang liked me and Dickie so talked to us when he saw us, asking how we were. I see today that he was perhaps actually checking us out, and that it was with his blessing that we were allowed to climb around the cars and fraternize with the men of the crew. Anyway, one late afternoon, I was hanging around the dining car talking with cook who wore a chef's hat, white tee shirt and white slacks. The dining car was always sweaty in the winter but warm otherwise and I hung out in hopes I'd get a handout. He offered cookies sometimes. This particular evening, the manager showed up, not unusual, but he had a with him.

She was a pretty woman with a pearly gray suit, Baum martens, and gloves. The manager was duded up with a sport coat, dress slacks and a fancy fedora. This was an event, obviously. He had come over the grab a cup of java for the two of them and there I was. It was an accident that I was there but he took the opportunity to introduce me to her. I also (mis-) remember that her name was "Miss Peacock". I have no idea where that came from but it has stuck for 50 years. I was tongue-tied as usual meeting someone new, particularly a pretty woman, particularly people who had obviously been out on the town. But he was kind as was she. He told her that was interested in stamps, as was she. On that basis I was able to have a brief conversation with her. She promised that she would provide me some duplicates that she had, and sure enough, she did.

Another framed image is from Greece. I loved Greek stamps for this reason, as well as for the fact that they had funny looking letters that I couldn't read. That exotic feature fascinated me because I was old enough to understand the concept of a different alphabet and had never seen one. The classical image of a bull with a man either being thrown or doing a stunt over the animal fascinated me. I'd gone to rodeos where there were bulls so this resonated. The style was simple lines in one color.



My first Greek stamps were given to me by, of all things, a Greek. His name was "Pete the Greek". No kidding. And he had a large fishing boat on blocks near the deck above the small boat harbor where he worked on it, replacing individual timbers that had rotted. I don't know whether he actually intended to launch it again, or whether it was just a fantasy that he enjoyed like Henri in "Sweet Thursday" who kept a boat in the woods, because it set up there for years and was still there when I left.

In any event, Pete the Greek found out I was interested in stamps so he gave me several. The really memorable part of the transaction, however, was not the stamps themselves. He was a swarthy heavy-set man who wore the standard plaid shirts and had a salt and pepper beard and heavy work boots. He talked with an accent and when he interrupted his work on a plank and called me over to give me the stamps I listened carefully. He had half a dozen stamps from letters he had received from his family in Greece. He held a stamp in one hand and with his other index finger he pointed to the "ΕΛΛΑΣ" and asked if I could read the letters. Naturally, I couldn't, which he knew but it was a way to start a teaching session. He pointed to the letters and said their names, "epsilon, lambda, lambda, alpha, sigma" and then he said the word out loud. [I don't think he told me about the 'smooth breathing' mark, but perhaps he did. It was something I wouldn't have understood if he had.]

For me, words are magical. They are powerful. They are symbols that capture the essence of things and ideas. The precise word to express a specific notion or emotion is lovely and powerful, like a proper name or spell. The exact word required by meaning and context sounds, when spoken, like a sledge hammer driving a huge nail squarely home in a single blow, "blammo". Saying "eye-less" did that to me although I didn't know the word. But I heard and I remembered - up to this day. "Eye-less", he said, "That's what that word means. It's the name of my country, Greece, you see." I saw and I still see. "Eye-less."

I used this information during a presentation in Miss Wilkinson's class. I don't remember what the assignment was or why I chose this topic. But I remember clearly standing up in front of the class with my prepared talk. I showed the kids my Greek stamps and one of the things I proudly explained to them was the Greek name. I pointed to "ΕΛΛΑΣ" and told them that Pete the Greek had said that the way to pronounce the word was "eye-less." That's right. Exactly right.

Another set of wonderful classical images was this group, with narrow frames and classical images. The Minoan -now I know- lady on the left with the uncovered breasts, the naked Zeus throwing a



thunderbolt and the graceful, armless Venus captured my imagination.

You need to understand something else right here. There was a powerful parallel current flowing in my poor juvenile brain at the time. Mythology. Perhaps because of the Indian stories that grandpa Merrell told, or stories that dad told, I became absolutely fascinated by mythology. Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Norse. I devoured all the books in the library. Edith Hamilton's "Mythology" captured my soul. So stamps from these countries were incorporated into the fascination as if it had been planned that I would see them.

I wasn't quite sure what this stamp was about and couldn't read the word "olympikos" at the bottom. But it was clear that this was some sort of celebration where two men were carrying another man. Others stood on the sidelines, and waved palm fronds, while pillars hung out in the background. The odd part was the men and kid running around without clothing. But the classical image inside of a frame appealed as a piece of art.



Close to Greece in my photo album was Guadeloupe with stamps like these, picture frames with lozenge shaped images in bicolor again. I am not really sure why that format and style appealed to me then and don't understand it now. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is a true statement.



I had never lived around black people, though I'd seen a few in Vernal. There were none at all in Seward, a fact that is interesting but which I cannot interpret without risking being called prejudiced or biased. There was manual labor that required no education which paid well. Where were they? Anyway, they were in the same style so this set of bi-color Madagascar stamps captured my imagination again. Mom bought this set for me from the Charleston or Jamestown Stamp Company. I



was familiar with cattle so found these long horns of great interest. I'd never seen long horns but had heard about them from Texas and these images reminded me of the stories I heard. The particular combinations of colors were appealing, brown in lavender, red in green, blue in brown, violet in brown, brown in red, all were appealing.

Ethiopia had the same stamp design with images of animals. Another unreadable script - Amharic it turns out - graces the frames. But I had a particular interest in Ethiopia because I had a friend whose dad took a job and moved to an exotic, far-off place called Addis Abbaba. That is actually in Saudi Arabia but in my mind it was close to Ethiopia.



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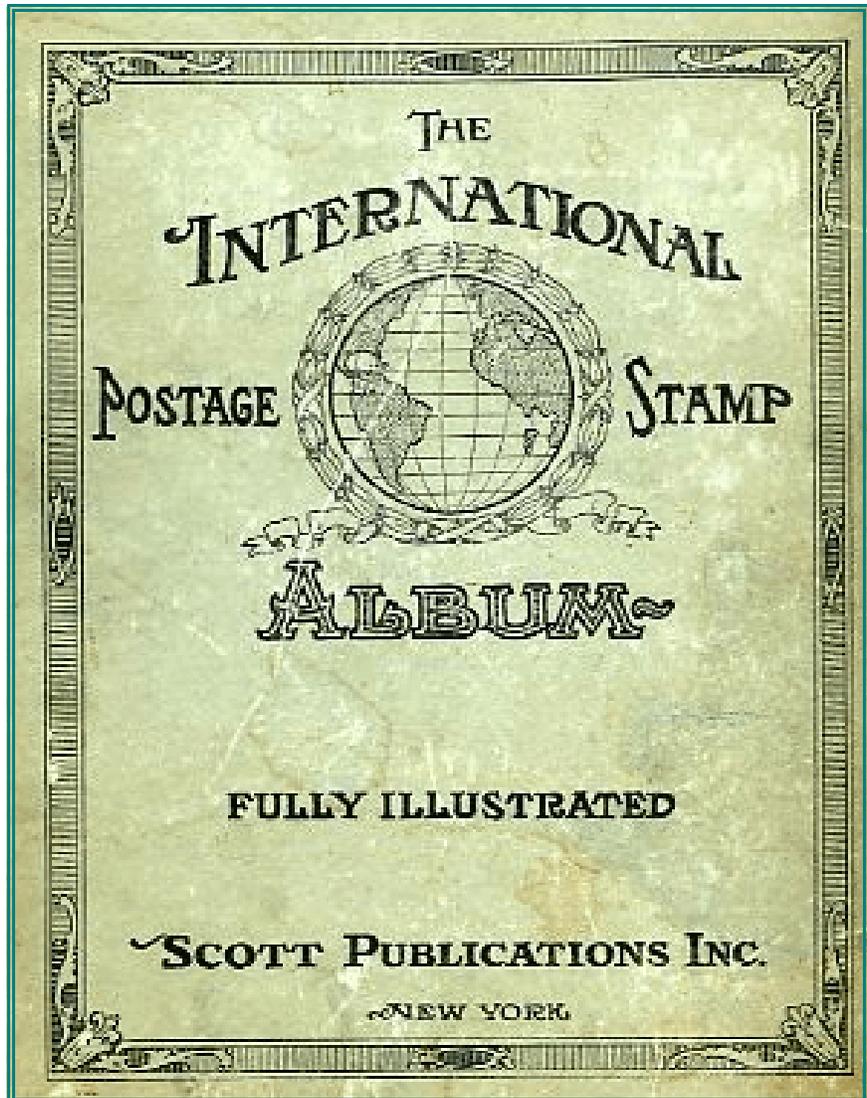
amps were sold with a tantalizing question, "Are these real stamps or are they wallpaper?" They came in small glassine envelopes with that question printed on the cover, for a few cents so we bought them, again, because they were so unusual.

French Sudan stamps were some of my favorite because the frames were bolder, darker. Sets of identical images varying only in color made lovely patterns on an album page.



For my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, 1952, while we were living on Homebrew Alley, mom and dad bought me a stamp album. My interest had matured to the extent that they thought it a worthwhile gift, which it was. Six whole dollars which was a heck of a lot of money in those days, from the Alaska shop, printed in 1947, hanging around for 5 years until some one 'needed' it.

Scott stamp albums are still the predominant brand of stamp album. This old timer is word but still has a good spine and the sprinkling of stamps that I would look at again and again, wondering about the countries they came from, wondering about the images, what they portrayed, what they meant. Philately is actually an excellent way to painlessly learn history, geography, cultures, etc. I recommend it to your children.



## 10. Selling fish

I think that the only free enterprise project I ever voluntarily attempted was catching and trying to sell "sea trout" in Seward. It failed. Fell flat. Not a single sale. What I think happened is this. Dick and I sometimes fished off the creaky old cannery pier. We were threatened with our lives if we entered into the actually cannery building so we never did even get close enough to see through the doorway. But we liked to stand on the more or less stable docks outside and to use hand lines to fish. We usually caught the small cod that infested the waters there. And used them as bait for their brethren.

This one time instead of cod there was apparently a run of "sea trout" and today I don't know what they really were. But they took anything we threw in. We ended up with large catches of pretty substantial fish, some of them a foot and a half long. We talked about what to do with all these fish and decided that we'd gut them and string

them on a pole. Then we'd go door to door in the town to sell the fish. I don't remember how much we asked for them probably a nickel or something like that. But no one bought any. A lady did examine them closely and



pronounced them unclean because she could see some sort of parasite in the abdominal cavity. We were embarrassed and stopped pedaling the fish then because we knew it was wrong to sell damaged goods. We never ate anything we caught in the waters near the docks so felt funny about trying to get other people to buy these to eat. Because the raw sewage of the town was dumped into the headwaters of the bay.

## Primary

This is a historic photo, the full body of the first LDS Primary in Seward



in 1951. Mom is on the left and Sister Carrol is the other adult. We're standing at the bottom of the stairway to the Oddfellow's Hall. Andy's Army Navy Store window is on the left. I don't remember most of the kids by name but remember these: On the back row Billy Schaefermeyer is second from the right, Dick is to his right, and Ross Carroll is to his right. The front row has Mike Schaefermeyer on the right and I'm kneeling just behind him in a shirt and suspenders that matched Dick's, obviously angry about something. I remember the faces of other kids but not their names. Note how few girls there were. I think about 6-7 families are represented by these kids, not all of whom were active in the Sunday functions but in the summer primary was a good place for kids to spend some time.

I don't remember the names of the classes we attended before we were 10 years old, but the Primary was rigidly structured so there must have been names for each class which was determined by age.

## Trail Builders

The Trail Builders program was for boys from ages 10 to 12 and was designed by the general primary board in SLC. The structure was changed long ago but in those days reflected the agricultural antecedents of the faith. It also demonstrated the faith's commitment to the Boy Scout's of America.

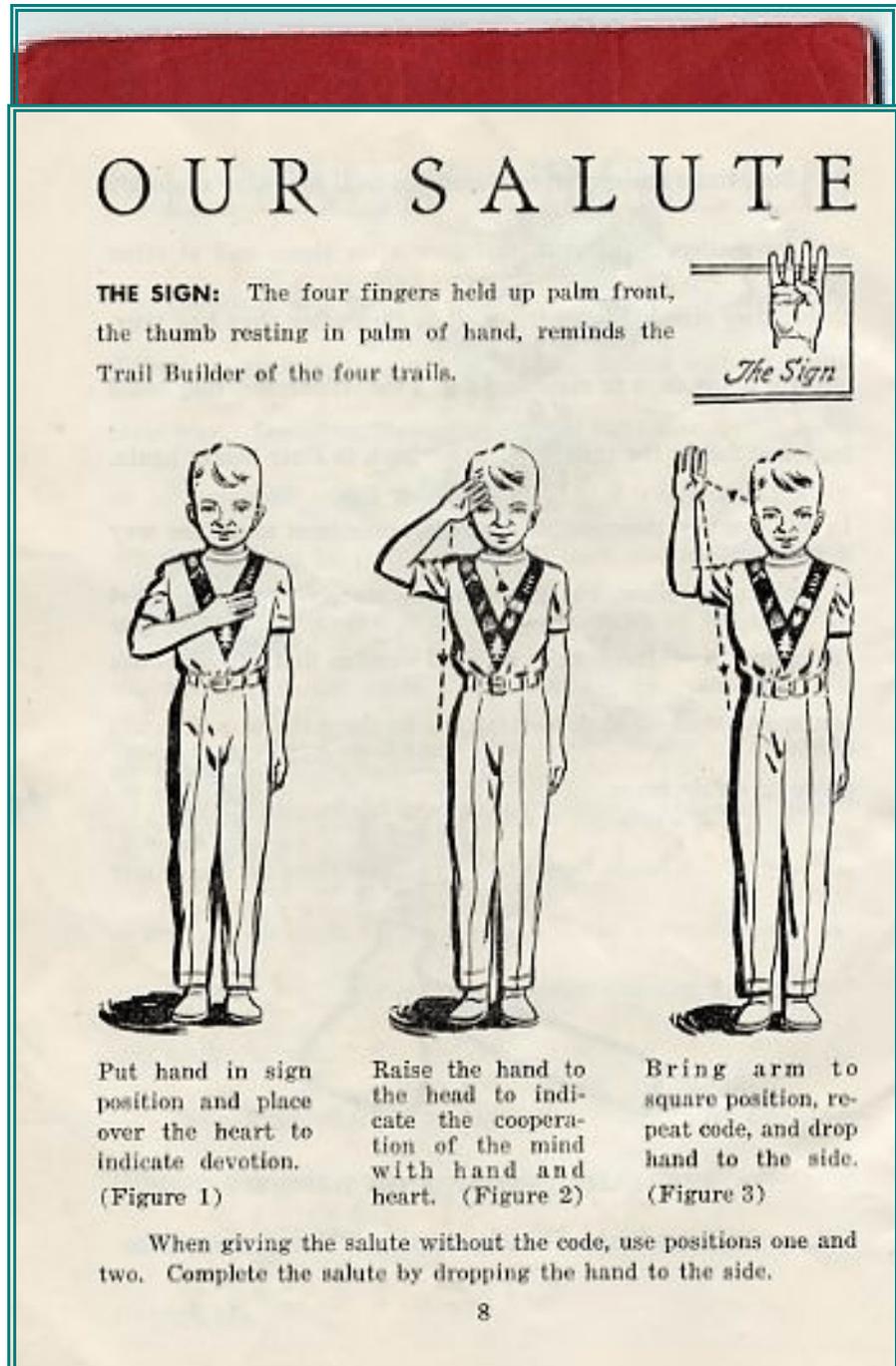
Each of the three years was given a specific name, workbook and emblems.

The first year was named "Blazer", the second was named "Trekker" and the third was named "Guide." The Guide year in particular was aimed toward preparing the boy for integration into a Boy Scout troop. I still have the items that represented all of the Trail Builder activities I was involved in.

Here's the cover of the Blazer Log, which was the same size as the other two. Each one was 48 pages long.

The Logs were filled with instructions, stories, diagrams, requirements and songs, graduated for each year.

For example, the Blazer Log had instructions about the Trail Builder Salute



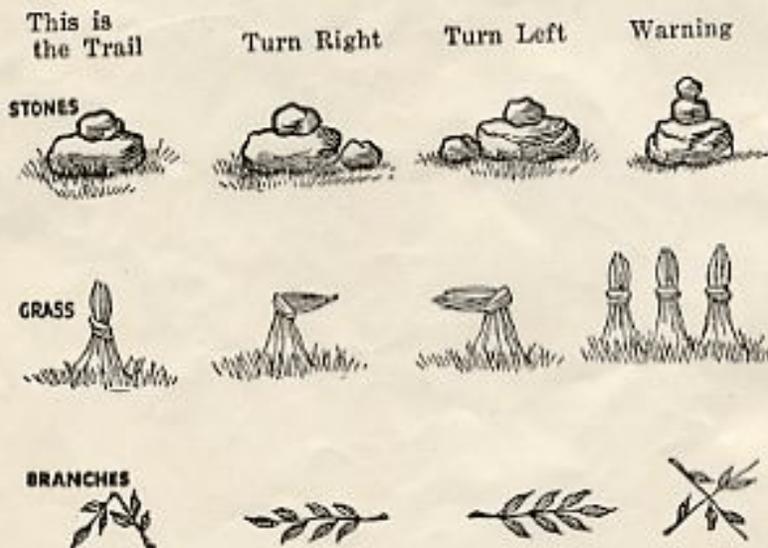
and Motto. This obviously prepares boys for the scouting program. We were earnest in learning how to execute the sign and argued with each other about how to hold our fingers and hands as little kids will. Having to associate meaning with the salute was another matter. Then the sequence of actions to complete the salute had to be memorized and practiced until we could all do it together without any mistakes. Mom was our Trail Builder leader who took her job seriously and taught us well.

One of the activities that we did as Blazers was to learn trail blazing. Three types of signs were demonstrated in the Log. We studied these diagrams while mom explained them carefully, trying to understand what the differences were. I compare the simplicity of this task to the complexity of tasks done by children of the same age today and am amazed at their sophistication. These tasks really did require us to work. We weren't stupid but somehow the

## SIGNS for TRAIL BLAZING

It's fun to lay trails for others to follow, and you'll enjoy playing follow-the-leader, or fox chase in your neighborhood as well as in the woods or canyons. Send one or two boys ahead to lay a trail; allow them five minutes start and then see if you can catch them.

Papers are unsatisfactory markers for a trail, for they may blow away and are untidy. Seeds are also unsatisfactory. They may be eaten by birds. Use one of the following:



expectations of us then and the amount of related information we received was such that this was a task. Today this would be handled by any kid in a few minutes.

The exciting thing about learning these three forms of signaling was finally being taken on a hike. Mom told us that after we all learned these signs that she would take us on a hike up Marathon so we could practice and she did it. Don't you love the last paragraph.



On the day we were to go, we had brilliant sun, a treat even in the summer. We gathered at the foot of Marathon for a photo before we started. Billy is on mom's right, Frank Alblanalp is on her left with Ross on his left. The irritating Whitaker kid is kneeling on the left, I'm in the middle wearing a beanie, with Dick on the right, also in coveralls, but with a denim jacket.

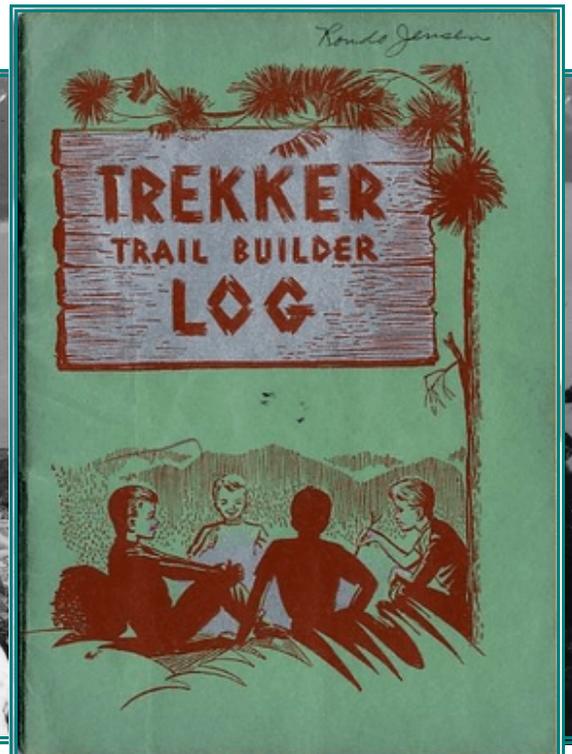
Mom took divided us into two groups and sent one group ahead with a 5 minute head start and the instructions to blaze a trail that would the other group would follow. It was an exciting thing to be in either group and we switched jobs after we caught up. This photo was taken at the point where the trail breaks out above timberline, the Army dock in the center. Mom was a good sport and also fit so we climbed almost to the top of the mountain, no mean feat. We're resting here in the shale looking at the town and the all-important docks from which we all derived our livelihoods.



Another photo was taken closeup of four of us, Frankie, me, Billy and Dickie. I remember this excursion well as one of the highlights of our Trail Builder activities. Having climbed most of Marathon this year, I appreciate what mom did.



The second year, Trekkers, was more of the same and as fun. We were living on a frontier in the wilds so these outdoorsey things were like



mother's milk to us. The activities were absolutely appropriate for us and seemed like they were designed specifically for us. This is the cover of the Log with my name written in mom's hand. That was my name until I went to Boston in 1956.

The preparation for Boy Scouts even shows in the cover. It also reflects the mountain and agricultural background of the culture.

The activities in the log continued in this direction as indicated by this page

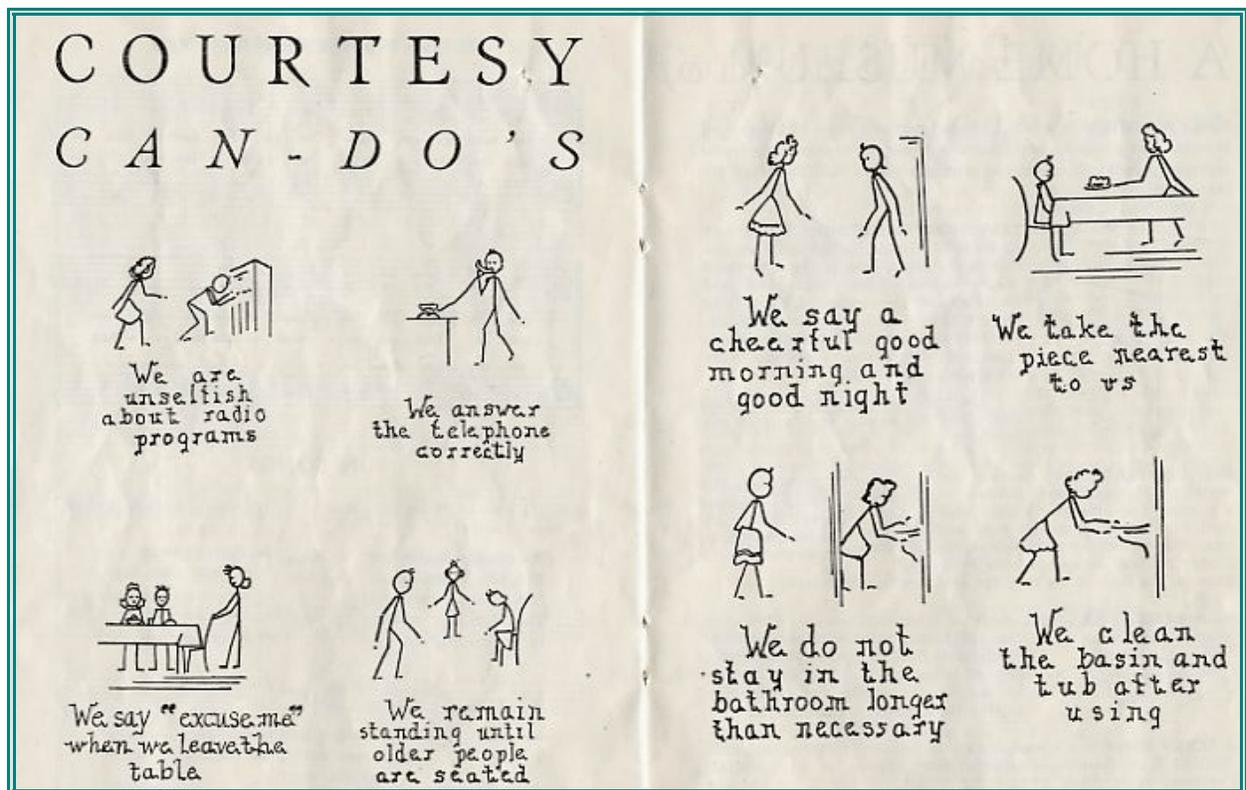
that shows how to tie certain knots.

We loved doing this because our dads worked on the docks and had to know how to secure cargo using knots. It was natural to do these things.

Learning to whip the ends of a rope is something I've used throughout my life whenever I have used manilla or hemp ropes.



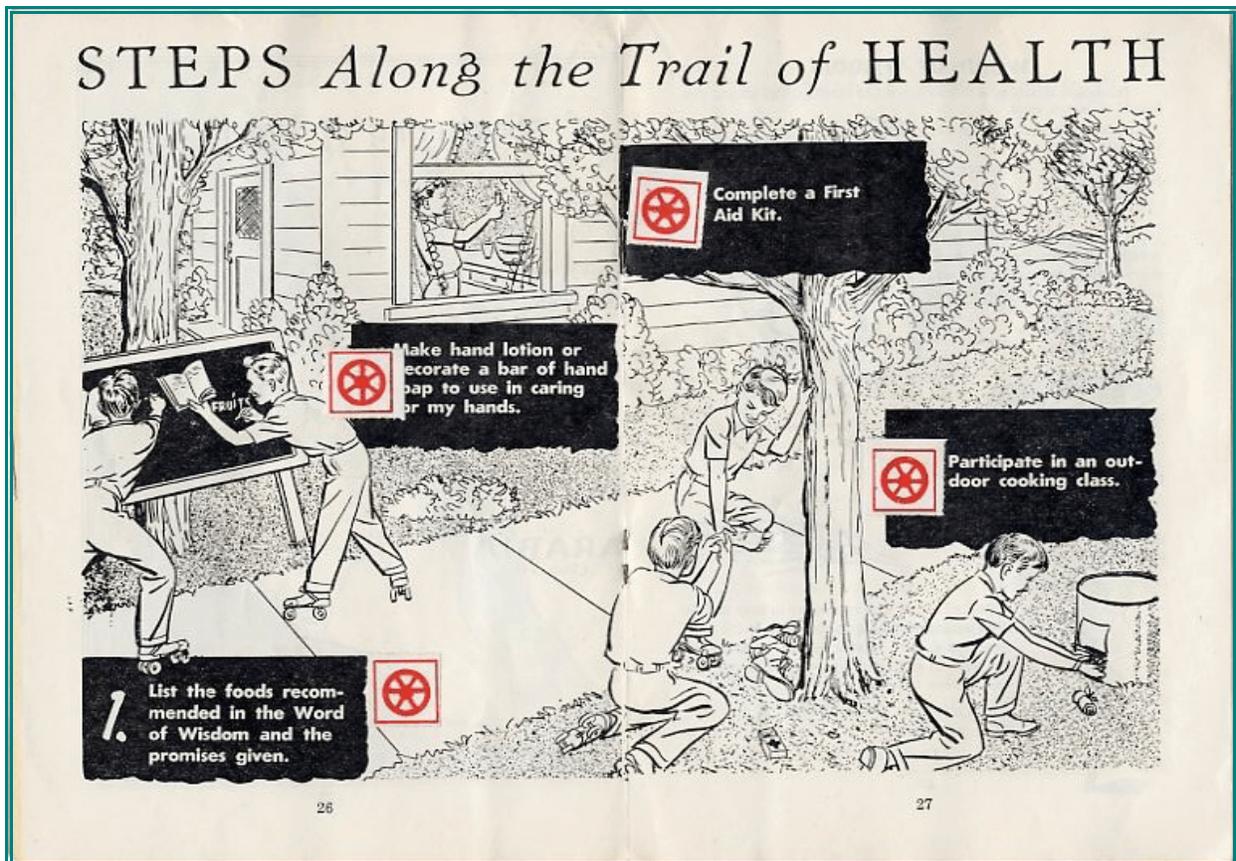
I put this page in because I think it is so different from things that kids are taught today. These 'can do's' seem silly in today's world perhaps but they are



actually elements that contribute to a smooth-functioning family and society. Manners are not popular today but we had them drilled into us and I think it was better.

Notice the smallness of the actions described, being unselfish about the radio, answering the phone correctly, saying excuse me when leaving the table, waiting for older people to sit (amazing isn't it), taking the piece nearest to us. Ever heard of the latter? It was a big deal in a world where "pieces" were cut by mothers in which case they were of different sizes so when a plate of pieces of brownies was presented to you, a larger one might be on the other side of the plate but you were to take the one on your side.

The three logs had sets of four activities that we had to complete. When we completed one of the four, a small stamp was placed by that activity. When the four were completed, we were given a plastic emblem to place on our bandelos which was a complicated process because it required cutting holes and gluing round



fasteners on the back of the plastic posts with acetone. This page shows a full set of four. I can still describe three of them.

We made hand lotion in our kitchen, cooking things that we bought at the drug store. The oddest item was a package of gum tragacanth which was flat dried scales that dissolved and made the lotion thick. Rose water was used to give scent to the lotion.

The first aid kit was built to fit inside of a large metal band-aid can and consisted of band-Aids, Mercurochrome, tweezers, matches, needle, gauze, halazone tablets and other small things.

The cooking project was done past Billy's place close to the bridge over Bear River. We used number 10 cans, cut out a hole near the bottom on one side, and cut

an opening on the opposite side at the top. We inverted these cans, built a fire inside of them, and the arrangement of the two holes created a draft through the can that made the fire hot. Then we cooked pancakes, bacon and eggs in pans on top of the stove, a real accomplishment for 11 year old kids.

We finally graduated from Primary and we are wearing our bandelos. I don't remember whether Dick graduated the same year I did but given mom's propensity to make us into twins, she may well have advanced Dick a year to make it so. I have that bandelos as well as the oil cloth envelope that holds the three Logs that I displayed above for you. One of the first projects we had to do in Trail Builders was stitch those oil cloth envelopes with large needles and blue yard. The oil cloth is badly deteriorated over 50 years and some of the stitching is tearing loose but the envelope still holds the logs.



The Primary was small but was constantly engaged in preparing programs for the adults, which remains true today. One of the programs involved learning several songs in Spanish. Sister Carroll taught us how to speak the words which we had to memorize. "El yono rancho grande, alala..." We wore some sort of sombreros and vests and learned a Mexican dance which we had to perform up there in the Oddfellows Hall.

The biggest program we ever did was Christmas. This photo shows the entire population of kids in the Seward Branch that included Gloria Schaefermeyer on the left who sang a solo and her sister Jeanie on the right holding an Easter Lily. At



Christmas. Joseph in the middle is Frank A., Dick to Frank's right is one of the shepherds, I'm a wiseman to Dick's right with an unidentified wiseman to my right. Billy is the wiseman on the right. Vonnie Schaefermeyer is Mary and Mike S. stands to her right. I don't remember the other kids but they are obviously costumed to represent nations of the world. This was quite a production with a satiny backdrop, Mary Schaefermeyer playing a funky electronic keyboard device that Art had to repair periodically for her, and us kids singing all the wonderful Christmas carols. That was Primary in Seward.

## Hit by Car

I was hit by a teen driver in a 1953 Ford, a mixed-breed kid who was known to be wild. His name was "Teddy" and he was probably a high school senior. I don't remember much about the accident except that I was walking home for lunch with a neighbor named Varnell -which we crudely changed to "Barnsmell". There was a great deal of snow on the ground and the roads were naturally nothing but icy, packed snow. We were headed west on the north side of a road when Teddy with a car full of kids appeared unexpectedly. I don't know why it was unexpected because the roads were wide and there was no other traffic so he should have been easily visible or audible.

I have a clear recollection of the instant of impact. As I was walking alongside the road, I became aware that Teddy's car was probably going to hit me. But instead of jumping and running off the road which is probably what Varnell did, I remember that I stood still. Then I turned to face the car and as it slid toward me, I crouched down a bit and had a vision of myself gracefully leaping up into the air at precisely the right moment so that I would land on top of the hood and not be hurt. That was a stupid thing to do because I had never tried anything remotely resembling that kind of sophisticated acrobatic move yet there I was. The car approached but I had a change of heart and decided that I needed to run after all. I turned to run and was struck at that instant by the front bumper. I was just a country kid after all.

The bumper struck my right leg half way down the calf. That is a shorter distance from the ground that the bumper was so I apparently was in full flight. The impact threw me through the air, an event I don't specifically remember. My next memory is lying on my back compressed down into the deep snow. Varnell was talking to me and Teddy was out of the car with his friends worried as he could be.

Then my memory is blank except for one highlight: an ambulance and several men came to collect and take me the few blocks to the hospital. I have a vivid memory of the instant of being picked up off the snow. The noonday siren was sounding, and my dad was kneeling over me, looking scared, talking to me. I was surprised to see him because he was on the City Dock that day. He helped put me into the ambulance and came to the hospital with us. I don't remember his words but was comforted by his large powerful presence. I hurt badly and passed out before we got to the hospital.

I was wearing my winter coat that had a hood made of brown clipped

sheepskin. The hood zipped along the middle and could be folded backward and snapped into a tall, double-thick layer of sheepskin, which was fortunate. I had bad bruises on the left side of my face and head but nothing was broken and I believe that was because the sheepskin cushioned me from the impact. I was bruised all over as one would expect but the other part that was badly hurt was my left elbow. I must have landed on the elbow and forearm because there was a hard knot over the elbow and my inner forearm was black. It was fascinating to watch the transformation of large bruises. They go from purple black to purple to green to yellow, in that order so you look like a rainbow. That elbow bothered me for a long time and a calcium nodule developed

This is the little hospital that served the town. It burned down years ago. It was located

on the south side of the Episcopal Church, or half a block from our 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue House. I don't know what door they took me through because I



Figure 226 From Mary Barry's Volume 3

was unconscious. But I was put in a room about where the blind is up to the right of the flag pole. There were two beds in the room but I was alone in a bed that looked like army surplus.

I stayed unconscious for a few hours and woke up when I needed to pee. I think that's really what woke me up. I was 12 and as self-conscious as a kid could be about things to do with body functions, so peeing was a big deal. I imagine there was a urinal nearby but I'd never used one and would have been shocked at the idea. Lying in bed and peeing into this metal tube, possibly while someone stood there and watched. Toilet training is so severe and creates such deep-seated aversions that even if I knew I was peeing into a container while I lay in bed, I would have felt like I was wetting the bed. I knew that there was a bathroom at the end of the hall -

the left end of the first floor in the photo from Mary Barry's book.

So I slowly crawled out of bed, sliding painfully over the side of the mattress and down onto the floor. It hurt like heck to stand on my right leg but the pain from my bladder, and the need to get the job done before anyone got some funny ideas, made me ignore the pain in my calf. I hobbled down the hall, leaning against the wall, hoping that no nurse would see me and order me back to bed, hopping on my left foot with enormous pain on my right leg. I made it. I went in, shut the door, peed and then had to repeat the effort. This time the bladder pain was gone and I had now been standing on my damaged calf for several minutes. This time it hurt like hell to go the distance from the bathroom back to my bed. It hurt soooo bad, but I was determined to get it done because I knew I would get a big lecture if I was caught. I made it, crawled painfully into bed, and lay there hurting so badly that I cried again. I never told anyone I did that because I knew I would have gotten into trouble.

I spent a couple of days in the hospital and different people came to visit, more to see how bad I was than to make me feel better. Kids in a hospital don't really benefit from the attention of adults. After Dr. Deischer decided I was stable to go home, he discharged me. Dad carried me out to the car and drove me home. At the house, he took me out and while Dick or mom held the front door open, he carried me inside, into the bedroom, and laid me on the bottom bunk which was actually Dick's bunk. I was privileged I thought because it was more convenient that climbing up a ladder each time I wanted to get into bed.

But one nasty event took place during the time I slept on the bottom bunk. During the night, Dick must have been trying to sleep walk. I was awakened by a loud crash right by my head. Dick had fallen out of bed and onto the orange crates we used as shelves. He destroyed the crate, went to the bathroom and got back into bed, but didn't remember the event in the morning.

## Polio Epidemic

I think it was 1954 when the movie Peter Pan was released. At least that's when it hit Seward which may have been a year after the initial release. In any event, it came to Seward and was one of the most waited for movies of the year. It was a highlight to look forward to which all of us kids did. There was nothing otherwise happening most of the time so this sort of Disney release was a thrill to look forward to.

Something terrible happened, however, that affected the 300+ people for the rest of their lives. An epidemic of polio and/or Iceland Disease happened. The symptoms were comparable and showed up all over town. The showing of Peter Pan was scheduled to take place well in advance of the outbreak of disease and went forward as planned.

It was frustrating or depressing or both to Dick and me that mom refused to allow us to go to the theater to watch this movie, along with most of the kids our age, but when she spoke, it was like holy writ. So when said you don't get to go, guess what. You didn't. But we resented that limitation for a long time.

In retrospect, it's hard to tell whether her judgment was accurate or not. She said that she didn't want us to go into the theater for an hour and a half with all those other kids because we might be exposed to the sickness was affecting so many people. I don't think that the diagnosis was even know at that point in time, just that there was a bizarre illness affecting a large number of people. 300 out of 2,000 people is an enormously high incidence of a disease, hence the designation of epidemic.

The reason I don't know if her judgment was correct is that I got the Iceland version of the disease anyway. I caught it while I was recuperating from the car accident and apparently due to the trauma to my right calf, the focus of the muscle wasting was that calf. I note in the article written by Joe Deischer, MD, in 1957, entitled "Benign Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (Iceland Disease in Alaska)" in NORTHWEST MEDICINE, reports that the muscle group most affected in the victims was the legs so my experience was consistent.

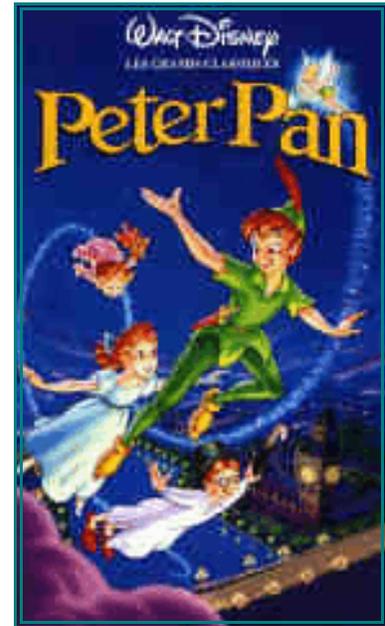


Figure 227

<http://www.sciencefiction.com/movies/images/pan.jpg>

It was years later that I tracked Dr. Deischer down through Deanna's mother's friends on Lopez Island. A Ted Phillips, M.D. was retired there and it turned out that he had lived in Seward after I left, so he knew Dr. Deischer and had kept track of him over the years. Ted talked to Dr. Deischer about my disease and he replied by sending a copy of this article to Ted who copied it to me. Deischer included a funny anecdote that sort of reflects the quality of life in Seward in the frontier days. Deischer wrote a note to Ted as follows, referring to lab tests he had wanted run on disease victims:

"The mental giant from Alaska's Dept of Public Health took some blood samples then lost them on the way back to Juneau. BRAINS! We need Brains!"

Poor Dr. Deischer. It have been frustrating trying to practice medicine this way.

The source of the epidemic was never determined, though there was speculation that it had been brought to town by some parakeets. Whether that's possible or probably I don't know but whatever it was, the disease was alarming. Mom got it in her spine, Susan Schaefermeyer got it and had to go into an iron lung and two people died from it.

### Achilles Tendon Surgery

In 1955 an orthopedic surgeon from California had arranged for a six week hunting and fishing trip on the Kenai Peninsula. He was a godsend. Probably as a result of the severe damage to my right calf, the disease caused enormous damage to it, perhaps more severe than other wise would have happened. As I was coming off the crutches from the car accident I noticed that the stiffness in my calf remained. As a kid I didn't even think about it. I just knew I had been hit by a car and that my leg had never recovered. However, it became evident over the next 6-8 months that something bad had happened that was not related to the car accident. Dr. Deischer doubtless related the symptoms I was experiencing to what he was seeing in other victims of Iceland Disease and concluded that I had developed the disease which had created severe atrophy of my right calf and tendon.

The severity of the atrophy progressed for some time. When I would wake

up in the morning, my calf ached which was bad enough but the serious effect was apparent when I climbed down the ladder from my bunk to go to the bathroom. My calf hurt so badly that I had to lean on the wall as I walked, hopping along on my left foot. When I tried to put my right heel on the floor, I could not. Not just because of pain but because it simply would not go, it would not stretch that far. However, as I walked around for the next hour, I could stand on the tendon and gradually bring my heel to the floor. It hurt badly but I dreaded going to school with this kind of disability. Kids were -are- malicious and I feared being labeled "crippled". So I was motivated to get my tendon stretched out enough that I would appear to be walking normally, even though it hurt badly. I did get a release from PE which made me happy for many reasons.

That next summer, 1955, this good orthopedist came to Seward for 6 weeks, but instead of hunting and fishing, he spent most of his time operating on those of us who needed it. In my case his surgery was to open the Achilles tendon, cut half way through it, split it down about 5 inches and cut the rest of the way through. At this point, after he had cut the tendon completely through, he pulled on the toe to move the bottom half of the tendon down far enough that the foot would be able to reach the floor "normally". When he judged that he had it far enough down, he stitched the two strips of tendon back together, closed the skin, dressed the wound and applied a heavy plaster cast that ran from just below my knee past my toes. The purpose the case was to completely immobilize the tendon for 6 weeks to allow it to grow back together with scar tissue and allow it to heal.

After six more weeks of hobbling around on crutches, having them stolen by mean kids at school, falling on the ice and snow in spite of the sharp calks put into the rubber foot, mom took me to the hospital to have the cast removed. I'd had a cast in Vernal so I understood that the nasty sounding saw was not going to hurt me, but I was nervous about what was going to happen after the cast was off, how my foot would work, how much it would hurt. It was a nurse who used the saw to cut the cast open along the shin on the front. The cast was so thick that she had great difficulty. She had to make two cuts and pried the halves open with a flat bar, being careful to not hurt me in the process.

When she managed to get the cast open enough to slip it off my leg, she called Dr. Deischer to come in. What was found was a dressing from knee to toe that was soaked with old blood, and which stunk worse than most bad things I'd even smelled. The leg wasn't hurting but the smell made me worry that something was wrong. The smell was caused by bacteria and aging blood and nothing was wrong

with the incision but I didn't know that. I thought my leg had rotted.

Dr. Deischer carefully cut the cotton layer and strips of gauze and gently removed them, working his way down to my skin. After all the stinking gauze had been removed, he had me turn over so that he could examine the incision. There were 8 big stitches visible. I don't know whether or not the orthopedist used other absorbable gut sutures inside the skin which would have dissolved by this time, but the 8 stitches were heavy and secure. The startling thing about them to me was that they had actually been placed through the center of the tendon. So when Dr. Deischer pulled them out, they hurt like hell. He did it without any pain medication, just an apology that it was going to hurt. Man, did it hurt. 8 times.

I was taken home still on my crutches because Dr. Deischer ordered that I not try to walk on it yet. He gave orders to continue with the crutches and to gradually start putting weight on my leg, just a bit at a time, to allow it to get used to the weight. I followed his instructions carefully because my ankle started to ache now that it was moving. The mending took place over 4-5 weeks and I eventually put my crutches aside, relieved that I didn't need to use them, and relieved that kids no longer had anything to bother me about.

But I still had one more painful episode related to the surgery. I was out at Billy's place at 5 mile playing one Saturday. We had walked down the old road to Bear River to explore. That road was 3-4 feet below the new road bed that had been built up with gravel. As we were walking back to Billy's house, we all started running which was just fine. My ankle was not hurting. Billy, Dickie and Mikie decided they run up the steep slope onto the new road and I naturally followed, not thinking a bit about my ankle.

As I turned, running, and headed up the slope, the first step I took on my right ankle produced a loud pop in my mind and instantly hurt so badly that I fell to the ground yelling. It hurt badly enough that I couldn't even stand up so the kids went to the house and got Art to come over. He talked to me, always a gentle man, and finally picked me up and carried me back to his house where I waited until mom came out to pick us up. She took me to see Deischer and it turned out that no damage was done but to this day I am chary of using my right leg to lead. I am, indeed, left-footed as you can tell when you compare the wear patterns on the heels and soles of my shoes.

The one benefit, perhaps, of this polio and surgery was that I was not drafted during the Vietnam war. I received my notice to appear for an induction physical, but after it was over, I was classified IV-F which meant I would never be

called up for anything.

## Bicycles

We didn't have horses in Seward. Too cold, no where to put them and too much rain. Actually, there were horses in Alaska, but they were rare because the weather was what it was and because hay wasn't produced much in that rain. Can you imagine how quickly it would mildew before it could dry and be bailed? At least in Seward.

Instead of horses, we had a pair of legs and bicycles. Those were our transportation. If we wanted to go somewhere, we used these devices to get us there. I must point out something again: my apologies but it is an important difference to point out. Our parents -like virtually every mom and dad in Seward- had no interest in "driving" us to School, driving us to the store, driving us to the Small Boat Harbor to fish, drive us out on the Old Nash road to fish. None of them.

Here's the part that may actually be the surprise to you: None of us kids would have accepted rides to the small boat harbor if they had been offered. Because we would have been afraid that our friends would see us and you know what would have happened? They would have made fun of us, and they would have called us "sissies" or "momma's boys." Those were pretty awful things to be called. I know they are pretty tame by the standards you grew up and live with but that is simply because the scale has shifted. You know what the terms would be for yourselves that would embarrass you.

When I look back and try to understand why mom didn't offer to give us a ride to the Cannery or the Small Boat Harbor I have to admit that I actually don't know why she didn't. However, I can make a good guess, actually two good guesses. First, the community standard was different than that as just pointed out. No parents drove their kids anywhere - except perhaps Virginia Blue but she was a special case. She was a pampered girl, an only child, whose parents BOTH worked - one of the big differences back then though not that rare- so they had the funds and time and energy to indulge her. I viewed her as spoiled and didn't see her as a standard model in Seward of how kids lived. Parents just didn't drive their kids around.

The other reason that mom wouldn't drive us around was money. Pure and simple. Money. In contrast to the community of Boise where parents seemed to be

oblivious to this fact, car motors actually consume a product called gasoline and that stuff actually costs money, real hard cash. Every single time the thing is taken for a ride, it eats gas, and at the same time, it eats money. It was viewed as a waste to spend money on gas when we legs and could walk ourselves wherever we had to go. I think that to mom, driving us kids to the small boat harbor -a frequent destination I use as an example- would have been about the same thing as handing us a pocket full of pennies that we threw away, one at a time, every one fifty feet.

To you kids that doesn't seem like much so let's convert the "value" to something you understand. A regular size Babe Ruth candy bar cost 5 pennies. Today you pay 40 pennies for that sum. So that's 5/40 for the value of one "penny". So let's use the homely example again but use today's value. Imagine how YOU would feel if you were told to throw a dime away every 50 feet you walked - assuming you would even walk that far!- and try to think how you would feel about the idea. I think that as long as you didn't view it as YOUR money, it wouldn't bother you but if you understood the dimes to be your personal dimes, you just might take a dim view of throwing them away one at a time, particularly if you had something you wanted to buy. I think that's how it was for mom and most parents. Driving a kid in a car somewhere when they could walk was about like throwing money away.

Anyway, the times were totally different and I had to get myself wherever I was going. The only exception was when I could beg mom to giving me a ride out to Mile 5 to see Billy Schaefermeyer. In that deal, there was a long distance for a kid to walk, plus mom could sit and chat with Mary so there was something in it for her. Otherwise, I rode my bicycle.

By the time I left Seward, I had three bicycles. I paid for them myself with money I earned from selling papers or saved from my allowance, or saved from shoveling snow. Those were my primary sources of cold hard cash. I never paid more than 10 dollars for one and paid 5 dollars for one of them.

They were all balloon tired bicycles, not because that was the stylish, faddish kind of tires to use, rather, it was the only kind of tires that were available. There were a few English Raleigh bicycles that has narrower tires but they were rare. Most of us rode balloon tires and didn't think a thing about it.

This photo makes me happy. This is actually one of the bicycles I owned, a Schwinn "Roadmaster".

Mine was a blue and looked exactly like this with a large flat leather saddle. The two silver shafts running from the front axle upward were attached on the silver thing on the other end were a shock absorber. Pretty cool to have a shock absorber. It really did make a difference in how the front tire negotiated bumps. The wide section hanging on



Figure 228 <http://www.deco-echoes.com/futures/to131.htm>

the cross bar had a button near the front that you can barely make out close to the handle bars. That button activated a small horn that was powered by a pair of D-cell batteries that were contained inside of that fat section.

This machine was stopped by stepping backward on either pedal. That applied tension on the innards of a Monarch Bendix-style brake just like this one. The toothed gear obviously held the chain and the long flange on the other side was secured to the frame by a small nut and bolt through a yoke-affair. When the toothed gear was turned clockwise in this image, the bicycle would move forward. When turned the other direction, the inner workings were activated and pinched together and compressing two surfaces together. That friction slowed and stopped the bicycle. The tough part of handling this unit was keeping that center shaft centered in the works. If you got it too far to one side, the other end would



Figure 229 <http://nostalgic.net/arc/parts/>

open up and bearings would spill out, creating a nightmare. I did that more than once because I would forget to pay attention to the centering business while I was concentrating on getting a nut off the shaft. If the nut was frozen in place, I would be turning the entire shaft, not realizing it, in which case it ended up being wound out of the cap on the other end and then I'd be frustrated having to rebuilt the whole dang thing.

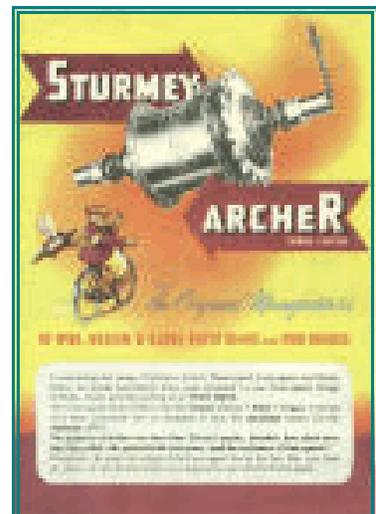
Sturmey-Archer made a three-speed rear hub that was operated by a lever on the handlebar. While the rider was pedaling, he advanced the lever a click at a time from low to second to high gear. As the lever moved, the cable it was attached to moved into or out of the inside of the gear mechanism, thereby altering which gear ring was being pushed by the pedal. Here's an image (the site identified by



Figure 230 <http://nostalgic.net/arc/parts/>

Google was no longer operational so I don't have a URL but this is a genuine Sturmey Archer ad from that era.) that shows the small flexible chain that the braided wire cable attached to. It's hard to see but on the top end of the chain is a threaded shaft.

That male element was threaded into the corresponding fat female element on the cable in the next photo. To adjust the length of the cable as the lever in the middle here is advanced or release, the female sleeve was loosened, and then secured in place by a "lock ring" on the male element that basically used friction to keep the elements locked in place. The way you could tell that the cable was too tight or too loose was that it would or it would not go through all of the gears. If that happened, you just got off the thing and experimented as many times as you needed to get the



three gears operating again.

When we got flat tires, which we did often on those unpaved, nail-ridden streets, we had to fix them. Period. I suppose that we could have pushed the bicycle to a service station where we could have paid a man to fix it for us. But the problem was the cost. We had to pay that, too. Not our parents. Us. So we

learned how to repair inner tubes. It is a lost art one I suppose we're better off not having to deal with. Remember when your tires went flat how much work it was to get them fixed? We tried to deal with the possibility by buying the so-called thorn-proof tubes and then fill them with the puncture repair liquid, one tube per tube. There were no such things as thorn proof tubes and the liquid repair stuff, so I had to do the repairs often and from scratch. The worst part of these repair ordeals was



Figure 232

[http://www.antiquemystique.com/images/2507\\_08\\_jpg](http://www.antiquemystique.com/images/2507_08_jpg)  
jpg

how often I punctured the tube myself when I was putting it back inside the tire. I used two or three screw drivers to lift one side of the tire and to put it back inside the hub. It was during those manipulations that I'd accidentally pinch the inner tube between a screw driver and the hub. And of course, I wasn't aware of having done this until AFTER I had everything reassembled and inflated the tire. I was so stupid that I'd even reassemble the entire bicycle in the beginning, only to have to undo it all and start over. Eventually, I learned that the best thing is to assemble the tire and then inflate the tube. That way I didn't have to remove the chain guard again, remove the chain again and so on.

Turns out that my dad didn't help me repair my tubes any more than your dad helped you. Do you suppose there was any connection?

I bought three bicycles so I'd have access to spare parts since things wore out and had to be replaced. I kept them leaning against the south side of the house under a tarp I cadged off dad.

The point of the bicycles was the freedom they gave me. I had a large, huge is the right word, basket hanging on the handle bars so I could haul all kinds of things around. At one point, I even managed to scrounge up enough moolah to buy a

set of used saddle-style baskets that fitted over the rear tire. Together, I could haul more things that I had the strength to pedal. Because I always had to pedal uphill when I came home. That was the major drawback living up that high on the alluvial fan. It would have been much less strenuous to have lived in Homebrew Alley. But whatever the slope was, bicycles gave us a great range to explore and play.

### Schwinn Bicycles

I suppose that kids loved bicycles so much because there was no other rolling stock to use to get around outside of the little pedal cars that small kids used and scooters that were fun but didn't get you far very fast. So kids were acutely aware of anything to do with these glorious things. This kind of sign hung in hardware store winds. They had incandescent bulbs inside so glowed in the dark.



Figure 233 <http://nostalgic.net/arc/parts/>

## Jesse Lee Orphanage

There was a religious group from the Lower 48 who took it upon themselves to build an orphanage up there in the frozen north to help take care of the little kids who were left behind when their parents died from white man's diseases and so on. I don't know which group it was, other than that it was a protestant group, as opposed to



Catholic or Jewish group. You can see it in this photo between Dick and me just above the tree line as we're preparing to descend Mt. Marathon on one Fourth of July. The white spot to the right of Dick's head was the residence of the director of the place, a man named "Don Lee" when I lived there.

When mom and dad were in Seward in 1941, the Jesse Lee Home was in existence so it must have been built in the early "part of the century." There I go again, using that phrase that suddenly refers the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Doesn't seem like anything to you I suppose but it sort of jars my chronometer to have to recalibrate it that way.

There were four structures that comprised this outfit when I went to Seward in 1941, and all four of them were painted in camouflage. This camouflage was another piece of the omni-present military and war efforts. I can't find any photos to show you what the camouflage was like but it's simple to describe. The buildings were almost three stories tall so had large walls that could be seen from the bay. These walls were painted a gray color and then full-length gray-green spruce trees were painted over the underlying gray. It didn't do anything to conceal the structure from us who stood in the town looking northwest to the Home, but the story I was told was that this camouflage was designed such that if a

submariner raised his periscope to scout the shore along here, he would not be able to see the orphanage. That was the key, "orphanage", a place filled with kids that needed to be protected. After a few years, the pine trees were painted over and I missed them. I liked the way the buildings looked before but I had nothing to say about the deal, did I.

The three main buildings of the home were these:



The building on the left was the boys' dormitory, the building on the right was the girls' dormitory and the one in the center was the school for these kids, called "Bayview School." As a kid I never learned precisely why this outfit had to provide it's own educational system. But since universal education was provided in those days, I assume that the orphans -sounds like such a pejorative term today doesn't it- would have been provided their education on the nickel of the local citizenry. So it's my guess -and that's all it is- is that the religious group who paid for this outpost of their religion decided that they probably and shrewdly decided that they kinda' otta' also provide "education" in addition to a bed and grub. So this was probably a parochial school in the beginning, just to keep these kids away from the nefarious influence of the town folks. But let me clarify things for you: When I

lived there, this approach was still the norm, and I can tell you unequivocally that those kids were no slouches when it came to getting into trouble. Indeed, I spent a great deal of time with them and came to understand that there was a kind of undercurrent of barely repressed violence ready to burst. And no wonder. How would you feel if you had lost your parents to something you didn't understand, at a young age, to then be shunted from place to place to live with people who weren't your family, who really didn't love or understand you, didn't really care for you like your mom and dad did, to finally end up in this place, a sort of barely concealed penitentiary.

That is precisely how the place felt to me: a jail, a penitentiary and I felt sorry for those poor kids trapped and locked up that way. Oh, if you visited the place with Mr. Lee or one of his minions who would describe the place in glowing terms, pointing out with pride the various features of the structures and the organization, you might not develop that same sense. But I went there dozens of times and I was sent out in the "cell blocks" without adults around. THAT is how you develop a sense of what it's REALLY like and believe me, it wasn't a bed of roses.

The most graphic example I cite of the repressed violence I saw how the boys played when we went into a small exercise room designed to be just that. It was one of the prettiest rooms in the place, not very large, with white walls, and a fair number of windows, situated on the second floor. When we were taken there the first time, I was surprised to be ordered -ordered, not asked- to remove my shoes because there was a rule -lots of rules- and no one could wear shoes in this room. So a pile of shoes developed by the door way as 7 or 8 of us boys went in to "play". There was actually little exercise equipment in the room so exercise was sort of roughhousing and scuffling and wrestling with each other. There was no adult in the room. That's the key to what happened. I had no idea what was about to happen to me.

The one piece of play equipment that was always in the room was a largish "medicine ball". It was made of a light tan leather and had many seams and was smooth, an innocuous looking ball that I immediately assumed would be rolled. I was wrong. This ball was about a foot and a half in diameter and probably weighed 10 - 15 pounds. The kids started playing with it by throwing it back and forth. It looked like a game of catch but when the ball was thrown to me, I was amazed at how heavy it was. But I was more amazed at the near violence of the throw. It was not a throw "to me". It was a throw "at me", and there was nothing reserved or gentle about it, regardless of the fact that I'd never been in that room before with those

kids.

I was hit in the stomach so hard that it knocked the wind out of me and I could scarcely breathe and got tears in my eyes. I didn't cry because boys don't cry but it hurt bad. That was bad enough, but I was out there to play with these kids, probably at mom's instigation so I couldn't very well back out after the first time I had the ball thrown to me. The kids could see I was hurt but no one said anything about it. They just kept pitching the ball around but not with the same intensity or ferocity. When I got my breath back I tried to be a good sport and started to engage in the play again. At some point, one of the kids yelled for me to catch the ball. He ran toward me with it. As he came near, he got this big evil grin on his face, wound up and threw the ball at me as hard as he could, hitting me in the stomach the same way. This time I cried and I left the room. I never played medicine ball with them again. It was too dangerous. The latent violence was given rein and it boiled in there.

The point of the story is the look on the kid's face and the expectancy of the other boys. It was as if they finally had a chance to punish someone in a room that was even set aside for mayhem. They did the deed with such undisguised satisfaction and were so malicious about it that I knew they really did want to hurt me. It wasn't until I was an adult that I began to get an understanding that there truly was a latent violence in these kids that was unleashed in certain circumstances. The etiology of that violence is (A) their antecedents and if I had the same ones, I, too, would doubtless have been violent, and (B) the regimentation they were forced to endure and were powerless to resist. I saw comparable expressions and actions at other points. It was like a penitentiary where there were guards with superior strength who rode the kids hard and were merciless in meting out "justice", i.e. punishment, for disobedience. The kids learned well.

Anyway, the place ran like a well-oiled machine as the saying goes but more out of fear than out of appreciation of the rules. Later in Boston I attended a junior high school across an anchor fence from a parochial school and there I saw the kind of violence that religious types inflicted on kids. In that case, they were nuns in the old-style habit who carried rulers and when kids broke a ruler they had to hold out their palms so the teachers could smack them with the ruler. Once more, there was latent violence in the acts of the nuns, as if they wanted to unload an murder the kids -who may have deserved it! In any event, these were the boys who comprised the bulk of Scout Troop 620 so I had a lot of experience with their attitudes and behaviors when adults weren't around.

This is a ground-level view of the three buildings to give you a better sense of their size and layout. At this time,

there was nothing around these buildings -as you can see from the first photo above of the Jesse Lee Home but in 2003 the entire field is overgrown with tall evergreens standing along paved streets between a subdivision!



### Benny Benson

The claim to fame for the Jesse Lee Home -which is now defunct which makes me very sad- is this little kid, Benny Benson. He was one of the orphans stranded at this place where he was being 'taken care of'. While he was there, the territory decided it was about time to have its own flag, even though statehood was still nothing but a far off dream -32 more years. The competition was advertised everywhere in the territory in the hope that someone would come up with a design that the "committee in charge of choosing" would like.

This was in 1927 and Benny was something like 12 or 13 years old, just a little kid to be entering a contest that was basically for adults. No one expected that kids would be able to come up with a design that might be good enough to win, so there were no rules that prohibited him from entering. No one guessed this might happen.

He was an Indian child and he loved his world. He decided that his flag would have a background like the blue sky. Then for a design he used the KISS principle and chose two things to include: the north star, and the big dipper. His simple, elegant design won and it's the classiest flag of the 50.

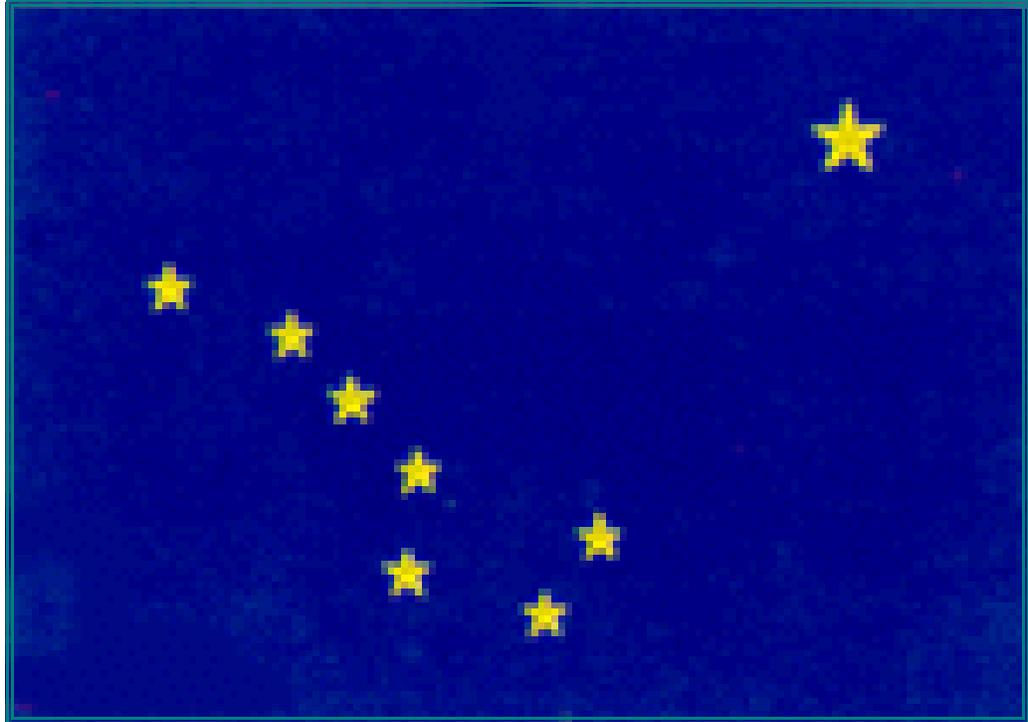


Figure 237 [http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/misc/ourflag/stateflag1.htm](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/misc/ourflag/stateflag1.htm)

### Guinea Pigs

This is the first place I ever saw guinea pigs. I was astounded at these creatures. I was with the boys in their dormitories which were large halls with probably two dozen cots lining the outside walls. I could hear this bizarre shrieking or crying that sounded like nothing I'd ever heard. It was sort of a whistle but not. I asked the kids what that sound was and they took me over to a



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Figure 238

<http://www.sPCA.com/francais/pages/adoptions/other.html>

wire cage that had 3 or 4 piles of fluffy hair that seemed to be squirming, from which arose these weird sounds. The kids reached in to the cages and pushed the piles of fluff which made them whistle even more. AT the time I didn't relate the odd odor to these animals.

I asked what they were and the kids said they were guinea pigs. They were happy that they could tell me about an animal I'd never seen. I could see that they ate something like rabbit pellets and made pellets sort of like rabbit pellets and drank out of a bottle with a metal straw hanging out of it. I'd never seen this before and was just amazed. The name "pig" confused the heck out of me. I knew what a pig was like. THAT was a 'pig', so why in the heck were these kids calling these piles of fuzz 'pig'. The reason they did was because the adults called them 'pigs' too but I never and still don't understand that.

There were their pets, no cats or dogs, which must have been a let down. But the Order Knew Best Once More.



Figure 239 <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/images/pigs.jpg>

### Brent, Janice & Pogo Sticks

**B**rent Whitmore, the kid who lived behind us across the alley, had a little sister. She was a wiry tough little kid who was a real tomboy. She'd spit with you or throw rocks at tin cans and do as good as you. She didn't like to wear dresses and didn't like to play girl things. But I discovered that she did know she was a girl. One summer afternoon, she and I were doing something in the alley between our houses. We kids spent a lot of time in that dirt alley with two tire tracks with a grassy knoll between them. For some reason, as we were playing, I ended up hitting her hard in the chest. It was not a malicious act, but she took exception to that particular accident and scared the crap out of me.

She screamed and started to cry which wasn't too bad because she had been hurt so it was appropriate to cry if it hurt that much. But she said something that

scared me. While she held the spot on her chest where I had hit her, she screamed that I had hit her "in my her breast bud". Sobbing, she said that now she was "going to be deformed" and yelled that it was all my fault and she was going to tell her mom on me. At which point she ran screaming and sobbing for her back door which was right there.

My natural impulse was to scam so Mrs. Whitmore couldn't find me to punish me for my crime. Brent and I ran down the alley toward the Episcopal Church to get away, though technically he wasn't running away - he was just keeping me company. I wasn't seeking solace in religion, I was unrepentantly seeking a hideout - in Father Clapp's house where Brent and I played with Jay Clapp. Every so often over the next few hours when I was "on the lam" I'd suddenly remember what had happened and would break out in a cold sweat. Mrs. Whitmore could get pretty worked up and I imagined she'd take a dim view of my deforming her only daughter.

I had never heard of "breast buds" and certainly was horrified to think she had any. That was sort of treacherous of her. To play with us boys while she concealed them seemed sneaky and dishonest of her. Real girls like Virginia Blue probably had these things but Virginia wore dresses and played dolls inside her house and made fun of us boys. We knew that she was a girl, that she was different. I did know what breasts were and was of an age where they were entering my consciousness but I never had associated them with this scrawny genderless kid. I felt confused and betrayed when she sort of switched sides on me that way. Our relationship shifted permanently at that point. She definitely became a girl so was "discriminated against", sometimes not so subtly, when she wanted to play with us boys.

One year for Christmas Brent and Janice were each given a pogo stick. Now a pogo stick was a funny thing to give a kid who lived in Seward where the streets weren't paved and there were no concrete sidewalks or driveways to bounce on. But that didn't matter. When summer came and the ground hardened up, Brent and his sister started experimenting with their pogo sticks. And so did I.

It is a tricky enterprise when you start. You have to develop a technique of jumping up and down just like you might do on the floor but in this case you do it on a pair of foot pedals. These pedals are fastened to a long tube that sticks up far enough for you to hold it in your two hands. Inside this tube is a strong spring that is compressed when you come down on the pedals. When you hit the bottom and jump upward again, the compressed spring expands and propels you and the stick into the air. At that point you have to aim your self in a direction away from where

you were, otherwise you just bounce up and down in one place, looking sort of dumb.

Coordinating all of these movements is tough to do but once it's accomplished, jumping is pure joy. When I could talk Brent's sister into loaning me her stick, Brent and I would take off bouncing for several blocks sometimes. Sometimes on our lunch break during the year our class met in the "undercroft" -not the basement we were told by Father Clapp- we'd get Mrs. Moore's permission and run the half block to Brent's house to get the pogo sticks. Then we came bouncing down the alley and to the church, to the envy of all the boys the point of the exercise.

After you perfect your technique you can vary the length of the "step" you take which also changes how fast you go. This is done two ways: first, you can vary how hard you jump on the pedals because the tighter the spring was compressed, the harder you shot back into the air; second, you could vary the tilt of the stick - held vertically, you just bounced in place but tilted forward a great deal meant you would take a really long step. If you tilted the stick sideways or backwards, the latter requiring more practice, you jumped in the same direction.

As long as the dirt was hard and smooth, jumping was nearly effortless and riskless. That wasn't the usual situation, however. Only the streets which were compacted by cars and trucks were reliably hard. But the problem in the street when you were getting up a good head of steam was the unexpected rocks. You had to keep an eagle eye out for them because if you landed with the foot of the stick on a small rock, it would roll, your footing was lost and you ended up on the ground wound around the stick.

If you tried to bounce in a yard, none of which had grass, you might avoid the rocks. But in this situation you would be doing just fine until you rammed into a secret spot of soft dirt at which time you mired straight down so you were standing on the pedals which were now flat on the ground. That stopped you real fast but there was a prohibition against doing this stunt. Dirt would stick in the grease and was then carried up into the spring the next time you jumped. Done enough times the dirt would gum up the spring.

## 11. Grandpa Jensen's Correspondence

When we moved to Alaska, we wrote occasionally to Grandpa Jensen far away in Leamington. He always answered, and his addresses were old-fashioned: "Master James Rondo Jensen". His sly humor showed through, though it was too dry for me to appreciate at the time. For example, in his letter dated October 27th, 1952, he says: "...yesterday I received your letters - yours and Dickie's - dated Jan. 26. It sure took them a long time to get here."

In his Feb. 3, 1953, letter, he ends with this:

**"Figure this out:  
Elizabeth, Lizzie, Bessie and Beth,  
Went across the river to rob a bird's nest.  
They found a nest with five eggs in.  
They each took one and left four."**

He was a lonely man. He ended one letter, "I am feeling fine, but get pretty lonely at times. will try and write your daddy tomorrow." He died before we got to see him again. He died in 1953 while we were still there so I never got to see him again after the trip dad and I took together to southern Utah.

### Grandpa Jensen's Letters

I received three letters from grandpa while I lived in Seward and I saved them all in my photo album which later disintegrated. At that time I transferred them into glassine sleeves and kept them with the set of photos that mom sent me for Xmas around 1984. The three are scanned in below for your enjoyment.

very lovely and Wilford and Ruth looked very happy. I am sending you News paper clippings of the first announcement and the final one when they were married. It was an impressive ceremony at the Temple, Thur. morning. We had all gone through the temple together, Wednesday evening. Bonrad and I acted as witnesses at the ceremony.

Wanda has changed doctors. She went to Dr Worley in Nephi and he told her to stay in bed for the next 2 months. The same doctor cured Viola Nielson of a condition similar to Wanda's. As soon as Viola and Bonrad heard about it they phoned to her and told her to get ready and they would come and get her, which they did. Joey's and Kenny's father and his new wife kindly consented to take the two boys and send them to

Figure 240 Page 2

Heamington, Utah Feb. 2, 1953  
Mr. James Rondo Jensen  
Seward, Alaska.

Dear Grandson Ronnie:

Please excuse me for being so slow to answer your last letter. I guess I worried some about having to go through the ordeal of a big wedding reception in the city, but it wasn't quite as hard an experience after all.

In fact I enjoyed it very much although it was a little tiring to have to stand in the reception line for 2 1/2 hours at a stretch. There were so many people coming in a steady stream. Viola stood there with me, when the Brides mother is supposed to stand and then Mr. & Mrs. Wiseman and then the rest of them. It was all

Figure 241 Page 1

4  
With their families.  
Earl has 3 boys and two girls. The oldest boy Eugene is on a mission to South Africa but is expected home any day. Wallace has 3 girls and 2 boys but they are all married but the youngest girl 14 yrs old. Her name is Wally Beth. One of Earls girls, about 5 or six years old is named Althea Beth and the oldest one is Iris. Their mother's name is Lilac. She said she and all her sisters had names of flowers.  
I think Althea Beth is a pretty name and she is such a pretty little girl, looks so much like her grandmother, my sister Eligabeth. We called her Riggie. <sup>Biggie then out:</sup> Eligabeth, Riggie, Bessie and Beth.  
Went across the river to rob a birds nest they found a nest with five eggs in. They each took one and left four.  
Hope you are all well and enjoying your school and everything good  
With love from Grandpa Jensen.

Figure 242 Page 4 with the Riddle

3  
school in Salt Lake City while Wanda is resting. I really believe this doctor will get results because Wanda is still quite young.  
Well, Ronnie I know I shouldn't burden you with all these troubles and it wouldn't have done so if I hadn't felt that there was perhaps a solution in sight.  
I called to see Uncle George on my way home and found he was home from the hospital and seemed to be doing better. Alta and Reak are there helping to care for him.  
Saturday I went to Delta to visit two of my Nephews, Earl Holman and Wallace Holman. I was glad to see them again and to get better acquainted



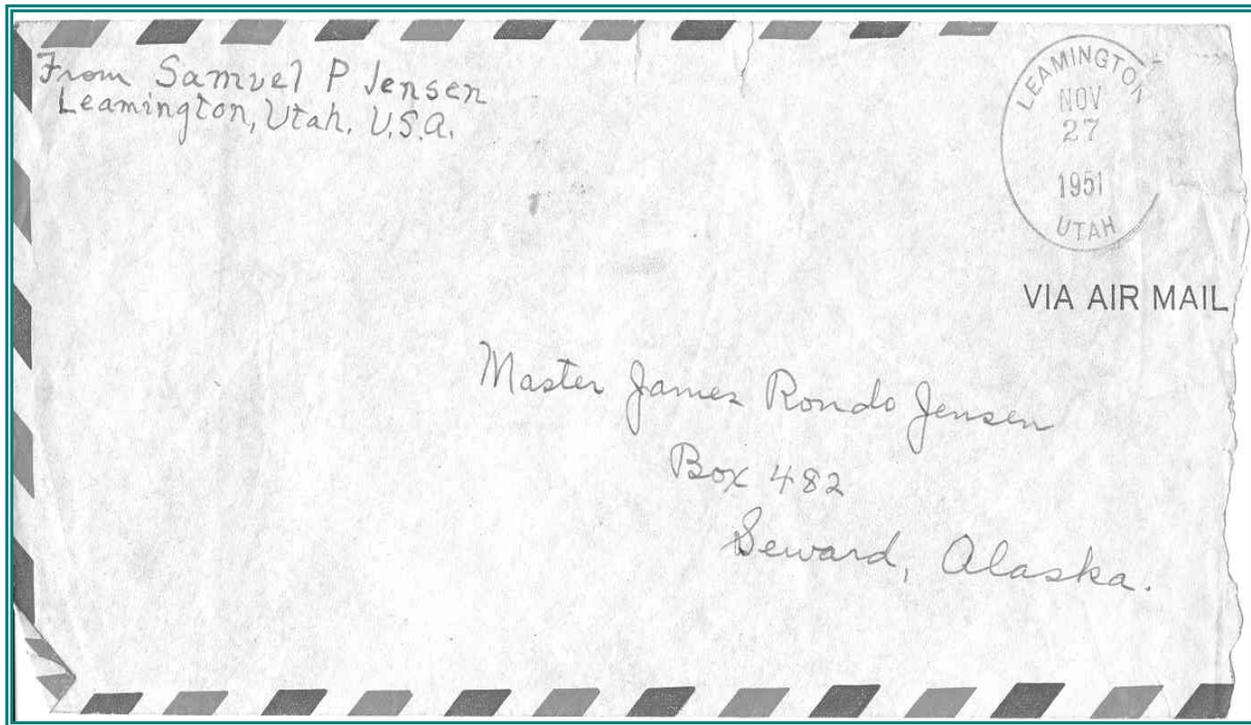


Figure 244 Grandpa Jensen's 11-27-1951 envelope to me in Seward.

The stamp was removed from the envelope by someone I know well.

2

all the way and was not very safe driving.

On Thursday morning we went to Mantli in Bonradi car. Ruth went with us and we got there before 8:00 a.m. We returned to Salt Lake City that evening.

It was snowing quite hard Saturday morning but I decided to drive home anyway. The roads were slick and it was snowing so much that I decided to stop overnight at Lake Shore and visit Uncle George & Aunt Jane.

I returned home Sunday morning in time to handle the mail.

I am feeling fine but get pretty lonely at times. Will try and write to your daddy tomorrow

With Love, Grandpa Jensen

Leamington, Utah 11/27/51  
James Rondo Jensen  
Seward, Alaska.

Dear Grandson:

I was glad to receive a letter from you and to hear that you like attending school at Seward.

It must have been a wonderful time you have had this past summer. I guess your days are getting pretty short by now. You must get plenty of sleep if you sleep all night.

I believe I would have enjoyed being with you on some of your trips. That looks like a pretty fine boat you go riding in.

I went to Salt Lake City in my car last Wednesday morning to be with the rest of the family on Thanksgiving day. It snowed

Figure 245 Grandpa's 11-27-51 Letter

shot a deer last year too, with the same gun. Her husband works on the section, but he hurt his foot some time ago and still has a cast on it, so he couldn't help her drag the deer down to the car so after cleaning it she had to go and get another man to help her.

There were lots of deer killed in Utah this year. They were allowed either buck, doe, or fawn.

I didn't buy the gun I was thinking of buying so I didn't go hunting.

It is still lovely weather here and most of the leaves are still green on the trees. I have a Paul's scarlet rose bush (climbing rose) that has sent out <sup>strong</sup> shoots from the root that have grown all the way up to the eaves, and

Figure 246 10-27-52 letter, Page 1

Heamington, Utah 10/27/52  
James Ronds Jensen  
Box 582 Seward, Alaska.

My Dear Grandson Ronnie:-

I was just thinking of writing to you asking you to please write and tell me how you spent the summer, and then yesterday I received your letter, - yours & Dikie's dated Jan 26. It sure took them a long time to get here, however I am glad to hear from you, and thank for the pictures.

Just a little while ago a woman came here to the postoffice. She was talking about shooting a large buck deer yesterday with her 22 Hornet. The deer was nice and fat. 2 points on one antler and 4 on the other. She

Figure 247 10-27-52 Letter - Page 2

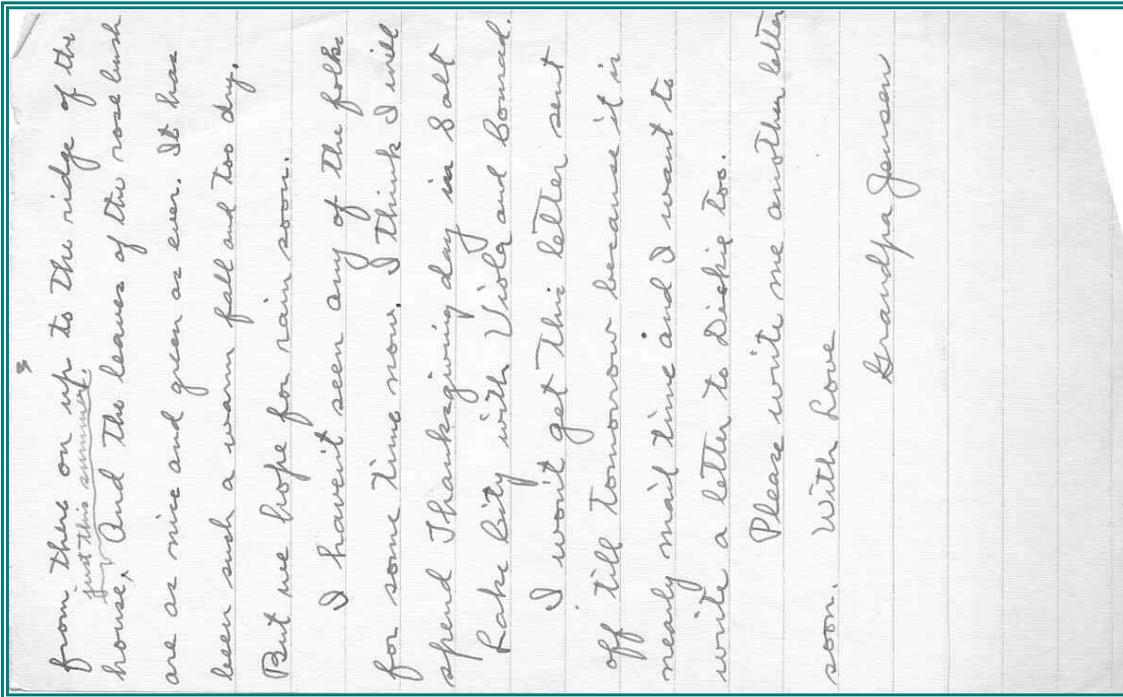


Figure 248 10-27-52 Letter - Page 2

I knew that grandpa was a naturalist and that things from Seward would probably interest him. So Dick and I collected shells and long stiff walrus whiskers to send to him. The box hung around for what seemed like a long time but it was finally mailed to him.

### Fishing

The small boat harbor was a marvelous place for kids to hang out. There were boats of every description ranging from large yachtish sorts of things moored by a few wealthy people who stopped in Seward just to fish, down to the small boats that were used to poke around in the headwaters of the bay when weather was good. And everything in between. Large fishing boats that trolled and so on. It is remarkable in retrospect to understand how much freedom Dick and I were given by mom and dad. The basic rules were simple:

- 1) Tell us where you are going

- 2) **We'll tell you how long you can be gone**
- 3) **Be safe and**
- 4) **Be home by the time we set.**
- 5) **Cuz if you're not, you don't get to do it again.**

The latter was very persuasive. We thought it was a great idea to get home when they said to be home. But in between, we could actually take our bikes or fishing poles and bikes or walk or whatever we wanted to do and go to the Small Boat Harbor, the defunct Cannery, any of the other docks or even visit Billy five miles outside of town.

One year the birthday present for each of us -often identical- was a rod and reel set mail-ordered from Sears. What a present. The reels were anti-backlash types so you didn't have to keep your thumb on the spool when you were casting like you had to do on the other kind of reel.

We went fishing often in the summer. Probably not daily but once or twice every week. Usually to the small boat harbor although we would ride our bicycles around the head of the bay and fish in a clear water stream along there, probably the Bear River. The Resurrection River emptied into the bay there as well but it was filled with silt so was milky and not much fun to fish.

The Small Boat Harbor was a sure bet, however, so if I needed to feel good about "catching fish", I went there. Throw a hook with a salmon egg out and you would catch a small cod fish fairly quickly. The wait could vary but they usually took it. The challenges were the perennial ones of the fisherman: when to jerk the line to set the hook and how hard to jerk it. We had variable success but to a true fisherman, which we were, any contact with fish was exciting.

One day we decided to kill the small cod fish we caught and throw them out for seagulls to eat. That was great sport because it always attracted a cloud of screaming fluttering gulls that fought over the fish, attacking the lucky one until he dropped the fish, and repeating the cycle until one of them was able to swallow the fish before being bullied enough to drop it. This particular day a kid that was with us decided that that he would try something different. When he caught another small cod instead of taking it off the hook and throwing it out as we had been, he left it on the hook, killed it then threw it out to see if a sea gull would take it.

Sure enough, the cloud of gulls descended and flapped around the surface until one of them picked the fish up and started to fly away. This was fascinating

to watch because it was novel. We stood there without any particular expectation. We watched the bird head over to the rock jetty, the fishing line whizzing off the kid's reel, the fishing pole pointed straight at the bird. Then it happened. The line on the spool ran out and since it had been securely tied to the reel to prevent a fish from getting away, something was going to happen and it did. What happened is that the kid in his amazement at what was happening was not holding the pole tightly so when the bird hit the end of the line and kept flying -seagulls are fairly big birds and this one obviously had some momentum going- it pulled the pole out of the kid's hand and kept flying. Oddly enough, I don't remember the end of the story, just that the pole flew away and sank as the bird was flapping away. We were glad that we hadn't tried that experiment because we had been tempted.

### Kobuk, RIP and the Porcupine

We had cats and dogs in Vernal and wanted them in Seward. The cat was not a problem because they are small, cheap to feed and they take care of their wastes. None of those are true about a dog, but we pleaded our case repeatedly and finally were granted a dispensation to get one. But there were strict rules attached to the boon: first, we had to swear an oath that we and we alone would take care of the dog so parents didn't have to; second, we had to swear that we would buy all of its dog food; and third we had to swear that we would clean up after it as necessary, which turned out to be a challenge in the ice and snow. While we were less than perfect at any of the three, we were nonetheless constantly prodded and poked and pushed in those directions.

The dog that mom and dad got for us was a wonderful squirmy pup. I don't remember whether they had to pay for it or simply picked it up from a litter that had been weaned and needed homes but knowing their style I imagine it was free. Their background didn't include resources to spend on pets. If they are seriously sick or hurt, put them to sleep. Always. Whatever, we got this wonderful pup that was half malemute husky and half German shepherd. His muzzle was long like a shepherd but he was generally shaped like a husky. He was black with the shepherd marks above the eyes in yellowish-brown. As we cast about for names, we wanted an Alaskan name. Somehow "Jellybean" was not appropriate for a husky. The name we ended up picking was "Kobuk", the name of a river in central Alaska. It just sounded like a good name.



So we had a husky named Kobuk to tend and play with and he was a source of great fun for several years.

Seward was full of stray dogs but we kept him chained up all the time. We could unhook him and walk him, but only if we stayed with him at all times and then we had to chain him up before we went back inside the house. We didn't have to train him to stay with us. It was natural for him, the loyalty of a



dog I suppose.

The strays in the town weren't usually a problem around our place. One or two showed up here and there but their presence was advertized more often by tipped over garbage cans. But one winter forage must have been bad for them. There was more snow than usual and it was colder than usual. The strays began to run in small packs and became militant. They growled and bared their fangs at anyone and were scary. That was the time that our Eskimo friend May Titus refused to even go outside. Eskimo and Indian women had obvious fear of dogs because their relationship with them in the villages was a fearful one.

When we went down the Yukon in '56, we saw how the dogs were handled. It was pretty un-nerving. The dogs in the summer at least where we were looked shabby and starved. We could hear them growling and barking as we neared a village well before we could see it. Each man's team was separated from all others. The dogs were staked out on 15 foot chains or ropes fastened to a wooden stake securely stuck in the ground. Since even team mates will fight, all dogs were placed far enough apart that they couldn't reach each other, but that didn't keep them from howling and threatening each other. They were fed once a day in the summer, one half of a dried salmon which was gone in a startlingly short time out of either fear another dog would take it or to get ready to take someone else's fish. The fish was tossed from a distance. When we asked about going outside the village to look at the dogs we were told that wouldn't be advisable. Only the owner dared enter his team. Kids and women never went there out of fear of being torn up. So May's intense fear of the stray dog packs was well founded. She did venture out sometimes during the day but only with a club.

The feeding of Kobuk was not a lot of fun after he got big, especially in the winter. We bought 25 pound bags of powdered dog food that was reconstituted with water and let sit a while to thicken up. There always seemed to be spilled water and powdered dog food on the counter. We'd sit the food near his dog house. He'd attack it right away, making a mess in his hurry to eat. In the winter we had to use warm water because the sub-freezing cold quickly froze any standing water. He also ate fast for that reason, otherwise the food froze.

Sometimes we bought him some sort of treat, small nuggets that he loved. Actually, I am thinking today that he loved anything to eat and that it was us who loved those particular items. Madison Ave at work. We didn't do this too often however because mom and dad didn't really approve of that sort of frivolous use of hard-earned cash. Some times mom would give him a treat, as a piece of toast in this photo. Fleming's house is in the background and the infamous giant sling shot is on the right edge of the photo. Elsie Whitmore strongly disapproved of it as reported elsewhere. Behind mom is a telephone pole except that it wasn't a telephone pole. It was a basketball hoop that dad made for us.



When Kobuk was a pup we were allowed to take him in the house for a while. He was never allowed to stay long, and certainly not over night which suited him, too. He did like to be in the warm house as a puppy, but after mom chased him out with a broom, didn't like to be in the house any more than he had to. We tried to interest him in play with a toy of some sort that we hoped a dog would like, but as soon as the door was opened s he could get out, he ran. After he got large, we drug him into the house by his collar and he did the same thing he did as a puppy. He ran to crawl under the couch. But he was so large by this time that he actually raised the couch off the floor.

On occasion dad would pay attention to Kobuk which he normally was too busy to do. Kobuk didn't quite know what to do about this but was a good dog. Dad's wearing his fedora which he always wore when he dressed up and Dick has a cloth parka. The 1953 Brown and creme Chevy is waiting to go. Behind dad is a 2 story apartment building which is where May Titus lived as described elsewhere.



Kobuk's death was a sad one that I remember vividly, the only pet death I remember. I can describe the weather that day, what I was wearing, what time of day the decision was made to shoot him, who participated in the examination of him, what the exam showed, and the tears I shed for him. I feel them now.

It was noontime on a sunny winter weekday when we got home for lunch that we heard the bad news. Kobuk got off his chain somehow so went prowling. I seem to recall that we knew he was missing in the morning, but we had to go to school anyway. In his explorations, as a sort of "city dog" without any experience with wild life, he wasn't prepared for his encounter with a porcupine. He must have regarded it sort of like another kind of cat or small creature to chase. They move slowly and deliberately so are easily overtaken. Dick and I saw the result and were sick.

What we saw was a miserable dog with porcupine quills in his lips and on his front legs. He was huddled on the ground by his dog house, on the chain again. While we were there, dad and Mr. Whitmore, Brent's dad, figured out how they could examine him because it is possible to remove quills. If the end is cut off to allow the quill to decompress, it can be pulled out with pliers. That's painful because the small barbules on the quill tear at the tissue, but they can be removed and the tissue can heal. Dad and Mr. Whitmore had to find out if there were any inside his mouth as well, before they would even start removing the quills.

Kobuk didn't want to be handled but there was no choice. What dad did was take a large empty tin can and cut the other end out so that it was a hollow tube.

Then he took the roll of all-purpose gauze from the medicine chest and wove a webbing over one end and tied it in place with string. Then Mr. Whitmore sort of straddled Kobuk and managed to get a good enough hold on him so that he couldn't move. Dad shoved the tin can over Kobuk's muzzle and while he held the can in place he poured ether from the drug store on the gauze. Kobuk kicked and fought, just like I did each time I had ether, but finally he was rendered unconscious.

Dad took the can off. Now it was possible to thoroughly examine Kobuk. There were a large number of quills in his lips, nose, chin, and forelegs, but they could be removed. Then dad opened Kobuk's mouth and what we saw was terrible. Kobuk had obviously tried to take a big bite of the porcupine. His tongue, the insides of his lips, gums, and palate were covered like hair with quills. They appeared to be migrating down his throat. There was no choice now. There was no veterinarian in town, and mom and dad wouldn't have spent any money on him any way, so he had to be shot.

Rural life was rough and this was one of the roughest times. Dad made us both get a good look at the inside of Kobuk's mouth. He wanted us to see just how badly injured Kobuk was. The purpose of that forced examination was probably to help us by letting us see with our own eyes the extent of the quills. The theory at least was that we would find it easier to accept his death if we understood how badly injured he was and the impossibility of fixing him. I understood that part even then, but it felt like punishment to be forced to look at this dog that we loved, in such a condition, knowing that he was going to be killed.

Today I wonder if Kobuk could have been taken care of. Just prolong the anesthesia and methodically clip and pull the quills. But the men were busy and had to get back to the docks. And dogs had no value. Indeed, I remember well as a kid in Vernal how unwanted kittens were treated. They were put in a gunny sack with some rocks, the sack was tied shut and thrown into the creek or irrigation canal. My cousins thought that was great sport but I could never get used to the idea. So shooting Kobuk was just the natural thing to do n those days with an animal that was badly injured. But I hated it.

At least they didn't force us to watch the shooting.

## Edible Plants

Another thought came to mind later about things we were forced to do in Alaska. The objective of this exercise was to prepare us for life and to care for ourselves, and this episode did have a connection to the physical reality of Alaska. They bought a book of the edible plants of Alaska and our assignment was to learn them so that on the chance we were ever stranded alone we could subsist for a while eating these plants - which Alaskan Indians and Eskimos did. This exercise seemed to last for part of a summer, though I can't remember which. The family often took rides out the dirt 'highway' so summer time was a perfect time to see the plants in their habitats and to get a real personal knowledge of them. The rides were fun.

One of the funnest plant, whose scientific name I don't remember, was tuft grass. It seemed to grow in marshy places and produced a white tuft of cotton on the end of its stems. The roots were edible apparently.



The only scientific plant name I remember was that for fireweed, *epilobium angustifolium*. An uglier name I don't know, but it stuck in my memory. The plant is beautiful and grows well here in Oregon. The explanation for the name was that the seeds would only germinate after being heated by a fire. Seeing them growing so well here I wonder if that is actually true.



In any event, this exercise which was well intended had the quality of punishment. It felt like we were being harangued and forced to do something we didn't like, and when we couldn't remember those ugly Latin names the response was at best a sort of disgusted silence, and at worst, a lecture about how we really should try harder for 'our own good'. Always for our own good.

The photos on the next page are ones I took in 2003 but they reflect what things looked like when I lived there.





## Fourth of July, Home-Made Root Beer & Mooseburgers

Home-made root beer I grew up on. As far back as I can remember we made root beer with Hires Root Beer extract, a square ridged bottle that came in a box marked with the Hires Root Beer logos. The ingredients that determined the flavor the most were sassafras and sarsaparilla. Wonderful tastes. I was thrilled to discover in New England that sassafras was easily found in the woods, a low growing shrubby plant with oak-like leaves. We'd pull the plant up, strip the leaves off, peel the bark off the root and suck on it. Just about like Hires root beer. For me, A&W didn't compare. I like A&W but not as much as I like Hires. That was the ultimate. Dad's Root Beer appeared in the '50's, and it was good, but not as good as Hires. Nothing was.

Making root beer is a simple process. It just requires time to ripen. In a well-scoured galvanized wash tub -yep, the one we washed clothes in each weekend-mom would mix the ingredients together so you get a sense of the volume we're talking about here. When she made root beer, she made root beer. The recipe is simple: water, sugar, extract and yeast. That's all. The extract takes care of all of the ingredients really. I loved it when mom put the sugar into the tub first and then poured the extract on it. The lumpy blackish brown sugar tasted excellent, but we were likely to get a rap across the wrist if she caught us taking any, which only made it more fun to take some when she wasn't watching. Then the water was poured in and stirred well until the sugar was completely dissolved.

The last step was perhaps the most delicate. A cake of yeast was dissolved in a cup of warm but not hot water. By the same token the water in the tub had to be warm but not hot either. After the yeast was dissolved, the cup of liquid was poured into the tub and thoroughly stirred again. It is the yeast that eats the sugar that creates the carbon dioxide bubbles. At this point the flat mixture was ready for bottling.

About the yeast. Fleischman's dry powdered yeast is probably the most common yeast in super markets today, but back then powdered yeast wasn't marketed. I don't know whether it didn't exist or whether there was market resistance from housewives to "dry" yeast. I know that when I first encountered it in Boston I thought it sort of bogus stuff. Yeast is yeast and it comes in little foil wrapped blocks that were stored in a cooler, not a freezer, in any store. When you bit into one of these cakes, it sort of squeaked and crumbled. It tasted - like

yeast. [Have you noticed how a basic flavor cannot be described? It's a basic building block. Compounds of different basic flavors can be described as compounds of different flavors, but basic tastes cannot. Try to really describe the taste of salt to someone who has never tasted it.]

Yeast comes in a wide variety of forms some of which are pathogenic. Yeasts are small organisms that are neither plant nor animal. It is 'yeast'. Its job in life is to take in sugars for the energy it gets from them, e.g.  $C_6H_{12}O_6$  - sucrose. One of the by-products of that metabolic process is carbon dioxide - just like it is for you. When this metabolism happens in a closed space, i.e. a capped bottle, the carbon dioxide dissolves in the water. When the cap is removed, the bottle decompresses so the carbon dioxide effervesces, the whole point of putting yeast in the mixture.

The pressure created by the carbon dioxide could become great if the stuff is allowed to brew a long time, and since the whole process was sort of a hit or miss thing without any "quality control", you never knew when you were getting a lot of pressure. It could cause bottles to explode so was a real consideration. The simplest way to deal with this risk was to use bottles designed to hold pressure which meant you didn't use quart canning jars - at least not if you really wanted to carbonate the stuff. The other way to limit the pressure was to chill the root beer after a few days. The chilling would kill the yeast.

So we used any sort of pressure-resistant bottles we could find including -I loved this- beer bottles. We made fun of beer drinking but we use beer bottles to make our own brew. I loved it. Of course, I never ever dared say that out loud but kids aren't stupid. They see what's going on, what the score is and think things their parents don't dream they think. Mom would set up an assembly line operation to handle the bottling and capping process. She sterilized the bottles first to kill any yeasts or organisms adhering to the bottle which would alter the quality of the final product if they competed with our tamed yeast.

She set them in rows that we handed to her to fill out of the tub with a ladle and a funnel. She'd leave about an inch of head room and give the bottle to one of us to put the soda pop bottle cap on at which time the bottle and cap were set into a bottle capper made specifically for this project. If there wasn't headroom, the bottle would explode much sooner than otherwise. The operator of the capper turned a long handle that moved the shaft with the cup-like plate down onto the cap to compress it around the neck of the bottle, sealing it so that pressure could build

up. If the cap wasn't tight, even though the yeast did its work, the bottle wouldn't be pressurized which is why these caps were essential.

This is a photo of the actual capper that we used in Alaska. Mom selected it as one of the things we'd take to Boston and it found its way to 2821 N. The black handle that's hanging down is rotated in full circles. This causes the silver shaft with the flange on the bottom end



to descend down onto the top of the bottle, compressing the cap onto the top of the bottle. The caps were plain unmarked, cork-lined metal discs that came in boxes of a gross (144). This box is left over from the 1950s because I made root beer in Boston. I have made root beer there, an example experiences in our family when we good, some bad, but over all such a complicated mix that I can't say categorically whether it was good for us or bad for us.



don't think that mom ever no memory at all of home of the profound shift we moved to Boston, some

Then the capped bottles were set near the stove or in location where they would be kept warm for the next few days. Three or four days, depending on how warm the room was, allowed sufficient fermentation. At that point the bottles were moved to a cool location to kill or at least immobilize the yeast, lest it cause the bottles to explode. The way we knew the stuff had brewed enough was to open a bottle each day and taste it to see if there was enough bubbles. Now we are finally ready to talk about the Fourth of July.

The Fourth of July was a special day in my book for the simple reason that I was allowed to drink all of the root beer I could hold and eat as many mooseburgers as I could. Period. That is exactly why I looked forward to the Fourth. No other holiday was celebrated that way in our house, not even thanksgiving or Christmas. The Fourth of July in our house it was sort of a low-budget bacchanalian debauchery - at least as close as we could get and still be inside the lines. But I

suspect that the intensity of my feelings got me over the edge in spirit. I love it. Man, I could drink all day and eat all day and not feel guilty.

Ground moose made excellent hamburgers. There wasn't a lot of difference between moose and beef in my memory, much less difference than between venison and beef. On the Fourth, mom would thaw pounds of mooseburger from the locker for the celebration. She would take the waffle plates out of her large waffle iron and open it out flat like an electric grill and cook up a bunch of burgers which we could help ourselves to at will. Buns and condiments were set out, including onion slices and lettuce, and we could dig in.

A large batch of root beer had been brewed for the celebration, knowing the Schafermeyers would probably be over at some point. Usually happened. It was made so that it peaked on this day, a shaky thing to predict but mom and dad succeeded. They had mastered the technique through their own lives. If root beer brews too long its flavor deteriorates so timing is critical here. On the Fourth of July morning with great anticipation of what was to come, Dick and I undertook a ritual we did several years.

We put the same trusty wash tub in our wagon with the small shovels we had from Andy's Army and Navy store, the kind used by soldiers to dig fox holes, then headed up the road to the turn off that went up into Lowell Canyon and finally got to the remainder of a small avalanche that happened every winter on the south side of Mt. Marathon. You could always get densely packed snow there all summer, plus it was free. This is exactly what it looked like. We scooped the dirt



off the top of the snow to get to fresh and then filled the tub.

The distance was probably between a quarter and half a mile, not a trivial distance for a couple of little kids. But we loved it. We were out there on the frontier, killing bears to protect our homes, slogging through storms, saving lives and generally having a heck of a good swash-buckling time on our way up the canyon,

swaggering and staggering as we twisted our ankles and jostled the wagon on the trail, not a road - quarreling a little bit about who was doing the most work just to liven up the expedition. The trip back was not quite so much fun because we then had a tub full of frozen water which was heavy. And the trail was just dirt so there were holes and rocks that wanted to turn the wagon over and ruin our precious snow. By the time we got home, we had stopped to rest a number of times, but it was a triumphant return. We staggered into the weedy rough back yard with our wagon and tub. We had the snow to chill the root beer, so the celebration would go on! Whee. We did. That's how it felt.

We grabbed root beer in long necked beer bottles and shoved them down into the snow to chill. Dozens, literally, of bottles were stuck into the tub so you'd think the whole neighborhood was coming over for mooseburgers. By the early afternoon when mom would fire up her fancy Sunbeam grill, the root beer was chilled and ready. She knew how to cook burgers and I can see her standing at the grill made by removing the waffle iron plates from her waffle iron and then lying both halves flat, using her spatula to scrape the fat to the corner spout to drain the burgers, pressing the burgers thin so that they cooked thoroughly, all of this accompanied by the wonderful smell of cooking salted peppered meat.

Then we'd open a bottle of root beer in anticipation and set it aside. We'd arm a commercial hamburger bun with everything imaginable on the table, catsup, sweet relish, mustard, hot dog relish, onions, chili sauce, tomatoes, lettuce. If there'd been chicken, we'd have probably put it on too. The first bite of burger and pull of root beer nearly undid me. I could hardly stand the gorgeous powerful flavors and smell and bubbles and textures. The liberty to indulge at will just overwhelmed my senses. My knees about buckled and I was in love with everything and everyone, all was well with the world, and it doesn't get any better than this.

Those were Fourth of July's to remember and I never had any better. Partly because we were such a small unit that we were dependent on each other for our sense of things and understood each other and loved sharing special times like that together because they were so unusual and rare. I have no idea why mom and dad decided to handle the Fourth that way. It was so out of character for them to enjoy anything, to be so prodigal with food, but that of course is precisely why they were such memorable holidays. My memories are doubtless flawed here but you get the general sense of what I am trying to tell you. Perhaps they granted us the same boon they were granted by their own parents when they were kids on the Fourth of

July.

## 12. Marathon on Mt. Marathon & July 4th Parade

The Fourth of July was THE highlight of the social calendar -haha- of Seward and one of the highlights of the Highlight for kids was the sawdust pile south of the Alaska Shop. It was probably 12 feet square and filled with a foot of sawdust. Someone threw piles of silver and pennies into the sawdust and stirred it around. On a signal to 'go', kids were allowed to climb into the box and hunt for coins. Anything they found they could keep.

I found 23 photos of this event, though I can't tell if they are from the same year or not. The highlights really were the race up the mountain and the parade. We went to the top to watch the runners circle the rock at least two years and one year we descended on the back side, the north side, going down a long, steep, snow field.

The Marathon Race had not yet gained the notoriety it has today, though its fame today probably has more to do with the growth of the yuppie culture with its 'extreme' sport fixation than on advertising. I say that because even back then the race was famous enough to attract Sven Johanssen from Sweden, an Olympic competitor, as well as a runner from Japan. In this image the pair of them are reaching the crest together.

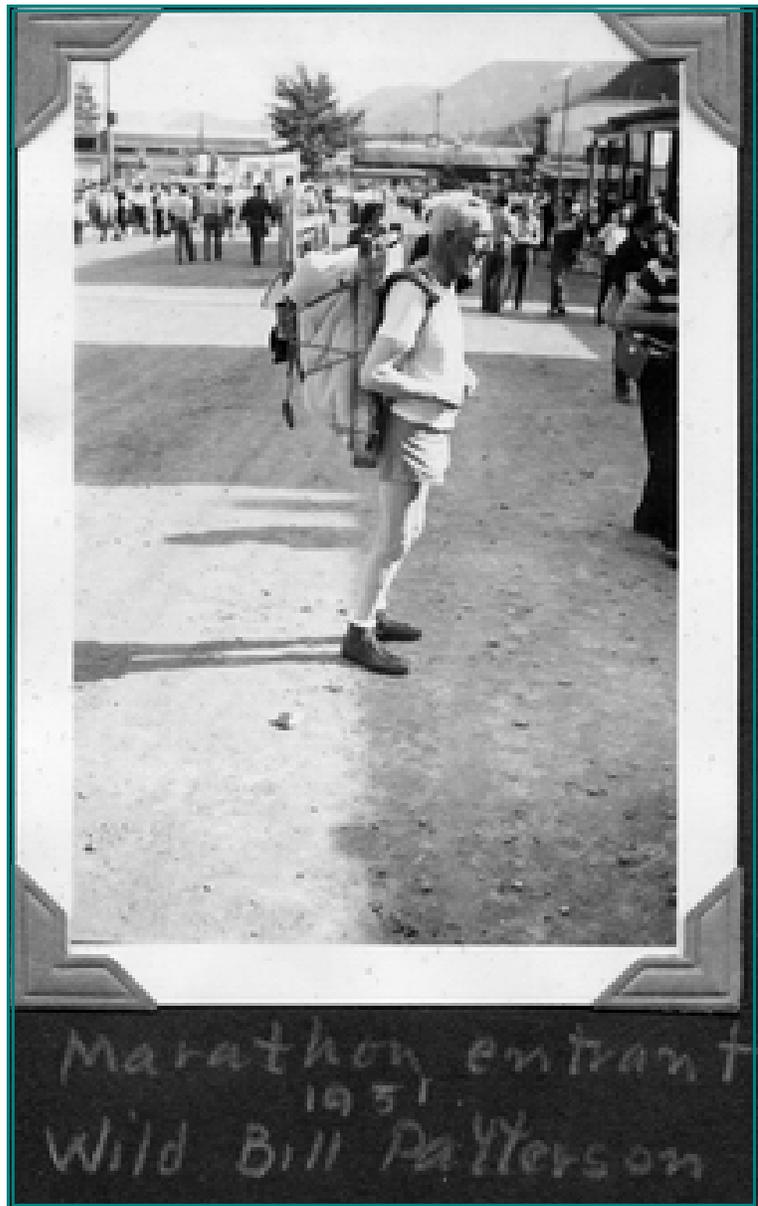


But Sven went on to beat the Japanese man.

It was a strange feeling to be up there on the top of the cold mountain, knowing that runners were on their way up but not be able to see them. The race official on the top had a military walkie talkie so he let us know when the race started but we didn't see any runners until they emerged from the cloud cover as in

this photo. You can tell from the snow over on Big Bear Mountain to the right just how cold it was.

The race had been run from about 1915 almost every year so it had a historical quality even when I was there. One of the fixtures of the race was an old man -truly old man- named "Wild Bill Patterson." Bill would show up with an old pack board outfitted with a frying pan, bed roll, snow shoes, spoon, and miscellaneous gear one would use to set up a camp. He did start the race but only as an honorary gesture because at this age he didn't even go to the foot of the mountain. It was a gesture to history that he repeated and townspeople loved it. Dad labeled this photo 1951 but I think it was a few years later simply because the other photos are later, i.e. Sven didn't run until something like 1953. This image was taken from about half way down the main block, looking toward the bay. Notice that this main street was not paved. Not paved and notice all the small rocks lying every where. The crowd seen here was enormous for Seward though I hear that today 10,000 visitors appear which is appalling and is why I didn't schedule our visit until July 6<sup>th</sup> which was a good idea. The sawdust box was to the left of the cluster of people on the left of the photo.



Once more, the presence of the military was manifested, this time in the parade. In the top photo, you see our small band standing to the side of the road as the large contingent of troops marches proudly by.



In the middle photo the troops are the large body far down the street, with a small group of boy scouts in the middle and a troop of cub scouts behind them. This is main street and is taken at about the fire station which is still located at that point in town.



The church behind the troops is the Methodist church which has been moved or something. These troops came down for the occasion from Anchorage, an honor to the town that otherwise had no military installation of any kind, even though it has been a central military location during WW II.



To get more mileage out of the parade which covered about 4 blocks, the participants followed a route that had them return back up 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the school where they had started. The Brownie Scouts are right in front of Durant's Hardware store and on the right edge of the photo is Warner's Market where we bought most of the groceries that we bought.



In addition to Wild Bill Patterson, there were sourdoughs -old time Alaskans- from the Seward Pioneers & Auxiliary, Igloo No. 6 who showed up with a clever dog sled, i.e. a small sled set on wheels, pulled by a single dog. The old man leading the dog had a long white bear, fitting the role.



Parades have apparently always attracted all kinds of entries. A bunch of kids are outfitted variously here. Daniel Boone shows up as the little kid with the coon skin cap and Pa Kettle is in the sweater, with a painted on moustache, pulling the wagon.



Note how the adults tend to be dressed up in fancy clothes to watch the parade, even in Seward.

Times have changed. The lineman here was beloved by all. Monkeys have that effect on kids all of whom want one, all of whom would hate it if they did by all accounts. We did in fact have a party line in Seward so this was no joke. The bus in the background was



from the Jesse Lee home, bringing kids in for the festivities.

The band obviously had no choice but to march, particularly since this community had just forked out a lot of voluntary dough for those uniforms. I'm the little kid in the middle just at the edge of the church building, pretending to blow a silver clarinet.



Here I'm looking at the music trying to figure out what I was supposed to do. I really couldn't play a single song and I am sure the director knew it, but he was apparently desperate enough to have bodies that he included me because at least I wasn't squeaking to make his other performers sound bad. So bizarre. Notice how much snow there is on Marathon. That's where the runners were headed in a short time.

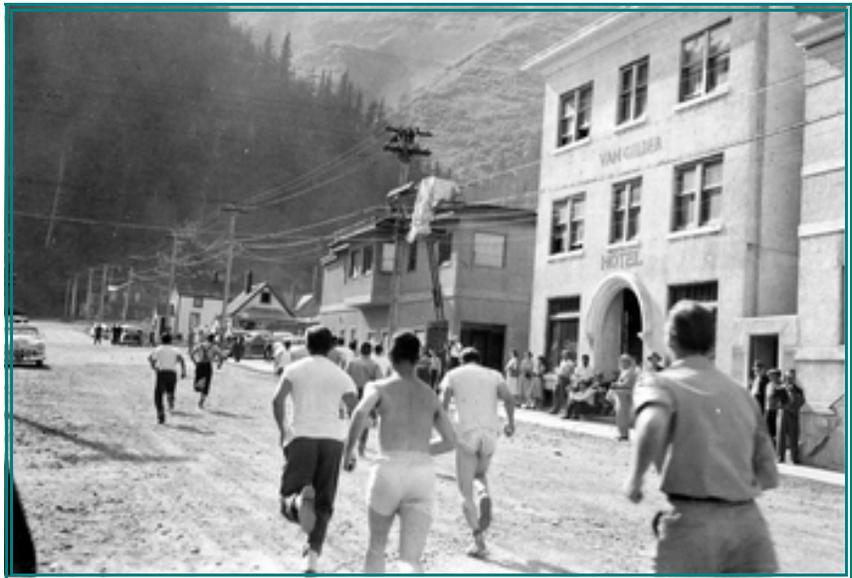


The highlight of the parade this particular year was Lady Godiva. Hmmmm, based on the shadows, there was sunshine this day so dad did take July 4<sup>th</sup> photos over several years. This girl was the hit of the show, attracting a lot of unbelieving curious people who had a full range of thoughts I expect. She's in front of the Seward Steam Laundry. The tree is in the vacant lot on the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Adams so my house was behind these buildings several blocks. The Van Guilder Hotel shows to the right of the tree.



The Van Guilder Hotel shows to the right of the tree.

Here the runners on Adams street, being lead by a few show offs who did not actually make the race, have just turned in front of the Van Guilder. The Van Guilder is on the right, behind which is the movie theater. This year you see that Marathon had no snow on it. Runners were allowed to take any route they wanted to the mountain and some of them went right through our yard on their way which didn't bother us because



we understood the rules of the race. It was sort of an honor, actually, to be picked that way. See the car on the left? That's right in front of Joe Guthrie's bakery where we learned about commercial baking.

Dad took this photo of me, Jack Parrot and Dick, up there in the cold clouds while we waited for the runners. The race official has the two way radio in hand, talking to the men at the start-finish line. I don't know his name but I know him.



This is a good shot showing how runners rounded the rock where the official sat. At that point he announced for the official below who had just passed. A pretty lonely event in those days when there were only a few dozen



competitors. The kid in the front has his trusty dog with him.

Here's Sven rounding the top in a different year than the first photo above with the Japanese man. The same official presides here. Note the snow.



Obviously no time is spent on the top so Sven is headed back down into the clouds on the show pack above the shale slide that all runners use. When they get into the shale the jump 15-20 feet at a time and are able to descend the 3,000+ feet in 15 minutes.



After all the runners had rounded the top, we decided to descend on the back side. You can make out the Jesse Lee Home just behind Dick's head. That's about where we came out. Dad's wearing the U.S. front and back pack that we took up on top of Big Bear that day.



I don't have any idea how long the snow field was but it was a glorious slide because the slope was so steep that we didn't even need a sled to slide. The only problem was that my bum was so wet and cold by the time the slide finished I could hardly stand. But it was glorious. In these two photos you can see most of the run.



In the top one you see where we started the slide. In the bottom, with the X that dad marked, you can see where we ended. The black ball down there is Dick and Jack on their way. The distance traveled gives you an idea of how fast we were moving because dad had to manually wind his film in that interval.



Dad got a great shot of me on another slide that shows just how steep it was. Jack is the guy following me who is spinning out of control.



### Ptarmigan Hunt on Mt. Alice

Dad decided that he wanted to hunt for ptarmigan on Mt. Alice, or for

grouse. I don't remember which. We loaded up and headed over the head of the bay on the Old Nash Road. Dad took his 30.06 Enfield, I took mom's 30.30 and Dick took the single shot .22. We were armed and dangerous. Well, we were armed.

Judging from our size, I'd guess this was around 1953-2 when I was 10-11 years old. The weather was typically gray, but obviously not raining, at least not hard enough for us to worry about it. One got used to grayness and rain and just lived with it. We didn't worry about it, except that we didn't like to get wet but as far as it affecting what we did, it didn't. We just carried on.

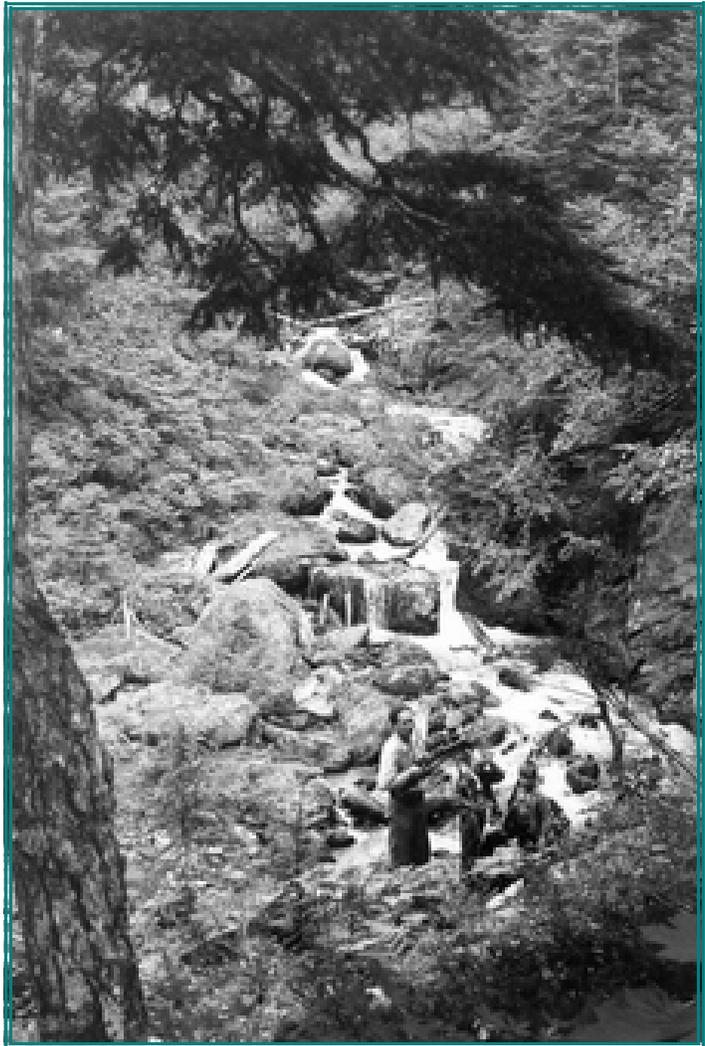
Based on the following photos, I



judge that we climbed about a third of the way up Alice. These photos were probably taken at about the level of my right ear in the photo on the left here. It was exciting to be out hunting with dad, but we didn't have any luck. I don't remember even seeing any birds but that was OK with us. We were out there

hunting with im and that was what it was all about.

This photo was taken at about the same place, but from a different location. I have a memory that Art went with us but he doesn't show in the photos. He was probably the one who took the photo, but I'm not sure because if he went, Billy would have gone too, so I don't know how dad got these photos.



### May Titus, Red Card & rancid seal oil

**M**ay Titus was an Eskimo woman that mom and dad met out at the TB San. They developed an affectionate relationship with her that persisted through our stay in Seward. Indeed, she became sort of a member of our family, sort of like a distant relative that mom and dad looked after.

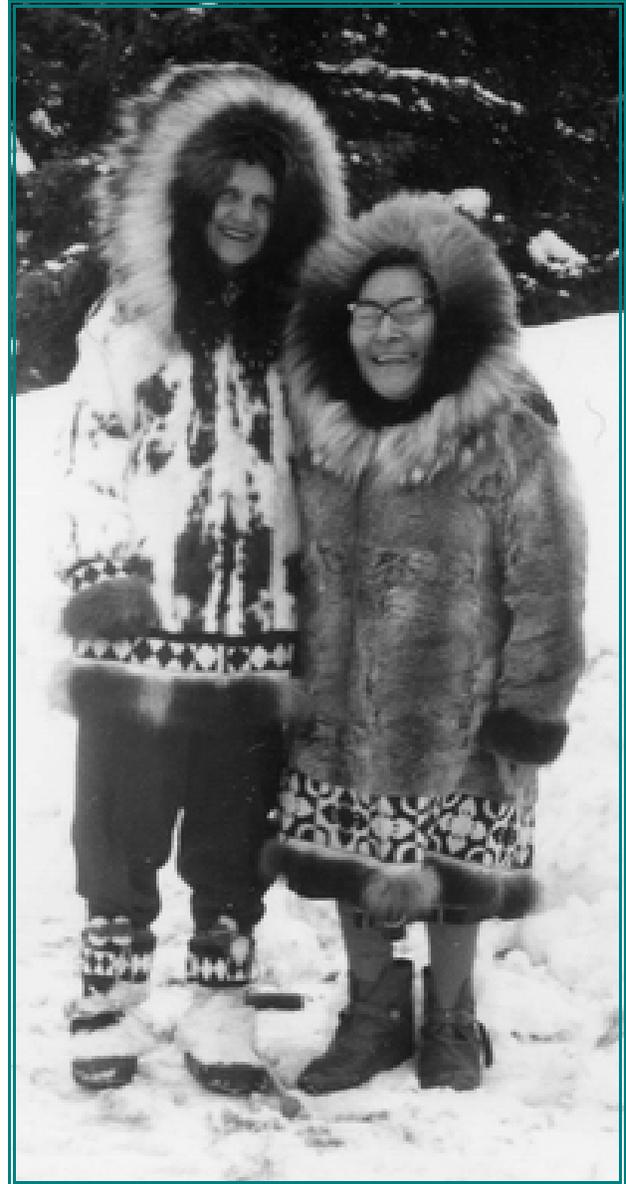
May did her therapy and treatment out at the San but later she moved into town into a small apartment that was on Third Avenue. From our the front of our house, we could look across the vacant lot across the street and see the two story apartment building she lived in, and could even see the back window of her rooms.

Given her disability, she was limited in how far she could walk, so mom made an arrangement with her. She told May that whenever she needed any assistance from us, she was to put a large green square in the window we could see. Then when we saw it, mom or one of us boys would walk over to see what she needed and then we would take care of it.

In this photo May and mom pose in their parkas so mom can show off the lovely parka that dad asked May to make for mom for her birthday. May also made the mukluks.

Some days May needed to go down to Warner's market and was afraid to go alone on account of the pack of wild dogs that prowled the streets. They actually didn't pose much of a threat although we were prudent around them, but her experience as a child with the meanness of Eskimo sled dogs remained with her and gave her an enormous anxiety. We would walk her to the store, carrying her big stick just in case, and then walk her back home.

One of the things she asked us to do was sort of unpleasant, not because there was anything wrong with it, just that we were not culturally prepared for it. She asked us to go over to one of the Quonset huts near the Army dock and pick up



a quart jar of seal oil that someone had given her. That was fine, except that it somehow spilled a bit in the car. The smell was pretty pungent because the method of making seal oil from the white blubber is to sew it into a sealskin and let it sit for a year. During that time the fat is reduced to a yellow oil that has a potent sort of unpleasant smell.

The other thing I wasn't culturally prepared for was eating raw frozen caribou. She had received some from one of her friends so she offered it to all of us. She handed us a strip of frozen meat that was marbled with fat and ice crystals along with an Ulu. We put the stick in our mouth and gingerly cut a piece off with the knife. Once more, this meat had been let sit around for a long time so it had started to turn and did not taste at all good. We ate it, however, as a courtesy to May and politely refused more when she offered it. She understood and was teasing us.

### Parties, Penuche, Taffy & Table Games

As Dick and I grew up, mom and Mary made sure to have activities to keep us busy, as much out of fear of us getting into trouble, as out of a desire to be nice to us. In Seward the latter was pretty easy and they didn't want anything to do with it. Ablanalps lived up the street from us on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue about 5 houses so they participated in these events with Gen Schaefermeyer who live next door. These four families constituted the bulk of the Seward Branch and our lives were inextricably bound up with the faith.

In those days people played board games and card games as their entertainment at home. There was no television at all in Alaska at the time so people had to find other things to do. Parcheesi, Sorry, Monopoly, Touring, Flinch, Chinese Checkers, Assembly Line, etc. Mom made sure to check out new games just before Christmas to see if there were any new ones that she liked. That's how we got the game Cootie in about 1954. It was the first of the plastic games like that and was a source of excitement to play.

When a party was organized by the mothers, several card tables were set up in the front room for kids to sit at to play games. Sometimes competitions were set up between teams or tables that required scores to be kept of who won what and prizes were given to the winners.

Food and candy always figured in these parties. Cup cakes were standard although regular iced cakes showed up. Ice cream was served with the cake, and cookies might be served with a kool aid punch. We drank soda pop at home but it wasn't usually served at parties because it cost too much for one family. When the mothers were really brave they would have a taffy pull which was always fun. The major problem with taffy was that people could burn their hands easily. Even when you succeeded in not burning your hands, you still finished with a great sensitivity in your fingers and palms from the heat. It was satisfying to pull taffy and convert it from the clear syrupy form into a glistening white, fluffy form that was braided on wax paper dusted with powdered sugar to dry. We'd mix a food color into the taffy, green, red, yellow and blue, the colors that came in the Schilling food color box.

Mom would make penuche sometimes, an odd tasting sort of fudge. She loved it and I would eat it because it was sweet, but I preferred chocolate fudge or peanut butter fudge. The best candy she made, however, was divinity with walnuts and on special occasions with maraschino cherries.

### Model Airplanes

The long dark winter days forced us to retreat to the house to play.

Other kids weren't coming out so we were left to our own devices. Mom and dad suggested that we learn to make model airplanes, an idea we loved. The planes we built were all old ones, reflecting the era.

We bought Tester kits because they were complete, except for the dope to paint the model. These models were constructed of thin sheets of balsa wood that had blue patterns stamped on them. Some of the pieces were die-cut so could be pressed out of the sheet while other pieces had to be cut out with a razor blade. Exacto knives hadn't reached our world so we relied on razor blades, the safety razor kind because they were safe - there was only one cutting edge.

After we finished a model, we'd paint it and ask dad to hang it up in our bedroom over the closet made out of the coffin case transported to Seward. They hung there, turning in any air currents, looking like they were flying. For some



Figure 289

<http://www.williamsbrosinc.com/planes.html>

reason one day Dickie lost it and started destroying them. At that point I think I had one of the really complicated large, tissue-covered airplanes so he got in serious trouble. I suspect today that he was probably justified in being angry because life in that little house was anything but loving and peaceful. Perhaps he could have found another outlet but I don't really blame him. He reports that what changed for him was that he learned that he should only destroy his own models.

### Junior Gateway Swingers

**A**s we entered puberty and began to be aware of girls, mom and dad realized that something needed to be done to provide social contacts in order that we would have what ever it was they wanted us to have.

So mom and dad bought an advanced portable record player in order to stage square dances and regular dances for us and other kids who wanted to attend. They ordered via mail order 78 RPM records and LP's that had the music they wanted and dad became a proficient square dance caller. Their collection of records is still in the tan and brown metal box in the closet on mom's side of the studio at 2821 North.

In addition to the square dancing mom and dad taught a lot of folk dances, schottisches, polkas, and other dances like the bunny hop. These dances were a highlight of the week because I got to spend time with girls I liked, holding their hands, dancing with them. There was no pairing up of kids, it was just a gathering of kids of the same age for a social.

This dancing was very strenuous and by the end of the night, which was 10pm, you were sweating from the exertion. Cookies and punch were served so we could spend time talking and telling jokes and enjoying each others company.

To honor this dedicated group of young people, dad designed a logo that included the name of the group, "Gateway Swingers".





### Tiny cave on Little Bear

There was a small cave half way up Little Bear a bit further north of the Whitmore house. I would go up and look into it. It was actually a tunnel affair that as perhaps 20 feet long and wide enough for me to crawl through. Except that I didn't have the courage to do that. I don't know why that was. I could see through it from one side to the other and I knew it wasn't going to collapse on me but the idea of crawling through haunted me because (1) I was afraid to do it, but (2) I really wanted to do it. I'd go there several times in the summer and wonder.

### Mike the Big Bomb

The Hydrogen Bomb was the "Big Bomb" but I bet none of you kids have much memory of it, don't have as much understanding about it as you do about the atomic bomb. How could you. The media didn't belabor this one because it doesn't have the political glamor of the atom bomb used to kill thousands of

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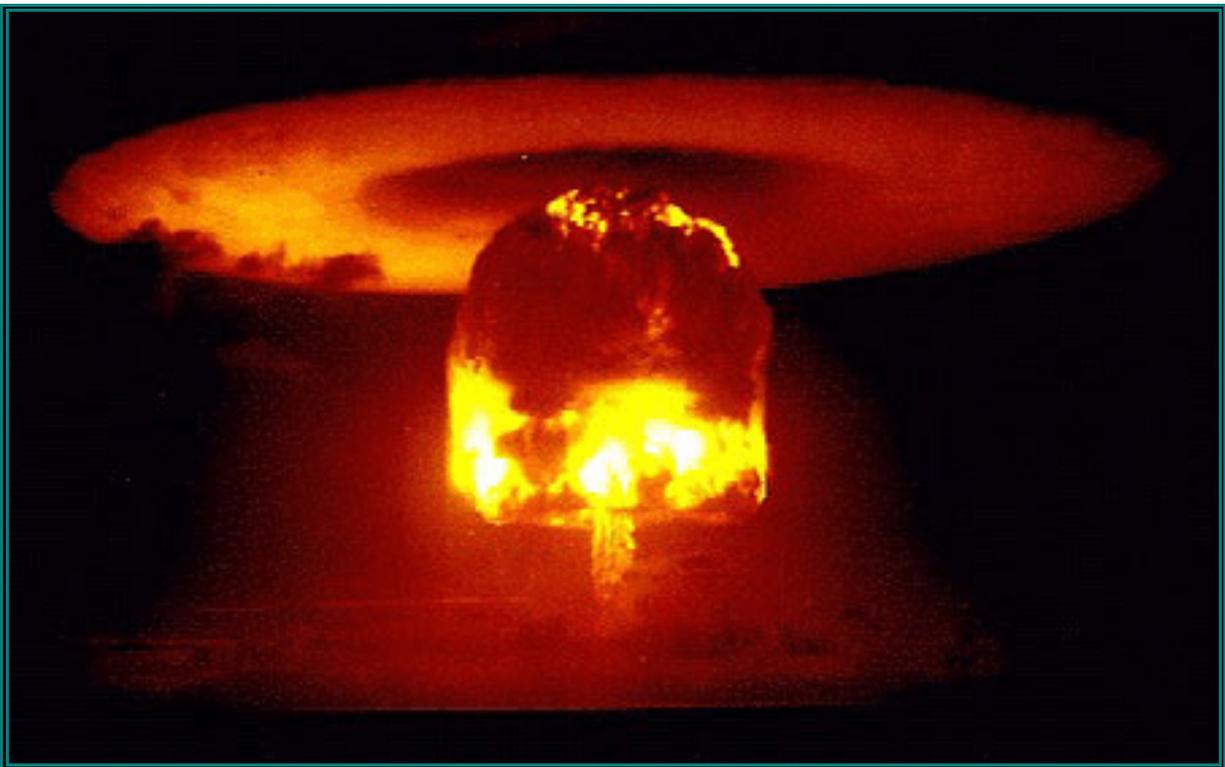


Figure 291 <http://mt.sopris.net/mpc/military/mike.html>

r, this bomb was just incredible. Here are the words of Thomas Power [former Commander in Chief of the Strategic Air Command] that give you a sense of what's I'm talking about:

*"No hydrogen bomb has ever been dropped in wartime, but this much we have learned from testing it--the bomb is so unbelievably powerful that, in comparison, the atom bombs loosed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seem like mere firecrackers..."*

*"It would have taken millions of B-17 Flying Fortresses of World War II fame to carry a load of conventional bombs that would match the explosive power of a single multi-megaton nuclear weapon."*

(Design for Survival\_1965, at 34.)

Pretty astonishing comparison. "Millions" of airplane to match the explosion of one hydrogen bomb.

Here's an image of the bomb which was actually large to begin with:



Figure 292 <http://mt.sopris.net/mpc/military/mike.html>

The first test, code-named "Mike", in November, 1951 just astonished the

observers. Carey Sublette reported some of its features:

*"Mike created a fireball 3 miles wide; the 'mushroom' cloud rose to 57,000 ft in 90 seconds, and topped out in 5 minutes at 135,000 ft - the top of the*



Figure 293 <http://nuketesting.enviroweb.org/hew/Wallpaper.html>

*stratosphere- with a stem eight miles across.*

*The cloud eventually spread to 1000 miles wide, with a stem 30 miles across. 80 million tons of soil were lifted into the air by the blast."*

Carey Sublette <http://www.milnet.com/milnet/nukeweap/Nfaq8.html>

Those numbers are incredible but predictable since the mechanism is the same as that of the sun itself.

Other hydrogen bomb tests followed Mike. The largest one was "Castle Bravo" in March 1954. I imagine this is the one I remember being shown in a large image on the front page of the newspaper because it exceeded the predicted power by 250%. That yield stirred everyone up because it was so enormous.

These bomb blasts are amazing and formed part of my childhood in Seward. It is an odd thing to look back and see how filled my universe was with military things and to note that I do not harbor anxiety about it. I did not grow up fearful of the nuclear atom bomb. Indeed, I viewed it as a wonderful thing. I did. Radiation is nasty I know but the Atom bomb was an invention of my country that saved thousands of lives and shortened the war. Oh, I know the media claim that's not true and they are as entitled to their opinion as I am to mine. And the hydrogen bomb was simply a vastly more powerful bomb than the atom bomb so was something I admired and respected. When it was announced in the media I hear and understood with the understanding of a child and remember that understanding. I have always loved and respected military things.

### Winter Picnics on Little Bear

If you use your imagination, you might see a largish pine tree on the mountain right behind the peak of the roof of the front porch. That tree is the tree that Dick and I sort of appropriated as



our own. Our 1951 Chevy is sitting in front of the house, Schaefermeyer's house is on the left and Whitmore's is in the right background. The snow-covered boat in the back yard is the "Jimmarie".

Anyway, in the early spring when the ground was still covered with snow and ice, the days started to lengthen. Occasionally the sun would shine and when that happened, it was too much for us little kids who had been cooped up for the winter. We'd go to mom and ask her if she'd make us a lunch so that we could go up to our tree for a picnic.

She would agree. She took out our Easter baskets which were a heavy wicker and would make us sandwiches. She'd put a pint fruit jar of milk into each basket with a couple of cookies. When it was ready, we'd take off. We'd didn't cut across Whitmore's yard even though that was the fastest route because it wasn't polite to cross other people's yards. We'd walk down the alley to Adams street and turn right a hundred yards to the foot of the mountain. There was a trail we knew that led directly to the tree. A log lay on the ground that we'd sit on so we weren't in the snow. We'd sit down side by side, open our sandwiches and look down at our house and the Episcopal Church and as much of the town as we could see. When we got thirsty, we'd open our pint jar of milk and take a swallow, particularly when we ate our cookies. That was a great picnic. It may not sound like much but after a long dark winter it was a lovely thing to finally be able to go on picnics on the mountain, even in the snow.

## Fur Rendezvous

The Fur Rendezvous was a regular part of the background of my life in Seward. I heard about it the first year of course and we attended it two times in 1953 and 1956. I loved it. The Fur Rendezvous took place in Anchorage each spring and was almost an anachronism, a historical left-over. The number of trappers who spent the winter running "trap lines" in the interior had diminished by 1950, but they were still out there with active trap lines so the rendezvous continued to serve its original function. The Fur Rendezvous was originally a business function and its name reflects the influence of the French Trappers who were so dominant in North America.

Trappers took a winter's worth of grub and traps and gear and went out into

the wilderness in the late fall. Remember that winter in Alaska is mostly darkness and the further north you go, the more the darkness. Even in Seward on the south edge of Alaska we only had 4-6 hours of light in the middle of the day - just the opposite of the summers when the two are reversed. So when trappers headed out alone, in a wilderness that had no roads, no electricity, nothing of civilization, they really were undertaking something heroic. I don't think I could do it even in my prime. It is too lonely and isolated which you probably think is precisely what I'd like but too much of a good thing is too much.

After they had selected the area they wanted to trap which was determined by the animals they sought, they set up camp, sometimes using a previously-built log cabin or creating a new structure and then set a series of traps. There were the nasty "leg traps" that I think are barbaric because they don't kill the animal. They just immobilize the animal, keeping it alive so that its pelt isn't damaged. The trapper then kills the critter when he finds it, a pretty nasty business. I'm not against using furs for coats but I do find this barbaric.

This string of traps was called a "trap line" and it was the exclusive possession of the man who set it up and ran it. No one raided another's trap lines without penalty since the man's livelihood was at stake. A trap line demanded tremendous amounts of work. In the dark and alone or with a companion. The trapper had to make the rounds on the trap line on snow shoes on a regular basis. If he didn't get to the a trapped animal soon enough, another animal would, and would ruin the pelt during the meal. The weather obviously affected his ability to travel so he had to work hard when he could.

The trappers would flense the hides on the spot so they



Figure 295

<http://www.bugspray.com/catalog/pro>



didn't have to haul the carcass back to the cabin. They'd leave the carcass there for animals to eat, and would haul the hide back to the cabin where they would refine the quality of the hide by removing the rest of the fat and flesh, and then stretching the pelts on frames to dry. This was necessary to give the pelt a uniform shape without wrinkles and to make it easier to transport. The shape of the frames was dictated by the shape of the particular animal. A beaver pelt has a different shape than a fox so each kind had to have its own kind of stretcher. These frames were hung under lean-to's where they would be protected from snow so they could dry, which they really did. Here's a drawing from

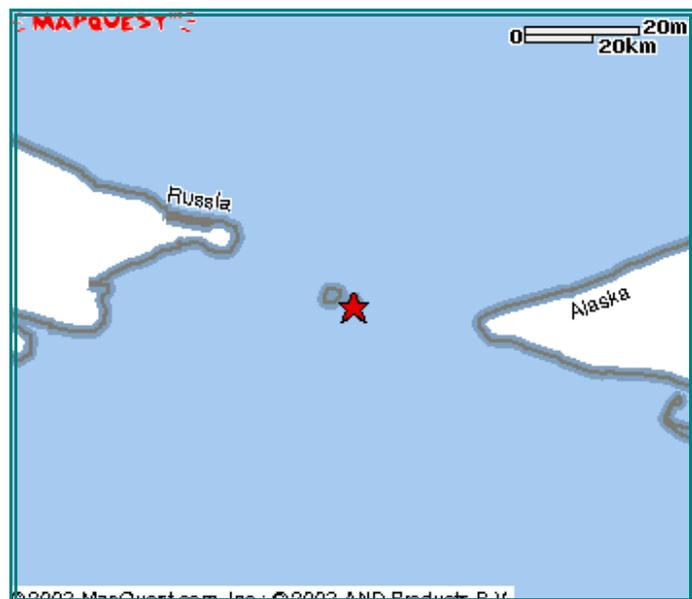
<<http://www.mntrappers.com/skinning.html>> of a racoon skin on a stretcher.

It was a tough lonely life that lasted until spring. The trappers knew when the fur buyers were going to congregate in Anchorage so they timed their return to coincide. They removed their hides from the stretches and made up packets of hides, tied them securely to be transported by dog sled. At the rendezvous, buyers and trappers go together and checked each other out, each one trying to get the best of the other. The hides were graded depending on the quality of the pelt itself, the age of the animals, the quality of the flensing and stretching and so on.

After the sales were consummated, the trappers were flush with dough and were ready to celebrate. Anchorage being a wild frontier town provided outlets for these trappers, collecting along the way a share of the proceeds from the winter's work. So the fur rendezvous was part business and part celebration which spanned the spectrum from bawdy houses and whisky to more genteel activities. The latter included plays, shows and art exhibits.

### King Islanders & Eskimos from Little Diomede

**I**n 1953 we first went to Anchorage for the rendezvous and then again in 1956. We saw marvelous sights that live in my memory today. We saw the masses of people, the Eskimos and Indians, sled dogs and attended a



memorable exhibition put on by Eskimos King Island and Little Diomedede. Little Diomedede was one of two islands in the Bearing Straits that separates Russia from Alaska a mere 50 miles across. They obviously wore their parkas and mukluks [fur boots with heavy soles of walrus skin that the women literally chewed to get the shape needed - which wore their teeth down to the gums over time].

I remember being intrigued at the technical thing that happened just before the exhibition started. A photographer in an old flannel plan shirt stood up and discussed the camera settings that people should use to get clear photos - he talked about flash bulbs [these were the old-fashioned kind made out of glass and filled with a mass of magnesium fibers that ignited when touched with an electrical spark. The bulbs were coated with clear plastic for black and white work and with a pale blue plastic for color work. The plastic wasn't just to determine the color of the flash - it was also a protective jacket that held the fragments when the glass bulb fractured from the intense heat. The heat was so intense that serious burns would result if one held the freshly fired bulbs. Magnesium fires are dreaded in industrial and manufacturing settings because they will burn through thick sheets of steel. That's why it is nearly impossible yo quench the fire of a burning helicopter air frame after a crash.], F-stops and shutter speeds, a foreign language to me at the time.] After he finished his presentation and answered a few questions, the show started.

Mom saved the program from 1956. Notice who the sponsors are. What a kick. "Business and Professional" anyone sounds really funny when referring who lived there then. I am sure there were such, at least in Anchorage, but don't get carried away with visions of what you grew up with in this category.

They were doing a wonderful thing in fact and I benefitted from it so am glad they did it. The name just sounds so funny.

*FUR RENDEZVOUS*  
*ESKIMO SHOWS*

Sponsored By  
ANCHORAGE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB

Underwritten By  
GREATER ANCHORAGE, INC.



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM  
*February 23 to 25, 1956*  
4:00 P. M. 8:00 P. M.

The following page is the inside of the program which was really extensive. I was little so had a hard time seeing over the adults sitting in front of me but I did manage to get a good look of lots of the things that went on.

# SAMMY MOGG

AND HIS

## Eskimo Dancers

FROM KING ISLAND AND LITTLE DIOMEDE

+

1. ISSOUCK ..... Invitational Dance by Mary Mogg and Walter Kiminok
2. POILUK ..... Invitational Dance by Group
3. SEAL HUNT
4. FAMILY SCENE ..... Cutting Up Of Seal
5. KOMONASEAK ..... Song and Story by King Islanders about one of the best dancers from Cape Prince of Wales — done by Oolahuk and Towowekiak, King Island
6. QWIASUK ..... Making a song and dance by Kaputuks, Diomedes
7. ELLANA ..... Egg hunting dance by Ellana of King Islands
8. SAYUNE ..... A family dance by Supkuck and Gloria Jeanne Mogg
9. TALLIKTOIT ..... Bench dance by the Women

### INTERMISSION

10. ESKIMO SPORTS ..... High Kicking, Rope Tricks
11. TINGAREE ..... A dance made by a young fellow that was very unpopular in village
12. NOOTICTUG ..... A dance using song from Wolf dance
13. MITT DANCE ..... Two parts of Wolf Dance
14. COMEDY DANCE ..... by Carl Katuk
15. NAYANGUK ..... Message to Pt. Hope from Diomedede to come to big celebration by Maasuk and Ohlakiak, Diomedes.
16. CONTEST DANCES: King Islanders Diomedes

# Cast

KING ISLANDERS.....Sammy Mogg  
Mary Mogg  
Gloria Jean Mogg  
Clara Sirfoak  
Mary Pushruk  
Leo Koonook  
John Kokuhuk  
Tony Pushruk  
Carl Katuk  
Frank Ellana

DIOMEDE ISLANDERS.....John Kiminok  
Walter Kiminok  
Vince Ahulik  
Patrick Omiak  
William Kaputuk  
James Kiminok

+

COMMITTEE.....Miss Eleanor L. Sullivan, Chairman  
Miss Sue Booch  
Mrs. Bea Culver  
Mrs. Boyd Crume  
Miss Harriett Whittington

STAGE MANAGER.....Miss Kay Anderson  
assisted by Donna Engel  
M. M. McCrary  
Maynard Dahlstrom

These people were mostly King Islanders. They had umiaks -large skin-covered boats for going out on the ocean- which were tipped up on their side as if they were wind-breaks, just as they would do at home for a village celebration.

The dancing was hypnotic but simple. A small group sat in front of the upturned umiak holding single-sided drums in one hand and a stick in the other. They were fairly wide so were low-pitched. The patterns were not complicated, most of the drums being struck simultaneously, nor was it fast. While they beat their drums, the drummers and other participants chanted their Songs in time to the drum beats. There were changes in pitch but no harmonies that I noticed.

The dancers moved slowly and in time with the drum beat, moving their feet in short steps, forward and backward. They clapped their hands and moved them in stylized patterns that apparently conveyed meanings like the dance patterns of many cultures.

## Eskimos

One of the highlights of the events was seeing more Eskimos. Mom and dad loved them as proved by their regular volunteer work at the TB Sanatarium in Seward. Few people did that but they did and it rubbed off on me. I

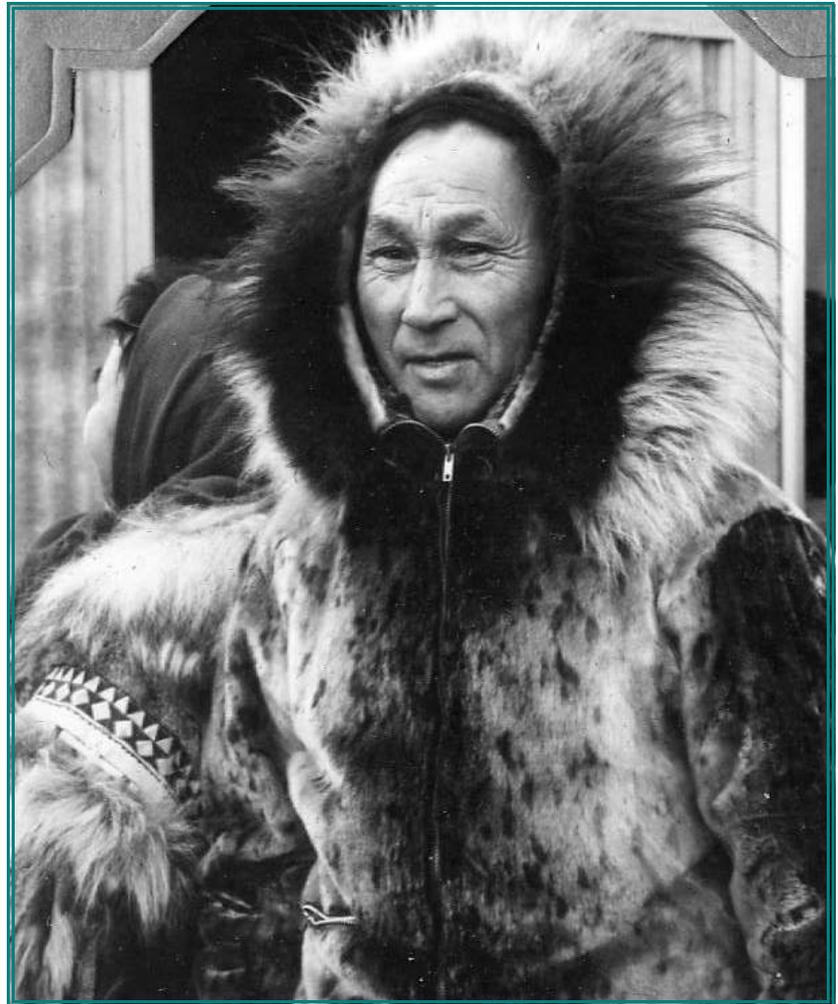
got dragged along now and then and met them. Some of their kids attended school with me and I was a member of the Eskimo troop so was familiar with them. Dad stirred



up a deep interest in pre-technological cultures that resulted in a doctoral minor in 1973. Seeing more Eskimos was a great thing.

Dad took several dozen photos of these new people and they were beautiful. I'll just show you a few of the photos because I can't use that much space. They were beautiful and striking, men and women. Here's a shot of one of the pages of his photo album with his white pencil notes. I'll put two of these photos on the next page for you. Simply gorgeous people.

This man is wearing a parka made of harbor seal skins. Those seals were in Resurrection Bay so were familiar. Mom got pelts from some Eskimos in Seward to make her own parka that I'll show you about later. Note his ruff. It is not the complex "aurora" ruffs that the women have on their parkas below. But it looks like he has wolverine fur next to his face, an important thing because wolverine fur is different than other furs. When the moisture from one's breath passes over the sub-zero hairs, it does not freeze like it does on a beard and other kinds of fur. That makes it the preferred fur to surround the face.



The aurora ruff is made beautiful by layers of different kinds of skins behind the wolverine. The most ornamental cut of wolverine is a continuous strip cut to include the two front legs with the section of long hair over the shoulders. That way the claws are hanging down each side of the ruff.



## Blanket Toss

The blanket toss done by a circle of 10 or 12 people who held the edge of a 'blanket' which was an animal hide in this case. This jumper is obviously outdoors doing the stunt. The person climbs into the center of the blanket after which the people pull outward forcibly and at the same time. This obviously tightened the hide and pushed the dancer upward. Then they relax the tension on the hide allowing the dancer to sag. Then they repeated their pull and relaxation cycle with increasing strength, bouncing the dancer higher and higher. The challenge to the dancer was to stay on his feet which was difficult since the tension from the circle was irregular, thereby making an uneven "surface". They offered Caucasians the chance to try it but few accepted the offer.



## Sled Dogs

There were a dozen or so teams of dogs for show during the rendezvous. I don't remember that they were raced though they may have been. I think these teams were working teams for the most part. This shot appealed to dad and he painted it several times. Kobuk looked like the snarling dog though he didn't do that much.



## Art Show

Dad entered some of his work in two of the three divisions for amateurs. He took first place in both amateur divisions.

This was in the spring of 1956 at the same time we were starting to get up a head of steam for the Yukon Trip. The air was filled with emotional currents and it's sort of sad for dad that he didn't get to spend much time in Seward enjoying the notoriety that must have been associated with this double achievement, something that I doubt few people ever do. He was a brilliant artist and I'll talk more about his art in Alaska elsewhere.

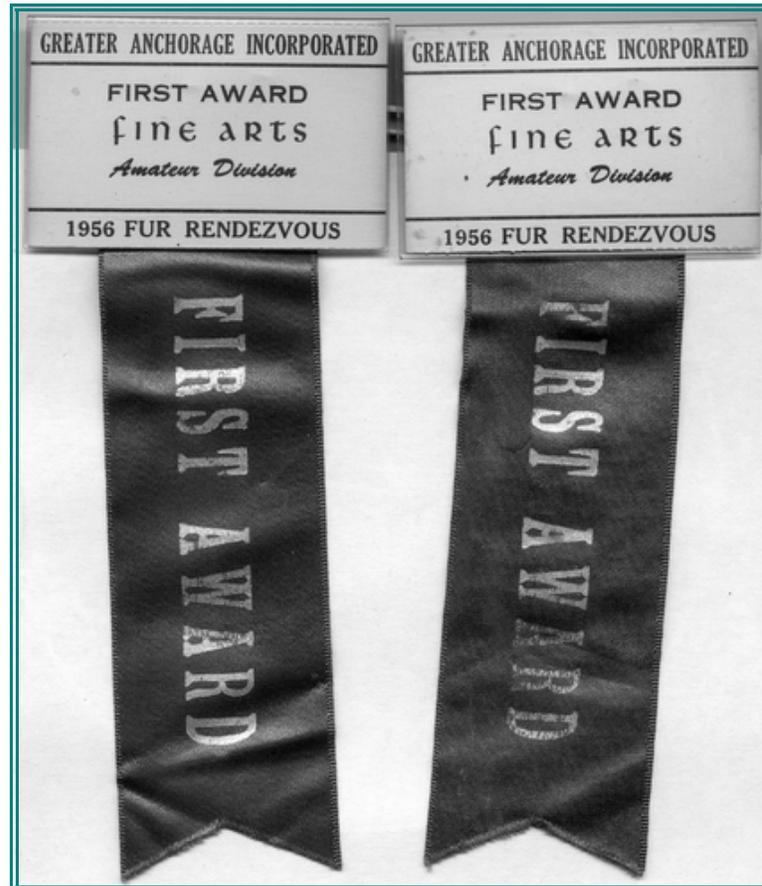


Figure 305

## Fort Elmendorf & JATO bottles

The Korean Conflict, a euphemism for the Korean War (KW) that we lost, just like we lost the Viet Nam War<sup>1</sup>, was in high gear when I was in Alaska. Indeed, a considerable amount of the shipping that dad dealt with on the docks was related in some manner with the KW and the military. So I was taken care because of it. This awareness that a war was being fought, and that it wasn't really that far from the end of the Aleutian Chain, part of my territory, created in me a real interest in the military. Someone had to protect and defend me and it seemed to me that this bunch was the most likely bunch to take care of that job.

I suspect that perhaps 30+% of the "gross state product", as opposed to the GNP, stemmed from the military and from this little bizarre war that seems to me today as a civilian to foreshadow the sad confusing Viet Nam war that was waged by our men at arms and directed by the incompetent politicians, may they rot in hell.

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<sup>1</sup>In the years following the painful nasty Viet Nam war my views clarified. I understand what was wrong about that war and can now state succinctly the metric that should be applied to any 'war' waged by the USA:

**If the Federal Government cannot allow our men and women at arms the unlimited use of their armaments, then we should not be engaged in that 'war'.**

It's that simple. If it is necessary to establish 'Rules of Engagement' that prevent our military from pursuing the enemy across certain political boundaries, then we sure as hell should not be there. There is no reason under the sun to sacrifice young people on the altar of self-serving political agendas, which are the ONLY reasons that the Viet Nam Conflict was even pursued. The devastating defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 made it abundantly clear that the Viet Nam were an implacable enemy, justifiably intent on defending their homelands from interlopers, and only men and women who had no moral compass would have done what they did to the youth of this country. It started with Kennedy, went through Johnson and finally Nixon finished this travesty.

But I hasten to add that I do not fault the military in any regard, even in those rare understandable instances where they engaged in impolitic exercises that I do understand and condone, I do not fault them. Sending a man into a boxing ring with one hand tied behind his back is the most cynical thing a promoter could do. And that is precisely what our politicians did to our youth. I look forward to seeing McNamara's punishment and suspect that it cannot be long enough to earn expiation for what he cynically did. I base that on what he has recently revealed wherein he says he didn't believe in the war!! Pour a bit of gas on him, but only a bit, and light it. Then repeat this until he is dead. Bastard.

But at the time I was in Alaska, the military deserved the greatest respect, perhaps in part because they basically supported our livelihood, but I think such a conclusion is too cynical. Perhaps it is true that they did, but there was still an over-weening love of the flag and a powerful sense of patriotism.

In those simple days, people at sporting events would actually stand, uncover their heads, turn obediently and respectfully to face the flag, put their right hands over their left heart and actually sing, out loud, so that god and the world could hear them and their cracked voice, the Star Spangled Banner. With a fervence that you really need to experience to understand how powerful the singing and the pledging was. It was like a tribe of people were reaffirming their commitment to a central leader and the value for which it stands in a visceral heart-felt way that actually mimics the state of mind and fervor of people devoted to a belief system that they reaffirm regularly with such communal expressions. Most impressive. I am still impressed and struck by the power of a group of people who publicly affirm their belief in their country and commitment to it. It is unfortunate that as a people today we have become embarrassed to show our love of our country, worse, that we don't even have a sense of love of country, and that we tolerantly sit and listen to the crappiest renditions of the Star Spangled Banners that merit a firing squad. We all politely smile and say 'Isn't that wonderful' when we should be puking on the arrogant singer who drug the meaning of our country in the mud. Enough of that. You get my drift and can see where I come from. The old saying, My country, right or wrong actually is a believable thing to me, which means more in the end that all of the "liberal", "enlightened" philosophies in the world..

As a by-product of this emphasis on the military, there were a variety of things done by the military to show their interest in and commitment to the common people, sort of an acknowledgment that they understood that it was through the sufferance of the common man that they received monies to continue the pursuit of their objectives, which were handed to them by the elected leaders.

Oh, I know that today the elected leaders have failed this country again and again, and that they are increasingly dishonest and cynical in their lives, William Clinton being the worst we have ever seen but unfortunately only the first of a series of increasingly dishonest men who should be castrated and put in front of firing squads because of their influence in the desecration of our national symbols and things, but in spite of these reasons to be cynical, I nonetheless maintain a simple honest faith and hope -I know it is as much hope as belief, and that it is even

MORE hope than belief- in the American system.

This system is the longest-lived democracy in the world. Even the extraordinary Greeks with their stunning Catholicism and creativity had been dead many many years before the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their precious "city-states". After more than 200 years we arrogant childish immature unsophisticated Americans are STILL going forward, still the predominant world power, the power that could selfishly determine the direction the entire world will take over the next 100 years should we be so arrogant as to take the power in hand and simply "do it". But we know better, we are too simple, too unaffected by the nasty arrogant godless amoral media who, like Clinton, should be castrated and actually SLOWLY killed, or perhaps, the politicians are now too weak and spineless to engage in such presumptuous behavior. That must be the reason because it is not an honest commitment to bedrock values that guides their behaviors today. Most depressing. Anyway, in those simple days in an economy that relied heavily on commerce with the military, when the populace had not become jaded and cynical, the military engaged in community activities that enriched the lives of us commoners, and forged stronger bonds with us and our government. Remember, please, that the first experimental hydrogen bomb had just been detonated by our government, a cause of pride and celebration. Because of this affection that existed between the military and the commoners, mom and dad decided to drive us kids from Seward one snowy day from Seward to Anchorage. So that we could go to Elmendorf Air Force Base, the destination of many of the munitions and cargo that dad personally off-loaded as a dockside longshoreman. The drive was not a simply drive in the park.

You must understand that. To drive from Seward to Anchorage in the winter was not like driving from Boise to SLC, or even across the continental US. This drive was an amazing exploration, even expedition even though it was only 128 miles, because one did not know what was going to happen in some of the wildest, most unprotected terrain in the US of A. For example, we did not know whether the road was even open. How do you feel today about undertaking a trip when you don't even know whether the road is open to wherever you are going? A dirt road, covered in snow and ice. Make the a trip of 128 miles. Throw in a few snow avalanches, territory where you see no one, there are not even villages, let alone motels or gas stations, and just make the road pure ice for the whole stretch. Start with those conditions. Would you even undertake the trip? My mom and dad did. Bless their souls. They were true pioneers. True, they didn't ride in the Conestoga but look. A

Conestoga wasn't even capable of doing what had to be done in Seward in those day. Its cattle would have died from the cold as would the men and women without proper clothing, without access to plants and forage for the animals, exposed to some of the nastiest and most unpredictable weather in the world. So why did Jim and Marie make those trips? First, selfishly. They could no longer stand to be isolated in the minuscule town of Seward. Second, and perhaps more importantly, they wanted to expose their sons, their offspring that they were responsible for, whom they loved, to the realities of government and the military and the purpose of dad's livelihood.

To make such a trip, the driver and passengers must be of a mind, i.e. they must agree that they are willing to undertake this risky expedition. Kids actually had no choice, obviously. Then the vehicle must be outfitted with the things required in the event of a serious emergency. Food and water for several days needed to be put on board, chains and shovel and sand had to be stowed, blankets had to be put on board, things to make a fire had to be included, a complete first aid kit had to be included, flashlights, boots, extra clothing, dry socks, towels, and so on had to be stowed in the car. Because one could not predict what was going to happen on the way. Food had to be included, enough for several days in case something happened to stop the trip at some point that required some time to repair.

Mom was experienced at making these preparation so it didn't take her long each time to get things on board. Dad relied on her to do these things, and she did them well. We got underway and I believe it was on this trip where we kept track of the number of moose that we saw from the road. The trip was made in the early spring which means that there was maximal snow packs everywhere, it was cold and day light was short. My recollection is that we counted over 400 moose from the road as we drove the round trip to Anchorage. We saw most of them in the flats of Turnagain Arm, but they were all along the trip because the snow had forced them down from the mountains to find whatever forage was still accessible to them.

## Bull Moose Threat

**I**t was on this trip on the way back to Seward that we had a frightening encounter with a large bull moose. We had made the trip around Cook's Inlet and Turnagain Arm and had actually made the turn south through Johnson Pass. The snow in the pass was heavy so the rotary plows had created a channel two-lanes wide. The walls were perfectly vertical, about 6-7 feet high and extended for many miles. This particular photo was taken at Mile 12 outside of Seward but it gives you an idea of what



these show tunnels are like. The interruption in the wall on the left is caused by the Alaska Railroad rails that also used rotary snow plows.

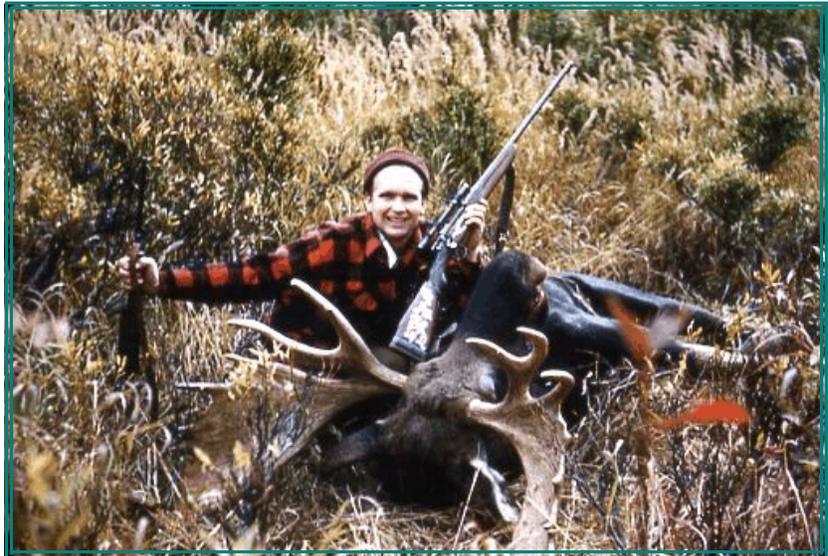
We were driving the 1953 cream and brown Chevy on this trip. It was a tall car by modern standards as you can see in this photo. It is almost as high as 5 foot 2 inch mom is tall in this photo taken at Mile 17. Things were going well as we started up the pass and entered this channel, and the sun was setting. As we entered a curve we could see light flashing on and off on the right wall, coming from somewhere in front of us. This was totally



uninhabited territory so there was no explanation for flashing lights in the crepuscular light but in territorial Alaska everything one experienced had meaning even if you didn't know what it was, so we stopped where we were. We knew something had happened and dad was going to get out of the car and walk around the curve to find out what was going on.

Before he could get out, a huge bull moose walked slowly around the curve toward us. This photo gives

you an idea of just how enormous these moose were. Dad is kneeling with a moose he shot and you can see that the muzzle of the moose is almost as high as his own shoulder. This is how big the moose was that approached the car, stopping perhaps 50 feet away. Dad did not get out of the car. We could see from his breath and the



movement of his chest that the moose was panting, like he had been running. He just stood there looking at us, gathering his strength. Darkness was coming and we had a long way to go to Seward so dad was impatient. We all were impatient. Nothing was happening after 5 or 10 minutes had passed so dad decided he'd start the motor, turn on the lights and drive slowly forward to force the moose to move and allow us to pass.

At that point, this moose with his enormous rack lowered his head until his muzzle almost touched the ground. The hackles over his shoulder stood up and he pawed the snow with his hoof. This was a threat and it was not a bluff. That was all it took. Dad turned off the lights and motor and we settled down to wait things out. We knew that people were killed every winter from hitting these giants in their cars and we didn't want to be casualties.

We must have waited half an hour when the bull finally decided to wander past us. As he started walking toward us, we didn't know what to expect. We sat still and held our breath as it approached, concerned that he might jump on the car. He

didn't. Instead, he slowly continued past us, headed down the pass. As he was directly across from us, practically filling that lane between our car and the other wall of snow, he looked directly at us. To do this, he had to actually drop his head down as he turned it to look in at us. He was gigantic.

After he was passed, we started breathing again, dad started the car and drove slowly forward. We found another car that had rammed into one of the snow walls. Everybody got out of the cars and started talking. The driver of that car said the what happened to them was that they also unexpectedly came upon the moose in the channel but didn't have enough time to stop before hitting it, so he turned into the wall, hoping it would do less damage to his car than ramming the giant moose. Dad helped him back his car out of the wall and it turned out that the damage was to the fender only. The wheel was healthy so the family continued on its way to Anchorage while we headed on down to Seward.

The adults decided that what must happened was this. The moose probably jumped down into the channel at some point, expecting to be able to get across and up the other wall. But for some reason he didn't manage to do that. Instead, he was apparently chased by a car one direction, and then back the other direction by another car and so on until it was exhausted. Its size was so great that it could not make a fast enough run in the narrow road to manage to breast the snow wall, so all it could do was run back and forth as it was chased. It was likely that he continued walking down the channel until he came out on Turnagain Flats.

### 13. Rubber Airplanes @ a Bar

One winter evening after I had been to Warner's Market to buy something and was headed home, I saw three black model airplanes. They sat on the doorstep into one of the bars next to Warners. I naturally coveted them on sight. They were gorgeous black models made of a hard rubber, imprinted with details of the doors, canopy and so on. One of them was a "Black Widow", the P-61, which I loved. I think I loved the name for a plane as much as I loved the plane. A stark, threatening name. I knew that black widows were black and that the female killed and ate the male. This was a unique plane for another reason: it was one of the first airplanes to be outfitted with the new technology called "radar". That's what really made it dangerous.



I stood there in a stupor wondering who owned them. Why would someone leave them there? They certainly weren't owned by a man were they? Why would a man go into a bar and lay these wonderful models on the sidewalk? Where "someone" might take them. "Someone" sounded like a good role to play in this act I thought. I looked around surreptitiously to make sure no one was watching me. They weren't. No one on the sidewalk nearby. I looked at the models and considered their weight, decided I needed to pick one up to find out. I picked the Black Widow up. What a beautiful plane with its double vertical stabilizers, and long sleek elements.

The other two planes were about the same weight and I discovered accidentally that they fit into my hands at the same time. I could carry the three easily. Meantime, I was working out the self-deceptions that we all do to ourselves. Like why it was OK for me to sort of borrow them for a while, like why it was stupid to leave them lying there that way, like their stupidity meant it was their own fault if "someone" took them and so on. Maybe someone even laid them there just so that a little kid could have them, one just like me for example. In the end I persuaded

myself that I actually had a right to take these three black models home with me, because they obviously had been either abandoned and lost which was the same thing and the person who lost them knew he'd never find them. Besides, if I didn't take them, someone else would and didn't I need them more? Didn't I deserve them more?

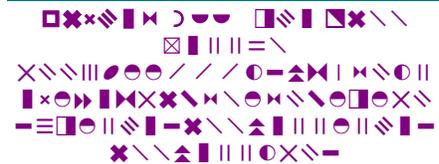
When I took them home and tried my best to sell mom on the idea that "they were just laying there, no one wanted them, so I can have them - can't I? Please please?" And her implacable reply was "Take them back and put them where you found them." I argued with her for a bit because I could tell by her face that she wasn't really into this fight - yet. You could tell that. It meant she was worrying about something else so was distracted and not really interested in matching swords with you. At rare times like that, I got braver than usual and dared argue more than usual - while I carefully watched her face to see if she was returning to the room. It happened. She came back in a flash. "Get them out of here and put them back or I'll punish you." I got it. So I put my coat back on in the dark and walked back to the bar. It was completely dark by now but everything was lighted so I found the bar without difficulty. I went up to the entry way and laid the three models down. Carefully, in a row, and turned and walked back home.

### Weekly Radio Shows

**I**n Vernal we were allowed to listen to certain shows on the radio, like the Lone Ranger. Since there was no T.V. we didn't think there was anything better. Radio was a medium that actually engaged your imagination so it was as much fun I think as watching TV that spells everything out. In Alaska we continued to listen to radio shows with mom's approval. That was always required. She had to say we could, and if she was in a foul mood, we didn't get to. This had a tendency, when we remembered, of making us a bit more careful of what we did on the evenings when there were shows we wanted to listen to.

Several of the shows were about detectives and police, like "Johnny Dollar". Radio shows, like TV shows, were sponsored by companies who put their lure out before the show started and somewhere in the middle. They ran half an hour or a full hour. Johnny dollar was exciting because it had the flavor of a Humphry Bogart movie except there was no picture. Johnny talked tough and risked his life to help beautiful women and always succeeded in catching the bad guys, narrowly escaping being killed. It came on during the week so we had to be extra careful to listen on a school night.

"Our Miss Brooks" was another favorite. It was on Sunday evening, which was basically another school night, so we had to be careful that evening. She was a school teacher who got into all sorts of jams with her students, the principal, a boy friend and other students. She had a great voice and sounded like she would be a fun teacher. I suppose I missed much of her humor that was probably aimed at adults but I got enough to think it was a funny show. I never saw what she looked like until I found this photo.



"Amos and Andy" came on right after "our Miss Brooks" and was as funny. In this case there were two black men who talked in an odd way but they were understandable. They were always getting into fixes where one had to get help to bail the other out with

humorous incidents along the way. I think there was a character called "Kingfisher" who added flavor

"Jack Benny" was also on Sunday night and was a show I loved. His staff included an Irish Tenor named Dennis, a black butler named Chester and a lovely woman whose name I don't remember. Jack was a violin player, a terrible one and had a dry sense of humor. His hallmark was being cheap. So cheap that he wouldn't tip waiters, wouldn't pay to have his shoes shined and so on. Chester had good horse sense so tried to save Jack from himself and sometime succeeded. Dennis was a foil to make the story go as was the woman. Jack's other trait that is perhaps more famous than his cheapness was the fact that he wouldn't ever admit his age. His joke was that he was 39 years old - again. This is where that particular joke became famous.

"The Shadow" was another mystery show that captured our imaginations and gave us chills. It started off with the memorable words, spoken slowly and carefully:

*"Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?... The Shadow knows!"*

Then things developed but that phrase set the tone for murders, robberies, and general mayhem that the Shadow sorted out without the police understanding his contribution. The website for this photos summarized it thusly:

*One of radio's most memorable dramas, The Shadow chronicled the adventures of Lamont Cranston and his companion Margo Lane. As The Shadow, Cranston used a "hypnotic power to cloud men's minds so that they cannot see him." This power was routinely used to battle*

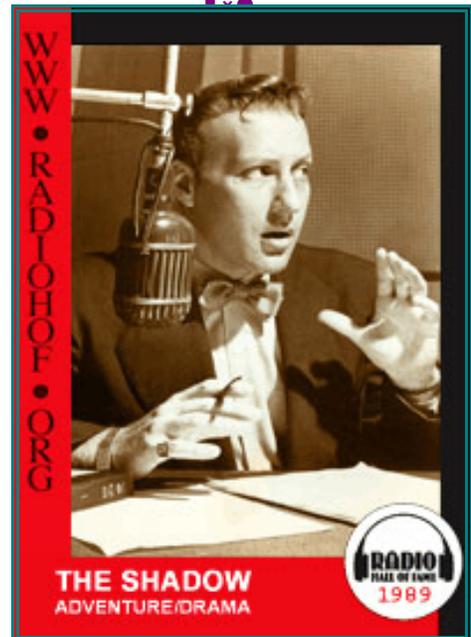
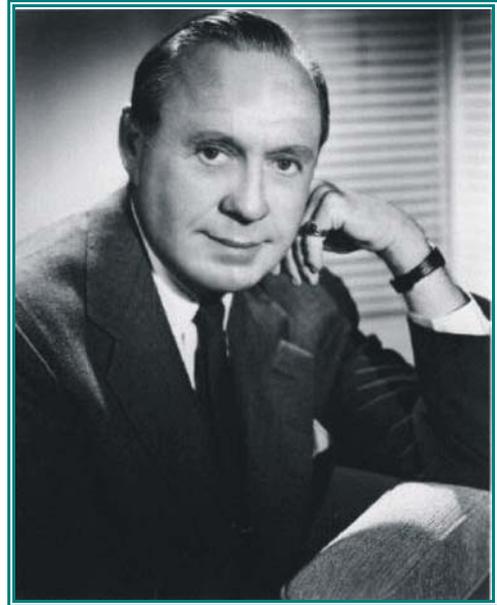


Figure 314

<http://www.radiohof.org/adventuredrama/shadow.html>

*crime lords, mad scientists, psychopaths and even werewolves, all of whom learned from The Shadow that "the weed of crime bears bitter fruit...crime does not pay!"*

Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy were a pair, a human who was a ventriloquist with a back-talking dummy. Comedy was the staple of the show that was enormously popular. Mortimer Snerd was one of the foils that allowed Bergen and McCarthy to play off each other. The website says, "The Edgar Bergen/Charlie McCarthy Show became one of radio's highest-rated programs, a distinction it enjoyed until it left the air in 1956."

I think it was the concept of ventriloquism that really attracted me. One person speaking in such a way that it appeared another was talking seemed like black magic, even when I knew that was happening.

"Gangbusters" was obviously one of the cop and robbers shows. It featured the same set of officers in a big city like New York. Gangsters and small crooks participated to keep the show going. Detectives, cop cars with sirens, loud bangs, a few shrieks constituted the background for the tough talk that the characters all used. This comic book, Issue No. 14 was created to capitalize on the radio show appeal and success.

When we were allowed to listen to these shows, we were usually in bed and it was only if we were good. Mom would leave the bedroom door open so that we could listen, tucked in tight, lying on our backs. That was a treat, to lie in bed after dinner, warm and comfortable, eyes closed listening to the stories, sound effects and the canned laughter. It was as exciting as watching TV in my mind. Because we could think whatever we wanted to think, to think whatever came to mind when we heard the voices and the sounds.

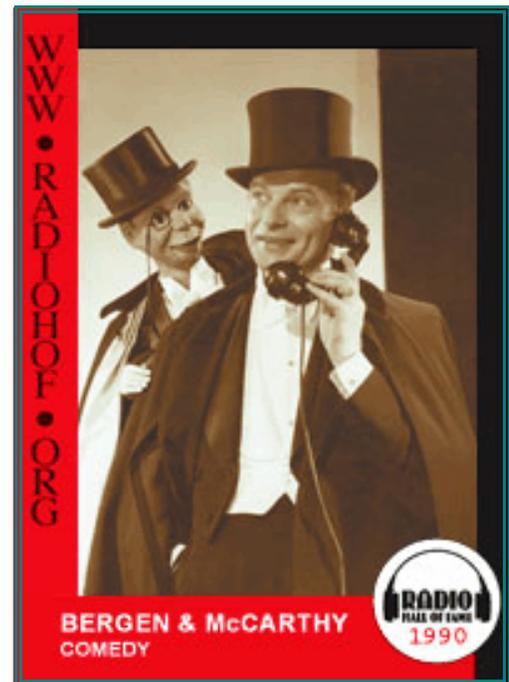


Figure 315

<http://www.radiohof.org/comedy/edgarbergen>

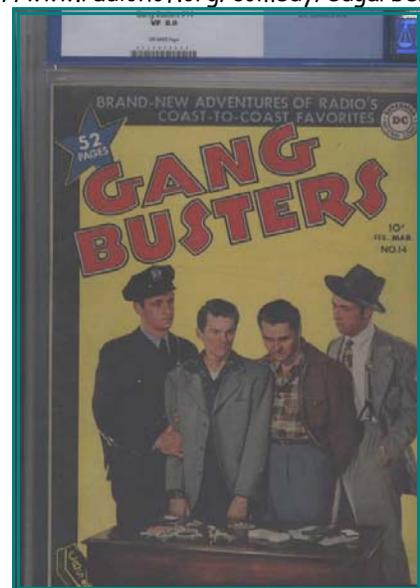


Figure 316

<http://www.socalcomics.com/gangbusters14.jpg>

The sound effects were as amazing as the stories. I didn't understand how it was possible to make sounds that were so realistic while standing inside of a studio. In those days sound-samplers weren't even dreamed of and tape recorders were primitive and mixing equipment didn't exist. So if you wanted the right sound, the right loudness at the right time in the story, it had to be manufactured in the studio. Some things, like breaking glass, were easy because all you had to do was break an appropriate size of glass during the dialogue. Other sounds were more difficult. How can you reproduce the sound of walking on dry hard snow? Easy, it turns out. Take an unopened box of corn starch and squeeze it in time to steps.

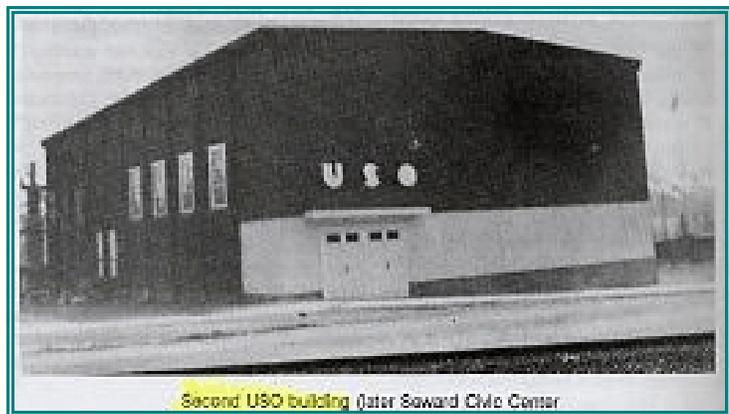
Some of the shows were specials, one-time one-hour shows on an interesting topic. The one that I remember clearest was the most frightening of them all. It was a show about an expedition in the Himalayas searching for "The Abominable Snowman." We lived in abominable snow, abominable snow and cold, with whistling mean winds and darkness. This creature was too believable. We were frightened by it after listening, whenever we were out alone at night in the snow. The sounds of whistling wind, the cries of lost frozen men, the shrieks of terror as the creature found and devoured them were too much for us because the sounds had a verisimilitude that harmonized with the world we lived each day. We had nightmares from that show for months and when they were particularly bad, we would get out of bed and go get in bed with mom if dad was working night shift. Oddly enough, if he actually was home, we were safe, even if we had bad dreams and didn't need to get in their bed.

### Seward PD & Wrestling Team

Seward had few activities for young people which meant that kids had great opportunities to experiment and find ways to get in trouble. That seems to be the natural propensity of us when we are kids, find the limits by testing them. There were so few people in Seward that local businesses were limited to basic services and goods. The bowling alley and the theatre were about the extent of the commercial entertainment that kids could take advantage of, except that the bowling alley served beer so that limited who could go there. There was no skating rink, no museum, no stage groups, no dance groups, no parks, no gyms, nothing for kids.

The police department was the group that understood best that there was a real need for some kind of entertainment. They started a wrestling program for kids from about 8 to the late teen years. At the time it didn't occur to me that the police were doing this because they saw the trouble that kids got into when they didn't have something to do, but looking back it's obvious that they did this because juvenile delinquency was probably higher than they liked it to be. This was a way to reduce the statistics.

The program was held in the USO building which sat just north of the fire hall. It was left over from the war and was a recreation hall for soldiers. It was set up like a basket ball court with bleachers along the walls. There were various smaller rooms that were used for wrestling practice. Mom and dad signed us up for the program -worried about us turning into juvenile delinquents



Second USO building (later Seward Civic Center)

apparently- and sent us over at the appropriate time. I don't think we were given any say in the deal. Or, if we were given as "say", it was simply an opportunity for us to endorse a previously made decision with a 'yeah' like in communist countries. We were destined to go so go we did.

We went over and stood in line with other kids, most of whom were familiar to us waiting to get 'signed up'. That was a slow process but the policemen were polite and moved things along. After we had finished signing up, we were told to sit down and to listen while they told us the rules. I don't remember what the rules were but I expect they were standard for any collection of rambunctious kids and included the requirement that we wear some kind of gym clothes. After that night was finished, we were sent home which was usually late for us kids who normally had to be in bed at 8pm. Mom couldn't stand us longer.

The next week at the same time we were sent over to the USO after dinner and this time I was more nervous because "practice" was going to start. I had never been involved in any kind of organized sport and had never wrestled. Indeed, I had never even heard that there were 'rules' for wrestling, that there were "holds", that

there were matches. I understood wrestling to be the fun that kids got involved in when they were rough-housing, which usually led to a bloody nose, some yelling and crying. Here we were told a whole bunch of stuff I had never heard about, which I didn't understand, and therefore promptly forgot.

After the coach -that's what the guy was called, "coach"- we stood around the ring where the hands-on training was done. Kids were eyeballed by the coach and lined up by size. Then the coach matched us up into teams and put in line for our chance to practice. We watched other kids and I dreaded having to do the thing. It was an unpleasant thought that I had to get onto the mat with this other kid who I didn't really know and didn't like and wrestle him. What a stupid thing to do, but I knew that this was "for my good", that my parents "loved me" and so on. That meant if I tried to skip the practice and went home, I would be in real trouble. That's how much they loved me.

When it came my turn, I had a dry mouth and stepped into the ring with this kid. Neither one of us understood what we were to do even though we had watched what was being done. We understood the idea that one guy knelt on his hands and knees and the other guy kneeled by him, put one arm on the bottom man's left arm and put his right hand on his shoulder or something. After the coach-referee was satisfied that we were properly position, he said "Go!" at which time we each were supposed to try to push the other kid down on the mat. That's what wrestling was to me. As we pushed and pulled and grunted, the coach was yelling to do this and do that, try this hold, don't do that, be careful and so on. As if I had a clue what he was saying, but I wasn't going to admit I didn't understand. I just proved it.

After the coach declared the other kid a winner, we had to start over but this time we changed positions. We wrestled wildly for a while with the same result. I didn't have a clue what I was doing and never did understand about the holds. In principle I could sort of grasp that a half nelson was such and such a configuration of arms and bodies, but when I was actually wrestling, an order to put a half nelson on the kid might as well have been an order in Chinese to launch a missile. I had no idea how to translate such an order into action.

It was so foreign to me to be physically fighting -that's what it felt like to me- that I was simultaneously afraid at a deep level that I was doing something wrong, and I was just plain afraid. I imagine my parents actually intended good for me out of this exercise but I disliked it and only went because I was told I had to do it. Nothing was learned. Besides, I wasn't a kid that was going to get into trouble.

Are you kidding? The punishment from my folks would have been 10 times worse than anything the police and a judge would have done to me!

### Fizz Pops, Canned Pop & Pop Tops

We drank soda pop from as far back as I can remember, considering it a treat because it was rare. Grandma would give us some when she had the little store, and mom would buy a bottle now and then in Vernal but it was the exception.

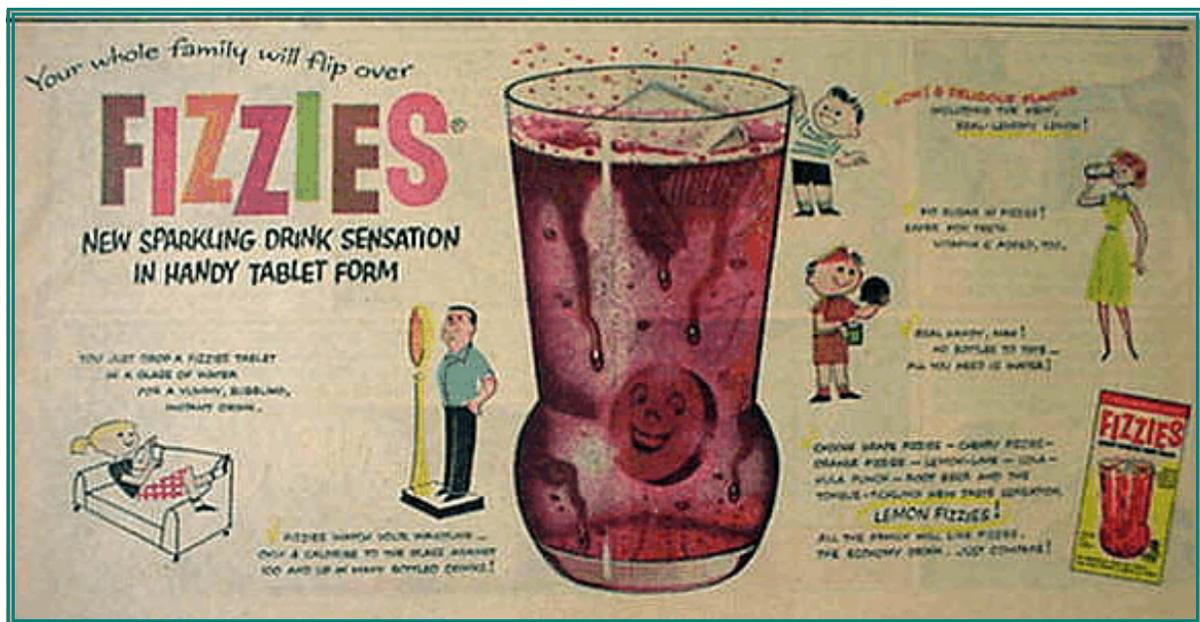


Figure 318

In the late 1940- and early 1950's there was a sensation amongst kids. I don't know what adults thought about the stuff. These things, Fizzies, were basically alka-seltzer with flavoring added. No kidding. They came in a flat package with a foil insert that contained 6 tablets the size of alka-seltzer. You peeled one out and dropped it into a glass of water and watched. It fizzed and bubbled just like alka-seltzer but was different because they were colored and had flavors. I liked them and didn't mind the fact that they did taste like alka-seltzer. Indeed, the fact that I like alka-seltzer today may well have something to do with this product.

They were great things to take on hiking trips because we carried canteens

anyway so with these tablets we had pop without the added bulk and weight of a heavy bottle. The craze didn't last too long which was probably merciful. Most people probably hated them, as did most kids, but they were cool for a while.

Pop itself underwent a profound transformation at about the same time. It was taken out of glass bottles, the only container up to that point, and marketed in tin cans. Literally, tin cans, not the fancy 'new' aluminum cans you kids grew up with. These tin cans were considerably heavier and some of them were poorly lined in which case the acid in the pop interacted with the metal and created a peculiar flavor. But the durability of the tin compared to the glass made these cans appealing.

### Cone Top Pop

**A** long toward the end of our time in Seward, we went over to Anchor River to fish for king salmon. We were in the brown and cream 1953 Chevy and stopped for gas along the way at a little store that sold everything a person might want - which actually wasn't too much in those days in that place because people knew not to expect too much. We got out of the car and wandered inside the store to see what we just had to have.

We found it right away: cone top pop cans. I found this particular image on the internet with the following quote:

*"Nesbitt's Fruit Products Company with headquarters in Los Angeles, CA made their canning debut with an orange drink in a 12 ounce cone top can. It appears that they hedged their bets on the acceptance of the new container by introducing it in the Alaska market area, as the only known examples have been found there."*

This can is identified as a 1951 can and was advertized at \$285.00. It cost a dime. It was the shape of the cans that made them appealing and naturally, us kids hassled our folks to get one. You never knew when you'd wear them down and this time we did, and we even persuaded them to buy each of us one

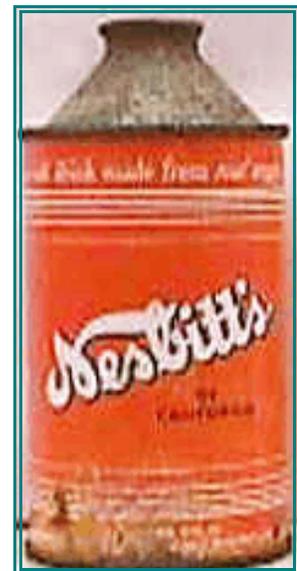


Figure 319

<http://gono.com/v-tours/sodacone/scone30nesbitts.htm>

with the admonition that we "better finish it." We didn't. We couldn't. It was too big and I suspect now, looking back, that mom and dad probably knew we wouldn't. Thank you. It was a neat thing to have these cans, partly because they were safer to drink out of in a moving car that bounced over the rough roads. Perhaps that's why they bought it for us.

Pop tops didn't come along while we were in Seward I don't think. They doubtless existed in the lower 40 but I don't remember them in Seward. They were so novel that I think I would have remembered them.

## Dances

"Junior Swingers" was a marvelous creation of mom and dad for us pubescent teens. I've talked about it elsewhere but wanted to throw in a list of some of the dances that they taught us because it amazes me today, based on the experience you kids had with your own teenagehood. I have to say in retrospect, without any criticism of you because you were "victims" of your community, that your experience with dance was pretty tepid. Not a big deal in the final analysis but take a look here at the variety of dances that I was taught. Pretty astonishing. And this was by my own personal mom and dad. That's perhaps even more astonishing. I complain and moan about how they were harsh on me and they were, but \_\_\_\_\_ (insert a few choice expletives here) they were astonishingly wonderful. Your own mom and dad did nothing of the kind, did they, didn't teach you a single dance - other than the polka that I danced around the front room with the girls, Nancy intentionally missing the beat just to get yelled at. Anyway, this list is an incomplete listing of the dances they taught us.

The Bunny hop was a very popular dance that most kids could dance. It was a line dance where you stood in a row, holding the waist of the person in front of you, kicking your feet alternately -usually- out to one side and ending the pattern by putting your legs together jumping forward and backward, at which point someone jumped in the wrong direction creating havoc and laughs. The leader got to pick the direction the line went and always snaked it around in loops that ran back along the end of the line.

"Put you Little Foot" was a pair dance that required a particular 'hold'. The boy and girl stood side by side and held arms and hands sideways. The steps were a

sort of brush with your right foot, a step and brush and so on in time with the music, "Put your little foot, put your little foot, put your little foot right there..." The excitement was both physical and emotional, standing together dancing, enjoying each other's company.

The "polka" was the most physical dance of all. You stood face to face, the girl's hands on the boy's shoulders and his hands on her waist. The steps are simple, one-two-three-hop, jumping back and forth from foot to foot. That is the dance. However, the music is frantic and you try to keep time while your bouncing up and down vigorously, usually moving the girl backwards in swirls and loops, the faster the better. Collisions with other couples happened with enormous amount of laughing, mock-accusing, and yelling. By the end of the dance, you were breathing hard, later in the night actually sweating. It was an athletic dance that you would have been hard-pressed to continue for long.

The "Schottische" -of which there are many flavors- was from Scandinavia I believe. The version we learned was another vigorous folk dance that wasn't quite as strenuous as a polka, but demanding nonetheless. These dances lasted the length of a 78 RPM record, the source of our music - the records are still at 2821 N and I need to snag them for posterity I suppose. By the end, we were breathing hard from the exertion.

"Waltzes" were a staple and totally different from the preceding dances that are so physical. Waltzes in 3/4 time are stately slow dances with a one-two-three pattern, the couple standing in a classic ballroom position, the boy's left hand and girl's right hand joined and extended upward to the side, the girl's left hand on the boy's shoulder and his right hand holding the small of her back. The steps started with the boy moving forward with his left foot -the standard ballroom start- and the girl stepping backward with her right. These were sort of intimate dances even though bear hugs and body-clutching wasn't tolerated and you had a few minutes to talk quietly while you moved slowly in swirls around the floor. Collisions were not part of this dance. It was a dance you wanted to share with someone special.

The "Foxtrot" was a faster dance an 2/2, 2/4 time. The dance position was the classic ballroom position but the music was faster than a waltz, though nothing as physical as a polka.

We experimented with the "Rhumba" but it was too difficult for us. I think actually that mom didn't really know it well enough to teach so it got scrapped. Us kids appreciated that because it was a lot of fancy foot work without much activity

overall and we were into big time bouncing and jumping and moving fast.

Same with the "Tango". I actually disliked the tango and was glad it was only a passing experiment. Too slow, too complex. Just let me dance!

Individual song titles stick out in memory, like "Dark Town Strutters Ball" and the "Tennessee Waltz". The atmosphere created by the words and music were haunting experiences. Young teens are not used to that sort of thing, just becoming aware of themselves and their own emotions. That's how it was for me. I was startled I suppose at what was happening inside of my mind and in terms of the awareness I had of social things, of girls, of the fact that I had a mind and that I began to see things that had always been there but which had passed me by. It's interesting to see that the decision by mom and dad to create this dance group to keep us off the streets and out of trouble had an impact that went far beyond those practical concerns. They gave me gifts without intending to.

### Library & Mythology

I hung out at the public library many evenings, particularly in the winter when it was dark all the time after 2:00 p.m.. Today I see that this tiny library which probably possessed no more books than I have today, was a center for some of the most formative experiences in my entire life. It was a small quiet place, located down a flight of stairs right at the center -don't put too much meaning on that word- of Seward. And the librarian, my neighbor Elsie Whitmore, was nice to me. That's it. So I felt a sense of liberty, of being granted the freedom to browse all books and a freedom to talk to her, to ask quiet questions that she quietly answered. I see that she offered me a fertile environment in which my burgeoning interest in intellectual things could flower safely. Not a trivial matter in a frontier town like Seward where a block away a man was arrested one night for running from a bar in his red underwear shooting his pistol in the air, harming no one but nonetheless violating several public statutes about various things.

Her kindness extended to the astonishing gift of a copy of the monthly news magazine sent to her by the Strategic Air Command. She received perhaps a dozen copies and she started giving me a copy of the new issue. That was like being given the key to the Library of Congress, to be admitted to her sphere of importance and intelligence. The gift, which to her was probably trivial, was an incredibly important

thing. I was certified as a person, as a person worthy of such consideration, and my mind was permanently bent.

What happened is that she discovered that I loved

I'd take out several books a week and read them quickly and then return them the next week for more.

The Bobsey Twins were too tame for me so I read the Nancy Drew mystery series and the Hardy Boys mystery series, plus a sprinkling of some odd books about scouts being involved in mysterious activities in WW II.

During these years I devoured the kids' books and moved on. I don't know how it came about but Mrs. Whitmore would suggest books now and then in between pasting envelopes in books, checking out the few patrons. One that she recommended that I read was "Up From Slavery" but Washington. It was a heavy book for a 12 year old to read I suppose yet it wasn't. It told the story of a remarkable man who was an inventor, struggling with and for his. It affected me for various reasons. I had never lived with black people so they were exotic creatures to me.

### Cheechakos, Snow Worms & Snow Caves

I really did see snow worms. Real worms. I know it today with a certitude that I find impossible to believe. In the snow. In February of March. Over by Little Bear Mountain just past Whitmore's house across the road across from the street light under the big pine we played under. In the snow, while I was building another snow cave in the densely packed snow put there by the wind all winter.

As I grew up, I learned more about the odd words that were bandied about by "old timers". And about the stories they told. And the things they did to confuse and upset and make fun of "new comers". But that did not change my perceptions, as stated in the previous paragraph. I really did see worms. In near the top layer of snow in about that time of the year when winter had become really old and we were really tired of the snow. And I was just trying to do something that was interesting. There they were. These little white worms, in clusters, not moving, but not appearing to be dead either. The bodies were robust, firm, and yellowish-white.

A cheechako is a new person to Alaska, therefore someone who (1) didn't

understand about the Alaskan frontier and (2) was a ripe target for being ridiculed. One of the things they were told was that there were "snow worms" in the territory, with the expectation that the newcomer would buy the joke without understanding that they were being made fun of and then ask about these 'worms' in another setting where they would be laughed at. Everyone would know the telegraphic message "Laugh at this fool!" and would do it. There was something of an elitist mentality in the old timers, called "sour doughs" that gave them license, apparently, to make fools of the newcomers.

I didn't understand that. Why should the old timers make fun of the newcomers? They were new, so if they didn't understand something, that was no reason to make fun of them, to ridicule them. Just explain the reality and go on. They'd appreciate knowing the facts and would incorporate them quickly into their reality. No doubt about that. But the sourdoughs took perverse pleasure in doing things to belittle the newcomers. Perhaps I was so close to being one that I was hypersensitive. Odd that a child would harbor such sensitivity isn't it. But I did and I was of two minds. There was in fact something funny about an adult doing something that revealed his or her gullibility. Probably made me feel not quite so stupid about things in general that adults all seemed, or pretend, to understand. Misery loves company.

One of the things the sourdoughs talked about to the cheechako was the 'snow worm'. Now it may be that there was some story about enormous worms that sort of breathed fire, ate dogs, and Eskimos. If that was the story, then my experience was totally different. But I did know what a "worm" was, and I do know that I saw small white coiled worms in clusters when I dug snow caves in that snow pack that year at the foot of Little Bear across the road from Whitmore's. Really. There is no doubt. I know today that I actually did see them. The problem today of course is that it seems impossible that any creature would be able to live in that icy hostile environment, at a level that had been chilled below freezing for 3 or 4 months. But I am crystal clear. I saw them and will die without being able to change that understanding. I was not hallucinating, I was not using drugs, it was day light, there was sun and these creatures were there. I know they were.

So perhaps I had relapsed into cheechakohood and was seeing what wasn't there. I doubt it however, in spite of the fact that the cold hard facts mitigate against my seeing what I saw. Perhaps it was a dream.

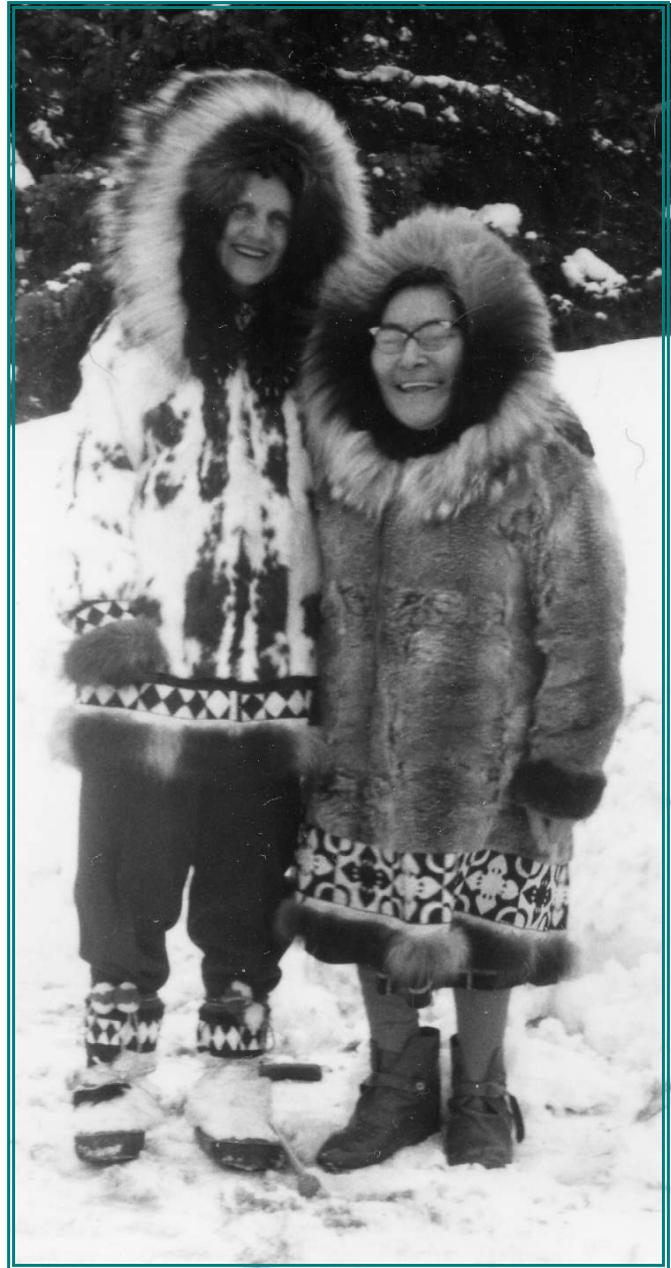


### Mom Made a Harbor Seal Parka

May Titus was an Eskimo who TB of the spine and so spent time at the TB San. That's where mom and dad met her when they were volunteering. May was skilled at handling skins and made beautiful parkas. As a gift, dad arranged for May to make a rabbit skin parka for mom with a full aurora ruff. May is standing by mom, much shortened by her TB but she was generally in good spirits. She has laid her cane on the ground between them for this photo. She also made the mukluks that mom is wearing but not the soles. Those were provided to her by someone in a village where such work was still done. Then May sewed on the top.

The aurora ruff is beautiful. The first layer around mom's face is from a wolverine skin, the section across the shoulders that included the feet and claws that you can see. Next to the wolverine is a similar cut from a wolf hide so that the long guard hairs stand out, long with dark tips that form a band around the outside.

Being a seamstress, mom was interested in the method used by May to handle skins because it is different than fabric. One of the basic reasons is the thickness and toughness of the skins. Another basic reason is the fact that a skin must be cut from the inside with a sharp blade rather than scissors because scissors would cut hairs off. When May was getting ready to make mom's parka, she had mom sit down by her. She took a



piece of butcher paper and looked at mom first. Then she took her scissors and cut a pattern for the hood. Then she held the pattern up to mom's head and folded it into a parka. It fit perfectly. Mom paid attention to May as she worked and learned how to handle skins. As a result, she decided that she wanted to make her own parka out of harbor seal skins.

We started with harbor seal skins that had just been removed from the owners. I don't remember how it was but dad managed to buy two complete pelts from some Eskimos who had killed the seals out by Fox Island. The price was right but it was conditioned on one thing. We had to flense the blubber from the hides and return the blubber to the Eskimos along with the agreed-upon dollars. The skins came to the kitchen in a wash tub, smelling oily and bloody. Dad did the job of course.

The blubber was surprisingly thick, about 3 inches thick everywhere. After it was removed, dad hauled it over to the Eskimos who then did what they loved to do. They put the blubber in a poke -a tight bag made out of a seal skins where it would remain for 6 months or until it had liquified. During this time, the blubber ages and takes on a flavor that is used to flavor their food, and turns into a liquid that looks like but does not taste like cooking oil. We were given a quart bottle of the stuff by some Eskimos to take to May and on the way it leaked in the car, creating a pretty powerful odor that lasted a while.

Dad knew taxidermy so he knew how to prepare the hides to ship to a tannery stateside. As I remember the process, he turned them inside out and carefully scraped them to remove all bits of fat. Then he salted them heavily so that they would cure and be stable during the time they were transported. After he had them dry enough, he folded each into a bundle and tied it with ropes. Then he put these tied bundles into a canvas bag that he wrapped in paper and nailed into a wooden box for shipping to Seattle where they were tanned. When they returned, they were totally different of course and were ready so that mom could proceed to make her parka.

The first step was to make her own pattern. She did this with butcher paper like May did. She also procured the skin needles that are shaped differently that needles for sewing cloth and waxed threads of different colors. She also hunted down a tanned wolf hide that she would be able to use for her parka.

After she had prepared the parka it was gorgeous. She cut a wide swath of wolf for the parka and made a diamond pattern to decorate the bottom of the parka. She also installed cuffs of wolf fur. All of this was done under the direction or supervision of May who made sure that mom used the right skin needles and made the proper stitches in the hides. This is now in a trunk at 2821 N.



### Flounder or Dungeness

Sometimes when I went to the small boat harbor to fish, I decided that I wanted to catch a flounder so I'd bait my hook, release the bail on my reel, and let the sinker pull the hook to the bottom of the ocean. Then I'd reset the bail and lift up on the line to find just where the bottom was because I didn't want my hook to be picked at without me knowing. I'd reel in a bit of line so that when the pole was about horizontal, the hook was just resting on the bottom. That way when something took hold of the bait, I'd be able to feel it, at which point I'd make a

vicious swipe upward with the pole to "set" the hook. Today I'm not sure I was doing that right, but no matter. I was persuaded that I had to yank the hook to make sure the hook set and I did it with enthusiasm.

After one such maneuver I rewound the line to see if the bait was still on. The reeling in was sort of slow because the bottom was probably about 30 feet down. That wasn't not really deep, but it seemed like a long distance when I reeled in a line using a reel that had a spool with a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch diameter reel. Of course, the distance to the bottom from the floats depended greatly on the stage of the tide. The difference between high tide and low tide there on the small boat harbor mooring was probably 10-12 feet. I could see the difference myself. The access to the floating segments was a long ramp attached permanently to the dock that was moored in place to secure the small boat dock. The other end rested on two steel wheels about 8 or so inches in diameter that rolled along steel plates fastened on to the deck. When the tide was out, the floats were so far down that the ramp was steep but when the tide was high, the ramp flattened out. The difference was amazing.

When I had to rebait the hook, I was sure a fish had eaten the previous specimen. That encouraged me in the insanity called 'fishing'. I'd anxiously rebait the hook, and quickly drop it down to the bottom again in hopes I could land it on the fish that had taken the bait last time. It never occurred to me that the vicious yanks on the pole might have been the cause of the disappearance of the bait but that is obviously half the reason for the loss of baits.

While I stood there waiting, pole in hand, I looked at the breakwater that the military had installed during WW II. The rocks were enormous. The breakwater stood 8 feet or so above the water, depending, of course, on the stage of the tide. Adult men would go out to the end of the breakwater with their large salt water poles to fish. I never dared even climb out there, fearing that a rogue wave would come along and flush me off. I couldn't swim and was terrified of getting my head in the water so did nothing that exposed me to that risk. All the time I saw the men fishing over there, I never saw them catch anything. Patience was required for fishing like this where you couldn't see the bottom, where you couldn't see the fish, where your line was simply hung between small boats moored on the docks.

I felt tugs now and then and hoped I had a flounder because dad liked them. I didn't. In the 5 years of fishing there, I don't think I caught half a dozen flounder but fishermen are eternal optimists and I convinced myself that (1) there really

were flounders down there because I saw a few specimens and (2) I wanted badly to catch one. So I kept at it.

A bit of natural history here: see how both of the eyes are on the same side of the flounder head? That isn't how they hatch. As hatchlings, they swim around in the water like other fish, one eye on each side of their head but as they mature, they undergo several changes. As they adapt to living on the bottom as adults, the colors of their two sides change. The side on the bottom turns white while the top side darkens into a camouflage. At the same time, one of the eyes literally migrates from one side of the head to the other by moving over the top of the skull. But the mouth stays oriented for free swimming.



Figure 322

<http://www.oceanicresearch.org/booksample.html>

Sometimes I felt a tug on my line and instead of reefing on the pole like I usually did, I tentatively lifted the tip of the pole to get a feel for whatever was there. I don't know why I was gentle sometimes. Sometimes as I lifted the pole the line went taut and I could feel a heavy weight. If it wasn't a fish, this weight wasn't moving about. It was just there and I feared that I had snagged my line again on the debris on the bottom and dreaded pulling too hard. It didn't take long, however, to differentiate between a piece of garbage, a snag and a crab. The piece of garbage would pull heavily but would slowly come to the surface where I'd see a rubber boot or large can. If it was a snag, there was no movement so I whipped the pole one way and then the other, popping the pole up and down in hopes of dislodging the hook. Rarely did that work but I wasn't doing anything else so took the time to work the hook. Usually I lost the hook and the sinker.



Figure 323

<http://www.theworldwidegourmet.com/fish/crab/dungeness.gif>

If the thing was a crab, the process started out like reeling in the piece of garbage but the ending was different.

There was no movement with either the garbage or the crab which was holding onto the bait with its pincer. Whatever was on the line fascinated me as I slowly reeled it in, leaning over the edge of the dock straining to see what it was. Garbage was disgusting and wasteful, but sometimes the reward was a dungeness crab.

The crab would hold onto the bait tenaciously as long as it was in the water. Strangely enough, it didn't matter to the crab that it was moving upward, that he was moving in the water. I could pull him back and forth as long as he was in the water. I supposed that was because he was used to being pushed around by waves. But if I lifted him to the point that he broke the surface, he'd immediately let go and drift tumbling back to the bottom. If I was brave and wanted to impress mom and please dad who liked crab, I'd gingerly reach down into the water to take hold of him. I had been taught how to take them by pinching them from the back. I misunderstood however because I thought that it was necessary to squeeze the heck out of the tail to hurt them and make them stop trying to pinch. Handling from the back was simply a way to keep my hand out of the range of those nasty sharp pinchers. I could tell males from females and knew I had to throw females back which I did.

When I caught a crab, I immediately had to go home because I knew that you shouldn't let a crab die before it is boiled because it gets poison. Somehow I thought the things would die in the next half hour so had to gather up my stuff and get it onto my bicycle and head home. It was a challenge to carry my fishing pole in on hand while I pedaled when I had a crab suspended on the other handle bar by a piece of fishing line. I didn't want it to fall and didn't want it to pinch me.



Mortimer Snerd was a country bumpkin who wasn't too bright, who was the straight man for the other two. He dressed in totally different style of clothing, a straw floated, bow tie and plaid sport coat and had freckles. Of course, we couldn't see these features when we listened to the radio, but the pictures in magazines revealed it all. Mortimer's favorite friend was his cow 'Bessie", and he lived on a farm with relatives. He was sort of slow but I liked him anyway. I had a couple of relatives like that and liked them. His name became a national synonym for a slow person.

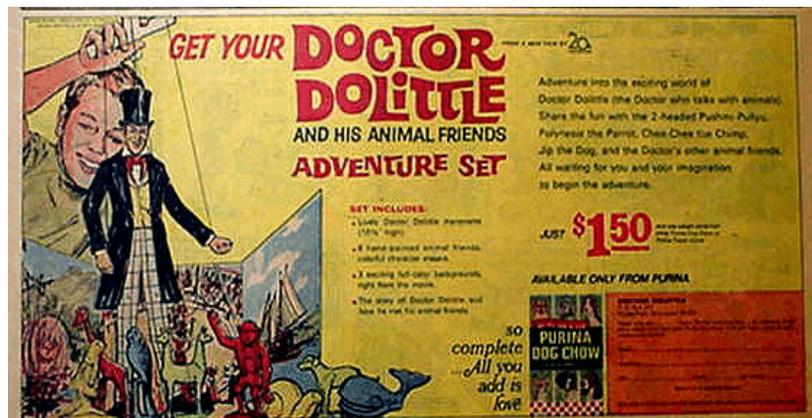
We were allowed to listen to this show sometimes. We obviously couldn't see the dummy but we heard the different voice so it worked fine in our imagination. He was funny, sometimes saying things that made big people laugh that we didn't really understand. But we laughed anyway.

## Dog Food

Dog food was an important commodity in our little world because we had a dog. He ate a lot and we had to buy the stuff with our own money. We bought it in 25 pound paper bags and took it home in a wagon. Mom never drove to the store. That was outrageous. She usually sent us to get what she needed, or walked with us and we pulled the wagon.

We'd put an orange crate in the wagon to have 'side boards" so we could haul more groceries.

This food was powdery and looked like a mixture of corn flour, wheaties and other odds and ends. To make it we measured out 2 cups of the dry mix into a large bowl. Then we measured two cups of almost hot water and poured it into the dog food mix, and stirred it. This created a characteristic smell that I still don't know if



Figure

326 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/newsad26.jpg>

I liked it or not. It wasn't really a bad smell but it was strong, probably revealing something about the original sources.

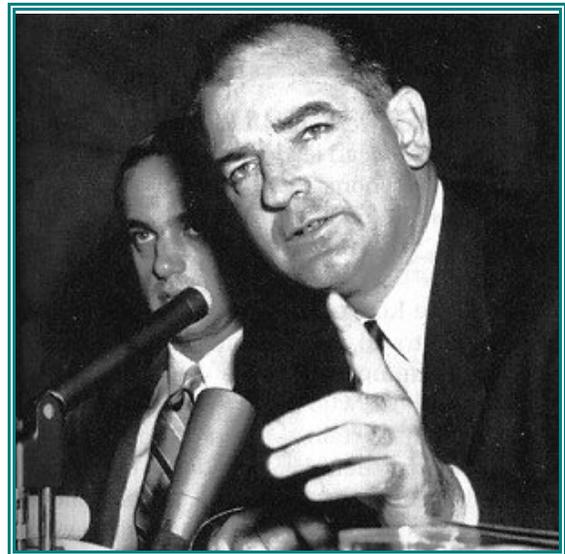
Then we set the bowl out by Kobuk's dog house and left him to eat. He was always hungry and devoured it all immediately. The warmth was especially important in the winter, not because Kobuk deserved warm food, rather because the food wouldn't freeze before Kobuk could finish.

There were different brands of dog food and different prices. Dick and I decided that Kobuk liked this particular brand the best. Because it also happened to be the cheapest. Nice coincidence.

### McCarthyism

I think this was an evil man. His name was Joseph McCarthy and he was one of the most despicable politicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, now that I think about it, I can see that he actually foreshadowed what the media do today, and doubtless taught them how to do it. For reasons that I sure don't know, this McCarthy who was one of the equivocal beings named 'politician' took it upon himself to launch a crusade that obviously attracted the media. Had the media ignored him, he would have not become the prominent thing he was.

His crusade was to root out the communists that had infiltrated our government and compromised our security. His most notorious attack was on Robert Oppenheimer and because of his disgraceful disregard for truth and propriety, McCarthy was able, with the help of Teller and a few others, to permanently destroy Oppenheimer's reputation. In the end, Oppenheimer was determined through trials to be a significant security risk because of his dalliance with a few professed communists in the late 1930's and as a result, he fell into disgrace. That was the



**Figure 327**

<http://www.vw.cc.va.us/vwhansd/HIS122/JoeMcCarthy.jpg>

disgrace.

Here's a quote from

<<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/mccarthyism.html>>:

"Throughout the 1940s and 1950s America was overwhelmed with concerns about the threat of communism growing in Eastern Europe and China. Capitalizing on those concerns, a young Senator named Joseph McCarthy made a public accusation that more than two hundred "card-carrying" communists had infiltrated the United States government. Though eventually his accusations were proven to be untrue, and he was censured by the Senate for unbecoming conduct, his zealous campaigning ushered in one of the most repressive times in 20th-century American politics.

While the House Un-American Activities Committee had been formed in 1938 as an anti-Communist organ, McCarthy's accusations heightened the political tensions of the times. Known as McCarthyism, the paranoid hunt for infiltrators was notoriously difficult on writers and entertainers, many of whom were labeled communist sympathizers and were unable to continue working. Some had their passports taken away, while others were jailed for refusing to give the names of other communists. The trials, which were well publicized, could often destroy a career with a single unsubstantiated accusation. Among those well-known artists accused of communist sympathies or called before the committee were Dashiell Hammett, Waldo Salt, Lillian Hellman, Lena Horne, Paul Robeson, Arthur Miller, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Charlie Chaplin and Group Theatre members Clifford Odets, Elia Kazan, and Stella Adler. In all, three hundred and twenty artists were blacklisted, and for many of them this meant the end of exceptional and promising careers.

During this time there were few in the press willing to stand up against McCarthy and the anti-Communist machine. Among those few were comedian Mort Sahl, and journalist Edward R. Murrow, whose strong criticisms of McCarthy are often cited as playing an important role in his eventual removal from power. By 1954, the fervor had died down and many actors and writers were able to return to work. Though relatively short, these proceedings remain one of the most shameful moments in modern U.S. history."

Unfortunately the media today engage in identical activities but they are able to get away with it - because they are the media. They single out individuals and groups and causes that they don't like and then mercilessly attack and criticize them, ridiculing them until they are diminished or destroyed, all in the name of "truth" that

is an unknown quantity to journalists.

In truth, a few old journalists like Edward R. Murrow did object against McCarthy but as a group, the media was only too glad to report the sensational things McCarthy said and did.

## Recording at Home

Today we make digital recordings of various kinds, DVD, CD, visual, aural, with an ease that is impossible to appreciate. In 1947 a far-sighted company offered a console model radio that included the ability to actually make your own 78 rpms. The same heart tugs were made then that are made today, though the visual styles are different. Family, memories, children, Christmas.

I never saw one of these at work, probably because the circle I moved in was too poor to afford such a thing in Vernal, and Seward simply was not a place that new technology found a place. It was too expensive to ship things to Alaska, and houses were small.

The ad contains no photographs. It is colored drawings, not too accurate, and text with a few "graphics", "cuts" as they were called in the printing industry. Notice also the class of people being teased with this ad. Dad is wearing a white shirt and a tie - apparently on Christmas Morning at home- and everyone was smiling, fully attired, hair combed and happy, without the presents being opened. Most of us wear pajamas or grubbies. I think that was true back then



Figure 328 Recordio

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/adaccess/R/R07/R0708-72dpi.jpeg>

as well but this ad like many represented the "better class" of people. Perhaps they were the only ones with the money to buy stuff like this.

## Halloween

Dick remembered this. One Halloween we left out jackolanterns on the window sill when we went out to trick or treat. Mom must have gone with us because this wouldn't have happened otherwise. When we got home, we discovered that one of the candles had set a curtain on fire which obviously threatened the whole structure. We didn't make many points that night and were doubtless relieved that nothing worse happened.

Mom became concerned about the safety of things we were given so wouldn't allow us to eat apples, donuts or unwrapped candy. I don't know why she had this anxiety but imagine it was based on rumors in the town the some people had done things to harm kids. I don't know a single instance where a kid was hurt so perhaps she was overly protective, but there was also a positive effect of her attitude. We'd come home from going door to door and she'd have us pour our bags of candy into a dish pan. Then we picked out the items that we were allowed to keep and then she'd pass out what was left to the other kids who came to the door. Today I look at this act and begin to suspect ulterior motives in her ruling, i.e. a financially motivated one. And I wonder why she would hand out things to other kids that she thought might be harmful. Ah well, parents are impossible to comprehend. Right?

School had Halloween parties that consisted of some kind of punch and cookies and cupcakes. Moms were allowed to bring anything they made without any concern for the kind of rules that apply today about home-prepared foods. Costumes were allowed if a kid wanted to wear them but we reserved that for the trick-or-treating time in the evening.

## Sleigh Riding

As noted above, Seward sloped down to the ocean everywhere. The point I didn't make, though, was that the slope was severe in many places. That made it hard to ride bicycles home since our house was about as high as it could be, but the upside was being able to use gravity and the steep slope to go down hill. I took this photo from the front porch. It shows Mr. Leonard's Crosley pickup, the Episcopal Church and the bay. Notice just how steep the decline is down to the beach, one long straight shot.



Sleigh riding was naturally a lot of fun on that street. It was one of the best because (A) it was so long, (B) so steep, and (C) so little traveled. Even third avenue one block over had more traffic than Second avenue. So we had a grand time on our sleds in the afternoons and evenings.

As a kid I didn't pay a great deal of attention to the reasons for some of the things in my environment. I noticed them when they impinged on my world but otherwise I didn't think about them. So I don't know why it was that several times in the winter barriers were erected across Second avenue right there in front of the Episcopal Church. The barriers were basically long saw horses painted white which wasn't a good idea in the snow. Small kerosene lamps shaped like bowling balls with a wick on the top were set at the ends of the barrier to warn people and vehicles. The net effect of these barriers was to improve the safety of sledding down Second Avenue because cars didn't go down it. The only cars would be those that came up from down below so we could see them in front of us in plenty of time to stop.

The sleds we used were all American Flyers. Here's one of them in the summer standing against the back wall of the house. Notice all of the debris and garbage hanging about. That was just how it was. Stuff was left lying around just in case it was needed, and no one expected otherwise. Fancy lawns and flowers and shrubs were basically non-existent so we didn't worry about how things looked, just about safety. This particular sled was the longer of the two. We had a neat one that I liked better which was about two thirds the length of this one.

The shorter sled was perfect for doing belly flops to get going fast. When we sat on the top of that hill to go down, we could stand, lean over the sled and run while we pushed it and then after we got going as fast as we could, then jump onto the sled, crushing our bellies. It worked, but if we held the sled in our arms at chest level and ran while in an upright position, we could get going much faster. The downside was that when we finally decided it was time to get the sled down on the ground and mount it, things got tricky. The force of this maneuver on the chest and belly was even more severe so we didn't do it too often, only when there was a girl or parent that we wanted to impress. In that case we'd sort of pray we could pull the maneuver off and just plan on suffering silently from the blow.

Either method was treacherous on the street, however. This was because the roads weren't paved. In the first picture above of the snow you'd think this wouldn't make any difference, but it did. I never wondered why because wondering about the problem was about like wondering why the sun came up. The problem was that small rocks managed somehow to work their way up through the snow. They lay embedded in the snowy/icy surface which was great for traction for car tires, but they were like small concrete blocks to sled runners. You'd hit some of them and stop like you had hit a wall.

Jay Clapp demonstrated that really well. It was during lunch hour while I was attending Mrs. Moore's class in the undercroft of the Episcopal church. Jay, Brent and I all ran home to eat and reappeared with our sleds to take advantage of the remainder of the lunch hour by sledding on the icy road. I had actually stopped



sledding and gone inside when it happened. I became aware of Jay's accident when Mrs. Moore called me outside and asked me to tell her and Father Clapp what had happened. I felt like I was being accused of hurting Jay.

What happened was that Jay, who was a scrawny weak kid who was less athletic than I had been doing one of those acceleration moves. I don't know whether he was doing one of the running belly flops or was simply squatting over his sled while he ran and pushed it. Whichever it was, his runners apparently came to a screaming halt in an instant of high exertion. Jay's body continued, however, and because his hands were still holding the sled, his head arced down to the ground. His face hit some of the gravel and the ice which produced an enormous bloody nose, cut lip, chipped teeth and an equally enormous amount of blubbering.

Jay apparently told Mrs. Moore and his dad that I had been with him, or something to that effect which is why they called me out of the undercroft to interrogate me. But I got the distinct sense that Jay had reported that I was responsible for his nasty fall that took him next door to the Hospital where Dr. Deischer took care of him. I didn't like it that I was falsely accused of having hurt Jay, particularly since I wasn't even outside with him when he did the deed to himself. But everyone knew that I hung out with him so apparently I was guilty by association in this case. In the end, I was let off the hook with some suspicious looks from the adults who could tell I believed I was telling the truth, who did not believe I was. Jay was bandaged and swollen up for a few days and developed nasty purple bruises. But I wasn't the cause. It was his own doing on top of those nasty rocks embedded in the ice.

### Spring Run-off

Winter was long and dark which made springtime particularly welcome. Sunshiney days were like jewels. When we could go outside without coats in the relatively warm air it was like heaven. The roads were all covered with ice about 6 inches thick, built up over the winter from car tires compressing the new snow. Snowplows were used sometimes but never got down to the dirt so the icy layer accumulated over the winter. Springtime was fascinating when the ice started to melt.

The neatest part of the thaw was how ice melted into water and started running in thin sheets at first after which the sheets turned into tiny rivulets.

These rivulets began to etch narrow troughs in the ice and as time passed, the troughs deepened until they reached the dirt road. By this time, there was basically a small river during the daytime running in this channel, which was an invitation to little boys to become civil engineers.

We'd find pieces of wood and rocks and cans, anything we thought could be used to create a dam and haul it all out to the icy road. Calling it a road misrepresents what it was because it was anything but a road. It was simply a sheet of glare ice that lay over the road. We'd plop our stuff down on the ground and then proceed to build little dams to prevent the water from flowing. I don't know why that was so interesting but it was. The water always washed the dams away creating enormous excitement. We'd yell to each other to do this or that to stop the water, as if it were a matter of life or death. It was simply two little boys out in shirt sleeves kneeling on the wet ice in the warm sunshine having a great time.

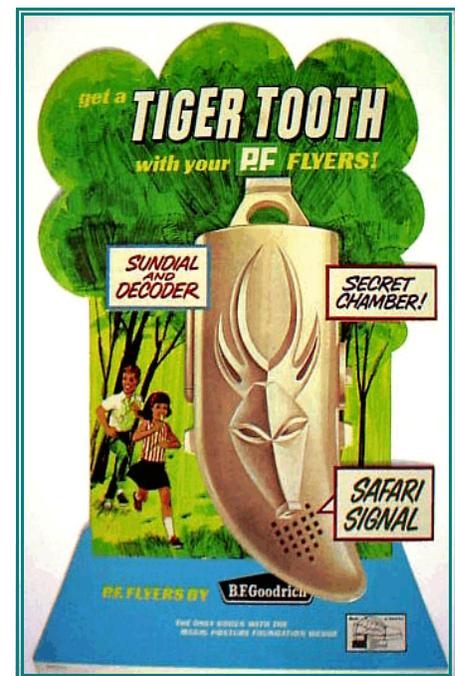
## 14. Sneakers

Sneakers were as big a deal then as they are now, comfortable lightweight foot covers. So companies competed as vigorously with each other then as they do now for this market. The style of shoes, however, was so simple that you can scarcely find it today. These were basically canvas shoes with simple rubber soled and most of them laced up to the ankle. Girls wore a low tennis shoe -that's what all of them were called, "tennis shoes" even though a tennis player wouldn't be caught dead wearing a black lace-up ankle high sneaker- but boys didn't.

One of the most famous brands was "P.F. Flyers." These were made by B.F. Goodrich, naturally, because they specialized in rubber things. These two ads show the kids of gimmicks used then to sell shoes which strikes me as curious because I don't remember that any of you kids bought sneakers in order to get some sort of a



Figure 332 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp14.jpg>



Figure

331 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp1.jpg>

prize. These prizes were sort of like what was advertised on breakfast cereal boxes at the time. Send in a quarter etc. and you'd get the prize.

Red Ball Jets were another famous brand, but mom never bought these. Must have been too expensive. We got Flyers.



Figure 333 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp35.jpg>

## Benzedrine

These things were common when I was a kid. In high school I was aware that kids abused these things to get high. However, I never saw one and had no comprehension about what they did.

The odd historical fact about them is that they are great weight reducers. I don't know what the mechanism through which weight is lost but they were marketed specifically for that purpose. Until the FDA finally banned them in the 1960's or '70's.

One of the interesting historical facts about benzedrine is that airlines used to offer them free to passengers who had trouble with the pain caused by altitude changes.



Figure 334 Benzedrine Inhalers  
[wings.buffalo.edu/aru/](http://wings.buffalo.edu/aru/)

### Smith Brothers, Dentyne, Chiclets

The following composite shows a variety of items that us kids coveted.



Figure 335 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/foodmain.html>

Each one cost a nickel which doesn't sound like much but it was. Dentyne and Chiclets were part of your childhood, in about this form I expect but the Fizzies and the Smith Brother's cough drops are gone. The black Smith Brothers was probably my favorite out of this bunch, a licorice flavored cough drop. These drops were sealed inside in a waxed paper package to keep them from absorbing humidity and

sticking together. The small boxes of two Chiclets would have been my favorite.

### Heels and Hose

Things were much more discreet in that era, and panty hose didn't exist but lingerie was as widely advertised as it is today. Instead of panty hose, there were garter belts, nylons with seams, with fluffy petticoats, full skirts, and fancy heels. This image is interesting because it taken of the legs only, amongst a bunch of chair legs. Within the context of today's show-it-all world, this is dowdy and puritanical and would not be used to advertise hose, or heels though it might possibly be used to advertize chairs.



Figure 336

<http://www.pettipond.com/du pont.jpg>

### No seam nylons

This was the next step in the development of "nylons" as they were always called, seamless hose. Hanes was one of the leaders even then. This ad is more risqué than the preceding one with its suggestive quality, but it is mild by today's standards. I keep mentioning that because I am still amazed at how profoundly values have shifted during my life.

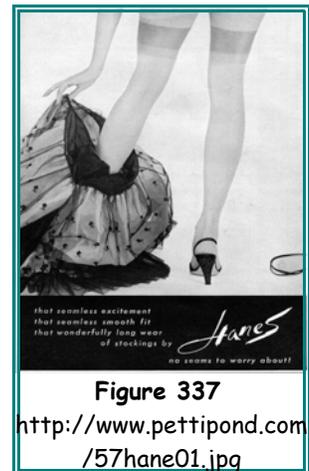


Figure 337

<http://www.pettipond.com/57hane01.jpg>

## Mum deodorant

**D**eodorant is actually a fairly new development. I don't really know when this product was first developed marketed widely but based on my own experience with deodorants in my own life on farms in Utah, with longshoremen in Seward and urbanites in Boston. Natural personal odors were pretty common even in Boston. I remember a dance in Belmont where I danced with a girl who wore a strapless dress -in ballroom position- which meant that her arms were up on my shoulder and hand. So the emanations from her underarms suffused the air. I gagged. She was a field hockey player who needed a shower badly but rather than do that, she just rubbed on a thick layer of a deodorant. The combination was worse than the smell of a pig pen because it was so personal. I didn't ask her a second time. Yes, I was well aware of body odors and the benefit of deodorants and showers and soap.

I think that men and women probably used colognes and after shave lotion to some degree to mask odors, but it was pretty difficult when the clothes smelled stale and the body hadn't been bathed for a week. In my own life in Vernal, I know that my folks only bathed once a week and that dad didn't use a deodorant at all. Mom did.

She used this "Mum" stuff. It came in a small milk glass jar with a wide mouth, closed with a metal lid. I don't imagine it could have held more than a quarter cup of product as you can see in this image of two teenage girls. It was a white paste that one applied with fingers and had an astringent quality if you tasted it - as I did. I tasted lots of things because I learned from dad that tasting new substances revealed interesting things about them. As long as you only taste it on the tip of your tongue, you can even taste harmful stuff for the most part though I don't recommend it if you don't have any clue about it because tasting a sulphuric



Figure 338 <http://www.pettipond.com/mum.jpg>

acid solution will cause a pretty nasty burn.

The next step in the development in deodorant products was the stick version. This was initially a hardened whitish paste but later was supplemented with a clear gel, a most amazing development. I started to be aware of deodorants in Seward before we left and wondered whether I needed to start using it. The next version was the spray. The first one I encountered was Right Guard in 1960 when I went to BYU. Some Californian had the fancy little red and black can of deodorant that all of us wanted to borrow because it smelled so good, and was such a clever idea. He didn't lend it, however.

### Niagara Starch

Up to the time we moved to Boston, mom cooked up her own starch solution to use when she did the laundry. She used plain old starch in a pan of water and after it had thickened, she poured it gradually into a tub of water, stirring vigorously to mix it in. Then she would dip the wet clothes in the solution, wring them out and hang them to dry. Then when she dampened them and ironed them, they were starched.

It was pretty neat for mom to be able to buy a powder that she could just mix with water. Later she could even buy premade liquid starch. The development of spray cans was in the future, however.

### Coke



Spring! Fashion shows! My, how good grooming shows up! But popular girls know they are always on a fashion runway... at school, home, church, everywhere. And they always use Instant Niagara Laundry Starch to keep starchable petticoats crisp and smooth! Wear one petticoat or six—you'll have more fun—feel more confident—if you use Niagara starch.

*Instant Niagara Laundry starch*

- keeps cotton petticoats like new—crisp and smooth to touch
- makes all starchable petticoats stay clean longer—wash with greater ease
- never causes white streaks or spots—colors stay fresh and clear
- makes petticoat ironing easy—prolongs the "ironed look"
- stiffens nylon petticoats—machine or line dried

Instant Niagara Laundry Starch is a trademark of Corn Products Refining Company, New York

JANE ASHLEY, Home Service Dept. 4  
Box 1026, Church Street Bldg.  
New York 42, N. Y.

Dear Jane Ashley: Please send me, free, a copy of  
TIMELY STARCHING TIPS FOR TEEN-AGERS.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET OR ROUTE \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 339

[http://www.pettipond.com/lateimages/images\\_m/niagara.jpg](http://www.pettipond.com/lateimages/images_m/niagara.jpg)

## 15. William H. Seward School

12 grades. In one building. Mr. Frampton was the principal, father of my good friend Clayton. I cannot find a single photo of the school in dad's collection which is obviously a reflection of his lack of interest in it. I mean that literally. He had no interest at all in my school or schooling at any time in my life. Even college was of little interest to him. The only image I could find that showed even part of the school was this one that I took of a WW II Quonset hut, probably in its original location on the "east side of town" -sort of a fancy way to refer to a town that was 8 blocks wide! That's the school there in the background on the right side



of the photo, the second story and roof line showing. The belt of evergreens is the bench that runs along the bottom of Mt. Marathon. I can't tell if clouds had obscured Marathon down to that level or whether it was simply the flat light that created that effect.

This photo is wonderful for the way it shows what the scruffy town was like and what the weather was like most of time, gray and dark and wet. That is how I remember Seward. Indoors we were dry and warm enough but outside was a different story. But it's important to point out that I did not find the weather oppressive or unusual. It was simply my reality, just like dry summers were my reality in Vernal. Kids don't think about what the weather is like, what it means, how it affects their attitude and emotions. The total effect of weather on me was its

effect on my outdoor life but even 'bad' weather didn't bottle me up completely, just required that I dress warmly, or dress to keep from getting wet. When I went out in bad conditions, I just counted on getting wet or cold, knowing that I'd dry out or warm up later.

This is Mary Barry's image of the school. Too bad that the image I have to



work with is a low grade offset image. The pattern of dots in the original is magnified in this scan.

This photo is looking south along unpaved 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue which has no sidewalks at all, which is the main street that runs on down through the center of town to the bay in the distance. You can see from the slope of the road that the peak of the alluvial fan is right there almost directly in front of the school. The dark mountain on the right side is Little Bear and the whitish mountain above Little Bear is Big Bear Mountain. The school was a large building of two stories with a "basement" that was half out of the ground on this side. On the other side of the school, due to the steep slope up to the right of this photo, the basement really was a basement. The main entrance of the school is the covered porch affair there. There was a back entrance but it didn't have the canopy. The one-story building on this end is the

gymnasium that served as a multipurpose space for basketball games, plays, parties, and celebrations of any kind in the community that required a large amount of space.

The school building had a wide hallway running lengthwise, creating two rows on rooms on the outside. As you walked inside this entrance, the main door, "The Office" was on the left side. That's where you'd find Mr. Frampton - if you were so foolish as to want to see him. The top floor was for the upperclassmen while the first floor was for the rest of us. If my memory is accurate, there was actually a one story addition on the far side of the school which was also devoted to the lower grades. The basement was divided into the restrooms, one for each gender, the woodworking shop, and the cafeteria.

Note that there is no grass, no shrubs, no trees. That's how it was. There were no concrete sidewalks, no concrete play slabs outside, just a few teeter-totters on the south side, a jungle gym, and a merry-go-round affair that kids always got hurt on.

### Mr. Watts Fights with a Student

## Trojan Balloons

Growing up to be an adult is a treacherous undertaking that none of us can either control or opt out of. Of all the aspects of human life we each deal with as we are trained and grow, gender issues are the most difficult to comprehend, particularly since the kids' antennae register powerful upsetting confusing fearful emotional signals from the adults who are demonstrating their own anxiety and discomfort with whatever embarrassing gender issue has unexpectedly surfaced. I was in the Fifth grade when I saw, though I didn't understand, a vivid public display of adult anxiety about a sexually-related matter. Though I doubt that most of us kids had a clue about what was going on. Actually most of us were envious of the kids who were having innocent fun. Until it happened.

We were having lunch in the classroom because it was too cold and snowy to go outside. The teacher didn't anticipate what was going to happen. Two boys went into the supply closet like they were going to get construction paper or glue to make something, a usual sort of occurrence during these indoor lunches. No one paid much attention, including the teacher. Until a small balloon bounced out of the closet to rest on the floor by the door. 'What a nice little balloon! I want one!', was our reaction. We were all envious. Then another came out and a kid picked it up and started to play with it, so some of us went to the closet to see where those kids were getting balloons because we didn't think the supply closet had that sort of celebratory toy.

What we saw were the most bizarre balloons we had ever seen. They came in little individual envelopes and looked like rubber donuts that you had to sort of twist open and then blow up with difficulty because there was no mouth piece to hold onto like most balloons have. And the tying was just as difficult because the balloon was so soft and floppy. Such strange, clear, little balloons.

It must have been about the time these balloons were being thrown around in the room that the teacher made her move. She must have been simultaneously mortified and horrified and paralyzed. This was around 1953. She disappeared, but us kids didn't have a clue that she was going where she went. If we thought about it at all, we were glad she left, or we thought she was just going to the bathroom, like we did during lunchtime. Instead, she went to "The Office." If we'd known that, every kid would have had their coat on and been outside in 60 seconds.

In a few minutes she returned, walking behind a red-faced, angry, Mr.

Frampton who was striding heavily, quickly, and angrily toward the supply closet. In his suit, white shirt and tie, which he always wore, such an odd thing in Seward where us kids wore Levi's and hip boots to school. Mr. Frampton had a bad temper so all of us kids tended to shy away from him even when he tried to be nice. You avoid the wolf even if it smiles. Without any introduction, he started in on the two little kids who were cornered and couldn't get away while he stood in the door. I don't think they even knew what they had. He was oblivious to the rest of us, and a string of angry questions and invective flowed without any time for the poor kids to answer, "Where did you get these? What are you doing? Why are you doing this? Give me those! I'm going to report you to your parents!"

At this point, what seemed like an innocent game started by these little kids became something very nasty. How did we know it was nasty? It's hard to really say because no words were spoken that would specifically convey that meaning. But the sheer magnitude of Mr. Frampton's anger about something as innocent as balloons signaled that a abnormally bright line had been crossed somehow by those boys. Even fist fights and bloody noses didn't provoke this terrible invective. We all knew those kids had not done anything on purpose to call down the wrath of god, but there it was, so we were all now in a minefield where we didn't even understand what the mines were. We knew each one of us that not a single one of us was going to ask a question or make a comment. We studiously looked away, or read our books or stared out the window while the slaughter concluded. Wondering what in the heck just happened? What did we just witness, knowing that it was profound, but clueless about what it was, fascinated and horrified at the same time.

Mr. Frampton tried to maintain his dignity while he angrily gathered the balloons that bounced away from him each time he grabbed at them. He finally collected them all and put them into a paper sack with the wrappings and the box they came in. The name on the box was "Trojan".

### Miss Wilkinson and Spelling Bees

I'd never heard of "spelling bees". I was just a dumb kid from Vernal who didn't know they could. (I'm not sorry.)

Turned out I was about the best-est spelled in the mob. Know how I knew? We had spelling bees! Plus we had weekly spelling tests. 25 new words each and

every week and as sure as god made little green apricots, there was a spelling test on Friday. Barring Easter and Christmas breaks.

On Monday Miss Wilkinson would announce after lunch, "OK, children, take out your note books. I'm going to give your spelling words for the week." That was our cue to get dry mouths, shaky hands that had resolved over the weekend. Then she would give us the 25 new words for the week. Always 25. We wrote them in our pads of wide-lined foolscap. The words were presented in a rigid, inflexible formula. She would say the word once, exaggerating its pronunciation to be sure we heard all of the syllables. Then she would spell the word carefully, sometimes pointing out something important, like "e before i or i before e". After she had spelled it clearly, she would use the word in a sentence that she would repeat one time, then she would say the word again and spell it again:

"Wagon. W-a-g-o-n. 'The farmer put hay in a wagon'" Wagon. W-a-g-o-n."

After she had given us our 25 new words she would always ask if anyone had a question. I don't recall that many kids had questions, perhaps because she intimidated us, perhaps because she did such a good job of spelling the word and using it in a sentence to show its meaning, that there was no reason for anyone to have questions. After she had given us our new words on Monday, she didn't talk much about spelling during the week except to remind us that the spelling test would be Friday after lunch. Not unless one of us wanted to ask her a question about a word. She was always polite and careful when she answered questions so you knew you could ask her if you could work up the courage because even though you knew she was a good person, she had a sober countenance. I don't remember any laughter in her class, but in fairness, I have to point out that I don't recall it being actually frightening either. Just a middle of the road experience with a good teacher who brooked no nonsense and one who actually loved kids and cared that they learn.

The book end for the week was the Friday-after-lunch test. Miss Wilkinson would announce, "OK students. Time for your spelling test. Take out your spelling notebooks." There was a spiral-bound notebook manufactured specifically for spelling ordeals. It was about half the width of an 8 ½ inch wide page and 11 inches long, with a heavy cardboard cover, front and back, with perhaps 50 sheets of paper, wide-lined for the weekly trials. We had to have this kind of notebook to take the tests. If we didn't, we had to explain to Miss Wilkinson why we didn't have one and it better not be that we lost it or that we forgot it or that the dog ate it. Nope,

only poverty would excuse us in which case she would make sure after class that the needy kid got his spelling notebook. She was an odd mixture of the severe school marm with her long salt and pepper hair wound up around the back of her head in a Scandinavian braid, and a softy who took care of kids who really needed it.

After we all had pencils at the ready, she would systematically and methodically as a metronome (one of the spelling words) administer the test. No kidding. It was sort of like an induction physical, except it was every week. She followed a rigid formula again. She would say the word, then use it in a sentence, and then say the word again.

"Super.

I have a super headache.

Super."

She would then pause for perhaps 10 seconds so the class dummies -of which there were several varieties, scratched their heads, looked out the windows, touched the tip of their tongues with the tip of their pencils, frowned or scowled whichever suited their feeling at the moment, glanced surreptitiously (another of them words) at their neighbor but looked back with alacrity (another of them words) before Miss Wilkinson caught him doing it because sure as shooting she would shoot any kid who she caught cheating.

Man alive, it was like Moses coming down off the mountain when she caught a kid cheating. She stormed up out of her chair behind her desk and nearly ran to the malcreant (another of them words) at which point she said "Mr. Thompson. You are cheating. I have warned you. Give me your notebook." At which time the red-faced Mr. Thompson -this was in the days when kids still could be embarrassed at being caught- meekly handed up his notebook and Miss Wilkinson angrily ripped this week's test out of the book and told him, "You will get a zero for this test. And don't ever let me catch you cheating again. I will send you to the principal next time."

That, too, was something us kids in those days could be frightened with, being sent to the principal, particularly this one, Mr. Frampton. He made Miss Wilkinson seem Sweet and Mild even in her anger. When he was angry, he was like Vulcan when he smote a smoking molten iron rod on an anvil with his Hammer, flakes of flashing burning metal flying every which way. Don't get sent to the principal. He didn't usually strike kids but he did, in fact, have a heavy wooden paddle that he would use

on certain occasions, so there was real reason to fear him. Looking back, I don't have a problem with corporal punishment. Guess that's because I don't have a problem with capital punishment. It's a powerful deterrent and we could use a little bit of it today, wouldn't you say?

Miss Wilkinson wasn't a tall woman, perhaps 5 foot 4, a bit taller than mom, though the difference may have been the piled-up hair, and she seemed ancient not just because she was older but because she seemed to have a lot of wrinkles on her face and neck which our moms didn't. The most distinctive, and bothersome aspect of her person, was her breath. Either from coffee or cigarettes, or both, her breath would curl your hair. That tended to keep me at a distance.

Miss Wilkinson lived alone in an apartment on the second floor of the apartment across the street from the post office. I would think of her over there sometimes when I went down to get the mail, but I never would have dared go visit her. There was an occasion when I did visit her in that apartment so I got to see in it. For some reason mom had to go there and she took me with her, probably to drop off a present for Christmas or something like that. Mom appreciated good teachers and did offer gifts to them up there, though in Boston that never happened because it was a different ball game for many reasons.



Figure 343 Miss Wilkinson's apartment building in 2003

I wondered about her living alone, how it must be to live there without family. But I knew that she had friends that she visited with and did things with like go out in the country side sightseeing. I don't know if she was ever married and haven't a clue about where she went. I noted with a bit of sadness that in Mary Barry's book about this era in Seward that when she listed the school teachers, she left out Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Watts and the two Mrs. Connelys.

The building to the right of Miss Wilkinson's building is the Oddfellow's hall

where Andy's Army-Navy Surplus store was located. It's all wrong in this image because it's got shingles and is now missing the large display windows.

### School in the Methodist Church

The population of the town was only 2,000 so there really weren't a lot of kids but there were more than the school could hold. The school had been built in the 1920's to hold all twelve grades. But the 1950's saw the first bulge of post-war babies and the school could no longer hold all of us. New teachers had to be found, and new locations had to be arranged.

The baby boom was a new and unexpected phenomenon so no one had taken steps to deal with the additional number of students that seemed to suddenly appear. But they were there and Seward was legally bound to provide them an education - though a large number of us would have been more than willing to sit it out.

(Did you know that I am not a baby boomer? I was born before the US even entered the war and the boomers are the kids born after the war after their daddies came home. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was 12-07-1941, and I was born in March 1942. )

Over the next few years the town fathers, territorial government and the feds cobbled together enough dough to spring for a new high school which really was needed and which decompressed the original building. Meantime, however, something had to be done to get the kids into classrooms. The obvious -and only- solution in this tiny community was to find a sufficient number of sufficiently large rooms in the community that could be used during the week to stable a gaggle of kids and a teacher.

I remember three off-site locations because Dick attended one of them and I attended the other two:

- 1 - The Episcopal Church Undercroft**
- 2 - The Methodist Church basement, and**
- 3 - The Oddfellow's Hall, a second story location.**

There may have been other locations but these are the only ones I remember.



## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade & Episcopal Undercroft

The Episcopal church was just a few houses down the street from our home on



the same side of the street. I attended school there for my 5th grade. It was sufficiently large to hold 25 kids who you can see in the adjoining class picture. This is a 2003 image that is accurate except for the addition of an enclosed porch. There were originally steps leading directly in to the church as in the following photo of the entire class with the teacher, Mrs. Moore.

Mrs. Moore was the teacher, a somewhat overweight, clinically depressed looking person who carried the burden of teaching like an anvil on her shoulders. For



good reason, no doubt. There are two significant memories of that year, one involved Dien Bien Phu, the other her method for retrieving stolen money. I thank her deeply for the former because it enriched my understanding of the damnable goings-on in South East Asia in the next 15 years.

As noted variously, ALL of us kids were well aware of WW II and of the Bombs (plural now since the Big One had also been experimentally detonated in 1951, making the atom bombs puny by comparison) and of the Korean "War" -as we called it in our unsophisticated (but accurate) way of viewing the world. It's worth noting that the movies of the time were often war-related. And one of the characteristics of movies in those days was the 5-10 minute "Newsreel" that frequently had clips of war-related items. So war was very much in our minds.

But we had never heard of Dien Bien Phu or French Indo-China. But for reasons I don't know today, but wish I did, the French who had occupied that region of South-East Asia were decisively beaten in 1954, and here's the point: Mrs. Moore read the newspaper story to us. That is my first memory of Viet Nam, and an ominous one it turned out to be.

The corrupt family -3 brothers in particular- who had joined with the French in subjugating the populace were overthrown. It was less the fact of the reason for the war and overthrow of a corrupt government, than for the manner of the overthrow, and the agent who accomplished. An insurgent guerilla army led by a man named Ho Chi Minh used tactics effectively to defeat the more professional, well-equipped French.

That was the man and the method of warfare that defeated the mighty US 18 years later.

I do remember Mrs. Moore reading other newspaper articles to us as a way to (A) kill time and (B) acquaint us with "Current Events". She succeeded in that, more perhaps than she could have imagined. It amazes me that this seemingly insignificant event in a land I had never heard of while the larger closer-to-home Korean War was winding down would stick in my memory simply because this teacher read an article and tried to explain why the event was important. Even after I started hearing of the Vietnamese problem in the mid-1960's it did not click in my memory that this was the same country and war and general until I heard the connection on a newscast one day. Then the pieces clicked into place. Thank you, Mrs. Moore.



There was a problem, however, that she dealt with poorly. Her method makes me wonder if she had children of her own because it was so inappropriate. First you have to understand the layout of the undercroft. It was a large empty room that was decorated by school desks in rows. Around the walls were blackboards, charts, maps and pictures. On each end was a short set of stairs that led out of the basement, and on the north side was a single bathroom inside of a large cloak room.

What happened this particular day was that someone had brought a large sum of money to school and during the morning discovered that it was missing. His or her conclusion was that one of us kids had gone into the cloak room and ransacked the pocket of the outercoat where the dough was housed. This person reported the theft to Mrs. Moore who was aghast at such behavior from us kids. So she swore to find the miscreant and punish him/her. But her method was bizarre.

She decided that the best way to recover the money was to have us individually do something that she apparently thought would give the robber enough cover that s/he would cough up the moola. She said that we would all sit in our places and that we would each go into the bathroom, shut the door, and then come back to our chair. We would follow each other until all of us had done this. At that time, she would go into the bathroom and find the money and return it to its owner.

Well, we sat there listening politely but we all saw the flaw in this process. In the end, in spite of wasting 5 minutes, the money didn't show up. She criticized us a bit and told us she was ashamed of us and so on and we all listened patiently. But us kids weren't really sure that the original sin was the only sin. We speculated - privately to be sure- that the robber just may have deposited his/her swag in the designated spot and returned to his/her chair and that one of the next kids checked the designated spot, found the loot, and liberated it again, and since that kid didn't have to go back to the bathroom again, s/he didn't have to return the money. I still don't know who stole it but I know her method was ineffective.

### Mr. Berg, Music Man

This man was an original who seemed out of place somehow. He came to town to replace a lady music teacher who I liked a great deal, so perhaps in my book he already had a strike against him. Teachers one can like are so rare that they are treasures, aren't they. She was, although I can't remember her name but I'll tell you about her next.

Of course, Lady Music Teacher had a leg up on any other kind of teacher because of the subject. I suppose one might argue that it was my own personal dad who did the deed, who set me up to be susceptible to someone who would teach me about music. That would persuade me. Truly.

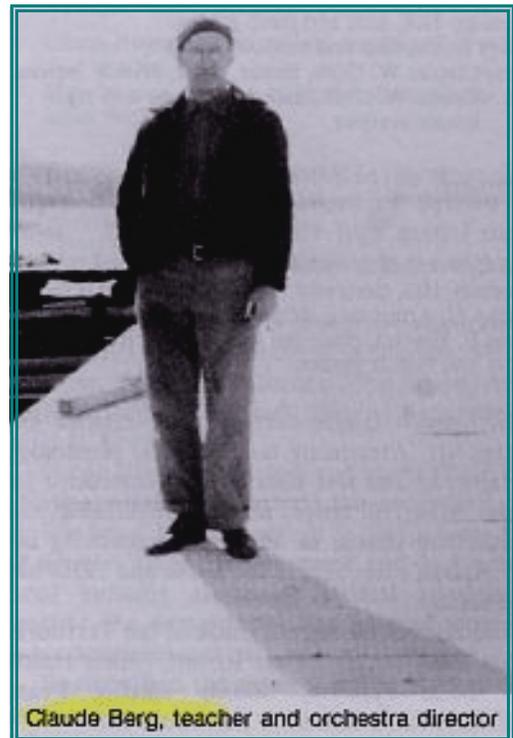
But having admitted that aspect of the music classes, I will still point out that Mr. Berg didn't make the grade. He was more irritating than inspiring. But once more I have to offer another thing in his defense. When he came to the Episcopal Church Undercroft, he had no source of music. Lady Music Teacher (LTM) had a real piano. So how did he make a melody to teach us the melody of new songs he wanted to teach us? A violin. A plain old violin in a case, which had just been outside in the cold so needed tuning and didn't stay tuned. Further, he came in freezing

from the outside while LMT was warm and toasty inside already. LMT had a record player and records that she could play to (A) entertain us and (B) teach us. He had nothing like that. Finally, LMT had her own classroom set up with pictures -that she had acquired over some years- on the walls about music, composers and so on while the Undercroft had no such resources. There was a huge number of differences that are coming into focus as I go through this exercise. See, an old man can figure some things out.

But still.....poor Mr. Berg had two intertwined personal habits that dis-endearred him to us kids. First, he got angry at us, really angry. LMT did too, but somehow she had a way about her that controlled us when we got rowdy and noisy. She was probably someone's mom so had learned the ropes at home and knew what to say and do to handle us but Mr. Berg had none of those skills. He would speak kindly to us and ask us to please be quiet and listen, and he'd maintain his cool during several attempts to settle us down. In the end, he blew up. He got very angry at us, got red in the face and was so angry that he couldn't think straight. Even us kids could see that and unfortunately more than one kid figured out how to push his buttons on purpose to get him in that state. And second, when he got into that state, dressed in his suit, white shirt and tie, holding his violin in one hand and bow in the other, he'd wave that bow at us and yell.

While flecks of white foam sat in the corners of his mouth, breaking loose occasionally.

Mr. Berg did run the music program well I think after all, particularly within to limitations he was saddled with. There is a program for the 1954 Christmas Program below that shows you what he did which was an accomplishment, particularly considering these resources. He apparently dropped the suit and tie and adapted to the environment later as shown by this photo from Mary Barry's book.



Claude Berg, teacher and orchestra director

## Lady Music Teacher

I don't remember her name, I can scarcely recall her face but she had as much impact on me as a teacher as any individual teacher did during my 12 years of hard labor cracking rocks in the yard. I'll show you what I mean:

- A. Grofe, "On the Trail"
- B> Grieg, "Hall of the Mountain King" and someone's "Dance"
- C. Thunderstorm in 4<sup>th</sup> movement of Beethoven's 6<sup>th</sup> (Pastoral Symphony)
- D. Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" (4<sup>th</sup> movement of 9<sup>th</sup>)
- E. "The Glendy Burke"
- F. Etc.

Those are specific things I can remember about her class today, Sept. 14, 2003 at least 50 years later. Don't ask me if I can remember that many specific things that I learned from any other teachers there - even Miss Wilkinson whom I really did like didn't make such an impression.

LMT had a way of making things understandable and interesting. You have to admit that it is a difficult task to help a 4<sup>th</sup> grade kid who's 10 years old understand that concept that a piece of classical -gag- music is expressing a visual image or any kind of image. For example, if you play a Debussy piece for kids that age and tell them that it portrays sunlight through trees or on the surface of a lake, the kids will just get a blank stare. But she didn't go to such difficult places for her purposes.

Her first example of music telling a story was Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite. I had no concept of a 'suite' and I don't think she bothered explaining the term but she did use the proper name of the composition. I was familiar with the Grand Canyon so had that benefit when starting. Then she said that Grofe was telling stories with the different parts of the composition and the one she used was "On the trail". She explained how people made the trip up and down the canyon on donkeys or burros and explained that they had to start early to get down and back in one day. And on the way, early in the morning, they would be up before the sun, so

as they descended they would be able to see the sun rise. Then she played "On the Trail" and as the situation progressed, she'd call it out over the music to help us understand what the music was expressing. I understood it.

Grieg was equally vivid. I was in love with folklore and myths and was reading anything I could find about Norse Mythology so I was prepared in that sense for Grieg. When LMT described the "Hall of the Mountain King" I had an already-formed image to fall back on and when she played the music, the two fit together.

Her classes were generally divided into two parts. One part it that just described where she explained things about music and illustrated them with music from records. Of course, these were the old 78 RPM records so they only lasted 2 minutes. The other part of the class was singing. Her class room had 3 rows of chair that didn't have arms, that faced the black board in the front where her piano sat. She'd pass out song books to us kids, knowing that if we had them in hand while she needed our attention that she'd not get it.

Then she'd tell us to turn to page such and such and if it was a familiar song she'd just start us together with her piano and sing all of the verses. If it was a new song, she'd sing the song herself while she played the melody by itself. She'd do this several times emphasizing whatever points she felt we needed. Then she'd play the melody while we all tried it with her. After we had learned it she'd add the other parts.

Amongst the song in that book were American folk songs, Stephen Foster, and Burl Ives kind of songs. I loved them. Some of them always created humor and some kids got carried away, exaggerating the words with their faces and mouths, as in the "Camptown Ladies". One song I liked in particular was the "Glendy Burke". This song was about a tugboat with that name on the Mississippi River, moving barges up and down. I still remember some of it:

"Oh, the Glendy Burke is a might fine boat  
With a might fine captain, too.  
He sits up there on the hurricane roof  
For to keep an eye on the crew.

Chorus:

Ho for Louisiana, I'm bound to leave this town,  
I'll take my duds and I'll tote'em on my back

When the Glendy Burke comes down."

There were 4 or 5 verses. I'd sit by Brent and Clayton and we'd ornament the performance with "toot toot" syncopated at the right places. LMT didn't mind, oddly enough. I suppose that's because she could tell we were enjoying the music and as long as we weren't disruptive, she let it go, perhaps even enjoyed it herself though she'd never let on.

### Mrs. Connolly, Jr. and the Methodist Church

The Methodist pastor, Reverend Malin, was a rosy cheeked do-gooder from the "lower 48", from "the outside", who always grinned an ivory-toothed grin and seemed always in the winter to wear this ridiculous fluffy red fake fur hat -that the sourdoughs wouldn't be caught dead in- I guess to show his solidarity with the folk or to dramatize his realization that he was roughing it in the wild with his little band of believers. Anyway, he was nice and allowed the town to use the basement of his little white church -a real basement, not an "undercroft" as it was over at Father Clapp's Episcopal church. It -the church with the basement- was located about 2 blocks from my house so it was a quick commute each morning. It was close enough to home that I could skip over and get a bite before I had to be back in class which was better than a sack lunch.

For the record, in those days lunch boxes that kids took to school were just like our dads' lunch boxes, the largish domed black metal boxes with a handle along the top, inside of which was a real thermos bottle that carried whatever moms could find to put in them that morning. Pretty funny looking to see a second grader lugging one of these to school - needed a wagon - or a pack mule. Paper bags were used a lot for this reason - and were re-used, too. Sometimes the bags were small grocery sacks, not the neat little lunch sacks made for the purpose.

In the bottom of the lunch pail or sack was a sandwich, a boiled eggs, or some carrots, perhaps a plastic container of something like pie or a few cookies, and apple or on really special days a candy bar. We'd go to the cafeteria or lunchroom and sit on benches along the tables, put our huge lunch boxes on the tables, tip the lid back and then practically fall inside while we peered in to see what was there. Eating was serious business so kids ate and then went outside to finish the recess. It was much later that the pretty silk-screened boxes with designs of cartoon characters and flowers made their appearance. Perhaps there were already in place in the "lower 48" but we didn't see them in Seward.

The teacher when we did our tour of duty in the Methodist Church Basement was a young Mrs. Connolly. The original Mrs. Connolly was a middle-aged art teacher, the mother-in-law of Junior. I sort of liked Senior basically but she made me feel very bad and I'll tell you about that later. Her son married a woman who was named Mrs. Connolly, at least after the marriage, and I call her "junior". This younger woman was pressed into service as a teacher in Seward I think when I look back

from the vantage point of my adulthood who also did a heck of a lot of teaching.

Mrs. C. Jr. was young, not that disqualifies her from teaching. But there was a greenness, and unpreparedness, and inability to cope with the normal stresses of classes that suggest that she really wasn't qualified or trained for the job. In those days I am sure that there was no requirement for even a teaching certificate of even college education. What would you do in a berg like Seward if you had those rules? You wouldn't find teachers, and with the baby boomer bulge someone had to be thrown into the breach. And this poor young woman was thrown in. And it showed.

She tried mightily to teach and she tried to control behavior in the classroom but basically could not. She'd get angry and out of control and just didn't have a great sense of appropriate handling of kids. On one occasion in the classroom, not out on the playground, something was going on with kids moving around the classroom. She had been trying to get us to do something, like maybe go sit down, and finally reached her limit. In a burst of ill-advised bravado, this 5 foot 4 inch 100 pound lady swarmed over a little kid, grabbed him and threw him up over her shoulder in a fireman's carry. The kid was so shocked that he didn't resist, else he would have knocked her down. She paraded him across the front of the room to show that she could in fact control kids.

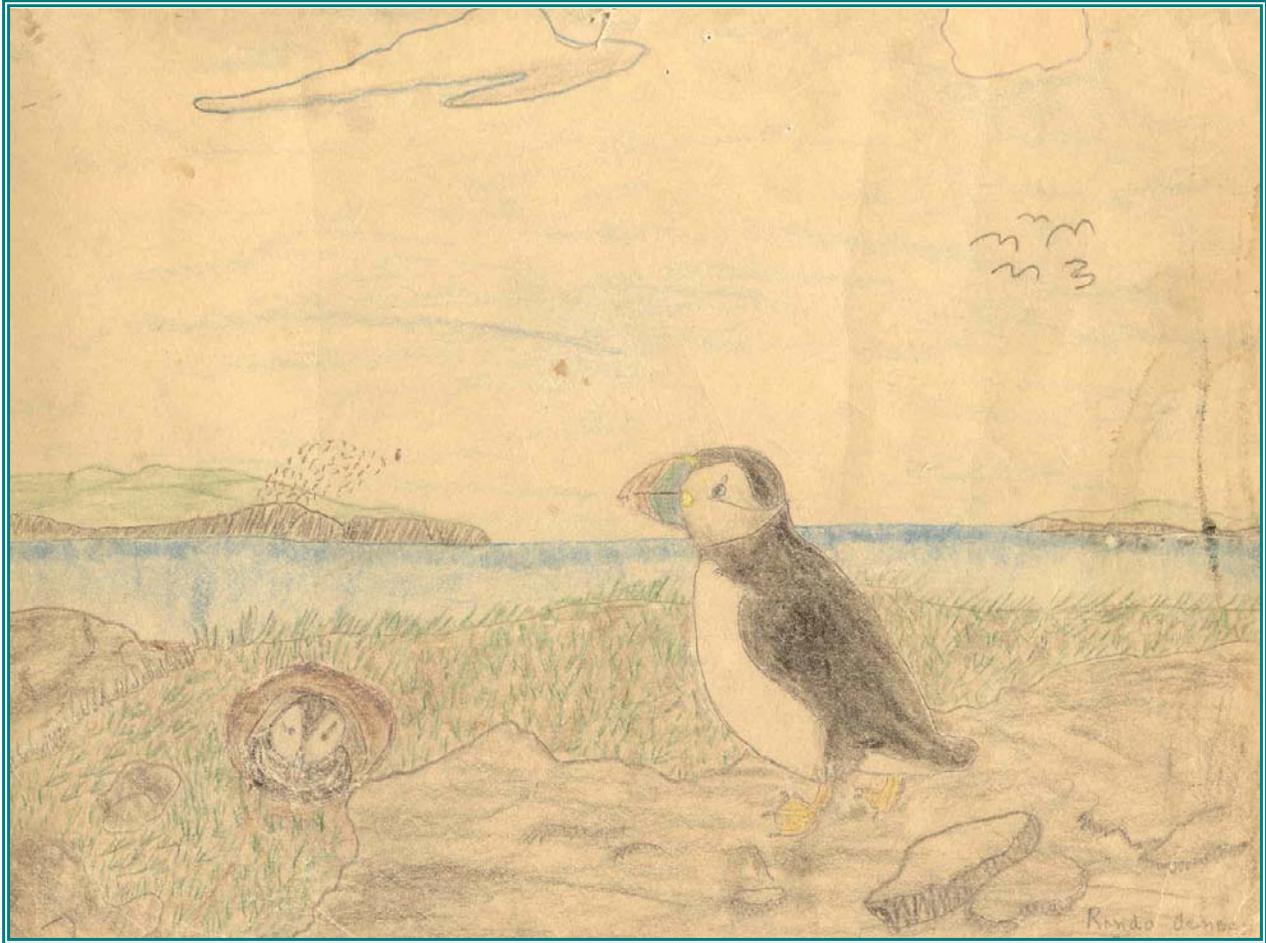
But she couldn't. The year was a waste as far as learning went. Teachers like Miss Wilkinson and Mr. Watts could control the kids, who were basically good kids who just got the bit between their teeth if they could, and even managed to pour some information into them. My year doing time with Junior was a waste overall. I did feel sorry for her but not enough that it really made a difference in my sense of her. An insecure kid is not likely to focus on the trials and travails of an incompetent adult who is harshly managing him.

### Mrs. Connolly, Puffins, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Mrs. Connolly came to Seward full of herself and her artiness. She did end up teaching art at the school and probably got her fill of us kids. She was one of these teachers who had pets. And goats I guess you'd call the opposite. Her pets could do no wrong and were allowed many privileges that the rest of us were not allowed to have, although she made it appear that we didn't get the privilege simply because the

timing was wrong. In fact, any time was wrong for certain kids.

I think I'll just scan in the actual picture because I have carted it around all these years. See, there it is. That is the topic of this story.



**Figure 348 Puffins a la Audobon**

The pet that I resented the most was an Indian kid, some sort of racial mixture of which there many varieties what with the native people and the wide variety of sailors from all over the world who passed through these little towns. As a kid this kid was actually OK. I liked him and got along with him, sort of low-slung Hispanic-looking kid with wavy black hair and pupil-less eyes, who was probably pretty badly damaged I guess today looking back at him - he rarely spoke, rarely smiled, was a loner, slouched against the wall, smoked and was tough in an authentic

silent James Dean sort of way.

For some reason Mrs. Connolly decided to adopt him as her cause I guess, though it may have been just because he had a certain chutzpah that affected you and made you like him, made you want to root for him in whatever contest he was internally engaged. During art class she would frequently stop by his desk to observe his drawing. He had natural talent. I could see it because I hung around a lot of it on the ol' homestead. I could see it. He was good, nice drafting skills, nice sense of composition and choice of topics. Mrs. Connolly would spend far more time with him than with any of us other kids, carefully explaining to him about perspective and how to blend colors to get another color and so on. I resented that. His paintings did excel compared to most of ours, but guess why. It was in part because of the extra attention and instruction that he received.

Well, the time when I parted ways with her in my mind was at the end of an art show that was sponsored by a women's group, and staged in the Odd Fellow's Hall. Their "hall" consisted of 2 large rooms with a kitchen in between, two bathrooms and two large closetish back rooms. I'll tell you about the mysterious contents of one of those rooms down below in the section about class in these rooms. The large rooms lent themselves to public displays like art shows. I look back and sort of grin to myself. "Art show" in Seward. Chuckle. But it was good that such things were held and that artists were encouraged and that kids saw and heard and were exposed to it. Whatever pretentiousness was involved in these shows, they fulfilled an important purpose for a tiny frontier community perched on the edge of the ocean with no commerce with any city. Either the town provided for itself or it was not provided for at all. So this lady's club put on an art show each year and it had a section for kids.

For my last birthday in Vernal which means after dad had gone to Seward, mom and dad gave me a book that I have loved through the years. Even today I see it with great affection and recall the wonderment of it all, when I turned the pages slowly, savoring and pondering the pictures. It was a hardback book of Audubon's prints, one picture to each side of a page. Absolutely grand gift for an 8 year old. [Isn't it an interesting gift for an 8 year old? What caused them to give that to me? I don't know but it is not your normal 8-year old's present is it.] Whenever I was trying to pick a topic to draw which I did on my own at home, I was more likely to turn to this book than any other for inspiration.

This year I had decided that I wanted to draw a picture of puffins. Their

whimsical striped beaks on roly-poly bodies and orange feet appealed to me. I'd looked at them for years and decided I would reproduce the print in my own sketch pad, a spiral bound one with dense lovely heavy paper that made me feel competent. I laid the picture out freehand, looking back and forth between the book and the sketchpad. It had a nice composition. The birds stood on the beach low in the picture, with the horizon being high in the picture. Thirds, always pleasing. Then I colored them with a small set of colored pencils that mom and dad had given me. Only 8 short pencils in the set in a cardboard box with a little window but they were wonderful. Colors came out of these pencils, and they could be blended together to create new colors. It was many years later that I saw tin boxes filled with even hundreds of pencils and I about decompensated. I wanted one of those enormous sets so badly. Oh my, what a treasure. Hard to conceive of the richness of such a resource.

What finally ruptured my friendship toward Mrs. Connolly was her judging of the kids' artwork. When I learned that kids could enter pictures in the art show to be judged, with three prizes for the three "best" pictures, I, with the confidence of an innocent kid, decided I'd enter my puffin picture. I knew it was good for a kid my age. I really knew it. So I entered it and anxiously awaited the announcement that I got first place. It felt that clear to me that my picture deserved that honor, that it excelled. I looked at the other pictures and still felt that way.

But when the prizes were awarded, I did not get first prize. First prize went to the Indian kid. Remember who the art teacher was and who her pet was and who the judge was. His picture was good, what could I say, but so was mine. I don't remember the topic of his picture but his work was generally simpler than the puffins which required a great deal of work, not that the amount of work should determine 'quality'. I was awarded second prize and received some sort of art thing, but I was not happy with that. But what's a kid going to do about it.

Parents can, however, do something. One of them did. Mom and dad had obviously seen the kids' art and knew that my piece was excellent. I don't know the details of what happened nor do I know what motivated them to do what they did, but it pleased me then as it does now that they took it upon themselves to inquire about the judging of my piece. I wonder if they knew, probably through me, that Mrs. Connolly favored that kid anyway. Since he was her pet whom she lavished attention on, she probably should have disqualified herself as a judge. But that didn't happen in Seward. The women's club asked her to be the judge. Who else

could they ask but the lone art teacher in the town. She looked, she evaluated and she pronounced.

As I recall it, my parent's conversation with Mrs. Connolly was basically one question and one answer.

**Question:** "Why did Ron's picture only get second place?"

**Answer:** "Because he obviously traced it and that's not art work."

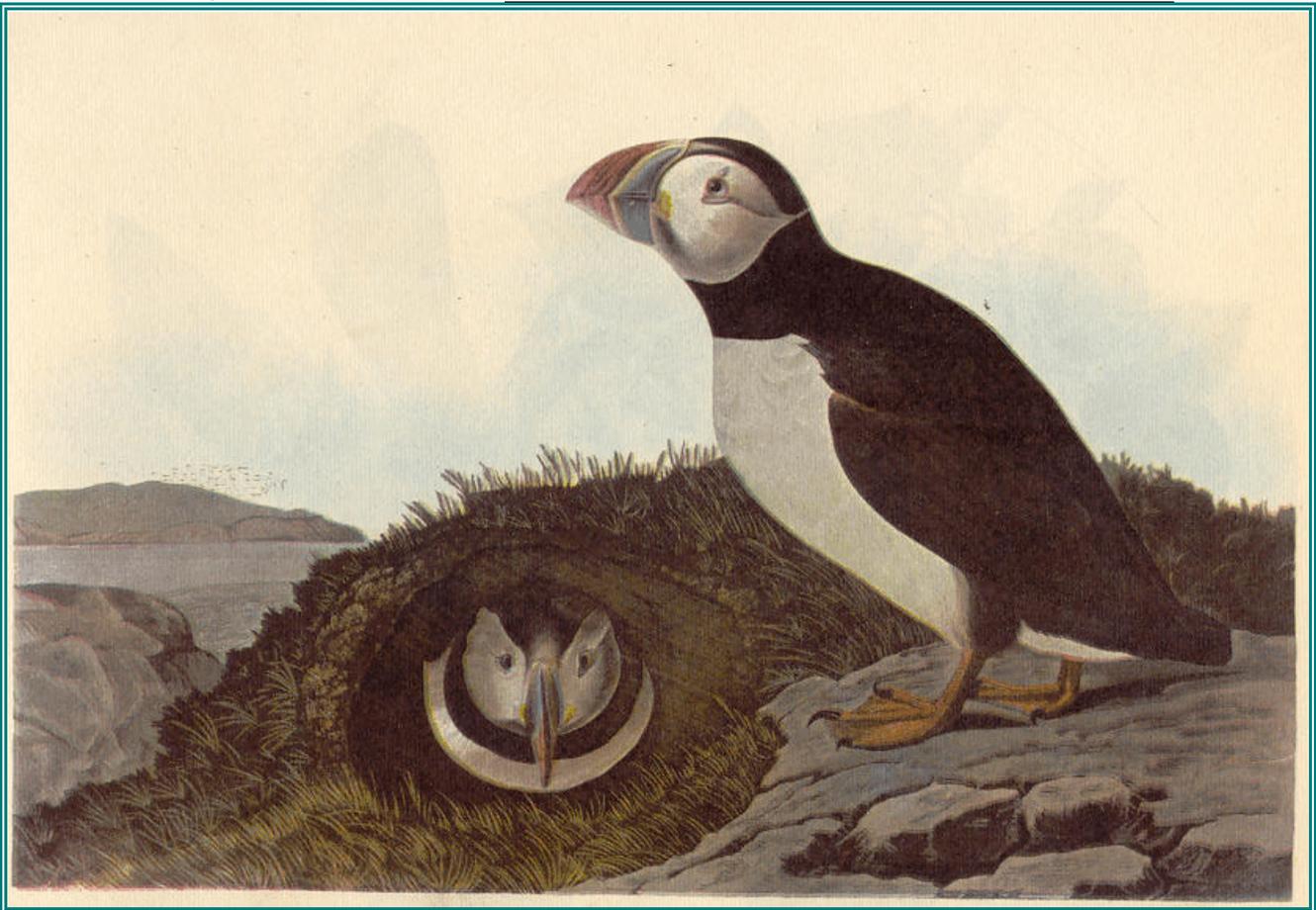
Ha. There it was. Mrs. Connolly, without investigating how I did the piece at all, decided that the picture could only be that good because it was traced. Besides she knew that she didn't spend any time with me in class so how could I be doing that well on my own? [She forgot my secret weapon, i.e. "my dad" who was generous in his critiques...] My parents felt that she had done that just so that she could justify giving first place to her pet. The proof was the print in the book.

The sad thing about this episode is that it stalled my development as an artist. Childish? Absolutely. But I was a child. It stopped me. To this day. An impediment that is simply insurmountable in spite of (1) the fact that I understand how it came to be and (2) I know I am a damn good draftsman -at least. And that's how we all grow or don't grow. Her rejection of my work as tracing was depressing, like what's the use.

Mrs. Connolly obviously either did not like me, or liked the half-breed more - or something equally unfair. I obviously did not "trace" the darn thing. The other fact you are missing in these two images is the difference in size. The original was perhaps 6 x 8 inches while my "traced" version was 8 x 12. Not likelyl was it that I had 'traced' it. My dad would have tanned my hide if I had traced. Connolly didn't know that. He would tolerate any amount of poor drafting, but if you were caught 'tracing', you would be on a ration of water and bread for a year. He did not tolerate that cheap technique.

Here's the actual image I looked at to create my drawing. On the one hand, it bears a strong resemblance to my drawing

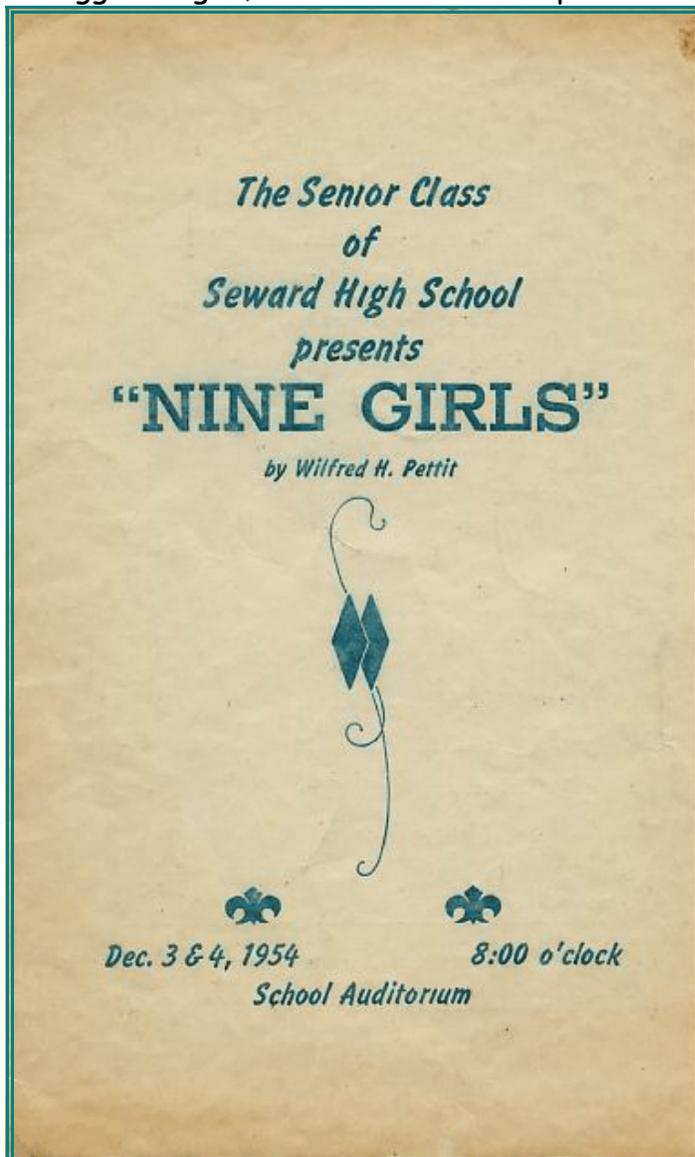




above, but on the other, it is so sophisticated and so on that it is embarrassing that I show you my drawing. The fact that I was only 12 when I did it palliates the embarrassment.



This was particularly true with those kids who were snotty to us younger kids. One of the lead girls was of that type. This is an excerpt from one of dad's photos that I like because it shows just how snotty she was. She was obviously incensed that he was taking a photo that she was going to be in and was trying hurriedly to get out of the way. Couldn't beat the trigger finger, however. I am not positive



but I think this was Murlene Trevethan.

The start time was surprising. 8:00 p.m. That was about the time we were required to go to bed even at that age so it was a luxury to be allowed to stay up.

The cast and supporting staff are familiar in general. Janice Frampton was Clayton's older sister but she was so old that she didn't pay any attention to me. Jeanine Schaefermeyer was Jim's daughter who lived next door on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

Peter Wagner, Janis

Jeffrey and Ava Doyle are other names of particular meaning to me, although I can't remember any specifics about them.

The play was figuratively dark. I don't remember anything about the plot but I remember one of the scenes in particular. There was darkness on the stage like the lights went out in the room where the actors were. Shortly after the lights went out there was lightening through a side window followed by a bolt of thunder. The part that fascinated me was the need to know how it was the sound men made that thunder because it sounded real. I guess I could have asked Jeanie but she, too, was so old that she didn't pay any attention to me. I played in her house a lot with Vonnie and Darrell but she was either not there or if she was there, she ignored me like I was something slightly offensive. Like high school students do to younger kids. You experienced it yourselves.

The program is on a heavy stock, not quite like card stock but much heavier than regular paper. The printing is of such a fine quality that I surmised that it was printed commercially.

## 2 cent bottles of milk

Man alive, this was one of the finest things about school. 8 ounce bottles of milk, real, whole milk fresh from the cow for 2 pennies. Two pennies!! I didn't understand at the time that this meant that the price was being subsidized, especially since this milk was actually produced in Alaska hence was enormously expensive. To give you a frame of reference, consider this: a dozen eggs prepared by Alaskan chickens and delivered to Werner's market for sale cost \$1.10 a dozen at the time. I don't know what a gallon of whole milk cost but it must have been enormously expensive at least for our table. Note that we ate powdered eggs in Seward. I suppose that we had cold storage eggs on rare occasions, eggs shipped in refers from Seattle but they were expensive and didn't really taste much better than powdered eggs anyway. In fact, I grew to like the flavor of powdered eggs.

Anyway, the school board and the local dairy man must have worked out a deal where he would provide these 8 ounce bottles of whole milk -complete with the cardboard bottle top- such that us kids could buy a bottle to drink with our lunch for a mere two pennies. That was about the best part of the day, to go to the cafeteria with our lunch pail, stand in line anxiously rubbing two pennies until it was our turn to offer them in return for an ice cold bottle of milk.

We'd find a place at one of the tables in the cafeteria to sit and place our lunch pail and bottle of milk in front of the chair and sit down. Then we'd open our pail, take out the sandwich, carrots wrapped in waxed paper or whatever was there and pry the lid off the milk. Then eat a feast, just because of the milk that we never had at home. It was something we drank limetlessly in Vernal



Figure 354

<http://www.theseoldthings.com/images/ad5042bg.jpg>



## Cleaning Erasers in the Boiler Room

### Obscene Ruler Figures

You know the wooden foot-long rulers that have the silver metal edge that had holes in them for a 3-ring binder? Well, there were a pair of kids who sat behind me in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade I think it was who got real creative with those rulers. The teacher was Mr. Watts who was so far away that he couldn't really see what they were doing. I could but I didn't understand it. One of the kids was a large Indian who broke a ruler into smaller pieces on a recess to avoid the noise. Then, instead of paying attention to his studies, he took a ball point pen -yes, we had some of those- and on the flat surface of the ruler he drew the figure of a female on one piece and a male on the other. Then he broke a small fragment and stuck it into the 3-ring holes of each piece. I didn't understand what it was about but I could tell from the snide looks and behaviors of the other kids that it was something dirty.

## Opera Singer vs. Students

In tiny frontier towns there were often a few hardy individuals who harbored love and affection for culture. Seward was not exempt. Out of the population of 2,000 men, women, dogs and children there was a band of women devoted to the cause of culture and refinement. They inflicted it upon us every chance they got, which, thank god, wasn't too often, what with the cost of freighting it into town from Seattle, a long way down the coast.

These sincere women -only women teachers and preachers indulged in culture- needed an occasional fix of culture. Life, otherwise was a pretty parched thing. They formed a women's club and met regularly. The members dressed in finery to attend and -be seen and- be enlightened by a speaker or a display. Dad did some presentation one time about his art. This is the same bunch that sponsored art shows including the one where I showed my puffin picture. They were held in a church or the Oddfellows's Hall. Tables with white table cloths and a few flowers were a bit more toney than the rest of our lives.

Every so often they were overcome by a fit of grandiosity. And they would make arrangements to bring stunning exemplars of culture into town, stuff from "The Lower 48". When that happened, we were in for it. The Opera Singer was such an experience.

Dear Pink-Cheeked, grinning Reverend Malin, the Methodist preacher, opened his sanctuary to a variety of non-religious activities, e.g. he allowed the school to use his basement as a classroom. The Women's Club of Seward availed itself of his courtesy. Plus it was probably free - though it is not entirely unlikely that the Sunday offering might have swelled just a bit. The good Reverend always showed his solidarity with the quaint frontier mob that met him on his arrival. One manner of demonstrating that he understood how difficult things were for us poor benighted folks who really did need The Light was his hat. He always wore a preposterous, pompous, laughable, huge, fluffy, fire engine red clipped mouton hat with enormous ear flaps. That he bravely tied up over the top.

In any event the contract was signed and the visit was planned. For a soprano. Now if that wasn't about the most grating bit of culture to foist on the community, I can't imagine what it would be. The tone of the town is shown by the fact that it was a draw between the forces of good and evil: there was one bar for every church. Even-steven. Introducing a soprano, in a church, wasn't enough to permanently

change the balance. But it sure raised hell for a while.

In spite of the fact that us kids felt pretty resistant to culture in general and sopranos in particular we were each determined to scrounge up the price of admission. We'd seen them shrieking in movies so had a sense of what they represented. In addition, candy bars were a nickel, so a two-bit piece was difficult to part with. We naturally laid it on pretty thick at home, pleading and pouting, whatever it took to get the quarter. Had to be a quarter, not a combination of smaller silver. More respectable some how. The motivation for this urge to get the money was not a burning interest in seeing the soprano. Indeed, more than one kid already was mimicking her to sniggering audiences. Caterwauling is what they did. The reasons for the urgency to get the price of admission were simple:

- 1) Skipping classes, and
- 2) Peer pressure.

Most of us collected the requisite quarter and were allowed to go. The teachers made checkmarks by our names in The Roll Book, granting us the privilege of skipping out. That's just how some of them regarded it, though some teachers probably welcomed the respite. Perhaps some foresaw what was about to happen.

This concert took place in the spring so the roads -not paved streets- were muddy. Like they were in the summer. And the fall. We walked in classes, more or less, to Reverend Malin's Place. Along the way a couple of kids that I was walking with told dirty stories. I could tell they were dirty by the way they sniggered. One of them was about a couple of insects that explored a body and got together to compare discoveries. The punch line was about a couple of mountains with berries on the top, but I didn't get it. I just remember the punch line because it was so weird.

When we arrived at the church, the anxious teachers herded us into rows assigned by grade. We sat down, curious but skeptical. We were cautioned to pay attention and to not make any noise because this was something special that we hadn't seen before. No kidding.

The soloist and her accompanist appeared from the side of the church. She was attired in a silky full-length dress, which struck us as out of place. We were wearing levis or cords, and loggers or hip boots. But we kept our opinions to ourselves. This cartoon conveys the image we had in mind, however, not very flattering but this is about how kids viewed opera. In reality, she was much smaller than this woman.

She then did the worst thing she could have done. She patronized us. She condescended to us. Her words and her attitude showed that she understood that she was bestowing her enormous talents on us by sacrificing to come all the way to rustic Seward. We were privileged. She began by explaining what she was going to sing and what the words meant.

After the learned discourse, she stepped back, took a deep breath, concentrated and with great dignity nodded her head. The accompanist started on the tinny piano. We had actually never seen this kind of performance before so actually were captured by the drama. Hushed, we sat observing, not entirely entrapped but sufficiently interested to be respectful. Then she let loose with an unexpected banshee shriek that scared the beejesus out of us. Kids quickly recovered. Some of them showed that they had not been surprised by snickering.

The noise in the audience irritated the poor woman, but she just frowned at us and continued. What else was a cultured lady going to do in the face of adversity. But the kibitzing became a bit louder in spite of the teachers' attempts to quiet us. Now she began to show irritation as she lost her concentration. After she finished that piece, she commented on our rudeness, another fatal error.

That encouraged the "wise acres", as they were called in those days, to become louder. Her reprimand simply emboldened them. Her response was to sing louder, to sing over the noise as the horrified teachers wished they had agreed to stay in their class rooms with the kids who didn't scrounge up two-bits.



Figure 355

<http://www.cottagesoft.com/~songbird/artists/singer09.gif>

## Christmas Tree Bra

William H. Seward School had a large Christmas tree every Christmas. This large tree was set up and decorated in the Gym each year for the Christmas program and taken down after New Year. This particular year, my 6th grade, the used tree only made it outside the back door where it lay on its side until spring. The janitor was too busy to haul it down the road half a mile to the city dump by the lagoon.

Clayton Frampton was one of my two best friends. He was a skinny kinetic sort of kid with buck teeth and he grinned a lot. He wore thick-rimmed Buddy Holly style eye glasses, and in the summer wore a brown felt beanie shaped like a sailor's hat, that really did have a little propellor standing straight up on the top. It even turned when he ran. Being the son of the school principal made him an unknown quantity to most kids. They didn't know whether to fear, respect, ignore or ridicule him. It didn't occur to them to just be friendly. I liked him so he and Brent Whitmore and I were a threesome of nerdy little kids who played together a lot.

Clayton and that defunct Christmas tree provided an enormous amount of hilarity for the rest of that particular school year. Because it mysteriously started wearing a white bra one weekend. On Monday morning, there it was. That intimate apparel triggered something hysterical in us. Each time we saw it, one of us would whack the other on the arm and start giggling, looking sideways at the other. Then the giggling turned to laughter, sort of sniggers in the back of the throat and would finally escalate into whole-body belly laughs. By this time we had to hold on to each other because our knees had turned to jelly and we were in danger of falling. Giddy, hysterical, laughing uncontrollably every time we passed it. We would not have been able to rationally explain our reaction if someone had insisted we do. Indeed, we would have rather died.

It got so if one of us, sitting in our desks in class, even pointed surreptitiously at the window on that side of the building with a mock leer, we were both in danger of being expelled from school for our riotous disruptive behavior. It was such an extraordinarily powerful emotional topic for pre-very-close-to-pubescent boys. The odd thing about it is that I don't recall that we ever actually discussed it. We probably did but the ownership really wasn't the issue. It simply was a fixture in the landscape possessed of this extraordinary meaning. The symbol was there and a naked girl herself could not have provoked any more hilarity than her bra did. Indeed, the girl would have shocked and embarrassed us. We never wondered whose

it was or what sporting event led to its being hung on the tree.

### Raffling Dad's Painting

The Seward High School Band, perhaps 35 players, needed new uniforms about the time I ventured with great anxiety into the band and public performances. The band teacher contacted vendors by surface mail to get quotes for a set of different-sized uniforms and then presented the information to Mr. Frampton, the principal. There was no question that the purchase of uniforms was not possible with the small school budget. This budget came primarily from the town of 2,000 people, so obviously could not be very large especially since it had to fund 12 grades of teachers and administrators. There was some federal money but certainly not enough to pay for a large out-of-budget request of the size necessary to purchase 40 full uniforms.

So the school board, recognizing that the old uniforms really did need to be replaced, cast about for alternate ways to generate the money. They fell back on the old stand-bys of the era, bake sales at the school and in businesses. The proceeds from these sales were all profit since the goods themselves were donated to the cause, but the amount of money needed was so great that bake sales just wouldn't do the job.

When Dad had lived in Seward before WW II, he had done various artistic things for the Alaska Shop. I remember seeing in racks in the Alaska Shop black and white post cards he had done in charcoal of huskies. So he was already a familiar quantity when he returned 8 years later. This was a small town where everyone knows everyone, and many of his previous friends were still alive and kicking, as they'd say.

He continued to draw and paint during this second stay, and his work sold easily. This was partly because his topics were basically Alaskan, Eskimos, snow scenes, caches, and mountains. Alaskans were proud of Alaska. It was also because he was familiar to people, sort of a "favorite son". People liked to be able to say, "I have that painting Jim did of that little Eskimo baby and bear cub." It was a sign of good taste and affluence I suppose.

So as the school board, in its hip boots and suit coats, hunted for a sure-fire

way to raise the rest of the money, someone quietly allowed as how you can raffle off just about anything, especially for a good cause and make a lot of money easily. And another surmised as how they bet that Jim just might be persuaded to throw in a thing he done, seeing as how he had a kid in the band, wasn't that right?

So the decision was made and a delegation was deputized to formally visit Jim, hats in hand, to play upon his civic sensibility in the hope, which is all it could be where Jim was concerned, that he might see a way to help the cause. I have no idea where this pow wow took place, but in the end Jim agreed. But I am as sure as I know my name that Jim didn't go gracefully. Good ol' Marie was behind his "agreement" to "donate" one of his paintings, and if the truth were known, I wouldn't be at all surprised to hear that it was Marie who put forth the idea in the first place - whether or not she was at that committee meeting. She had a way of leading Jim by the nose his entire life without realizing it.

So after a sigh of relief, the enterprise took on an urgent sense of mission. Band uniforms would be purchased for sure. Someone made the raffle tickets out of colored construction paper, someone undertook arranging the campaign to sell them to businesses and private citizens, someone was assigned to create the "thermometer" to reflect each week's take and so on.

The canvassing process not unexpectedly drafted the members of the band, who after all, were going to get to wear these gorgeous gold and green uniforms, so don't you think they should participate? I found my sweaty palm filled with a wad of tickets that I had to personally sell.

I had mixed feelings here. One, as a band member I did have a sense of obligation to help, but I was only a 6th grader for heck sake. Second, I was Jim's son and it embarrassed me to be pedaling his art work. Even if it was for a good cause, it still embarrassed me.

## Clarinet in the Band

Somewhere along the line mom and dad decided that each of us kids should "learn to play an instrument" and further, that we had a duty, nay a 'civic duty' whatever in the heck that meant to a 12 year old- to play the damn thing in the school band. I would rather have been boiled in oil. But somehow the whims of our parents become our mandates, or decrees, or dictates, and we find that we somehow agreed exactly with them, that "yes, we REALLY did want to look like an Easter parrot in that stupid uniform marching down the muddy street getting our shoes full of water squeaking badly off key", just so that they would stay off our back. That's the reality. Sounds harsh and is exaggerated but not by much.

Now, don't misunderstand me after I said what sounds so venomous. Kids are histrionic, no perspective, no balance of reality, so they react as they are inclined to react. Down in their hearts, from their guts, with pure emotion, which represents their reality in a way that 'reality' is never 'real' for adults who have learned to sublimate their real feelings and emotions and responses to the crap foisted on them by the world. And this business of putting on a brightly colored costume with this stupid hat, marching in formation down a street when I was positive that the entire world was jeering was painful for me. But I understood well that if I wanted to be able to live in that house, if I wanted to be fed, if I wanted to be 'loved' -which I doubted the entire time- wanted to be clothed, to be



bathed, etc. then I darn well better discover that I "Really wanted to play in the band.". I did.

Here's a photo of that results of that experiment. Here we are on the Fourth of July one soggy July in Seward wearing gold and green -I think it was- uniforms. This was often the hottest day of the year, so you probably can extrapolate from this photo and figure out what the weather and climate was like in Seward. See the low clouds hanging on Mt. Marathon in the background? And the wet ground? This is "Main



Street" remember. I'm the kid there with the silver clarinet. The kid to my right was a red-headed nerd. I felt sophisticated compared to him. The kid standing right behind me with the French Horn was as good a horn player as we had but he was meaner than sin. I was afraid of him.

I suspect that the choice of Dick to play trumpet and me to play clarinet had little to do with what we in our heart of hearts really wanted to do. Somehow, mysteriously, nay miraculously, the Jones family just happened to have for sale at that mysterious point in time the cheap silver clarinet of their precious, precocious, 200 pound daughter felicitously named "Poodie"- that they would sell at a great sacrifice to Jim Jensen so that little Ronnie -sigh, hand across the breast, head turned to heaven to receive all of the blessings that were forthcoming for such Spartan and remarkable self-denial- could have . For twice what it was worth. If I remember correctly Dick fared better. He held out for a trumpet and since there didn't just happen to be a cheap trumpet in town, mom and dad had to buy him a new one. I think it was mail order, though it could have been specially ordered through a local store which was still mail order.

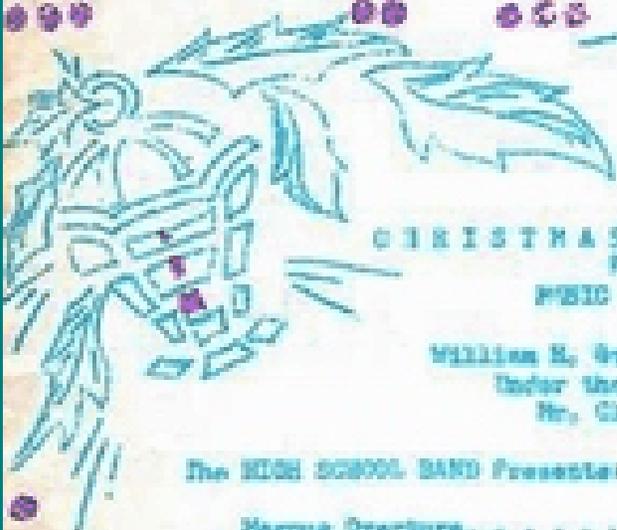
So I became the owner of this instrument, perhaps not as proud as I might have been under different circumstances. Jimmarie explained their 'good fortune' to their colleagues in crime, i.e. the Schafermeyers and Ablanalps, the senate within

which they all tested and argued their child-raising decisions, particularly those that they knew in their heart were perhaps not really what their sweet children wanted.

Was I even a sweet child?

As a matter of fact, I was.

Christmas Program, 1954



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
From the  
MUSIC DEPARTMENT  
of  
William S. Seward High School  
Under the Direction of  
Mr. Claude Berg

The HIGH SCHOOL BAND Presents:

Magnus Overture . . . . .	Maxing
Nice Noon . . . . .	Libbie
Song of the Rose . . . . .	Waber
Spirit of the Snow . . . . .	Odette
Village Carol . . . . .	Libbie

SEVENTH and EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS' CHORUS Presents:

Angels We Have Heard on High . . .	Old Frode Melody
The First Noel . . . . .	Traditional
Christmas Voices . . . . .	Schlan

The HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS Presents:

Today There is Singing . . . . .	Christiansen
O Holy Night . . . . .	Adams
(Solo by Jim Woods)	
Birthday of a King . . . . .	Meldinger
Cherish Song . . . . .	Bortolowski
Silent Night . . . . .	Waber

On the next page, we have listed the members of  
each group of musicians.

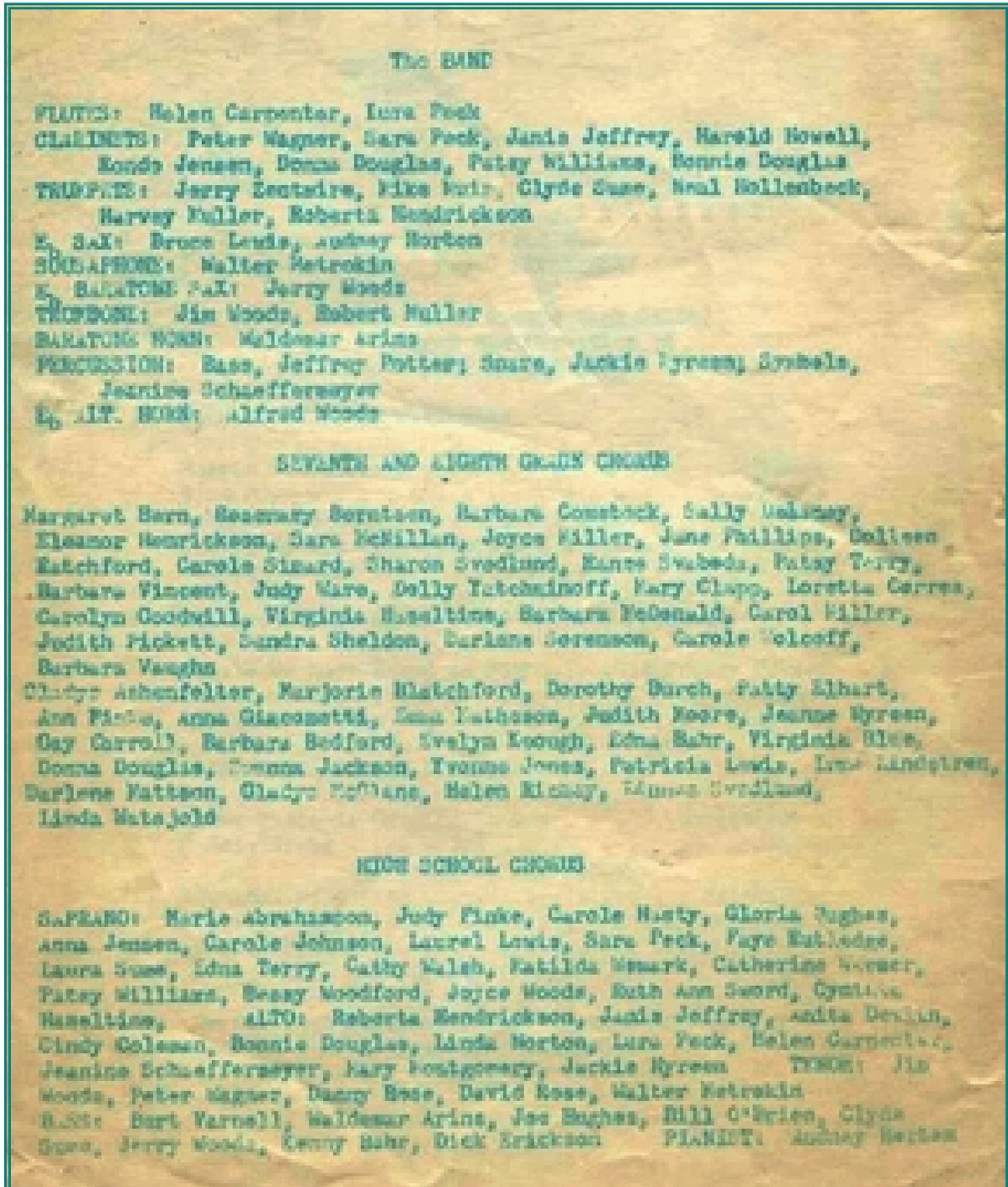


December, 1954

Mr. Berg, the same that I've talked about elsewhere, was the "director" of the Music Department at William H. Seward School. Pretty high falutin' title isn't it for what it really was.

The kids who participated were listed in detail inside. "The Band" was at the

top of the page followed by the "Seventh and Eighth Grade Chorus" and the "High School Chorus." My name shows up under Clarinets in the Band, and honor I didn't deserve. I never did learn to play well enough to truly contribute to the band and I



think Mr. Berg knew it. But since I was a quiet kid and didn't make and BAD noises, it was safe to keep me there to fill a space, to "swell a crowd". I always felt dishonest and never did know whether or not my folks knew I rarely made actually noises when "playing" in the band.

The most interesting thing about this program is how it was prepared. It appears to have been made by using two ancient techniques: a mimeograph that you've probably seen, and a hectograph which is such an ancient process that I suspect none of your school teachers had ever heard of it. I knew it well because mom herself learned how to make one and then used it to make programs and so on for the little branch.

A mimeograph you probably know. A fibrous sheet is "typed" on with a manual typewriter - can't do this with modern word processors and ink jet printers. Of course, if you have one of these, you certainly don't need one of those. The keys would actually cut holes in the fibrous layer the shape of the letters. Then this fibrous layer is placed a circular drum set up to spread a thin thin layer of ink through those little holes at the same time a sheet of paper is pressed against that fibrous layer. This is the method used to "print" the names on the program.

A hectograph is a totally different animal, and much older. It is simply a layer of gelatin. That's all. A layer of dryish gelatin that has to be kept covered when not in use to keep it from drying out entirely. When ready to be used, a dense layer of dye is embedded into the gelatin. The gelatin absorbs the dye. Then a sheet of paper is laid on top of the gelatin and pressed lightly. When the sheet of paper is removed, it has a thin layer of the dye. So whatever shape the dye is in is the shape that will appear on the paper. Simple. That's how the fancy shapes and two colors were made in the corners of the program.

Mom found a recipe to make one of these things when she needed to make copies of something for us Blazers. She followed the recipe carefully and cooked up the gelatin on the gas stove. When it was finished, she poured it out slowly and carefully in a thin cookie sheet to make sure there were no bubbles. Bubbles would make it impossible to have perfect images. After it had set and cooled, she took something that looked like a "ditto master" something you may know. It was a sheet of paper with a thick layer of dye on the back behind which there was a white sheet of paper. With a stylus, sort of like a ball point pen without ink, you drew the letters or images on the top sheet which pressed a layer of dye off the back of the sheet onto the white page behind it.

Then you took that sheet with the layer of dye shaped like a star or tree or whatever you made and laid it face-down on the gelatin layer. It was left in place for something like 5 minutes, long enough for the gelatin to absorb most of the dye off of the sheet of paper. After it had been left in place long enough, you pulled the dye sheet off and were ready to start making copies which was as just described. Clean sheets of paper were laid down on the gelatin and pressed lightly and then pulled off carefully to keep from tearing the sheet that stuck to the gelatin.

Then what. The gelatin now has a dye pattern in it, so do you have to make another layer of gelatin? That's the big question I had but mom said not to worry. She said to "Watch and see what happens." Like she knew. Perhaps she did, perhaps she just read the directions and trusted them. I don't know. But I do know that magic happened. After a week or so, the dye disappeared from the gelatin. When as a sheet of clean paper was pressed into the gelatin and pulled up, no image was created. I asked mom, "What happened to the ink?" That's what I called it. She said, "Oh, it sank to the bottom so I can put another picture of ink on it and make copies again." She was right. I still don't know what really happened to the dye. It had no weight so I don't see how it could "sink" to the bottom but I know that the dye wasn't volatile so it couldn't evaporate. It must have sunk to the bottom. I wish the thing had been made in a pyrex dish so that I could see if the dyes accumulated on the bottom. Whatever, it was a slick method to make multiple copies.

### "Coach" and the Metropolitan

The Coach was a little man, even to me, a little man. He was skinny, balding, wore glasses, had thin lips that protruded, eye glasses, dissheveled grayish hair, wore a thigh-length trench coat with the collar up like Bogart, had a perpetual scowl and harried look and didn't like kids who weren't athletes. That about says all I need to say about him. Except you know I'm going to say more or I wouldn't have brought him up.

He was the "gym teacher" the class I feared and disliked. The only class I felt that way about. In his defense, I have to admit that the first problem with gym was that it was gym. I had grown up like a wild kid without any discipline or exposure to organized sports. I don't think I ever saw a football game in Vernal. Indeed, I'm

not sure I'd even heard of the sport though I must have, but it certainly didn't make any impression. Baseball was familiar but only as a concept. I never saw a baseball game, but I did see softball.

Basket ball was something mom liked to watch, yelling and screaming like a wild woman that I didn't know so I understood that there were groups of men who got together to "play" other groups of men who were willing to engage in this sort of thing. I didn't understand why it was called "play" when they were each actually trying to beat the other team up. That wasn't play, that was war. Whatever, I went to Seward from Vernal without any real exposure to, let alone experience in, organized sports. Then in Seward I maintained that pristine view of the world. Until I got in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. At that point, things changed dramatically and most painfully. I had to go into gym classes.

That was an exercise in terror and humiliation. Nothing less. If you didn't feel that way when you had to go out onto the basket ball floor as a member of a "team" of kids you didn't really like, who certainly didn't like you, then you were lucky. If you enjoyed going out on the floor under the supervision of a "coach" who yelled and screamed at you, while kids sneered at your clumsiness, then you're bigger people than I am. I couldn't stand it. I didn't know the rules for basket ball. I didn't care to know the rules of basket ball and I hated it not understanding anything about the game. And I was outraged at the way kids would intentionally foul each other, hurt each other in order "to win". That was so wrong. I had been taught from early on that while it was understood that I would do things wrong, the adults would never accept it. And it was apparent in gym class that the coach knew that kids were committing fouls, so I was shocked. The injustice of it all.

The final humiliation was having to go into locker rooms where kids took off their clothes and stunk and yelled and made fun of each other. I hated it. One of the requirements for gym was to have a "uniform". What a god-awful thing to have to do. It was a basketball player's uniform and I felt like a moron and clown wearing the damn thing. It was gold and another color and I was cold when I wore it and looked like a dummy, particularly when I was stumbling around the floor in it. We were also required to start wearing "supporters" that I had not used before and I didn't think I needed to start them. Why should I be forced to wear one of those silly things if I didn't want to? It didn't offer any protection if I fell on my gonads or someone kicked me there, it didn't make me play better, it was of no use. Except that the coach "ordered" it so there is was.

I personally had no use for organized sports like that. I would have preferred to have been sent out to hike or climb Marathon or something that had some redeeming value but this business of running around in a room or on a field obeying a set of stupid arbitrary rules made me crazy. I'm still not over it and you kids all experienced my ambivalence to sports, didn't you. I find them to be primitive, sort of like stylized warfare. Pre-technological groups of people engaged in similar activities and I think sports are basically the replacement of that. It's as if groups of people do have needs for symbolic war fare and sports is the substitute. I have no need for it.

The funniest thing about this "Coach", as all the athletes ("jock" was an unknown term, even a dirty term to me) called him, the macho man, was the car he drove. I wasn't into cars at that age but I was still aware of them and in his case, he drove a silly little car that didn't fit with the image of the big man that he tried to portray. To do that he should have been driving a late model Ford or Chevrolet. I don't know what his football or basketball students thought about this silly little car.



Figure 360

<http://www.classiccarbug.com/featuredcars/oct02-1.jpg>

### Chik-a-lak-a-chow-chow-chow

What sort of embarrassing nonsense was that? Us 7<sup>th</sup> graders were apparently being initiated into the mysteries of organized sports. One day shortly after school had started in September, we were summoned with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to the gym for something important. Being basically sheep and being glad to get out of class, we dutifully walked double-file to the gym where we were directed to sit in the bleachers.

After a few moment of nothing happening except a few of us talked quietly, a cheerleader walked into the gym from the basement where she would have changed into the outrageous uniform in the girls' bathroom. She was followed by several

more girls dressed in the same outlandish outfits more suited for Halloween than for everyday life. I expect I'd seen them before but from a safe distance, not trapped in the same room with them, not being addressed by them. They had what's called 'attitude' today, haughty, superior, patronizing, condescending, irritated, impatient, superior, aristocratic, arrogant, world-weary and so on. Just the kind of nice girls anyone would like to spend some time with.

The only photo I have that shows several of these specimens is this one, taken in 1956 in Anchorage when we went up for a Music Festival, and this parade - on a street that was paved!

You can see 2 and a half of these critturs wearing dark dresses with a gore in the side for sassiness, and batons which were apparently the talisman of the tribe. The lead majorette, Miss



Trevathan I think, was elevated above the other two who wore lowly saddle shoes, by wearing white, high-topped boots that had white tassels flopping around on the front. My, she was grand. If you doubted it, you needed to just ask her.

Well, she and several others appeared in the gym in front of us naive, innocent, country yokels, sitting there with our mouths open. Some of us were wondering why they weren't embarrassed being out in public that way. They might as well have been wearing pajamas or night gowns as far as I was concerned. They launched into some arcane discussion about "cheering our team on". "Our team"? "Our team"? Who or what was "our team"?

Believe it or not, that was one of the fundamental things they should have explained to us, that "our school" had teams of basket ball players and teams of foot ball players played games with similar teams -usually- from other high schools in the region. And that it was a local custom for us, on those august occasions when the games were played in our space, for students to actually go watch what was going on,

who was hurting who, who was getting away with foul play, and by the way, who was scoring points, and -here's the point of the educational conference- it was important for us to wave our hands and yell a lot. Somehow that made "our teams" hurt the other team more, get away with more foul play and even make some points so they would win. I didn't understand any of this when Merlene almost immediately launched into what is called, in mixed company, a "cheer".

She and her compatriots began to yell a song, without accompaniment, while they waved their arms in unison, jumping up and down like they were doing calisthenics. Our mouths dropped in amazement. What were they doing? Right there in front of us. Were we supposed to clap? It was mildly embarrassing. But what happened next was even more embarrassing.

We got a tongue lashing from Miss High and Mighty. Apparently we were supposed to engage in the same yelling and hollering and when we didn't, she was mad. Actually, I think she was embarrassed. Cheerleading is apparently one of those things that you can do "with" other people but not "for" or "in front of" other people. That is, people have to be as stupid as you. We didn't know that so she laid it on thick. Of course the other item that was missing was a song sheet. We didn't know these loud poems so how could we yell them. Teachers would get pretty upset at us in class if we yelled our poems.

Well, things moved forward a bit at a time. One of the other girls who wasn't so snooty could see that we genuinely didn't know what to do so she took the floor and explained something about cheerleading and cheers. She then said that she wanted us to yell the next 'cheer' with her and that she would teach it to us first. Then she said a line at a time and asked us to then repeat each line with her which we did intermittently because we were still dumbfounded at the silliness of the whole thing, acting like this was normal to sit in rows in a big room and yell together. We weren't Japanese you know, Nate.

I think the cheer she taught us was easy to learn because it was (A) so simple and (B) so stupid and (C) so embarrassing. Here's the whole deal, without the hand waves - I forgot to tell you that these girls compounded their foolishness and own embarrassment by holding wads of strips of thin paper and shaking them while they were waving their hands and doing calisthenics- or screaming:

First Verse (Quietly, face averted):

"A chik-a-lak-a-chik-a-lak  
A-chow-chow-chow" (*Got it? This is tough stuff.*)  
A boom-a-lak-a-boom-a-lak  
A bow-wow-wow. (*My face is glowing again.*)

Second Verse (with gusto):

A chik-a-lak-a-boom-a-lak  
A-Who are we? (*You don't have to answer that question.)(Fools?)*  
Seventh and Eighth grade  
Yes-sire-ee!!

My face was fairly burning with embarrassment to be sitting there with those shenanigans going on. And we were supposed to enjoy making fools of ourselves that way. Well, I didn't.

Of course, I have to admit that walking around streets in outrageous uniforms squeaking and tooting together isn't a whole lot smarter and I did that so who was I to make fun of these girls and their own favorite sport.

### Crossing Guard for Police Department

This was a highlight of my last year at William H. Seward school. I was a crossing guard for the whole school year. I don't remember how it came to pass that I was selected from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class to be a crossing guard but I was. It sounded like something I'd like doing, being responsible for helping people and protecting little school kids who had to cross the busy streets.

T. H. MILLER  
PRESIDENT  
STANLEY ZAVERL  
VICE-PRES.  
CARTER SEYMOUR  
SECY.-TREAS.



ALASKA ASSOCIATION  
OF  
CHIEFS OF POLICE

FRIENDSHIP - EFFICIENCY - SECURITY

MAY 14, 1956

THE CITY OF SEWARD COMMENDS

*RONDO JENSEN*

FOR HIS DEVOTION TO DUTY WHILE HOLDING THE RANK OF

*PATROLMAN*

WITH THE SCHOOL PATROL, A UNIT OF THE JUNIOR POLICE.

HIS CONDUCT AND SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS OF

THE CITY OF SEWARD DURING THE SCHOOL

YEAR OF 1955-1956 WAS OUTSTANDING.

*Dwight Stockton*  
MAYOR  
CITY OF SEWARD

*Carter Seymour*  
CHIEF OF POLICE  
SEWARD, ALASKA

*J. Harding*  
CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF SEWARD

## All Alaska Music Festival 1956

This was the first music festival I attended in Anchorage. I don't know whether they were done every three years or some such things but whatever the case, we were invited along with every other school in the territory to go to Anchorage to participate in a "All Alaska Music Festival", in full dress. So we did just that, mom and dad and teachers and kids. It was a major event in my young life.

Part of the excitement of the festival was the location. A new high school had just been finished in Anchorage and this was the first major event to be staged there. We were honored to be part of the group. This 2003 image shows you the auditorium in the front with the high school behind it.

Mr. Berg had been drilling us all winter for this performance because he naturally felt he would be judged by his students' performance. I didn't accomplish much as I've noted elsewhere. I felt like a cheat doing this



thing but I was simply not given an option to stop being in the band. I knew that if I asked mom and dad for permission to quit that I would get interminable lectures with two salient features. First, they would play on my sense of guilt for letting the tiny band down by dropping out, but second, they would also tell me that I could do what I wanted. Sure I could. So I kept up the charade.

The event lasted several days so we stayed overnight but I don't know where. It seems like we stayed in a private home but I don't even know that for sure. We practised during the daytime one day and the performance was the next day. Things were going well but a very funny thing happened in the middle of the program. This new high school appeared to be top drawer stuff so it as totally unexpected when

the electricity went off. Everything in the building was dark and since the school was out in the country, there weren't even streetlights to provide any light. Janitors had to find flashlights and go to the master panel I suppose to figure out and fix the problem. The audience wasn't bothered by this event because we all lost power in our own towns on a regular basis. But the Anchorage High School band was obviously the most skilled of us all. Without any light, simply on the basis of voice commands, the band launched into a song that was currently popular, a song that everyone knew. The audience laughed and then joined in, singing "Glow little glow worm, glimmer glimmer."

### The Girl who got Pregnant

Around my 7th grade year, a girl in my class or in the 8th grade became pregnant. It was like she had one of those fearsome loathsome "social diseases" although the only thing we understood about such diseases was that they were especially nasty. Her disease was such a reprehensible disease that she was even sent away for some reason. We imagined that she was subjected to some painful thing that would remedy her problem.

The confusion about her condition arose from the fact that we didn't know how it actually happened, but had a vague uncomfortable sense about the process. This confusion was compounded by the fact that our mothers had also been pregnant to get us and they didn't seem to have been derided for it. They were even proud to have been able to make babies - though I think there were some days when they repented of it. So why was it so nasty if this 14 year old was in the same condition?

If we turned the corner in a hallway and saw and heard teachers talking about her, their voices dropped as soon as they saw us. That told us that something was really wrong about this deal because they didn't bother to whisper when they talked about discipline problems with some kids.

Some of those kids with discipline problems were friends of this girl, a guy named Tracy McCracken and his brother Jeff and their friends. The teachers would audibly talk about their bad behavior - but not whatever this girl was guilty of. As it turned out, it is likely that the McCrackens were the cause of her problem. There was a small group of pretty hardened kids who hung out together, cussed dirty words, told dirty jokes, disobeyed the teachers, made fun of everything and picked

on other kids. In some way we "got it" that this girl's sin was severe by the company she kept. "Nice" girls like Virginia Blue wouldn't even talk to Tracy. Even we avoided them and were actually afraid of them and their switchblade knives - which were illegal, but that only makes them show them off more.

We still did not know the "facts of life", although our dads probably swore to their concerned wives that they had explained them all to us. Mothers recognized the signs of incipient puberty and thought it was high time for us to have a talk about the birds and bees -though why it was suddenly necessary, or what difference it would make, isn't clear to me even now. When the hormones surge, so does the urge and it all becomes shockingly clear anyway. No talks will subvert that. We did know generally about the 'facts of life' and that we needed to learn what they were, even wanted to know them, but the emotional baggage hung on the phrase "the birds and the bees" -most confusing since they are pretty innocuous creatures who really have nothing to do with the hormone rage that was about to strike us down- convinced us with a visceral certainty that the keys to the meaning of life were contained therein. In fact they were, but we were clueless.

Actually, I specifically remember the first time someone explained explicitly the act of intercourse. It was in the alley behind my house on Second Avenue. I was going to Joe Deisher's house, the new one, to spend the evening and he, being the son of a doctor had a good understanding of the mechanics. He asked me if I knew the facts of life, and when I admitted that I didn't really, he launched into a detailed description as we walked. I looked at the grassy alley listening to this explanation. It was the most disgusting thing I'd ever heard.

Anyway, this girl's condition was tied up somehow with that topic so we were alternately horrified and fascinated by her, as she sat on the school steps in a jacket worn by that little gang, toughly and defiantly smoking a cigarette, while the McCrackens and their ilk hung around, sneering and leering, challenging us all with the eyes to "make something of it" - though what "it" might be or why we would even care about "it" was a mystery to us 7th graders. After she left things quieted down and we stopped think about it any more. But that experience was disturbing because of the confusion and insinuations that made no sense to us kids who just didn't know enough facts about sex or about human relations or the law.

## Betty Boop

You have all heard of Betty Boop. She probably came across as a sort of kewpie doll type character, innocent and not the sharpest knife in the drawer. But I suspect that you might not know how sexy she really was. This image gives you a sense of that quality, sort of risque. She was a sweet thing, but not really. A hot little number with the brains of a modern blonde I suppose. Not really the sweet young innocent confused thing you know her to be. She was those things to be sure, but there was also the deeper meaning I think. At least that is how I perceived her. When you all began to think she was cool, part of me was shocked. I knew what she was really about.



**Figure 364 Betty Boop**

<http://www.tiac.net/users/mharney/boop.html>

The original cartoons were done in black and white, not the color that you probably saw. She was modeled on the Rita and Lana type I imagine.

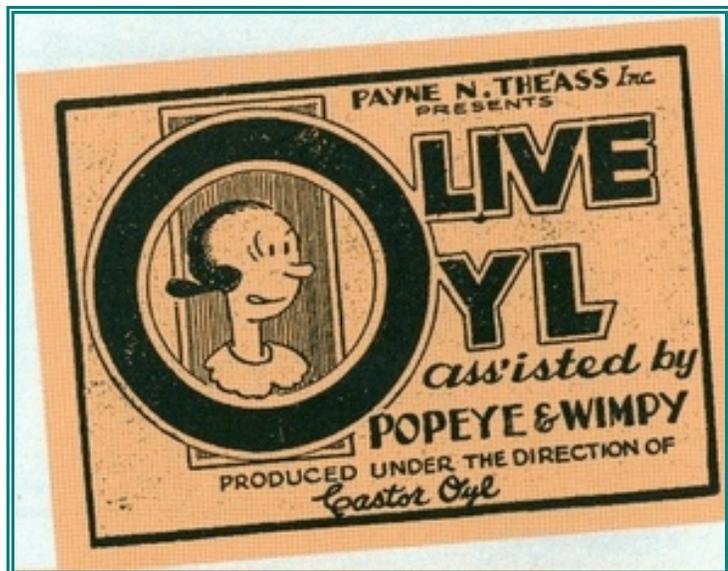
## Tijuana Bibles

I'm not going to embarrass you by showing you the complete contents of one of these things but they were another feature of teenagehood. I never owned one and I never even actually held one in my hand to read it completely through. But this was another of the pornographic things that teenage boys circulated amongst themselves. I have no idea whether teenage girls indulged in the same things

These little booklets were about 4 inches long and 2 inches wide. They were crudely drawn by hand and consisted of about 16 pages of pictures, basically a dirty cartoon.

The drawings and language were explicit, far beyond what was available in the public. I don't know how kids got them, but expect that someone's dad bought them from some salesman on the dock or in Seattle or in Anchorage and brought them home. Kids would giggle nervously and pass the thing to the next kid, all the while on the lookout for an adult who would confiscate the thing if s/he saw it. They were so explicit that they were actually a course in

sex education if you read them, but I didn't ever have that opportunity. Once more, I was aware of the things because I saw them and I recognized the dirty laughs and sniggers which meant the things were prurient, though that term wasn't one I knew either.



## Waldemar and John Ahrins

DP's. They were DP's, a pejorative term though I didn't understand what there was to be pejorative about. These people deserved sympathy for what had happened to them. "Displaced Persons" from Latvia.



## 16. William H. Seward School

12 grades. In one building. Mr. Frampton was the principal, father of my good friend Clayton. I cannot find a single photo of the school in dad's collection which is obviously a reflection of his lack of interest in it. I mean that literally. He had no interest at all in my school or schooling at any time in my life. Even college was of little interest to him. The only image I could find that showed even part of the school was this one that I took of a WW II Quonset hut, probably in its original location on the "east side of town" -sort of a fancy way to refer to a town that was 8 blocks wide! That's the school there in the background on the right side

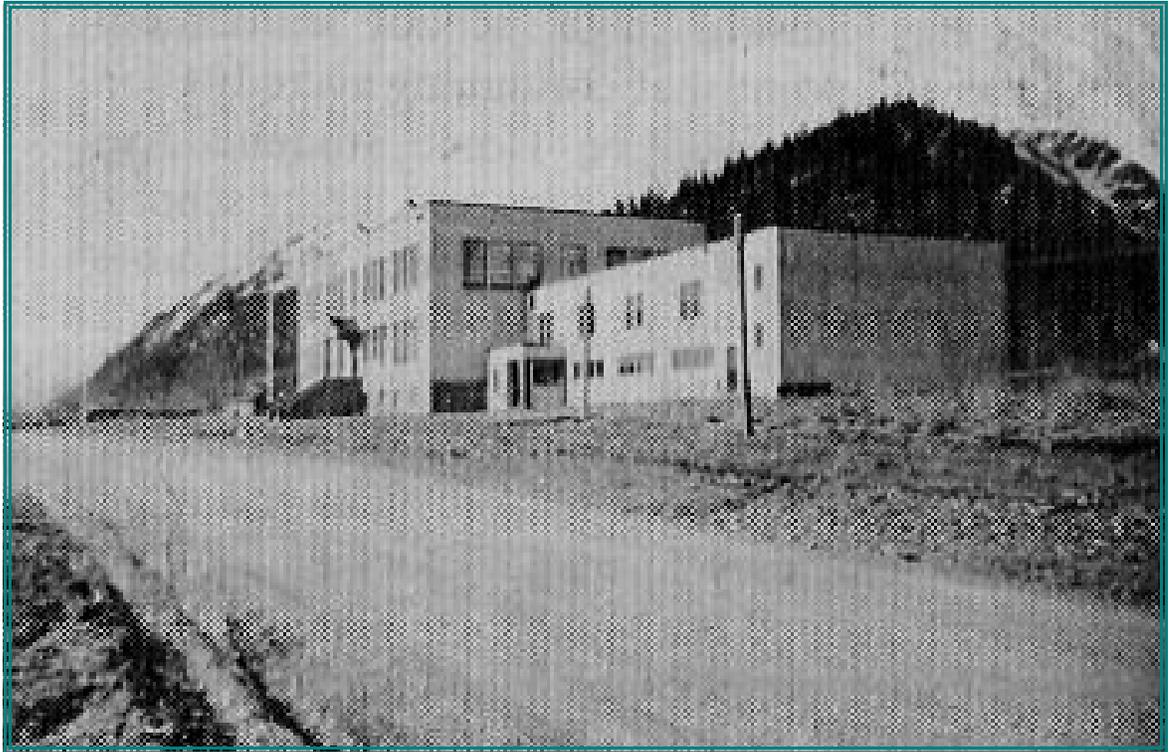


of the photo, the second story and roof line showing. The belt of evergreens is the bench that runs along the bottom of Mt. Marathon. I can't tell if clouds had obscured Marathon down to that level or whether it was simply the flat light that created that effect.

This photo is wonderful for the way it shows what the scruffy town was like and what the weather was like most of time, gray and dark and wet. That is how I remember Seward. Indoors we were dry and warm enough but outside was a different story. But it's important to point out that I did not find the weather oppressive or unusual. It was simply my reality, just like dry summers were my reality in Vernal. Kids don't think about what the weather is like, what it means, how it affects their attitude and emotions. The total effect of weather on me was its

effect on my outdoor life but even 'bad' weather didn't bottle me up completely, just required that I dress warmly, or dress to keep from getting wet. When I went out in bad conditions, I just counted on getting wet or cold, knowing that I'd dry out or warm up later.

This is Mary Barry's image of the school. Too bad that the image I have to



work with is a low grade offset image. The pattern of dots in the original is magnified in this scan.

This photo is looking south along unpaved 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue which has no sidewalks at all, which is the main street that runs on down through the center of town to the bay in the distance. You can see from the slope of the road that the peak of the alluvial fan is right there almost directly in front of the school. The dark mountain on the right side is Little Bear and the whitish mountain above Little Bear is Big Bear Mountain. The school was a large building of two stories with a "basement" that was half out of the ground on this side. On the other side of the school, due to the steep slope up to the right of this photo, the basement really was a basement. The main entrance of the school is the covered porch affair there. There was a back entrance but it didn't have the canopy. The one-story building on this end is the

gymnasium that served as a multipurpose space for basketball games, plays, parties, and celebrations of any kind in the community that required a large amount of space.

The school building had a wide hallway running lengthwise, creating two rows on rooms on the outside. As you walked inside this entrance, the main door, "The Office" was on the left side. That's where you'd find Mr. Frampton - if you were so foolish as to want to see him. The top floor was for the upperclassmen while the first floor was for the rest of us. If my memory is accurate, there was actually a one story addition on the far side of the school which was also devoted to the lower grades. The basement was divided into the restrooms, one for each gender, the woodworking shop, and the cafeteria.

Note that there is no grass, no shrubs, no trees. That's how it was. There were no concrete sidewalks, no concrete play slabs outside, just a few teeter-totters on the south side, a jungle gym, and a merry-go-round affair that kids always got hurt on.

Mr. Watts Fights with a Student

## Trojan Balloons

Growing up to be an adult is a treacherous undertaking that none of us can either control or opt out of. Of all the aspects of human life we each deal with as we are trained and grow, gender issues are the most difficult to comprehend, particularly since the kids' antennae register powerful upsetting confusing fearful emotional signals from the adults who are demonstrating their own anxiety and discomfort with whatever embarrassing gender issue has unexpectedly surfaced.

I was in the Fifth grade when I saw, though I didn't understand, a vivid public display of adult anxiety about a sexually-related matter. Though I doubt that most of us kids had a clue about what was going on. Actually most of us were envious of the kids who were having innocent fun. Until it happened.

We were having lunch in the classroom because it was too cold and snowy to go outside. The teacher didn't anticipate what was going to happen. Two boys went into the supply closet like they were going to get construction paper or glue to make something, a usual sort of occurrence during these indoor lunches. No one paid much attention, including the teacher. Until a small balloon bounced out of the closet to rest on the floor by the door. 'What a nice little balloon! I want one!', was our reaction. We were all envious. Then another came out and a kid picked it up and started to play with it, so some of us went to the closet to see where those kids were getting balloons because we didn't think the supply closet had that sort of celebratory toy.

What we saw were the most bizarre balloons we had ever seen. They came in little individual envelopes and looked like rubber donuts that you had to sort of twist open and then blow up with difficulty because there was no mouth piece to hold onto like most balloons have. And the tying was just as difficult because the balloon was so soft and floppy. Such strange, clear, little balloons.

It must have been about the time these balloons were being thrown around in the room that the teacher made her move. She must have been simultaneously mortified and horrified and paralyzed. This was around 1953. She disappeared, but us kids didn't have a clue that she was going where she went. If we thought about it at all, we were glad she left, or we thought she was just going to the bathroom, like we did during lunchtime. Instead, she went to "The Office." If we'd known that, every kid would have had their coat on and been outside in 60 seconds.

In a few minutes she returned, walking behind a red-faced, angry, Mr. Frampton who was striding heavily, quickly, and angrily toward the supply closet. In his suit, white shirt and tie, which he always wore, such an odd thing in Seward where us kids wore Levi's and hip boots to school. Mr. Frampton had a bad temper so all of us kids tended to shy away from him even when he tried to be nice. You avoid the wolf even if it smiles. Without any introduction, he started in on the two little kids who were cornered and couldn't get away while he stood in the door. I don't think they even knew what they had. He was oblivious to the rest of us, and a string of angry questions and invective flowed without any time for the poor kids to answer, "Where did you get these? What are you doing? Why are you doing this? Give me those! I'm going to report you to your parents!"

At this point, what seemed like an innocent game started by these little kids became something very nasty. How did we know it was nasty? It's hard to really say because no words were spoken that would specifically convey that meaning. But the sheer magnitude of Mr. Frampton's anger about something as innocent as balloons signaled that a abnormally bright line had been crossed somehow by those boys. Even fist fights and bloody noses didn't provoke this terrible invective. We all knew those kids had not done anything on purpose to call down the wrath of god, but there it was, so we were all now in a minefield where we didn't even understand what the mines were. We knew each one of us that not a single one of us was going to ask a question or make a comment. We studiously looked away, or read our books or stared out the window while the slaughter concluded. Wondering what in the heck just happened? What did we just witness, knowing that it was profound, but clueless about what it was, fascinated and horrified at the same time.

Mr. Frampton tried to maintain his dignity while he angrily gathered the balloons that bounced away from him each time he grabbed at them. He finally collected them all and put them into a paper sack with the wrappings and the box they came in. The name on the box was "Trojan".

### Miss Wilkinson and Spelling Bees

I'd never heard of "spelling bees". I was just a dumb kid from Vernal who didn't know they could. (I'm not sorry.)

Turned out I was about the best-est spelled in the mob. Know how I knew?

We had spelling bees! Plus we had weekly spelling tests. 25 new words each and every week and as sure as god made little green apricots, there was a spelling test on Friday. Barring Easter and Christmas breaks.

On Monday Miss Wilkinson would announce after lunch, "OK, children, take out your note books. I'm going to give your spelling words for the week." That was our cue to get dry mouths, shaky hands that had resolved over the weekend. Then she would give us the 25 new words for the week. Always 25. We wrote them in our pads of wide-lined foolscap. The words were presented in a rigid, inflexible formula. She would say the word once, exaggerating its pronunciation to be sure we heard all of the syllables. Then she would spell the word carefully, sometimes pointing out something important, like "e before i or i before e". After she had spelled it clearly, she would use the word in a sentence that she would repeat one time, then she would say the word again and spell it again:

"Wagon. W-a-g-o-n. 'The farmer put hay in a wagon'" Wagon. W-a-g-o-n."

After she had given us our 25 new words she would always ask if anyone had a question. I don't recall that many kids had questions, perhaps because she intimidated us, perhaps because she did such a good job of spelling the word and using it in a sentence to show its meaning, that there was no reason for anyone to have questions. After she had given us our new words on Monday, she didn't talk much about spelling during the week except to remind us that the spelling test would be Friday after lunch. Not unless one of us wanted to ask her a question about a word. She was always polite and careful when she answered questions so you knew you could ask her if you could work up the courage because even though you knew she was a good person, she had a sober countenance. I don't remember any laughter in her class, but in fairness, I have to point out that I don't recall it being actually frightening either. Just a middle of the road experience with a good teacher who brooked no nonsense and one who actually loved kids and cared that they learn.

The book end for the week was the Friday-after-lunch test. Miss Wilkinson would announce, "OK students. Time for your spelling test. Take out your spelling notebooks." There was a spiral-bound notebook manufactured specifically for spelling ordeals. It was about half the width of an 8 ½ inch wide page and 11 inches long, with a heavy cardboard cover, front and back, with perhaps 50 sheets of paper, wide-lined for the weekly trials. We had to have this kind of notebook to take the tests. If we didn't, we had to explain to Miss Wilkinson why we didn't have one and it better not be that we lost it or that we forgot it or that the dog ate it. Nope,

only poverty would excuse us in which case she would make sure after class that the needy kid got his spelling notebook. She was an odd mixture of the severe school marm with her long salt and pepper hair wound up around the back of her head in a Scandinavian braid, and a softy who took care of kids who really needed it.

After we all had pencils at the ready, she would systematically and methodically as a metronome (one of the spelling words) administer the test. No kidding. It was sort of like an induction physical, except it was every week. She followed a rigid formula again. She would say the word, then use it in a sentence, and then say the word again.

"Super.

I have a super headache.

Super."

She would then pause for perhaps 10 seconds so the class dummies -of which there were several varieties, scratched their heads, looked out the windows, touched the tip of their tongues with the tip of their pencils, frowned or scowled whichever suited their feeling at the moment, glanced surreptitiously (another of them words) at their neighbor but looked back with alacrity (another of them words) before Miss Wilkinson caught him doing it because sure as shooting she would shoot any kid who she caught cheating.

Man alive, it was like Moses coming down off the mountain when she caught a kid cheating. She stormed up out of her chair behind her desk and nearly ran to the malcreant (another of them words) at which point she said "Mr. Thompson. You are cheating. I have warned you. Give me your notebook." At which time the red-faced Mr. Thompson -this was in the days when kids still could be embarrassed at being caught- meekly handed up his notebook and Miss Wilkinson angrily ripped this week's test out of the book and told him, "You will get a zero for this test. And don't ever let me catch you cheating again. I will send you to the principal next time."

That, too, was something us kids in those days could be frightened with, being sent to the principal, particularly this one, Mr. Frampton. He made Miss Wilkinson seem Sweet and Mild even in her anger. When he was angry, he was like Vulcan when he smote a smoking molten iron rod on an anvil with his Hammer, flakes of flashing burning metal flying every which way. Don't get sent to the principal. He didn't usually strike kids but he did, in fact, have a heavy wooden paddle that he would use

on certain occasions, so there was real reason to fear him. Looking back, I don't have a problem with corporal punishment. Guess that's because I don't have a problem with capital punishment. It's a powerful deterrent and we could use a little bit of it today, wouldn't you say?

Miss Wilkinson wasn't a tall woman, perhaps 5 foot 4, a bit taller than mom, though the difference may have been the piled-up hair, and she seemed ancient not just because she was older but because she seemed to have a lot of wrinkles on her face and neck which our moms didn't. The most distinctive, and bothersome aspect of her person, was her breath. Either from coffee or cigarettes, or both, her breath would curl your hair. That tended to keep me at a distance.

Miss Wilkinson lived alone in an apartment on the second floor of the apartment across the street from the post office. I would think of her over there sometimes when I went down to get the mail, but I never would have dared go visit her. There was an occasion when I did visit her in that apartment so I got to see in it. For some reason mom had to go there and she took me with her, probably to drop off a present for Christmas or something like that. Mom appreciated good teachers and did offer gifts to them up there, though in Boston that never happened because it was a different ball game for many reasons.



Figure 368 Miss Wilkinson's apartment building in 2003

I wondered about her living alone, how it must be to live there without family. But I knew that she had friends that she visited with and did things with like go out in the country side sightseeing. I don't know if she was ever married and haven't a clue about where she went. I noted with a bit of sadness that in Mary Barry's book about this era in Seward that when she listed the school teachers, she left out Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Watts and the two Mrs. Connelys.

The building to the right of Miss Wilkinson's building is the Oddfellow's hall

where Andy's Army-Navy Surplus store was located. It's all wrong in this image because it's got shingles and is now missing the large display windows.

### Auxiliary Classrooms

The population of the town was only 2,000 so there really weren't a lot of kids but there were more than the school could hold. The school had been built in the 1920's to hold all twelve grades. But the 1950's saw the first bulge of post-war babies and the school could no longer hold all of us. New teachers had to be found, and new locations had to be arranged.

The baby boom was a new and unexpected phenomenon so no one had taken steps to deal with the additional number of students that seemed to suddenly appear. But they were there and Seward was legally bound to provide them an education - though a large number of us would have been more than willing to sit it out.

(Did you know that I am not a baby boomer? I was born before the US even entered the war and the boomers are the kids born after the war after their daddies came home. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was 12-07-1941, and I was born in March 1942. )

Over the next few years the town fathers, territorial government and the feds cobbled together enough dough to spring for a new high school which really was needed and which decompressed the original building. Meantime, however, something had to be done to get the kids into classrooms. The obvious -and only- solution in this tiny community was to find a sufficient number of sufficiently large rooms in the community that could be used during the week to stable a gaggle of kids and a teacher.

I remember three off-site locations because Dick attended one of them and I attended the other two:

- 1 - The Episcopal Church Undercroft
- 2 - The Methodist Church basement, and
- 3 - The Oddfellow's Hall, a second story location.

There may have been other locations but these are the only ones I remember.

## Methodist Church

I had the good fortune of attending one grade in the basement of the Methodist Church. It was a large open room that had room for 25 or so desks and students. I don't actually remember desks so we may have sat at small tables, but whatever the furniture was, we sat there every day for a school year.

The Methodist Church which has since burned down and been replaced faced the main street as seen in this photo of soldiers in a Fourth of July parade. These



guys were really impressive. I admired them and looked up to them. The Methodist Church stands there behind them. The entrance was from the back side. The church was 2 blocks away from my house so it didn't take long to walk to school, or go home for lunch.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade & Episcopal Undercroft

The Episcopal church was just a few houses down the street from our home



on the same side of the street. I attended school there for my 5th grade. It was sufficiently large to hold 25 kids who you can see in the adjoining class picture. This is a 2003 image that is accurate except for the addition of an enclosed porch. There were originally steps leading directly in to the church as in the following photo of the entire class with the teacher, Mrs. Moore.

Mrs. Moore was the teacher, a somewhat overweight, clinically depressed looking person who carried the burden of teaching like an anvil on her shoulders. For



good reason, no doubt. There are two significant memories of that year, one involved Dien Bien Phu, the other her method for retrieving stolen money. I thank her deeply for the former because it enriched my understanding of the damnable goings-on in South East Asia in the next 15 years.

As noted variously, ALL of us kids were well aware of WW II and of the Bombs (plural now since the Big One had also been experimentally detonated in 1951, making the atom bombs puny by comparison) and of the Korean "War" -as we called it in our unsophisticated (but accurate) way of viewing the world. It's worth noting that the movies of the time were often war-related. And one of the characteristics of movies in those days was the 5-10 minute "Newsreel" that frequently had clips of war-related items. So war was very much in our minds.

But we had never heard of Dien Bien Phu or French Indo-China. But for reasons I don't know today, but wish I did, the French who had occupied that region of South-East Asia were decisively beaten in 1954, and here's the point: Mrs. Moore read the newspaper story to us. That is my first memory of Viet Nam, and an ominous one it turned out to be.

The corrupt family -3 brothers in particular- who had joined with the French in subjugating the populace were overthrown. It was less the fact of the reason for the war and overthrow of a corrupt government, than for the manner of the overthrow, and the agent who accomplished. An insurgent guerilla army led by a man named Ho Chi Minh used tactics effectively to defeat the more professional, well-equipped French.

That was the man and the method of warfare that defeated the mighty US 18 years later.

I do remember Mrs. Moore reading other newspaper articles to us as a way to (A) kill time and (B) acquaint us with "Current Events". She succeeded in that, more perhaps than she could have imagined. It amazes me that this seemingly insignificant event in a land I had never heard of while the larger closer-to-home Korean War was winding down would stick in my memory simply because this teacher read an article and tried to explain why the event was important. Even after I started hearing of the Vietnamese problem in the mid-1960's it did not click in my memory that this was the same country and war and general until I heard the connection on a newscast one day. Then the pieces clicked into place. Thank you, Mrs. Moore.



There was a problem, however, that she dealt with poorly. Her method makes me wonder if she had children of her own because it was so inappropriate. First you have to understand the layout of the undercroft. It was a large empty room that was decorated by school desks in rows. Around the walls were blackboards, charts, maps and pictures. On each end was a short set of stairs that led out of the basement, and on the north side was a single bathroom inside of a large cloak room.

What happened this particular day was that someone had brought a large sum of money to school and during the morning discovered that it was missing. His or her conclusion was that one of us kids had gone into the cloak room and ransacked the pocket of the outercoat where the dough was housed. This person reported the theft to Mrs. Moore who was aghast at such behavior from us kids. So she swore to find the miscreant and punish him/her. But her method was bizarre.

She decided that the best way to recover the money was to have us individually do something that she apparently thought would give the robber enough cover that s/he would cough up the moola. She said that we would all sit in our places and that we would each go into the bathroom, shut the door, and then come back to our chair. We would follow each other until all of us had done this. At that time, she would go into the bathroom and find the money and return it to its owner.

Well, we sat there listening politely but we all saw the flaw in this process. In the end, in spite of wasting 5 minutes, the money didn't show up. She criticized us a bit and told us she was ashamed of us and so on and we all listened patiently. But us kids weren't really sure that the original sin was the only sin. We speculated - privately to be sure- that the robber just may have deposited his/her swag in the designated spot and returned to his/her chair and that one of the next kids checked the designated spot, found the loot, and liberated it again, and since that kid didn't have to go back to the bathroom again, s/he didn't have to return the money. I still don't know who stole it but I know her method was ineffective.

### Mr. Berg, Music Man

This man was an original who seemed out of place somehow. He came to town to replace a lady music teacher who I liked a great deal, so perhaps in my book he already had a strike against him. Teachers one can like are so rare that they are treasures, aren't they. She was, although I can't remember her name but I'll tell you about her next.

Of course, Lady Music Teacher had a leg up on any other kind of teacher because of the subject. I suppose one might argue that it was my own personal dad who did the deed, who set me up to be susceptible to someone who would teach me about music. That would persuade me. Truly.

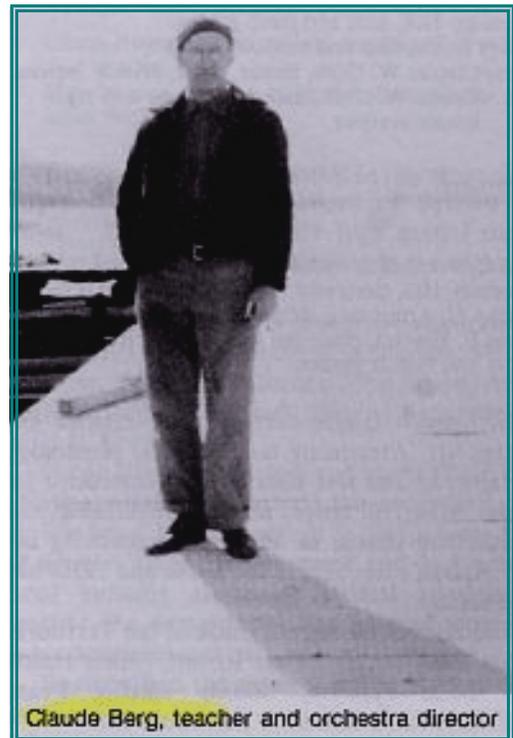
But having admitted that aspect of the music classes, I will still point out that Mr. Berg didn't make the grade. He was more irritating than inspiring. But once more I have to offer another thing in his defense. When he came to the Episcopal Church Undercroft, he had no source of music. Lady Music Teacher (LTM) had a real piano. So how did he make a melody to teach us the melody of new songs he wanted to teach us? A violin. A plain old violin in a case, which had just been outside in the cold so needed tuning and didn't stay tuned. Further, he came in freezing

from the outside while LMT was warm and toasty inside already. LMT had a record player and records that she could play to (A) entertain us and (B) teach us. He had nothing like that. Finally, LMT had her own classroom set up with pictures -that she had acquired over some years- on the walls about music, composers and so on while the Undercroft had no such resources. There was a huge number of differences that are coming into focus as I go through this exercise. See, an old man can figure some things out.

But still.....poor Mr. Berg had two intertwined personal habits that dis-endearred him to us kids. First, he got angry at us, really angry. LMT did too, but somehow she had a way about her that controlled us when we got rowdy and noisy. She was probably someone's mom so had learned the ropes at home and knew what to say and do to handle us but Mr. Berg had none of those skills. He would speak kindly to us and ask us to please be quiet and listen, and he'd maintain his cool during several attempts to settle us down. In the end, he blew up. He got very angry at us, got red in the face and was so angry that he couldn't think straight. Even us kids could see that and unfortunately more than one kid figured out how to push his buttons on purpose to get him in that state. And second, when he got into that state, dressed in his suit, white shirt and tie, holding his violin in one hand and bow in the other, he'd wave that bow at us and yell.

While flecks of white foam sat in the corners of his mouth, breaking loose occasionally.

Mr. Berg did run the music program well I think after all, particularly within to limitations he was saddled with. There is a program for the 1954 Christmas Program below that shows you what he did which was an accomplishment, particularly considering these resources. He apparently dropped the suit and tie and adapted to the environment later as shown by this photo from Mary Barry's book.



Claude Berg, teacher and orchestra director

## Lady Music Teacher

I don't remember her name, I can scarcely recall her face but she had as much impact on me as a teacher as any individual teacher did during my 12 years of hard labor cracking rocks in the yard. I'll show you what I mean:

- A. Grofe, "On the Trail"
- B> Grieg, "Hall of the Mountain King" and someone's "Dance"
- C. Thunderstorm in 4<sup>th</sup> movement of Beethoven's 6<sup>th</sup> (Pastoral Symphony)
- D. Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" (4<sup>th</sup> movement of 9<sup>th</sup>)
- E. "The Glendy Burke"
- F. Etc.

Those are specific things I can remember about her class today, Sept. 14, 2003 at least 50 years later. Don't ask me if I can remember that many specific things that I learned from any other teachers there - even Miss Wilkinson whom I really did like didn't make such an impression.

LMT had a way of making things understandable and interesting. You have to admit that it is a difficult task to help a 4<sup>th</sup> grade kid who's 10 years old understand that concept that a piece of classical -gag- music is expressing a visual image or any kind of image. For example, if you play a Debussy piece for kids that age and tell them that it portrays sunlight through trees or on the surface of a lake, the kids will just get a blank stare. But she didn't go to such difficult places for her purposes.

Her first example of music telling a story was Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite. I had no concept of a 'suite' and I don't think she bothered explaining the term but she did use the proper name of the composition. I was familiar with the Grand Canyon so had that benefit when starting. Then she said that Grofe was telling stories with the different parts of the composition and the one she used was "On the trail". She explained how people made the trip up and down the canyon on donkeys or burros and explained that they had to start early to get down and back in one day. And on the way, early in the morning, they would be up before the sun, so as they descended they would be able to see the sun rise. Then she played "On the Trail" and as the situation progressed, she'd call it out over the music to help us

understand what the music was expressing. I understood it.

Grieg was equally vivid. I was in love with folklore and myths and was reading anything I could find about Norse Mythology so I was prepared in that sense for Grieg. When LMT described the "Hall of the Mountain King" I had an already-formed image to fall back on and when she played the music, the two fit together.

Her classes were generally divided into two parts. One part it that just described where she explained things about music and illustrated them with music from records. Of course, these were the old 78 RPM records so they only lasted 2 minutes. The other part of the class was singing. Her class room had 3 rows of chair that didn't have arms, that faced the black board in the front where her piano sat. She'd pass out song books to us kids, knowing that if we had them in hand while she needed our attention that she'd not get it.

Then she'd tell us to turn to page such and such and if it was a familiar song she'd just start us together with her piano and sing all of the verses. If it was a new song, she'd sing the song herself while she played the melody by itself. She'd do this several times emphasizing whatever points she felt we needed. Then she'd play the melody while we all tried it with her. After we had learned it she'd add the other parts.

Amongst the song in that book were American folk songs, Stephen Foster, and Burl Ives kind of songs. I loved them. Some of them always created humor and some kids got carried away, exaggerating the words with their faces and mouths, as in the "Camptown Ladies". One song I liked in particular was the "Glendy Burke". This song was about a tugboat with that name on the Mississippi River, moving barges up and down. I still remember some of it:

"Oh, the Glendy Burke is a might fine boat  
With a might fine captain, too.  
He sits up there on the hurricane roof  
For to keep an eye on the crew.

Chorus:

Ho for Louisiana, I'm bound to leave this town,  
I'll take my duds and I'll tote'em on my back  
When the Glendy Burke comes down."

There were 4 or 5 verses. I'd sit by Brent and Clayton and we'd ornament the performance with "toot toot" syncopated at the right places. LMT didn't mind, oddly enough. I suppose that's because she could tell we were enjoying the music and as long as we weren't disruptive, she let it go, perhaps even enjoyed it herself though she'd never let on.

### Mrs. Connolly, Jr. and the Methodist Church

The Methodist pastor, Reverend Malin, was a rosy cheeked do-gooder from the "lower 48", from "the outside", who always grinned an ivory-toothed grin and seemed always in the winter to wear this ridiculous fluffy red fake fur hat -that the sourdoughs wouldn't be caught dead in- I guess to show his solidarity with the folk or to dramatize his realization that he was roughing it in the wild with his little band of believers. Anyway, he was nice and allowed the town to use the basement of his little white church -a real basement, not an "undercroft" as it was over at Father Clapp's Episcopal church. It -the church with the basement- was located about 2 blocks from my house so it was a quick commute each morning. It was close enough to home that I could skip over and get a bite before I had to be back in class which was better than a sack lunch.

For the record, in those days lunch boxes that kids took to school were just like our dads' lunch boxes, the largish domed black metal boxes with a handle along the top, inside of which was a real thermos bottle that carried whatever moms could find to put in them that morning. Pretty funny looking to see a second grader lugging one of these to school - needed a wagon - or a pack mule. Paper bags were used a lot for this reason - and were re-used, too. Sometimes the bags were small grocery sacks, not the neat little lunch sacks made for the purpose.

In the bottom of the lunch pail or sack was a sandwich, a boiled eggs, or some carrots, perhaps a plastic container of something like pie or a few cookies, and apple or on really special days a candy bar. We'd go to the cafeteria or lunchroom and sit on benches along the tables, put our huge lunch boxes on the tables, tip the lid back and then practically fall inside while we peered in to see what was there. Eating was serious business so kids ate and then went outside to finish the recess. It was much later that the pretty silk-screened boxes with designs of cartoon characters and flowers made their appearance. Perhaps there were already in place in the "lower

48" but we didn't see them in Seward.

The teacher when we did our tour of duty in the Methodist Church Basement was a young Mrs. Connolly. The original Mrs. Connolly was a middle-aged art teacher, the mother-in-law of Junior. I sort of liked Senior basically but she made me feel very bad and I'll tell you about that later. Her son married a woman who was named Mrs. Connolly, at least after the marriage, and I call her "junior". This younger woman was pressed into service as a teacher in Seward I think when I look back from the vantage point of my adulthood who also did a heck of a lot of teaching.

Mrs. C. Jr. was young, not that disqualifies her from teaching. But there was a greenness, and unpreparedness, and inability to cope with the normal stresses of classes that suggest that she really wasn't qualified or trained for the job. In those days I am sure that there was no requirement for even a teaching certificate of even college education. What would you do in a berg like Seward if you had those rules? You wouldn't find teachers, and with the baby boomer bulge someone had to be thrown into the breach. And this poor young woman was thrown in. And it showed.

She tried mightily to teach and she tried to control behavior in the classroom but basically could not. She'd get angry and out of control and just didn't have a great sense of appropriate handling of kids. On one occasion in the classroom, not out on the playground, something was going on with kids moving around the classroom. She had been trying to get us to do something, like maybe go sit down, and finally reached her limit. In a burst of ill-advised bravado, this 5 foot 4 inch 100 pound lady swarmed over a little kid, grabbed him and threw him up over her shoulder in a fireman's carry. The kid was so shocked that he didn't resist, else he would have knocked her down. She paraded him across the front of the room to show that she could in fact control kids.

But she couldn't. The year was a waste as far as learning went. Teachers like Miss Wilkinson and Mr. Watts could control the kids, who were basically good kids who just got the bit between their teeth if they could, and even managed to pour some information into them. My year doing time with Junior was a waste overall. I did feel sorry for her but not enough that it really made a difference in my sense of her. An insecure kid is not likely to focus on the trials and travails of an incompetent adult who is harshly managing him.

### Mrs. Connolly, Puffins, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

**M**rs. Connolly came to Seward full of herself and her artiness. She did end up teaching art at the school and probably got her fill of us kids. She was one of these teachers who had pets. And goats I guess you'd call the opposite. Her pets could do no wrong and were allowed many privileges that the rest of us were not allowed to have, although she made it appear that we didn't get the privilege simply because the timing was wrong. In fact, any time was wrong for certain kids.

I think I'll just scan in the actual picture because I have carted it around all these years. See, there it is. That is the topic of this story.



Figure 374 Puffins a la Audobon

The pet that I resented the most was an Indian kid, some sort of racial mixture of which there many varieties what with the native people and the wide variety of sailors from all over the world who passed through these little towns. As a kid this kid was actually OK. I liked him and got along with him, sort of low-slung Hispanic-looking kid with wavy black hair and pupil-less eyes, who was probably pretty badly damaged I guess today looking back at him - he rarely spoke, rarely smiled, was a loner, slouched against the wall, smoked and was tough in an authentic silent James Dean sort of way.

For some reason Mrs. Connolly decided to adopt him as her cause I guess, though it may have been just because he had a certain chutzpah that affected you and made you like him, made you want to root for him in whatever contest he was internally engaged. During art class she would frequently stop by his desk to observe his drawing. He had natural talent. I could see it because I hung around a lot of it on the ol' homestead. I could see it. He was good, nice drafting skills, nice sense of composition and choice of topics. Mrs. Connolly would spend far more time with him than with any of us other kids, carefully explaining to him about perspective and how to blend colors to get another color and so on. I resented that. His paintings did excel compared to most of ours, but guess why. It was in part because of the extra attention and instruction that he received.

Well, the time when I parted ways with her in my mind was at the end of an art show that was sponsored by a women's group, and staged in the Odd Fellow's Hall. Their "hall" consisted of 2 large rooms with a kitchen in between, two bathrooms and two large closetish back rooms. I'll tell you about the mysterious contents of one of those rooms down below in the section about class in these rooms. The large rooms lent themselves to public displays like art shows. I look back and sort of grin to myself. "Art show" in Seward. Chuckle. But it was good that such things were held and that artists were encouraged and that kids saw and heard and were exposed to it. Whatever pretentiousness was involved in these shows, they fulfilled an important purpose for a tiny frontier community perched on the edge of the ocean with no commerce with any city. Either the town provided for itself or it was not provided for at all. So this lady's club put on an art show each year and it had a section for kids.

For my last birthday in Vernal which means after dad had gone to Seward, mom and dad gave me a book that I have loved through the years. Even today I see

it with great affection and recall the wonderment of it all, when I turned the pages slowly, savoring and pondering the pictures. It was a hardback book of Audubon's prints, one picture to each side of a page. Absolutely grand gift for an 8 year old. [Isn't it an interesting gift for an 8 year old? What caused them to give that to me? I don't know but it is not your normal 8-year old's present is it.] Whenever I was trying to pick a topic to draw which I did on my own at home, I was more likely to turn to this book than any other for inspiration.

This year I had decided that I wanted to draw a picture of puffins. Their whimsical striped beaks on roly-poly bodies and orange feet appealed to me. I'd looked at them for years and decided I would reproduce the print in my own sketch pad, a spiral bound one with dense lovely heavy paper that made me feel competent. I laid the picture out freehand, looking back and forth between the book and the sketchpad. It had a nice composition. The birds stood on the beach low in the picture, with the horizon being high in the picture. Thirds, always pleasing. Then I colored them with a small set of colored pencils that mom and dad had given me. Only 8 short pencils in the set in a cardboard box with a little window but they were wonderful. Colors came out of these pencils, and they could be blended together to create new colors. It was many years later that I saw tin boxes filled with even hundreds of pencils and I about decompensated. I wanted one of those enormous sets so badly. Oh my, what a treasure. Hard to conceive of the richness of such a resource.

What finally ruptured my friendship toward Mrs. Connolly was her judging of the kids' artwork. When I learned that kids could enter pictures in the art show to be judged, with three prizes for the three "best" pictures, I, with the confidence of an innocent kid, decided I'd enter my puffin picture. I knew it was good for a kid my age. I really knew it. So I entered it and anxiously awaited the announcement that I got first place. It felt that clear to me that my picture deserved that honor, that it excelled. I looked at the other pictures and still felt that way.

But when the prizes were awarded, I did not get first prize. First prize went to the Indian kid. Remember who the art teacher was and who her pet was and who the judge was. His picture was good, what could I say, but so was mine. I don't remember the topic of his picture but his work was generally simpler than the puffins which required a great deal of work, not that the amount of work should determine 'quality'. I was awarded second prize and received some sort of art thing, but I was not happy with that. But what's a kid going to do about it.

Parents can, however, do something. One of them did. Mom and dad had obviously seen the kids' art and knew that my piece was excellent. I don't know the details of what happened nor do I know what motivated them to do what they did, but it pleased me then as it does now that they took it upon themselves to inquire about the judging of my piece. I wonder if they knew, probably through me, that Mrs. Connolly favored that kid anyway. Since he was her pet whom she lavished attention on, she probably should have disqualified herself as a judge. But that didn't happen in Seward. The women's club asked her to be the judge. Who else could they ask but the lone art teacher in the town. She looked, she evaluated and she pronounced.

As I recall it, my parent's conversation with Mrs. Connolly was basically one question and one answer.

**Question:** "Why did Ron's picture only get  
second place?"

**Answer:** "Because he obviously traced it and  
that's not art work."

Ha. There it was. Mrs. Connolly, without investigating how I did the piece at all, decided that the picture could only be that good because it was traced. Besides she knew that she didn't spend any time with me in class so how could I be doing that well on my own? [She forgot my secret weapon, i.e. "my dad" who was generous in his critiques...] My parents felt that she had done that just so that she could justify giving first place to her pet. The proof was the print in the book.

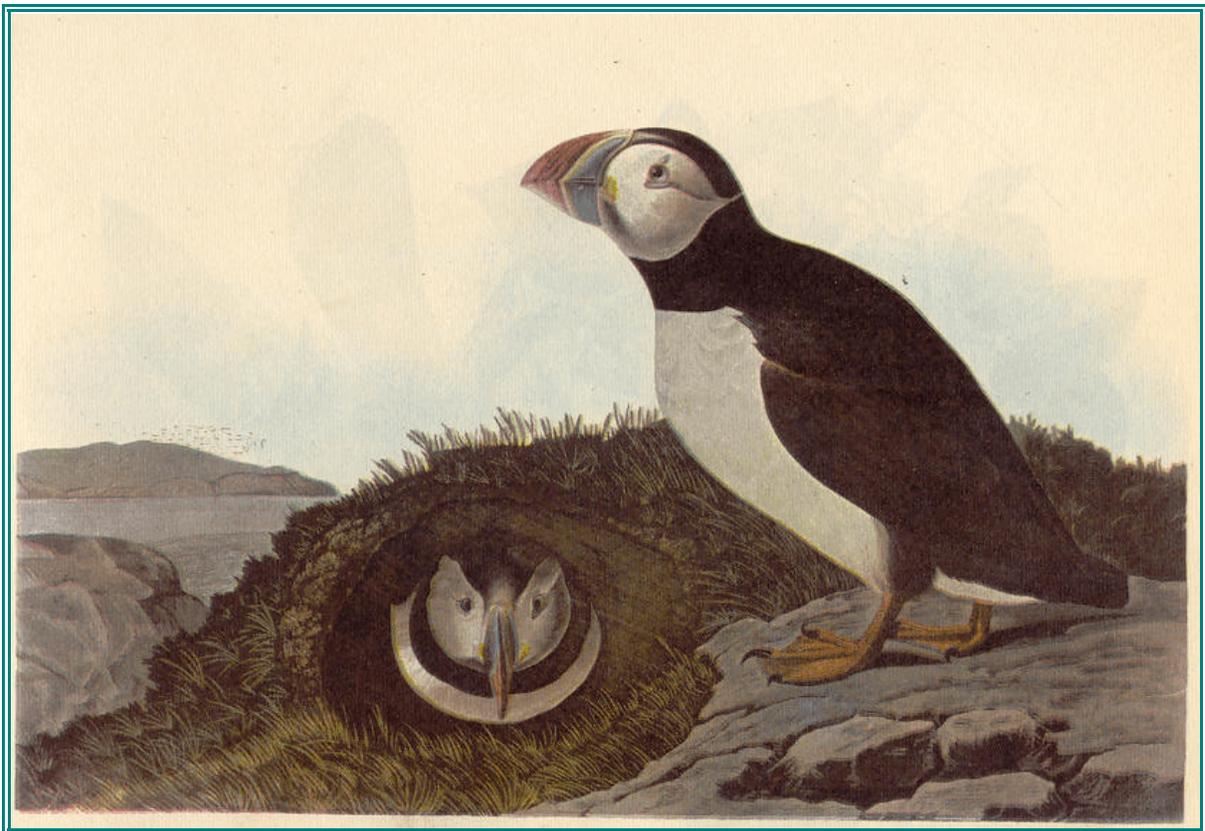
The sad thing about this episode is that it stalled my development as an artist. Childish? Absolutely. But I was a child. It stopped me. To this day. An impediment that is simply insurmountable in spite of (1) the fact that I understand how it came to be and (2) I know I am a damn good draftsman -at least. And that's how we all grow or don't grow. Her rejection of my work as tracing was depressing, like what's the use.

Mrs. Connolly obviously either did not like me, or liked the half-breed more - or something equally unfair. I obviously



did not "trace" the darn thing. The other fact you are missing in these two images is the difference in size. The original was perhaps 6 x 8 inches while my "traced" version was 8 x 12. Not likely was it that I had 'traced' it. My dad would have tanned my hide if I had traced. Connolly didn't know that. He would tolerate any amount of poor drafting, but if you were caught 'tracing', you would be on a ration of water and bread for a year. He did not tolerate that cheap technique.

Here's the actual image I looked at to create my drawing. On the one hand, it bears a strong resemblance to my drawing above, but on the other, it is so



sophisticated and so on that it is embarrassing that I show you my drawing. The fact that I was only 12 when I did it palliates the embarrassment.

17. Nine Girls

The high school students put on a play in 1954. I attended because it was a major production, the major one of the year. It was held in the gymnasium on the

<p><b>THE SCENES</b></p> <p>Place: Sorority clubhouse in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains.</p> <p>Time: Three years ago.</p> <p>Prologue: A spring evening, in the present.</p> <p>Act I, Scene I—A Saturday evening three years earlier. Scene II—11:00 the same evening.</p> <p>Act II, Scene I—Sunday morning. Scene II—Sunday night.</p> <p> </p> <p>STAGE MANAGER ..... Pete Wagner, Jeff Potter</p> <p>STAGE PROPERTIES ..... Audrey Horton, Murlene Trevethan</p> <p>SOUND EFFECTS ..... Pete Wagner, Jeanene Schaefermeyer</p> <p>ADVERTISING ..... Murlene Trevethan, Tucker Jones, Janis Jeffrey</p> <p>TICKETS AND PROGRAMS ..... Ava Doyle, Hazel Brossow</p> <p>MUSIC ..... Mr. Berg</p> <p>PROMPTERS ..... Helen Carpenter, Jeanene Schaefermeyer</p> <p>DIRECTORS ..... Mrs. Campen, Miss McGrath</p>	<p><b>"NINE GIRLS"</b></p> <p><b>CAST</b></p> <p>Jane .....AVA DOYLE</p> <p>Mary ..... MURLENE TREVETHAN</p> <p>Freida ..... HAZEL BROSSOW</p> <p>Alice ..... AMY RUTLEDGE</p> <p>Eve ..... JANICE FRAMPTON</p> <p>Sharon (Glamorous) ..... CINDY COLEMAN</p> <p>Shirley ..... AUDNEY HORTON</p> <p>Betty (Tennessee) ..... PATSY WILLIAMS</p> <p>Stella (Shotput) ..... JANIS JEFFREY</p> <p>Fhyllis (appears in Prologue) ..... SARA PECK</p> <p> </p>
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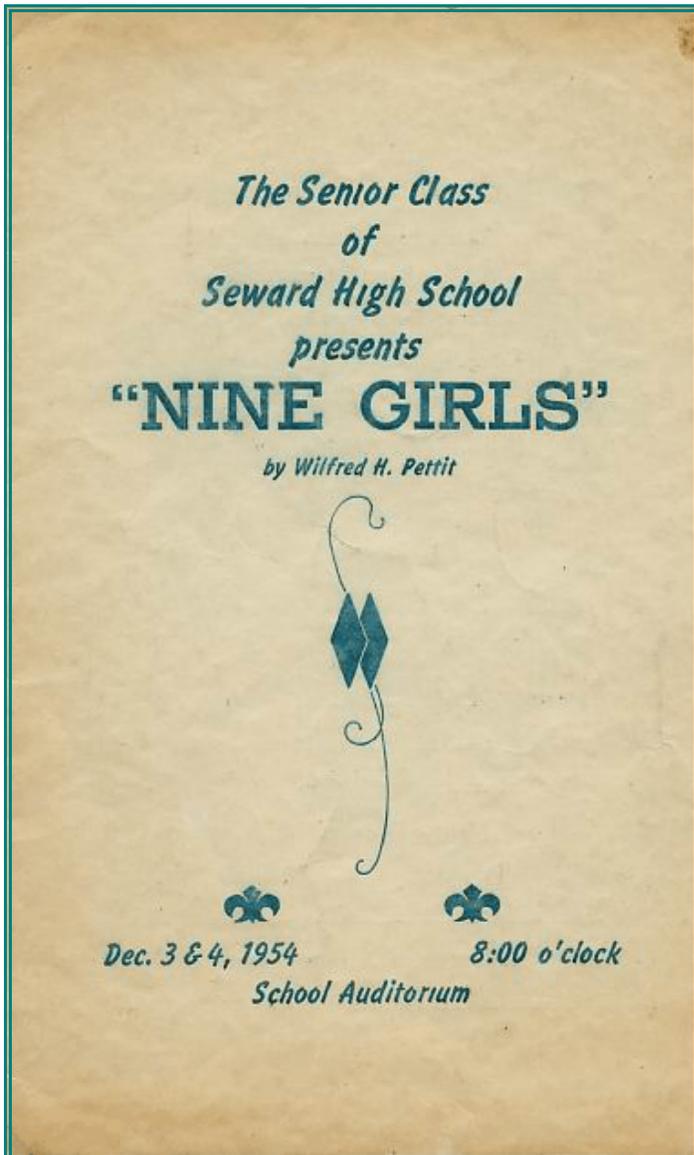
stage that was on the north end of the building. I sat on one of the front rows so I could get the full effect. It was an interesting experience. Somehow I think I expected more than there was, probably because I was sort of equating this production with what I saw on the silver screen. But the nice thing about this production was that I knew most of the kids who were participating, either by name or by face. The school wasn't large, nor was the town so people got to know of each other even if they never spoke. That was the case with these high school kids who seemed to me to be basically adults. I didn't have the perspective of an adult so didn't realize that to an adult a high school kid is still a kid. They were giants to me.

This was particularly true with those kids who were snotty to us younger kids. One of the lead girls was of that type. This is an excerpt from one of dad's photos that I like because it shows just how snotty she was. She was obviously incensed that he was taking a photo that she was going to be in and was trying hurriedly to get out of the way. Couldn't beat the trigger finger, however. I am not positive but I think this was Murlene Trevethan.

The start time was surprising. 8:00 p.m.



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s about the time we were required to go to bed even at that age so it was a luxury to be allowed to stay p.

he case and supporting staff are familiar in general. Janice rampton was Clayton's older sister but she was so old that she didn't pay any attention to me. Jeanine chaefermeyer was Jim's daughter who lived next door on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. eter Wagner, Janis Jeffrey and va Doyle are other names of particular meaning to me, although I can't remember any specifics about them.

he play was figuratively dark. I don't remember anything about the plot but I remember one of the

scenes in particular. There was darkness on the stage like the lights went out in the room where the actors were. Shortly after the lights went out there was lightening through a side window followed by a bolt of thunder. The part that fascinated me was the need to know how it was the sound men made that thunder because it sounded real. I guess I could have asked Jeanie but she, too, was so old that she didn't pay any attention to me. I played in her house a lot with Vonnie and Darrell but she was either not there or if she was there, she ignored me like I was something slightly offensive. Like high school students do to younger kids. You experienced it yourselves.

The program is on a heavy stock, not quite like card stock but much heavier than regular paper. The printing is of such a fine quality that I surmised that it was printed commercially.

### 2 cent bottles of milk

**M**an alive, this was one of the finest things about school. 8 ounce bottles of milk, real, whole milk fresh from the cow for 2 pennies. Two pennies!! I didn't understand at the time that this meant that the price was being subsidized, especially since this milk was actually produced in Alaska hence was enormously expensive. To give you a frame of reference, consider this: a dozen eggs prepared by Alaskan chickens and delivered to Werner's market cost \$1.10 a dozen at the time. I don't know what a gallon of whole milk cost but it must have been enormously expensive at least for our table. We drank powdered milk, reconstituted condensed milk, or canned whole milk. We also ate powdered eggs in Seward. I suppose that we had cold storage eggs on rare occasions, eggs shipped in refers from Seattle but they were expensive and didn't really taste much better than powdered eggs anyway. In fact, I like the flavor of powdered eggs.

Anyway, the school board and the local dairy man must have worked out a deal where he would provide these 8 ounce bottles of whole milk -complete with the cardboard bottle top- such that us kids could buy a bottle to drink with our lunch for



Figure 380

<http://www.theseoldthings.com/images/ad5042bg.jpg>

a mere two pennies. That was about the best part of the day, to go to the cafeteria with our lunch pail, stand in line anxiously rubbing two pennies until it was our turn to offer them in return for an ice cold bottle of milk.

We'd find a place at one of the tables in the cafeteria to sit and place our lunch pail and bottle of milk in front of the chair and sit down. Then we'd open our pail, take out the sandwich, carrots wrapped in waxed paper or whatever was there and pry the lid off the milk. Then eat a feast, just because of the milk that we never had at home. It was something we drank limitlessly in Vernal

### Clapping Erasers in the Boiler Room

The boiler room was down in the bowels of the school, the proper place for any self-respecting heating device that fills the whole building with smells and heat. It wasn't forced air, but it was central heating. Do you know how that was possible? Steam radiators. The old-fashioned steam radiators that were set in each room and plumbed into the boiler device in the basement. Each radiator had a knob that you'd turn to make the room hotter or colder, at least in theory. Truth was that the valves didn't seem to really make much different, but they kept you busy for a while until you got distracted with something else. The other end of the radiator had another valve that was activated by pressure. When the steam pressure inside the radiator got to a dangerous level, that valve would open and bleed off hot hissing steam.

The most annoying thing about radiators were "water hammers" or "steam hammers". I don't understand the physics behind this phenomenon but I can tell you it's irritating to hear it in the middle of the night when you thought you'd sleep. For some reason, on some occasions when steam is actively flowing through the heating system, a loud banging or pounding noise is produced by the steam inside of something. This loud is transmitted throughout the house or building through the pipes, almost as loud in each room as in the original location. This hammering will persist for 10 minutes or so until things equilibrate or the ghost gives up.

The school had radiators in all of the rooms heated from the boiler room. In the winter when it was too cold to go outside, the teacher would grab one of us kids, usually a boy, handed the erasers and ordered to go to the boiler room to "clap the erasers". The term 'clap' came from the usual method of dealing with the excess

chalk dust that accumulates in these heavy felt erasers over a week or so. You'd hold two erasers in your hands, bottom surfaces facing each other, and then 'clap' them together like you were clapping your hands though you didn't make as much noise. The smacking together of the erasers stirred up a cloud of chalk dust that made you sneeze but the erasers were cleaned enough to last another week. If they weren't cleaned regularly, the black board -yep, real old fashioned slate blackboards- would be white like a cloud and when the teachers erased something, all she did was smear the cloud over it. It made pretty patterns and streaks on the board, but reading of the hieroglyphics was difficult.

In the boiler room, we didn't usually clap the erasers. There was a little electric motor device that looked like a grinding wheel in a machine shop, except that instead of carborundum wheels to sharpen steel, there were soft brushes. When these brushes whirred, you'd hold the under surface of the eraser against it and watch the dust fly off. You'd move the eraser slowly back and forth across the brush to cleanse the entire surface and this was actually more effective than old-fashioned clapping.

The other housekeeping chore that was associated with these slate blackboards was washing. Even when the teacher used fleshly clapped erasers, the time would come that it was impossible to really erase the chalk enough. At that point, over a weekend usually, the janitor would be summoned and he'd do his duty. He'd bring a bucket of water and a chamois-covered pad about a foot long. He'd dip this thing in the water and then slowly and systematically wash the board, starting at one end. When he could see that he was smearing and not washing, he'd wash the chamois thing in the water and continue. The result was a shiny black board with faint even streaks that showed the strokes made by the janitor, which disappeared on the first morning when the teacher started to use them. But they were a nice sign on Monday morning that things were well in the universe.

### Obscene Ruler Figures

You know the wooden foot-long rulers that have the silver metal edge that had holes in them for a 3-ring binder? Well, there were a pair of kids who sat behind me in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade I think it was who got real creative with those rulers. The teacher was Mr. Watts who was so far away that he couldn't really see

what they were doing. I could but I didn't understand it. One of the kids was a large Indian who broke a ruler into smaller pieces on a recess to avoid the noise. Then, instead of paying attention to his studies, he took a ball point pen -yes, we had some of those- and on the flat surface of the ruler he drew the figure of a female on one piece and a male on the other. Then he broke a small fragment and stuck it into the 3-ring holes of each piece. I didn't understand what it was about but I could tell from the snide looks and behaviors of the other kids that it was something dirty.

### Opera Singer vs. Students

In tiny frontier towns there were often a few hardy individuals who harbored love and affection for culture. Seward was not exempt. Out of the population of 2,000 men, women, dogs and children there was a band of women devoted to the cause of culture and refinement. They inflicted it upon us every chance they got, which, thank god, wasn't too often, what with the cost of freighting it into town from Seattle, a long way down the coast.

These sincere women -only women teachers and preachers indulged in culture- needed an occasional fix of culture. Life, otherwise was a pretty parched thing. They formed a women's club and met regularly. The members dressed in finery to attend and -be seen and- be enlightened by a speaker or a display. Dad did some presentation one time about his art. This is the same bunch that sponsored art shows including the one where I showed my puffin picture. They were held in a church or the Oddfellow's Hall. Tables with white table cloths and a few flowers were a bit more toney than the rest of our lives.

Every so often they were overcome by a fit of grandiosity. And they would make arrangements to bring stunning exemplars of culture into town, stuff from "The Lower 48". When that happened, we were in for it. The Opera Singer was such an experience.

Dear Pink-Cheeked, grinning Reverend Malin, the Methodist preacher, opened his sanctuary to a variety of non-religious activities, e.g. he allowed the school to use his basement as a classroom. The Women's Club of Seward availed itself of his courtesy. Plus it was probably free - though it is not entirely unlikely that the Sunday offering might have swelled just a bit. The good Reverend always showed his

solidarity with the quaint frontier mob that met him on his arrival. One manner of demonstrating that he understood how difficult things were for us poor benighted folks who really did need The Light was his hat. He always wore a preposterous, pompous, laughable, huge, fluffy, fire engine red clipped mouton hat with enormous ear flaps. That he bravely tied up over the top.

In any event the contract was signed and the visit was planned. For a soprano. Now if that wasn't about the most grating bit of culture to foist on the community, I can't imagine what it would be. The tone of the town is shown by the fact that it was a draw between the forces of good and evil: there was one bar for every church. Even-steven. Introducing a soprano, in a church, wasn't enough to permanently change the balance. But it sure raised hell for a while.

In spite of the fact that us kids felt pretty resistant to culture in general and sopranos in particular we were each determined to scrounge up the price of admission. We'd seen them shrieking in movies so had a sense of what they represented. In addition, candy bars were a nickel, so a two-bit piece was difficult to part with. We naturally laid it on pretty thick at home, pleading and pouting, whatever it took to get the quarter. Had to be a quarter, not a combination of smaller silver. More respectable some how. The motivation for this urge to get the money was not a burning interest in seeing the soprano. Indeed, more than one kid already was mimicking her to sniggering audiences. Caterwauling is what they did. The reasons for the urgency to get the price of admission were simple:

- 1) Skipping classes, and
- 2) Peer pressure.

Most of us collected the requisite quarter and were allowed to go. The teachers made checkmarks by our names in The Roll Book, granting us the privilege of skipping out. That's just how some of them regarded it, though some teachers probably welcomed the respite. Perhaps some foresaw what was about to happen.

This concert took place in the spring so the roads -not paved streets- were muddy. Like they were in the summer. And the fall. We walked in classes, more or less, to Reverend Malin's Place. Along the way a couple of kids that I was walking with told dirty stories. I could tell they were dirty by the way they sniggered. One of them was about a couple of insects that explored a body and got together to compare discoveries. The punch line was about a couple of mountains with berries on

the top, but I didn't get it. I just remember the punch line because it was so weird.

When we arrived at the church, the anxious teachers herded us into rows assigned by grade. We sat down, curious but skeptical. We were cautioned to pay attention and to not make any noise because this was something special that we hadn't seen before. No kidding.

The soloist and her accompanist appeared from the side of the church. She was attired in a silky full-length dress, which struck us as out of place. We were wearing levis or cords, and loggers or hip boots. But we kept our opinions to ourselves. This cartoon conveys the image we had in mind, however, not very flattering but this is about how kids viewed opera. In reality, she was much smaller than this woman.

She then did the worst thing she could have done. She patronized us. She condescended to us. Her words and her attitude showed that she understood that she was bestowing her enormous talents on us by sacrificing to come all the way to rustic Seward. We were privileged. She began by explaining what she was going to sing and what the words meant.

After the learned discourse, she stepped back, took a deep breath, concentrated and with great dignity nodded her head. The accompanist started on the tinny piano. We had actually never seen this kind of performance before so actually were captured by the drama. Hushed, we sat observing, not entirely entrapped but sufficiently interested to be respectful. Then she let loose with an unexpected banshee shriek that scared the beejesus out of us. Kids quickly recovered. Some of them showed that they had not been surprised by snickering.

The noise in the audience irritated the poor woman, but she just frowned at us and continued. What else was a cultured lady going to do in the face of adversity. But the kibitzing became a bit louder in spite of the teachers' attempts to quiet us. Now the singer began to show irritation as she lost her concentration. After she finished that piece, she commented on our rudeness, another fatal error.

That encouraged the "wise acres", as they were called in those days, to become louder. Her reprimand simply emboldened them. Her response was to sing louder, to sing over the noise as the horrified teachers wished they had agreed to



Figure 381

<http://www.cottagesoft.com/~songbird/artists/singer09.gif>

stay in their class rooms with the kids who didn't scrounge up two-bits.

### Christmas Tree Bra

William H. Seward School had a large Christmas tree every Christmas. This large tree was set up and decorated in the Gym each year for the Christmas program and taken down after New Year. This particular year, my 6th grade, the used tree only made it outside the back door where it lay on its side until spring. The janitor was too busy to haul it down the road half a mile to the city dump by the lagoon.

Clayton Frampton was one of my two best friends. He was a skinny kinetic sort of kid with buck teeth and he grinned a lot. He wore thick-rimmed Buddy Holly style eye glasses. In the summer wore a brown felt beanie shaped like a sailor's hat like the one I'm wearing here except that I think he really did have a little propellor standing straight up on the top. It even turned when he ran. Being the son of the school principal made him an unknown quantity to most kids. They didn't know whether to fear, respect, ignore or ridicule him. It didn't occur to them to just be friendly. I liked him so he and Brent Whitmore and I were a threesome of nerdy little kids who played together a lot.

Clayton and that defunct Christmas tree provided an enormous amount of hilarity for the rest of that particular school year. Because it mysteriously started wearing a white bra one weekend. On Monday morning, there it was. That intimate apparel triggered something hysterical in us. Each time we saw it, one of us would whack the other on the arm and start giggling, looking sideways at the other. Then the giggling turned to laughter, sort of sniggers in the back of the throat and would finally escalate into whole-body belly laughs. By this time we had to hold on to each other because our knees had turned to jelly and we were in danger of falling. Giddy, hysterical, laughing uncontrollably every time we passed it. We would not have been able to rationally explain our reaction if someone had insisted we do. Indeed, we



would have rather died.

It got so if one of us, sitting in our desks in class, even pointed surreptitiously at the window on that side of the building with a mock leer, we were both in danger of being expelled from school for our riotous disruptive behavior. It was such an extraordinarily powerful emotional topic for pre-very-close-to-pubescent boys. The odd thing about it is that I don't recall that we ever actually discussed it. We probably did but the ownership really wasn't the issue. It simply was a fixture in the landscape possessed of this extraordinary meaning. The symbol was there and a naked girl herself could not have provoked any more hilarity than her bra did. Indeed, the girl would have shocked and embarrassed us. We never wondered whose it was or what sporting event led to its being hung on the tree.

### Raffling Dad's Painting

The Seward High School Band, perhaps 35 players, needed new uniforms about the time I ventured with great anxiety into the band and public performances. The band teacher contacted vendors by surface mail to get quotes for a set of different-sized uniforms and then presented the information to Mr. Frampton, the principal. There was no question that the purchase of uniforms was not possible with the small school budget. This budget came primarily from the town of 2,000 people, so obviously could not be very large especially since it had to fund 12 grades of teachers and administrators. There was some federal money but certainly not enough to pay for a large out-of-budget request of the size necessary to purchase 40 full uniforms.

So the school board, recognizing that the old uniforms really did need to be replaced, cast about for alternate ways to generate the money. They fell back on the old stand-bys of the era, bake sales at the school and in businesses. The proceeds from these sales were all profit since the goods themselves were donated to the cause, but the amount of money needed was so great that bake sales just wouldn't do the job.

When Dad had lived in Seward before WW II, he had done various artistic things for the Alaska Shop. I remember seeing in racks in the Alaska Shop black and white post cards he had done in charcoal of huskies. So he was a already a familiar quantity when he returned 8 years later. This was a small town where everyone knows everyone, and many of his previous friends were still alive and

kicking, as they'd say.

He continued to draw and paint during this second stay, and his work sold easily. This was partly because his topics were basically Alaskan, Eskimos, snow scenes, caches, and mountains. Alaskans were proud of Alaska. It was also because he was familiar to people, sort of a "favorite son". People liked to be able to say, "I have that painting Jim did of that little Eskimo baby and bear cub." It was a sign of good taste and affluence I suppose.

So as the school board, in its hip boots and suit coats, hunted for a sure-fire way to raise the rest of the money, someone quietly allowed as how you can raffle off just about anything, especially for a good cause and make a lot of money easily. And another surmised as how they bet that Jim just might be persuaded to throw in a thing he done, seeing as how he had a kid in the band, wasn't that right?

So the decision was made and a delegation was deputized to formally visit Jim, hats in hand, to play upon his civic sensibility in the hope, which is all it could be where Jim was concerned, that he might see a way to help the cause. I have no idea where this pow wow took place, but in the end Jim agreed. But I am as sure as I know my name that Jim didn't go gracefully. Good ol' Marie was behind his "agreement" to "donate" one of his paintings, and if the truth were known, I wouldn't be at all surprised to hear that it was Marie who put forth the idea in the first place - whether or not she was at that committee meeting. She had a way of leading Jim by the nose his entire life without realizing it.

So after a sigh of relief, the enterprise took on an urgent sense of mission. Band uniforms would be purchased for sure. Someone made the raffle tickets out of colored construction paper, someone undertook arranging the campaign to sell them to businesses and private citizens, someone was assigned to create the "thermometer" to reflect each week's take and so on.

The canvassing process not unexpectedly drafted the members of the band, who after all, were going to get to wear these gorgeous gold and green uniforms, so don't you think they should participate? I found my sweaty palm filled with a wad of tickets that I had to personally sell.

I had mixed feelings here. One, as a band member I did have a sense of obligation to help, but I was only a 6th grader for heck sake. Second, I was Jim's son and it embarrassed me to be pedaling his art work. Even if it was for a good cause, it still embarrassed me.

## Clarinet in the Band

Somewhere along the line mom and dad decided that each of us kids should "learn to play an instrument" and further, that we had a duty, nay a 'civic duty' whateverintheheck that meant to a 12year old- to play the damn thing in the school band. I would rather have been boiled in oil. But somehow the whims of our parents become our mandates, or decrees, or dictates, and we find that we somehow agreed exactly with them , that "yes, we REALLY did want to look like an Easter parrot in that stupid uniform marching down the muddy street getting our shoes full of water squeaking badly off key", just so that they would stay off our back. That's the reality. Sounds harsh and is exaggerated but not by much.

Now, don't misunderstand me after I said what sounds so venomous. Kids are histrionic, no perspective, no balance of reality, so they react as they are inclined to react. Down in their hearts, from their guts, with pure emotion, which represents their reality in a way that 'reality' is never 'real' for adults who have learned to sublimate their real feelings and emotions and responses to the crap foisted on them by the world. And this business of putting on a brightly colored costume with this stupid hat, marching in formation down a street when I was positive that the entire world was jeering was painful for me. But I understood well that if I wanted to be able to live in that house, if I wanted to be fed, if I wanted to be 'loved' -which I doubted the entire time- wanted to be clothed, to be bathed, etc. then I darn well better discover that I "Really wanted to play in the band.". I did.



Here's a photo of that results of that experiment. Here we are on the Fourth of July one soggy July in Seward wearing gold and green -I think it was- uniforms. This was often the hottest day of the year, so you probably can extrapolate from this photo and figure out what the weather and climate was like in Seward. See the low clouds hanging on Mt. Marathon in the background? And the wet ground? This is "Main



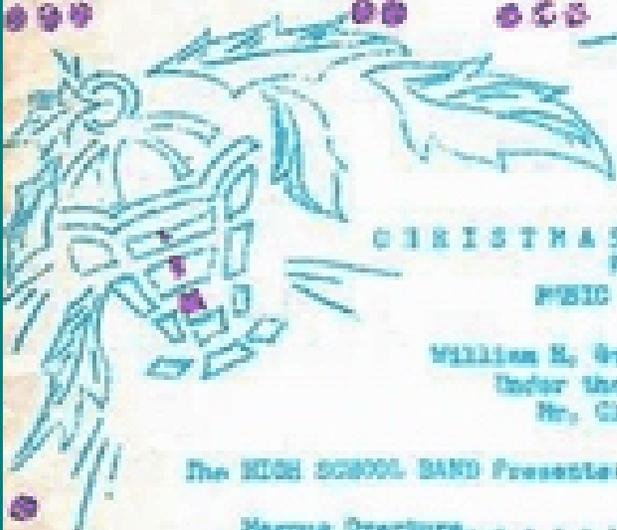
Street" remember. I'm the kid there with the silver clarinet. The kid to my right was a red-headed nerd. I felt sophisticated compared to him. The kid standing right behind me with the French Horn was as good a horn player as we had but he was meaner than sin. I was afraid of him.

I suspect that the choice of Dick to play trumpet and me to play clarinet had little to do with what we in our heart of hearts really wanted to do. Somehow, mysteriously, nay miraculously, the Jones family just happened to have for sale at that mysterious point in time the cheap silver clarinet of their precious, precocious, 200 pound daughter felicitously named "Poodie"- that they would sell at a great sacrifice to Jim Jensen so that little Ronnie -sigh, hand across the breast, head turned to heaven to receive all of the blessings that were forthcoming for such Spartan and remarkable self-denial- could have . For twice what it was worth. If I remember correctly Dick fared better. He held out for a trumpet and since there didn't just happen to be a cheap trumpet in town, mom and dad had to buy him a new one. I think it was mail order, though it could have been specially ordered through a local store which was still mail order.

So I became the owner of this instrument, perhaps not as proud as I might have been under different circumstances. Jimmarie explained their 'good fortune' to their colleagues in crime, i.e. the Schafermeyers and Ablanalps, the senate within which they all tested and argued their child-raising decisions, particularly those that they knew in their heart were perhaps not really what their sweet children wanted.

Was I even a sweet child? As a matter of fact, I was.

Christmas Program, 1954



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
From the  
MUSIC DEPARTMENT  
of  
William S. Seward High School  
Under the Direction of  
Mr. Claude Berg

The HIGH SCHOOL BAND Presents:

Magnus Overture . . . . .	Maxing
Nice Noon . . . . .	Libbie
Song of the Rose . . . . .	Waber
Spirit of the Snow . . . . .	Odette
Village Carol . . . . .	Libbie

SEVENTH and EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS' CHORUS Presents:

Angels We Have Heard on High . . .	Old Frode Melody
The First Noel . . . . .	Traditional
Christmas Voices . . . . .	Schlan

The HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS Presents:

Today There is Singing . . . . .	Christiansen
O Holy Night . . . . .	Adam
(Solo by Jim Woods)	
Birthday of a King . . . . .	Meldinger
Cherish Song . . . . .	Bortolowski
Silent Night . . . . .	Waber

On the next page, we have listed the members of  
each group of musicians.

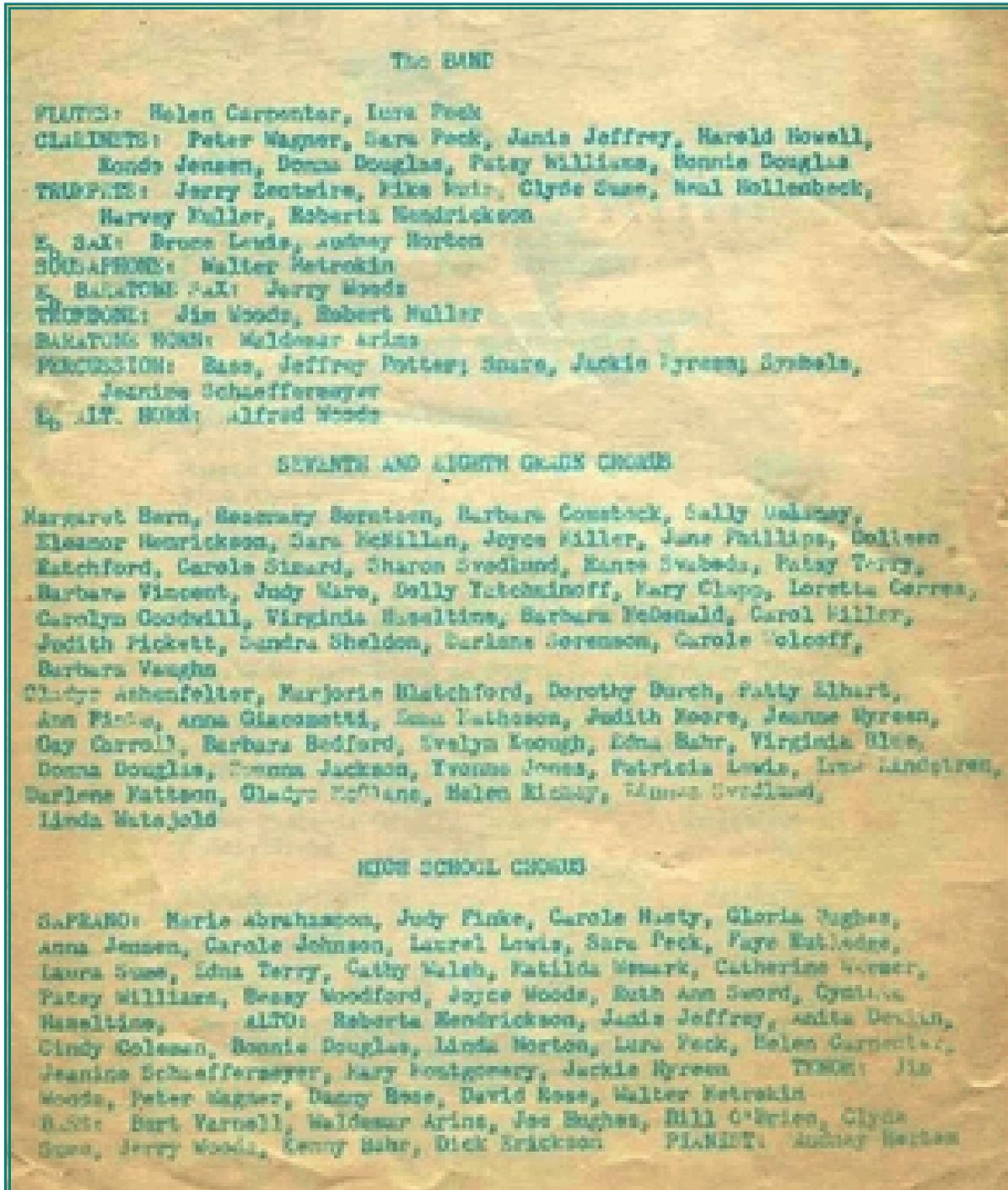


December, 1954

Mr. Berg, the same that I've talked about elsewhere, was the "director" of the Music Department at William H. Seward School. Pretty high falutin' title isn't it for what it really was.

The kids who participated were listed in detail inside. "The Band" was at the

top of the page followed by the "Seventh and Eighth Grade Chorus" and the "High School Chorus." My name shows up under Clarinets in the Band, and honor I didn't deserve. I never did learn to play well enough to truly contribute to the band and I



think Mr. Berg knew it. But since I was a quiet kid and didn't make and BAD noises, it was safe to keep me there to fill a space, to "swell a crowd". I always felt dishonest and never did know whether or not my folks knew I rarely made actually noises when "playing" in the band.

The most interesting thing about this program is how it was prepared. It appears to have been made by using two ancient techniques: a mimeograph that you've probably seen, and a hectograph which is such an ancient process that I suspect none of your school teachers had ever heard of it. I knew it well because mom herself learned how to make one and then used it to make programs and so on for the little branch.

A mimeograph you probably know. A fibrous sheet is "typed" on with a manual typewriter - can't do this with modern word processors and ink jet printers. Of course, if you have one of these, you certainly don't need one of those. The keys would actually cut holes in the fibrous layer the shape of the letters. Then this fibrous layer is placed a circular drum set up to spread a thin thin layer of ink through those little holes at the same time a sheet of paper is pressed against that fibrous layer. This is the method used to "print" the names on the program.

A hectograph is a totally different animal, and much older. It is simply a layer of gelatin. That's all. A layer of dryish gelatin that has to be kept covered when not in use to keep it from drying out entirely. When ready to be used, a dense layer of dye is embedded into the gelatin. The gelatin absorbs the dye. Then a sheet of paper is laid on top of the gelatin and pressed lightly. When the sheet of paper is removed, it has a thin layer of the dye. So whatever shape the dye is in is the shape that will appear on the paper. Simple. That's how the fancy shapes and two colors were made in the corners of the program.

Mom found a recipe to make one of these things when she needed to make copies of something for us Blazers. She followed the recipe carefully and cooked up the gelatin on the gas stove. When it was finished, she poured it out slowly and carefully in a thin cookie sheet to make sure there were no bubbles. Bubbles would make it impossible to have perfect images. After it had set and cooled, she took something that looked like a "ditto master" something you may know. It was a sheet of paper with a thick layer of dye on the back behind which there was a white sheet of paper. With a stylus, sort of like a ball point pen without ink, you drew the letters or images on the top sheet which pressed a layer of dye off the back of the sheet onto the white page behind it.

Then you took that sheet with the layer of dye shaped like a star or tree or whatever you made and laid it face-down on the gelatin layer. It was left in place for something like 5 minutes, long enough for the gelatin to absorb most of the dye off of the sheet of paper. After it had been left in place long enough, you pulled the dye sheet off and were ready to start making copies which was as just described. Clean sheets of paper were laid down on the gelatin and pressed lightly and then pulled off carefully to keep from tearing the sheet that stuck to the gelatin.

Then what. The gelatin now has a dye pattern in it, so do you have to make another layer of gelatin? That's the big question I had but mom said not to worry. She said to "Watch and see what happens." Like she knew. Perhaps she did, perhaps she just read the directions and trusted them. I don't know. But I do know that magic happened. After a week or so, the dye disappeared from the gelatin. When as a sheet of clean paper was pressed into the gelatin and pulled up, no image was created. I asked mom, "What happened to the ink?" That's what I called it. She said, "Oh, it sank to the bottom so I can put another picture of ink on it and make copies again." She was right. I still don't know what really happened to the dye. It had no weight so I don't see how it could "sink" to the bottom but I know that the dye wasn't volatile so it couldn't evaporate. It must have sunk to the bottom. I wish the thing had been made in a Pyrex dish so that I could see if the dyes accumulated on the bottom. Whatever, it was a slick method to make multiple copies.

### "Coach" and the Metropolitan

**T**he Coach was a little man, even to me, a little man. He was skinny, balding, wore glasses, had thin lips that protruded, eye glasses, disheveled grayish hair, wore a thigh-length trench coat with the collar up like Bogart, had a perpetual scowl and harried look and didn't like kids who weren't athletes. That about says all I need to say about him. Except you know I'm going to say more or I wouldn't have brought him up.

He was the "gym teacher" the class I feared and disliked. The only class I felt that way about. In his defense, I have to admit that the first problem with gym was that it was gym. I had grown up like a wild kid without any discipline or exposure to organized sports. I don't think I ever saw a football game in Vernal. Indeed, I'm

not sure I'd even heard of the sport though I must have, but it certainly didn't make any impression. Baseball was familiar but only as a concept. I never saw a baseball game, but I did see softball.

Basket ball was something mom liked to watch, yelling and screaming like a wild woman that I didn't know so I understood that there were groups of men who got together to "play" other groups of men who were willing to engage in this sort of thing. I didn't understand why it was called "play" when they were each actually trying to beat the other team up. That wasn't play, that was war. Whatever, I went to Seward from Vernal without any real exposure to, let alone experience in, organized sports. Then in Seward I maintained that pristine view of the world. Until I got in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. At that point, things changed dramatically and most painfully. I had to go into gym classes.

That was an exercise in terror and humiliation. Nothing less. If you didn't feel that way when you had to go out onto the basket ball floor as a member of a "team" of kids you didn't really like, who certainly didn't like you, then you were lucky. If you enjoyed going out on the floor under the supervision of a "coach" who yelled and screamed at you, while kids sneered at your clumsiness, then you're bigger people than I am. I couldn't stand it. I didn't know the rules for basket ball. I didn't care to know the rules of basket ball and I hated it not understanding anything about the game. And I was outraged at the way kids would intentionally foul each other, hurt each other, in order "to win". That was so wrong. I had been taught from early on that while it was understood that I would do things wrong, adults would never accept it. It was apparent in gym class that the coach knew that kids were committing fouls, so I was shocked. The injustice of it all.

The final humiliation was having to go into locker rooms where kids took off their clothes and stunk and yelled and made fun of each other. I hated it. One of the requirements for gym was to have a "uniform". What a god-awful thing to have to do. It was a basketball player's uniform and I felt like a moron and clown wearing the damn thing. It was gold and another color and I was cold when I wore it and looked like a dummy, particularly when I was stumbling around the floor in it. We were also required to start wearing "supporters" that I had not used before and I didn't think I needed to start them. Why should I be forced to wear one of those silly things if I didn't want to? It didn't offer any protection if I fell on my gonads or someone kicked me there, it didn't make me play better, it was of no use. Except that the coach "ordered" it so there is was.

I personally had no use for organized sports like that. I would have preferred to have been sent out to hike or climb Marathon or something that had some redeeming value but this business of running around in a room or on a field obeying a set of stupid arbitrary rules made me crazy. I'm still not over it and you kids all experienced my ambivalence to sports, didn't you. I find them to be primitive, sort of like stylized warfare. Pre-technological groups of people engaged in stylized warfare, and I think sports are basically the replacement of that. It's as if people do have needs for symbolic war fare and sports is the substitute. I have no need for it.

The funniest thing about this "Coach", as all the athletes ("jock" was an unknown term, even a dirty term to me) called him, the macho man, was the car he drove. A puny, silly looking little boy's car. I wasn't into cars at that age but I was still aware of them and in his case, he drove a silly little car that didn't fit with the image of the big man that he tried to portray. To do that he should have been driving a late model Ford or Chevrolet. I don't know what his football or basketball students thought about this silly little car.



Figure 387

<http://www.classiccarbug.com/featuredcars/oct02-1.jp>

9

### Chik-a-lak-a-chow-chow-chow

What sort of embarrassing nonsense was that? Us 7<sup>th</sup> graders were apparently being initiated into the mysteries of organized sports. One day shortly after school had started in September, we were summoned with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to the gym for something important. Being basically sheep and being glad to get out of class, we dutifully walked double-file to the gym where we were directed to sit in the bleachers.

After a few moment of nothing happening except a few of us talked quietly, a cheerleader walked into the gym from the basement where she would have changed into the outrageous uniform in the girls' bathroom. She was followed by several

more girls dressed in the same outlandish outfits more suited for Halloween than for everyday life. I expect I'd seen them before but from a safe distance, not trapped in the same room with them, not being addressed by them. They had what's called 'attitude' today, haughty, superior, patronizing, condescending, irritated, impatient, superior, aristocratic, arrogant, world-weary and so on. Just the kind of nice girls anyone would like to spend some time with.

The only photo I have that shows several of these specimens is this one, taken in 1956 in Anchorage when we went up for a Music Festival, and this parade - on a street that was paved!

You can see 2 and a half of these critters wearing dark dresses with a gore in the side for sassiness, and batons which were apparently the talisman of the tribe. The lead majorette, Miss



Trevathan I think, was elevated above the other two who wore lowly saddle shoes, by wearing white, high-topped boots that had white tassels flopping around on the front. My, she was grand. If you doubted it, you needed to just ask her.

Well, she and several others appeared in the gym in front of us naive, innocent, country yokels, sitting there with our mouths open. Some of us were wondering why they weren't embarrassed being out in public that way. They might as well have been wearing pajamas or night gowns as far as I was concerned. They launched into some arcane discussion about "cheering our team on". "Our team"? "Our team"? Who or what was "our team"?

Believe it or not, that was one of the fundamental things they should have explained to us, that "our school" had teams of basket ball players and teams of foot ball players played games with similar teams -usually- from other high schools in the region. And that it was a local custom for us, on those august occasions when the games were played in our space, for students to actually go watch what was going on,

who was hurting who, who was getting away with foul play, and by the way, who was scoring points, and -here's the point of the educational conference- it was important for us to wave our hands and yell a lot. Somehow that made "our teams" hurt the other team more, get away with more foul play and even make some points so they would win. I didn't understand any of this when Murlene almost immediately launched into what is called, in mixed company, a "cheer".

She and her compatriots began to yell a song, without accompaniment, while they waved their arms in unison, jumping up and down like they were doing calisthenics. Our mouths dropped in amazement. What were they doing? Right there in front of us. Were we supposed to clap? It was mildly embarrassing. But what happened next was even more embarrassing.

We got a tongue lashing from Miss High and Mighty. Apparently we were supposed to engage in the same yelling and hollering and when we didn't, she was mad. Actually, I think she was embarrassed. Cheerleading is apparently one of those things that you can do "with" other people but not "for" or "in front of" other people. That is, people have to be as stupid as you. We didn't know that so she laid it on thick. Of course the other item that was missing was a song sheet. We didn't know these loud poems so how could we yell them. Teachers would get pretty upset at us in class if we yelled our poems.

Well, things moved forward a bit at a time. One of the other girls who wasn't so snooty could see that we genuinely didn't know what to do so she took the floor and explained something about cheerleading and cheers. She then said that she wanted us to yell the next 'cheer' with her and that she would teach it to us first. Then she said a line at a time and asked us to then repeat each line with her which we did intermittently because we were still dumbfounded at the silliness of the whole thing, acting like this was normal to sit in rows in a big room and yell together. We weren't Japanese you know, Nate.

I think the cheer she taught us was easy to learn because it was (A) so simple and (B) so stupid and (C) so embarrassing. Here's the whole deal, without the hand waves - I forgot to tell you that these girls compounded their foolishness and own embarrassment by holding wads of strips of thin paper and shaking them while they were waving their hands and doing calisthenics- or screaming:

*First Verse (Quietly, face averted):*

"A chik-a-lak-a-chik-a-lak

A-chow-chow-chow" (*Got it? This is tough stuff.*)

A boom-a-lak-a-boom-a-lak

A bow-wow-wow. (*My face is glowing again.*)

Second Verse (with gusto):

A chik-a-lak-a-boom-a-lak

A-Who are we? (*You don't have to answer that question.)(Fools?)*)

Seventh and Eighth grade

Yes-sire-ee!!

My face was fairly burning with embarrassment to be sitting there with those shenanigans going on. And we were supposed to enjoy making fools of ourselves that way. Well, I didn't.

Of course, I have to admit that walking around streets in outrageous uniforms squeaking and tooting together isn't a whole lot smarter and I did that so who was I to make fun of these girls and their own favorite sport.

### Crossing Guard for Police Department

This was a highlight of my last year at William H. Seward school. I was a crossing guard for the whole school year. I don't remember how it came to pass that I was selected from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class to be a crossing guard but I was. It sounded like something I'd like doing, being responsible for helping people and protecting little school kids who had to cross the busy streets.

T. H. MILLER  
PRESIDENT  
STANLEY ZAVERL  
VICE-PRES.  
CARTER SEYMOUR  
SECY.-TREAS.



ALASKA ASSOCIATION  
OF  
CHIEFS OF POLICE

FRIENDSHIP - EFFICIENCY - SECURITY

MAY 14, 1956

THE CITY OF SEWARD COMMENDS

*RONDO JENSEN*

FOR HIS DEVOTION TO DUTY WHILE HOLDING THE RANK OF

*PATROLMAN*

WITH THE SCHOOL PATROL, A UNIT OF THE JUNIOR POLICE.

HIS CONDUCT AND SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS OF

THE CITY OF SEWARD DURING THE SCHOOL

YEAR OF 1955-1956 WAS OUTSTANDING.

*Dwight Stockton*  
MAYOR  
CITY OF SEWARD

*Carter Seymour*  
CHIEF OF POLICE  
SEWARD, ALASKA

*J. Harding*  
CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF SEWARD

## All Alaska Music Festival 1956

This was the first music festival I attended in Anchorage. I don't know whether they were done every three years or some such things but whatever the case, we were invited along with every other school in the territory to go to Anchorage to participate in a "All Alaska Music Festival", in full dress. So we did just that, mom and dad and teachers and kids. It was a major event in my young life.

Part of the excitement of the festival was the location. A new high school had just been finished in Anchorage and this was the first major event to be staged there. We were honored to be part of the group. This 2003 image shows you the auditorium in the front with the high school behind it.

Mr. Berg had been drilling us all winter for this performance because he naturally felt he would be judged by his students'



performance. I didn't accomplish much as I've noted elsewhere. I felt like a cheat doing this thing but I was simply not given an option to stop being in the band. I knew that if I asked mom and dad for permission to quit that I would get interminable lectures with two salient features. First, they would play on my sense of guilt for letting the tiny band down by dropping out, but second, they would also tell me that I could do what I wanted. Sure I could. So I kept up the charade.

The event lasted several days so we stayed overnight but I don't know where. It seems like we stayed in a private home but I don't even know that for sure. We practised during the daytime one day and the performance was the next day. Things were going well but a very funny thing happened in the middle of the program. This

new high school appeared to be top drawer stuff so it as totally unexpected when the electricity went off. Everything in the building was dark and since the school was out in the country, there weren't even streetlights to provide any light. Janitors had to find flashlights and go to the master panel I suppose to figure out and fix the problem. The audience wasn't bothered by this event because we all lost power in our own towns on a regular basis. But the Anchorage High School band was obviously the most skilled of us all. Without any light, simply on the basis of voice commands, the band launched into a song that was currently popular, a song that everyone knew. The audience laughed and then joined in, singing "Glow little glow worm, glimmer glimmer."

### Girl who got Pregnant

Around my 7th grade year, a girl in my class or in the 8th grade became pregnant. It was like she had one of those fearsome loathsome "social diseases" although the only thing we understood about such diseases was that they were especially nasty. Her disease was such a reprehensible disease that she was even sent away for some reason. We imagined that she was subjected to some painful thing that would remedy her problem.

The confusion about her condition arose from the fact that we didn't know how it actually happened, but had a vague uncomfortable sense about the process. This confusion was compounded by the fact that our mothers had also been pregnant to get us and they didn't seem to have been derided for it. They were even proud to have been able to make babies - though I think there were some days when they repented of it. So why was it so nasty if this 14 year old was in the same condition?

If we turned the corner in a hallway and saw and heard teachers talking about her, their voices dropped as soon as they saw us. That told us that something was really wrong about this deal because they didn't bother to whisper when they talked about discipline problems with some kids.

Some of those kids with discipline problems were friends of this girl, a guy named Tracy McCracken and his brother Jeff and their friends. The teachers would audibly talk about their bad behavior - but not whatever this girl was guilty of. As it turned out, it is likely that the McCrackens were the cause of her problem. There was a small group of pretty hardened kids who hung out together, cussed dirty

words, told dirty jokes, disobeyed the teachers, made fun of everything and picked on other kids. In some way we "got it" that this girl's sin was severe by the company she kept. "Nice" girls like Virginia Blue wouldn't even talk to Tracy. Even we avoided them and were actually afraid of them and their switchblade knives - which were illegal, but that only makes them show them off more.

We still did not know the "facts of life", although our dads probably swore to their concerned wives that they had explained them all to us. Mothers recognized the signs of incipient puberty and thought it was high time for us to have a talk about the birds and bees -though why it was suddenly necessary, or what difference it would make, isn't clear to me even now. When the hormones surge, so does the urge and it all becomes shockingly clear anyway. No talks will subvert that. We did know generally about the 'facts of life' and that we needed to learn what they were, even wanted to know them, but the emotional baggage hung on the phrase "the birds and the bees" -most confusing since they are pretty innocuous creatures who really have nothing to do with the hormone rage that was about to strike us down- convinced us with a visceral certainty that the keys to the meaning of life were contained therein. In fact they were, but we were clueless.

Actually, I specifically remember the first time someone explained explicitly the act of intercourse. It was in the alley behind my house on Second Avenue. I was going to Joe Deischer's house, the new one, to spend the evening and he, being the son of a doctor had a good understanding of the mechanics. He asked me if I knew the facts of life, and when I admitted that I didn't really, he launched into a detailed description as we walked. I looked at the grassy alley listening to this explanation. It was the most disgusting thing I'd ever heard.

Anyway, this girl's condition was tied up somehow with that topic so we were alternately horrified and fascinated by her, as she sat on the school steps in a jacket worn by that little gang, toughly and defiantly smoking a cigarette, while the McCrackens and their ilk hung around, sneering and leering, challenging us all with the eyes to "make something of it" - though what "it" might be or why we would even care about "it" was a mystery to us 7th graders. After she left things quieted down and we stopped think about it any more. But that experience was disturbing because of the confusion and insinuations that made no sense to us kids who just didn't know enough facts about sex or about human relations or the law.

## Betty Boop

You have all heard of Betty Boop. She probably came across as a sort of kewpie doll type character, innocent and not the sharpest knife in the drawer. But I suspect that you might not know how sexy she really was. This image gives you a sense of that quality, sort of risqué. She was a sweet thing, but not really. A hot little number with the brains of a modern blonde I suppose. Not really the sweet young innocent confused thing you know her to be. She was those things to be sure, but there was also the deeper meaning I think. At least that is how I perceived her. When you all began to think she was cool, part of me was shocked. I knew what she was really about.

The original cartoons were done in black and white, not the color that you probably saw. She was modeled on the Rita and Lana type I imagine.



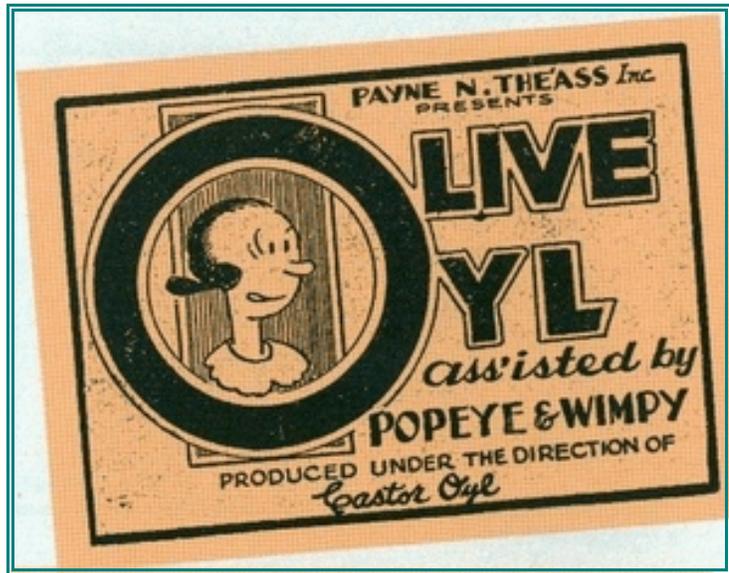
Figure 391 Betty Boop

<http://www.tiac.net/users/mharney/boop.html>

## Tijuana Bibles

I'm not going to embarrass you by showing you the complete contents of one of these things but they were another feature of teenagehood. I never owned one and I never even actually held one in my hand to read it completely through. But this was another of the pornographic things that teenage boys circulated amongst themselves. I have no idea whether teenage girls indulged in the same things

These little booklets were about 4 inches long and 2 inches wide. They were crudely drawn by hand and consisted of about 16 pages of pictures, basically a dirty cartoon. The drawings and language were explicit, far beyond what was available in the public. I don't know how kids got them, but expect that someone's dad bought them from some salesman on the dock or in Seattle or in Anchorage and brought them home. Kids would giggle nervously and pass the thing to the next kid, all the while on the lookout for an adult who would confiscate the thing if s/he saw it. They were so explicit that they were actually a course in sex education if you read them, but I didn't ever have that opportunity. Once more, I was aware of the things because I saw them and I recognized the dirty laughs and sniggers which meant the things were prurient, though that term wasn't one I knew either.



### Waldemar and John Ahrins

DP's. They were DP's, a pejorative term though I didn't understand what there was to be pejorative about. These people deserved sympathy for what had happened to them. "Displaced Persons" from Latvia. The most obvious characteristic of these guys was their accent. We didn't have much contact with Europeans whose native languages were not English so these two stood out. I understood somehow that they were disadvantaged though I didn't understand the mechanism. I understood it had to do with World War II in Europe but I didn't know how these people were displaced, just that this family came to Seward to live.

It was difficult for them, I believe, based on my experience with John who was my age. I have one photo of John, this segment taken from one of dad's photos of one of our treks to the top of Marathon on the Fourth of July. He was several inches taller than I was and ended up hanging around with me to some degree, probably because I was nice to him. I was nice to everyone. Most kids didn't pay a great deal of attention to him after they had looked him over. He was just a feature of the landscape for most of us, including even the mean McCracken kids. It was like we all knew that there was something different about John and that he should not be harassed.



The only time I remember him being bothered was on the days when he would go to the store over lunch time and spend a quarter on a small paper bag of candy. A quarter would do that since you could get two pieces for one penny. When he'd come back to the school yard where we were all playing, he'd stand around eating with one hand while he held the neck of the sack tightly closed with the other. The problem was that some times some kids would go after John begging him to give them a piece of candy. It was an absolute thing for John. He absolutely would not share his candy, even the little pieces that cost only half a cent. It was HIS candy, and HE was going to eat it all. No one actually hurt him, but they would pretty aggressively go after him verbally, "Come on John! Give us a piece! Come on John. Be a sport!" and so on. He would get tense and angry and if someone actually tried to grab his sack he would jerk it up in the air over our heads because he was taller than most of us, and would tell us to leave him alone. His accent made understanding him difficult when he got upset.

We didn't understand that in asking for food, we were asking for his life. His family came to town with nothing after suffering in Latvia so what they had was theirs and they were not inclined to share. To share would be to hurt themselves.

The other memorable thing about John was his hamstrings. During one of the years that I attended school in the school building, the health doctor came and did some sort of physical exam of all kids. I don't know what this was all about. I just know that we were advised ahead of time that on a particular day we were all going to be examined by the doctor and that we had to take a permission slip home for our parents to sign to authorize him to do this. I don't remember whether any parents

refused to sign and I do know that basically everyone was herded through this line.

The cafeteria was divided into half with tall screens so that there was a boy's side -south- and a girl's side. Teachers were there to oversee the process. We were brought down a class at a time and ushered into our side of the cafeteria. We were told to take off our shirt, pants, socks and shoes. Then we had to stand in a line to wait for the doctor. He would call the next in line each time he was ready. We were nervous and self-conscious as we stood there in our underwear, hoping that the girls didn't peek - which is probably what they were doing.

One of the things we did for the doctor was put our fingers on our toes, a simple enough exercise. Few of us could really reach our toes but we could all get pretty close to them so the doctor was happy. But when John was asked to touch his toes, he could hardly bend over. He was self-conscious in the first place, more than the rest of us, and was mortified at this public display of his inability. We all heard the doctor report dryly something about John's "hamstrings". We didn't really understand what this meant, nor did we really even understand what they were. But we knew that something was wrong with John, something serious.

Today I think about that event and entertain the possibility that John was a victim of some hideous treatment by the Germans. They are the ones who overran Latvia first and it is not inconceivable that John's family was beat or tortured. His inability to do much more than bend forward was so abnormal that it stood out. As I said, none of us could really touch our toes, but we all got far enough down that the doctor could see that we were basically OK. But John was totally different. This is the first time I have considered this possibility for John.

I liked him but it was difficult to talk to him because he was self-conscious in general. When he spoke and saw that we couldn't understand him, that made him even more nervous and self-conscious at which point his speech became even more difficult to understand. He'd stutter and hunt for words, making these strange sounding sentences that probably reflected the word order of sentences in his native language. Poor John.

## 18. Troop 620

This was a trip. It was astonishing. I look back and am astounded at my good fortune. Being a boy scout in Seward in the early 1950's when Alaska was still a territory, when it was still a frontier, undiscovered, rough, no paved roads and fewer people, trees everywhere, trap lines, miners, fishermen, log cabins. The magnitude of the good luck is compounded by the fact that most of the kids in my troop were Eskimos, Indians or admixtures with European genes.

I have to explain why I feel that way. Basically, I see the scout organization as one that is suited primarily to agrarian, rural settings, almost pre-industrial settings which is precisely what Seward was. Taking kids as we did in Boston a few years later out to a "scout camp" that was 150 acres on someone's wood lot outside of Boston was a joke. That was not scouting. Oh, we engaged in tent erection, fire building, axe sharpening and so on, but the effect was phony. How can one be a scout when you can practically hear the traffic over there on the freeway, when you can just walk down the road a mile and find a Dairy Queen, A & W, gas stations and stores. Silly really.

In this comment I obviously hearken back to Lord Baden Powell, the instigator of the international scouting movement and reveal my strong personal opinion about how the program fits into a 21<sup>st</sup> century world. I don't think it fits at all. That's not to say that I am opposed to organizations for young people because I actually am much in favor of them. But not Baden-Powell's type. The foundational elements of the program were acquired in a different era and different setting where there was merit to being able to learn to fend for oneself in the outdoors, to become self reliant, capable of tracking, starting fires, creating emergency lean-tos, cooking, swimming and so on. Merit badges covered a much wider range of topics but the fundamental purpose of the scouting movement as created by Lord Baden Powell was those elemental things, not libraries or stamp collecting. Those were added to enrich the experience but they were merely ancillaries to the basic objective of the scouting movement to enrich the boys, not to supplant those features. To take a program designed for a different era and force boys to participate in it today is a little like taking an engineer from the shinkansen (bullet train) and making him work in a narrow-gauge, coal-powered, steam locomotive in Rainbow, Utah. It just doesn't fit and no amount of finagling and adjusting can change the fact that the program is fundamentally agrarian, rural, non-urban, low-tech. Nothing will change that.

My first realization of this fact -in my universe it is a fact- occurred in Boston in 1956. I think that I and those like me from that era in that type of seeing are the only experts on the matter because we experienced the authenticity of the program, the setting and the era. That's pretty rash to say, but it is, whether you like it or not, the truth. We have the requisite experience to evaluate the various versions of boy scouting. Specifically, we actually lived as BOYS, not as intellectual, oh-we-can-make-it-fit adults, inside of a full-blown program in precisely the environment it was designed for.

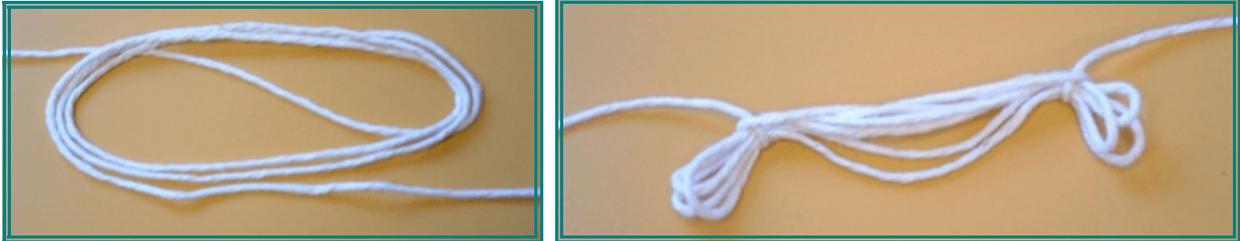
When we moved to Boston I found myself in a metropolis of a bewildering sort. It was bewildering specifically because it lacked the fundamental features of a wilderness, frontier, rough-hewed life. Our little band of boy scouts in Boston consisted of city kids like Adam Pereira and Eddie Valleau, two truly entertaining authentic characters even at the ripe old age of 14. Who in their right mind would go camping with a heavy military webbed belt slung around their waist with a lantern hanging from it, a pack of army bandages designed for massive head injuries, etc., except an urban nut who didn't have a clue about what real scouting was about. We went on several camp outs around Boston and they were enormously disappointing to me because they were, literally in one instance, a camp on someone's property out by Farmington. It was like a bunch of little kids playing "Let's pretend." In Alaska we didn't have to pretend. We had to be serious and careful because nature did not forgive stupidity, there was no hospital nearby, no store nearby, no highway. It was deadly earnest up there.

Many years later when I was a scout master in Boise, I learned even more about the program which was the confirmation of my belief. The other feature, in addition to a legitimate outdoors, that was essential to having real scouting was to have enough boys to make a troop. A band of 8 boys was a joke if one really intended scouting as Lord Baden-Powell intended it to be. But in Seward? We did it right because we had enough boys to reach a critical mass for the spirit of scouting to manifest itself. This is only possible with a certain minimum number of boys.

To attempt to have a scout troop with less than absolute minimum of a dozen and a half boys is to engage in "let's pretend". Only men who have done real scouting can grasp the truth of that statement. With less boys it is just a game, particularly in an urban setting, particularly with a bunch of boys who want to play video games, who don't like to get dirty, who don't like sleeping on the ground, who don't like cooking over a messy fire where they either half-cook or burn their food, who are

accustomed to who hand-held GPS devices so think compasses are stupid, and who couldn't care less how one tied a 'sheep-shank'. I don't blame them in the least. I'd be the same today.

For the record, let me give you an example of the kinds of skills I'm talking about. Here's what the 'sheep-shank' looks like in 2 steps. A sheep shank is a knot



that is used to shorten ropes when you're lashing a load or doing anything where your rope is too long and you don't want to cut it. You simply make uniformly-sized loops in the rope, and then twist the loose ends backwards and fit those twists down over the school of loops. Then, when you pull on the two ends of the rope there in the image on the right, the knot tightens up and the rope is as much shorter as you want it to be, determined by the number of times you looped the rope. You can treat that thing on the right as if it were simply a length of rope, even though there is that tumor on it. Then, when you're finished doing whatever it was you were doing, you release tension on the rope and simply shake out the loops and the rope returns to its usual shape. Neat nifty knot.

That's what scouting was about, doing stuff like that in settings where you had real reasons to do it. But why would kids today care about this? Worse, when would they ever have a chance to use it in a setting where it actually fitted into their attempt to deal with their universe? Sitting in a church room pretending you care to do this, just waiting till you can go home and play video games or watch TV, pretending that you understand when to do it, not really knowing it could be important to your survival - perhaps to even save your own life- is a travesty. I think Lord Baden Powell is turning in his grave. BSA has lost its position of prominence in the young male minds because it is so badly out of date and no amount of tinkering and adjusting will change that. I hate Bill Gates but think that his enormous monies could be used to built a data, computer-oriented, entertainment based program for urban kids.

## Lord Baden-Powell

This is the man who created this outfit in about 1910. He was an officer in the English Army in South Africa, in the Boer Wars. He observed young English men who were sent to the front to fight who didn't have a clue about how to survive in the hostile environment except with careful instruction and supervision. On the basis of these observations he - obviously assuming that these kinds of wars would be fought in those kinds of primitive settings- decided to create an organization for young boys to prepare them for the day that they, too, put on uniforms and went to some wilderness when they had to fend for themselves.

He patterned the organization on the military organization he was involved in, hence the uniforms and troops and insignias and ranks. The program he created was presented to organizations and officials in England when he returned. It was an immediate hit for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the fact that England, while industrialized, nonetheless had a distinct rural flavor in most areas, and people also understood his reports that young soldiers were unprepared to take care of themselves on bivouacs in inhospitable territory.

His program was introduced in the US in about 1912 and was also well-received. Remember, again, the state of the nation in 1912. The United States were still basically agricultural, rural settings in spite of the few large cities like Boston, New York, DC, Chicago, and San Francisco. The interest in the US probably had less to do with anticipation of young men being at war than it did with the basic appeal of camping and fishing and swimming in the outdoors that was abundant. There was a match between the fundamental philosophy of Lord Baden Powell's program and England and the US in the early 1900's.

However, the urbanization of the US has fundamentally altered the balance between young men and their interest in and need for outdoor skills. To young people today, an overnight with a jet ski, or a snazzy bicycle, twinkies and pizza are more interesting. Don't try to teach them to understand the purpose of a sheep shank or



Figure 396  
[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord\\_Baden-Powell](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Baden-Powell)

how to tie one. What a waste of their time.

It is. Scouting today is an anachronism that people certainly should be allowed to engage in but it has moved now into the category of "fanatics" like those who engage in re-enactments of the Battles of Appomattox, Gettysburg and so on. Exciting but off the main path. But when I was there, I was in the perfect milieu to engage in scouting as Lord Baden Powell intended it to be.

### Scout Troop 630

Troop 630 was one of two scout troops in town. I don't remember the number of the other one but it was affiliated with one of the religious organizations in the town. This is the patch we wore on the left shoulder of our shirts. We had to sew all of our patches and merit badges on our shirts by ourselves. I suppose mom would have done it except that it was a scout requirement that boys do their own sewing so mom probably would have said 'no' if asked. The "630" shows by its shabbiness how poorly it had been sewn on. Repeated washings of the shirt frayed all of the patches I sewed though that's partially the result of the construction of the patches I suppose.



There was always a sense of competition between our troop and the town troop, as there always is between any troops. However, I detected a subtle difference in the sense of competition in this instance. Perhaps I am wrong but I don't think so because I was a little kid and little kids have the most extraordinary radar for detecting emotional signals in their environment. I'm pushing my glasses back here with three of my Indian friends from



the scout troop.

In this instance the subtle signal I detected on various occasions, which was probably plausibly deniable by whoever sent the signal, had to do with two things:

- 1) **race, and**
- 2) **genealogy.**

The two are intertwined in fact and in this instance the issue I detected, though subtly to be sure, had to do with fact that the town troop was pretty much of lily white European extraction while Troop 620 was pretty much a collection of native American orphans, of whom most were 'bastards', which was not a nice thing in those days.

Diversity training -a damnable charade parading as something good- hadn't risen its ugly head and Sewardites were of a mixed mind about "mixed breed" kids, - not a nice term- indeed, about native Americans. I was only a kid but my sense was that natives were looked down on, regarded as primitive, as less educated, as inferior and I suppose that by those European standards they were. But just meet them out on the ice in a parka and then see who's inferior. Having said that, I have to say that I also imagine that Sewardites were more tolerant than the average - whoever that might be- American where interracial issues came up. They lived in the Alaskan natives' home territory.

I know personally diversity training is something different than it pretends in some instances to be because I went through one of these silly sessions. The leader was, predictably, a minority person, in this case a black man. That was fine with me. I'd lived two years with black people and don't see their color as much as I see their attitude. He struck me as a sort of tongue-on-cheek operator who said things as if he had an internal smirk but there was nothing to call him on. It became apparent, however, as things progressed that this was basically his opportunity to play the poor benighted martyr, beset by the prejudices and injustices of the whites who oppressed even him personally. Oh, he was careful to dress up his complaints in nice-sounding language so you couldn't take him to task without sounding like YOU were the bigot -when in fact, HE was the bigot.

Anyway, I detected signals coming from other kids, from the other troop, that I was in a sort of inferior group when I hung out with these Jesse Lee orphans. This trait was observable in general where these kids were concerned. They had

their own school for some of them, they had no money, had to wear cast off clothing that was donated, had to live under the rigid rule of a religious group who ruled with an iron fist, and so on. They had to ride the Jesse Lee bus into town or had to walk, didn't have parents to buy them things, to take them around. They were treated as equal-but-separate I suppose.

It interests me that I did not take that stuff personally. That sound funny perhaps but it isn't. Kids easily take onto themselves disparagement of a group they hang out with and as a result turn on that group. I did not feel embarrassed to be part of that troop, did not feel embarrassed to be part of the group, did not look down on these kids. They were kids like I was a kid and they happened to have the background they did, and happened to live where they did but there was nothing bad about them, other than the interpersonal differences that spring up between human beings in any event. My folks had trained me to not care about the differences between myself and other groups, i.e. Indians and Eskimos. Indeed, dad always showed a fascination with these people, their culture and their belongings. Those things made a difference in me and I learned to share his interest and curiosity. Being in this troop was as natural as being with the white troop in town.

Having said they "trained me to not care", I need to clarify again what I mean. That phrase may suggest that mom and dad sat me down and said, "Now, Rondo. We want you to understand that you are no better than those kids. Etc." They didn't do that, ever. I don't remember a single time in my life where either of my parents made a point of lecturing us about difference between me and native Americans. Never. So don't misunderstand and think that I got Sunday school lectures about 'doing good' and "turning cheeks" and so on because I emphatically did not. The 'training' I refer to was entirely subconscious on their part as far as I could see. They simply demonstrated their relationships to native Americans and I assimilated them without even thinking about them. It was as natural being with them as with Billy Schaefermeyer or Brent Whitmore.

I don't specifically know why mom and dad chose to put us in that troop out there. However, it isn't difficult to guess that there were at least two reasons. The first would be the fact that the town troop was less disciplined than the Jesse Lee troop by its basic nature. The city kids didn't have a rigid religious system within which they lived so they were considerably rowdier than the Jesse Lee kids. Second, mom and dad had a soft spot for working with native Americans as demonstrated by their lengthy service to the patients at the TB San and the fact

that mom took us out to the Jesse Lee home early on. It seems to me that the reason behind the latter was two fold, first to give us exposure to more kinds of people and second, to provide to those kids friends from town. The fact that the home was run by a different religious group didn't bother mom and dad. Indeed, the fact that there was a religious group involved at all counted positively.

I find it interesting today to look back at mom's determination to make us kids become friends with those kids at the orphanage, because I don't remember that she specifically explained to us what she intended to accomplish. However, I do know that mom never did anything in her life without a calculated, clear reason behind it. If my guess is right that her intention here was to introduce us to these kids while she gave those kids some friends, then it is interesting that I have no recall of a lecture of "doing good" or some such cant. But that would be consistent for both mom and dad. While the lectured us about our own moral behavior and castigated us severely for our failures, they were private about their own 'good deeds' in the community. Their volunteer work at the San was done freely, frequently and fervently. There was something dedicated about them yet they didn't talk about it to people, didn't carry on to get praise or even thanks. They felt the urge to do it, understood there was a need, that there would be some benefit, so they did it. I think that taking us boys out to the Jesse Lee home was one of those kinds of things for which reason she really wouldn't discuss it much with us. We just did it.

It was sad in 2003 to return to the Jesse Lee home and discover that two of the three buildings are missing. They burned down. The one that remains is forlorn and sad, fenced in, windows broken out, and the subject of a lot of debate between those who want tear it down and replace it with something modern and those who want to keep it as a historical building. This was the boys' dorm, the only left. It's surrounded by trees and houses today. I spent a lot of time there.

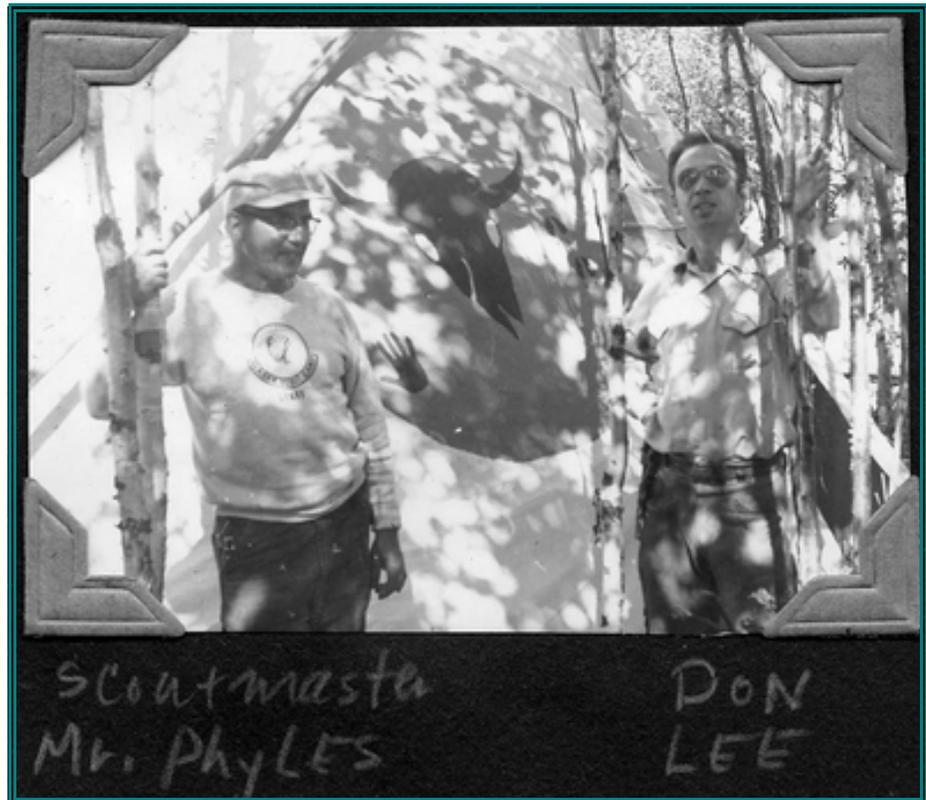


Mr. Phyles, Scoutmaster

This man has probably been enthroned on Olympus as far as my little kid is concerned. He was an enormous man in my eyes, and not because he was physically tall. He wasn't. He was probably about my height, 5 feet 9 inches, but he stood like a giant to me, a 12-14 year old. He had a daughter my age so I knew her in school but I had nothing to do with here. That was an age where girls were still sort of nasty things that we avoided doing anything with, even though we were becoming acutely aware of them and their femininity.

As I recall, Mr. Phyles moved to Seward from outside sometime after we did. I don't know where he came from, nor does it matter. He was more suited to the task than any scoutmaster I have even known. Here's a great photo of both men who dominated my scout troop, Mr. Phyles on the left and Mr. Don Lee, the director of the Jesse Lee Home, standing in front of one of our teepees at Camp Gorsuch.

The kindness you see here in Mr. Phyles smile was genuine and constant. Just ask any little kid who spends 10 minutes with an adult about whether the adult likes little kids or not. The kid will tell you god's truth in an instant, because only a kid isn't deceived. Mr. Phyles



had a kind, direct manner that appealed to us kids. He was actually a quiet man, almost reserved, yet when an occasion required him to stand up and take charge, he would, unhesitatingly. But he knew how to stand back and let others perform and take charge.

A telling example of the latter was the courtesy and trust he showed us all

toward his senior patrol leader and assistant patrol leader. I don't remember his name but he was Robert Muller's older brother. Each week we gathered at the Rec Hall for Troop Meeting which was a momentous event for us. Recall that life in Seward was interminable mist and rain and clouds with a movie theater and a tiny library for entertainment, and little else, other than a few school events. But it was a tiny isolated town. So anything different from the run of the mill stuff assumed a large size in our minds. That was Troop Meeting.

Us white kids trickled in a few at a time, Billy Schaefermeyer, the Ayles boy, the Muller boys, Marshall Mahurrian and then the Jesse Lee boys would arrive more or less en masse. About this time the senior patrol leader would stand in the front of the room in front of the huge

fireplace that you see behind these women at a function during WW II. This gives you a sense of the perspective of that room. It was large though the sheep head was no longer there. Mr. Muller would raise his hand in the call to attention and would command us to "fall in." All of us milling-around kids actually obeyed his order. Really. I'm not kidding you. Try that with a bunch of kids today and see what happens.



We had 40+ boys so had 6 (S I X!!!) Patrols that lined up at attention in full dress uniforms every week. Full uniforms were required. If a kid didn't have the money to buy his shirt or hat or belt or neckerchief or slide or whatever, all he had to do was tell Mr. Phyles. It was embarrassing to appear at Troop Meeting without a complete uniform because inspections were sometimes held and we were advised in public that our shirt was missing, that it was dirty, that our neckerchief knot was wrong, that we needed a different slide and so on. The necessary items that were needed would appear shortly, no strings attached and no identity of the giver. Each of our patrols had a patrol leader and assistant patrol leader who had power and control and responsibility for us. The seriousness of the senior patrol leader who stood in front of us, alone, facing us, rubbed off on us. When we 'fell in' we had to "face off", extending our right arm straight ahead to touch the shoulder of the man

in front of us, and extending our left straight out to touch the man to our left. When every man did this, straight files were created on the patrol leaders who stood at attention before the senior patrol leader.

Here's the point of that description: My Phyles didn't say a thing during this process. Mr. Muller was entirely in charge. He was allowed to stand alone in charge of us all and it was an impressive thing, both for Mr. Muller as well as for Mr. Phyles. Instead of somehow diminishing the senior patrol leader by "helping" him, Mr. Phyles enlarged him by letting him manage the whole opening exercise. He did nothing until we were at attention in neat ranks. After Mr. Muller had finished his task, he ordered us "At ease", which we did as uniformly as we could. Only at that point did Mr. Phyles stand forward and take charge. That's an example of how Mr. Phyles inspired trust and obedience in us.

### Time Trials

**W**e had never heard of such things. I just use the name to catch your attention. A big part of troop meetings was devoted to competitions of all kinds, based on skills taught in the Boy Scout Handbook, which was our Bible. One competition, however, had nothing to do with tying knots, or sharpening knives or orienteering, nothing to do at all with camping or the outdoors. It was something we loved to do and something that none of us did well. The secret to keeping us interested in it was not doing it often. That kept interest and a sense of challenge.

When Mr. Phyles thought the time was about right to do a time trial, he'd order us to fall out and sit anywhere we wanted on the floor in front of the counter. Some kids had difficulty finding the 'right' spot to sit down, others just sat down where they stood, interesting differences. After everyone was seated, Mr. Phyles would announce that he would give a new neckerchief slide to the kid who was able to guess how long a minute was. We understood the drill.

When he was ready, he held a large stop watch up dramatically, like he was going to start a race, and called out, "Ready, set, GO!" at which point he'd click the watch while its string dangled. At that point all of us did whatever we did to try to count 60 seconds. We'd all heard the instruction to count "One-and, two-and", others of us just counted slowly, "one, two, three". Whatever we did, we did silently so we didn't let any of the other kids know what we were doing. After an enormously long time had passed, one of the kids would pop up like a jack-in-the-box, red faced,

eager to be the one who guessed right. Mr. Phyles would just smile and look at his watch, not saying a thing. The kid knew he was wrong.

But now that one kid had stood up, the rest of us began to feel some pressure because we weren't really sure about what we were doing. We began to fear that we were going beyond 60 seconds. It had already seemed so long. So another kid would pop up, looking eagerly at Mr. Phyles who would just smile again, looking at his stop watch. Then in a few seconds another kid would pop up. This continued, more kids popping up at shorter intervals, until the last kids sitting felt like they were way over the 60 seconds. At last, all of them stood up and Mr. Phyles would then announce who the winner was, hand him the slide, and move immediately into another activity. I never won and had no sense of time but always liked the thrill of trying to guess time that way.

### Parade Drill

Other troop meetings Mr. Phyles would tell us that the major event for the night was a parade drill and told us that the last person to be doing the proper moves would win a new pocket knife that he held up for all of us to see. We each wanted it, partly because it was a new knife, and partly because it was from Mr. Phyles. After explaining this to us, he told Mr. Muller, the senior patrol leader to take charge.

Mr. Muller ordered us all to fall in on the guidon bearer who was positioned facing the fire place. After we had all fallen and stood at attention in our patrols, Mr. Muller would perform an inspection of each and every scout. Patrols were ordered to march out in front of the troop where we were each examined from head to toe. Mr. Muller commented on an improper knot in our neckerchief, soiled shirts, missing neckerchief slide, sloppy hat, dirty web belt, poorly sewn on badges, missing badges, etc. Each gig was like a slap in the face in front of the rest of the troop but we all knew our turn was coming so no one took it too personally. Any boy who was missing a part of his uniform felt particularly bad that night. You just did not go to troop meeting with anything less than a complete clean uniform and that included a hat, neckerchief with slide, shirt, belt, and pants.

After the inspection was completed, Mr. Muller would take us through a parade drill. He'd put us at 'attention' and then call out orders that we had to follow as he called them, "Right Face", "Left face", "About Face", "Parade Rest", "At ease",

"Attention," forward March, "Halt", "About Face," "Right face." The first couple of commands all of us kids followed properly but as soon as we started marching and trying to execute the turns, we started to fall apart. One kid would realize that he was on his right foot instead of his left, so while he was trying to get back in step, he'd miss the next turn command. That would throw another kid off who was standing behind him, and so on. In the end when only one kid was still following Mr. Muller's orders, the rest of us were standing to the side just watching. It never took very long because while we understood the commands and how to execute them, we were inexperienced. It was fun, however, and made us feel a bit like soldiers, which, of course, we were.

## Singing

Singing was an integral part of troop meetings. I expect that we sang in most of them. Some of us sang better than others but it was immaterial. The best times we had when we sang were those when the troop was gathered closely together around a roaring fire in the large fireplace when the overhead lights were doused. In that setting, we'd sing fun songs and we'd sing silly songs. The interesting feature of these song fests was the fact that certain of the songs allowed kids to improvise the words. If a kid wanted to do that, he'd just raise his hand during the chorus and then he'd get to lead the next verse, singing the words he had made up.

The most popular song for this kind of improvisation was, "Oh ya' cant' get to heaven." The verses were rowdy but that was the tenor of life in Seward anyway. Here are a couple of verses with one refrain of the chorus. The style of the song was antiphonal. One person would sing a line to be followed by the whole group singing the same song, sort of an antiphonal arrangement though the boys would have recoiled at such a fancy-sounding word to describe what they were doing, the person would solo the next line which was repeated by the group. There were four lines to each verse that went this way:

*"Oh ya can't get to heaven (solo voice)*  
*(Oh ya can't get to heaven) (Group response)*  
*On pork and beans*

*(On pork and beans)*  
*Cuz the Lord don't have*  
*(Cuz the Lord don't have)*  
*That many latrines?*

*Chorus:*

*(The four lines were sung together as the chorus.)*

*"Oh ya can't get to heaven*  
*(Oh ya can't get to heaven)*  
*In Mr. Phyles' car*  
*(In Mr. Phyle's car)*  
*Cuz the gosh darned thing*  
*(Cuz the gosh darned thing)*  
*Won't go that far.*  
*(Won't go that far."*

*CHORUS.*

Kids improvised fairly often and the results were pretty rough. The point of their improvisations were usually to tease Mr. Phyle. Rhymes tended to be absent and the length of the lines didn't match the melody but no one cared. We all knew what was going on and even admired the brave kids who dared try it. Another song we loved to sing was "I wear my pink pajamas":

*I wear my pink pajamas in the summer when it's hot*  
*I wear my purple undies in the winter when it's not*  
*And some times in the spring time*  
*And sometimes in the fall,*  
*I jump right into bed with nothing on all.*

*That's the way we do in Seward*  
*That's the way we do in Seward*  
*That's the way we do in Seward*  
*With nothing on at all.*

These were innocent songs sung for the joy of singing together. "The ants go marching" was another fun one that grew a line at a time. We'd also sing the military songs, "The caissons go rolling along" (Over hill, over dale as we hit the dusty trail, and the caissons go marching along, in and out, round about, counter-march and ....) "The Marine Hymn (From the halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli, we will fight our nation's battles, in the air on land or sea. We will fight for right and honor and to keep our country free. You can always ...the United States Marines"), then "America", "Home on the Range", "The Star Spangled Banner." and so on. Singing was a central part of the program that we loved, partly because Mr. Phyle loved it and participated as fully as we did. We also sang on campouts.

A song I learned at scout camp -NOT from Mr. Phyle- that was very naughty sticks in my memory. Marshal and Robert taught it to use younger kids. The odd thing about it is that I learned it so quickly, once or twice through and it stuck:

*Three Irishmen, three Irishmen were digging in a ditch  
One called the other a dirty son of a  
Peter was a doggy a very fine dog was he  
He went to see his lady friend to keep her company  
She fed him she fed him she fed him some jump  
He jumped right up her petticoat and bit her on the  
Cocktail gingerale 5 cents a glass  
If you don't like my story you can kiss my rusty  
Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies  
But if you get hit with a bucket of spit  
Be sure to close your eyes.*

There were other bawdy songs that kids sang but not me. I was too afraid of being punished. Some of them I didn't understand.

### First Aid drills

After we had all been taught how to do certain first aid cares, Mr. Phyle would announce that there was going to be a competition between patrols to see who did them the best and who did them the fastest. Both elements were

evaluated, speed and accuracy. He'd then identify which pair of patrols was to go first. After three pairs had competed, he had the three winners finish the competition by simultaneously doing the assigned skills.

These events created a lot of yelling from the observers. We all had friends we liked, and we had patrols we wanted to win, so we cheered for those kids. I'm not sure the yelling helped at all, particularly if someone was trying to yell instructions. Us kids were not used to competition so would get rattled easily. Since the patrols had 6 - 8 boys, the prize was usually something to eat, a sure fire winner for scouts.

## Vespers

This was often the most inspirational part of the troop meeting, one that was familiar to me because it was prayer, one that I anticipated. I loved the name 'vespers'. When our activities were completed for the night, Mr. Phyle would summon us with the standard scouting signal into a single circle in the middle of the rec hall by holding his right arm up straight and rotating it in a circle. We all fell quickly into the circle and at that point a candle was lighted on a bottle in the center and the lights were doused. Mr. Phyle might say a few words sort of like a gentle sermon and would end by telling us to join hands. This was done in a particular way. We crossed our hands in front of ourselves and took the left hand of the kid to our left in our right hand and so on. After we were all joined together this way, Mr. Phyle would lead us in a verse or two of Scout Vespers:

### Scout Vespers

Softly falls the light of day,  
As our campfire fades away.  
Silently each Scout should ask,  
Have I done my daily task?  
Have I kept my honor bright?  
Can I guiltless sleep tonight?  
Have I done and have I dared,  
Everything to be prepared?

Quietly we join as one,  
Thanking God for Scouting fun,  
May we now go on our way.  
Thankful for another day.  
May we always love and share,  
Living in peace beyond compare,  
As Scouts may we find,

Friendships true with all mankind.  
Quietly we now will part,

Pledging ever in our heart,  
To strive to do our best each day,  
As we travel down life's way.  
Happiness we'll try to give,  
Trying a better life to live,  
Till all the world  
Be joined in love,  
Living in peace under skies above.

That is a beautiful, non-denominational prayer that all faiths could say, one that touched each of us with its simplicity and honesty. On some occasions we would sing a song that I don't remember the name of, just the first line, "Softly now the light of day,..." It was another fitting way to end a troop meeting where we had enjoyed learning and playing together. After the group song or prayer was ended, we would break loudly as the lights were turned on and tear out of the Rec Hall.

### Charred skin

That large fireplace was used in most troop meetings in the winter. Wood was provided by Mr. Lee I believe. It was stacked up outside and brought in as needed. The fire pit was probably 5 feet tall and about as wide. On one occasion I was assigned to start the fire and build it up so that it was large. I took the assignment seriously and got a fine fire going so I let it burn a while. Meantime I wandered away to do something else with Dick probably. After some time had passed I looked at the fire and decided that I needed to put more wood on it. I went over and without thinking about what I was doing, I reached through the chicken wire that served as the screen to keep embers in the fireplace. I stuck three fingers through the loops and as soon as I lifted, I felt a terrible pain and then smelled burning flesh.

I didn't understand what had happened but I dropped the fire screen instantly. My fingers hurt



badly so I looked at them as I was smelling the charred flesh. Across my index and middle finger there was a narrow crust of burned skin, sort of brown and sort of tan, but crisp. It hurt badly but since I was given an assignment, I fulfilled it rather than complaining about it at the time. I knew there was nothing to do to stop burns from hurting. The eschar -that's the fancy medical word for charred flesh- eventually came off in peculiar strips, leaving behind a shiny scar where the finger print is missing. You can see the remnants of the scar in this image as a straight line above the joint of my middle finger. It is the missing fingerprint that shows where the burn was. About straight across from that scar you can see a smaller one at about the same level on my index finger. The burn scar is the lower one on the middle finger. I was accident prone so have scars covering my hands and arms. Mom said I was just too eager to try things out. Sounds like I'm ADHD.

### Weekly Patrol Meeting

Marshall was our patrol leader. In the summer when the snow was gone we had weekly meetings, usually at his house. He lived out past the TB San a short enough distance to walk. We would take the San bus out and get out at the San and then go to Marshall's house. The other members of our patrol were from the Jesse Lee home so took the San bus from their place to the same place we got off and walked over.

These meetings were sort of lazy times to get together out of uniform and talk about merit badges, an upcoming campout or plan our own activities. There was a scribe -i.e. secretary- who had a little book that he wrote in, and who collected weekly dues. Dues were a dime and we had to pay our own money into the kitty. No handout from mom and dad. Either we earned it or we saved it out of our irregular weekly allowance of 25 cents. The dimes were put into a metal bank and saved to buy merit badges or whatever sundries we could afford to buy.

Mr. Phyle gave assignments to the patrols so if there was something we needed to practice, the weekly meeting was the time to do it. This usually involved activities from the requirements for ranks, like fire building or first aid. We'd get supplies and practice the skills for a while, and then break for some kind of Pool-aid and cookies, the standard refreshment that Mrs. -in those days married women were addressed differently than unmarried women so we said "Mrs." or "Miss", as

the case demanded- Mahurrin always prepared in the kitchen.

## Day Hikes & Snipe Nests

One of the activities we planned for our patrol was a day hike around the head of the bay. The day we went was sunny and as warm as it got which isn't really warm, but nonetheless nice for us. We had small back packs and canteens. In the packs we had things like compasses, ropes and first aid supplies, things we really didn't use but we carried just in case, a wise thing to do.

We followed the Old Nash Road that went clear around the head of the bay but not much further. The road was not paved but was fairly smooth because it was graded in the spring by a big yellow road grader. Rain made pot holes but there was so little traffic that they were generally not large. We had to cross three rivers.

We stopped at each river and explored upstream and down stream from the bridges, just poking at things and looking for interesting items left behind by fishermen. At one of the bridges, Marshall called us over to point something out. He and Robert had found some snipe nests that had been built by the birds up underneath the bridge. He pointed out to us exactly where the nests were and we made the association in our minds with the snipes we saw in the Hunter's Encyclopedia. We finished our hike which meant going twice along the Nash Road before we were finished, the second half being considerably longer than the first.

## Furnace in the Rec Hall

The last winter I was in Seward I was given the assignment in the winter of starting the furnace in the Rec Hall before each meeting so that it would be warmed up enough for troop meeting. I was 13-14 that winter. I don't remember how it was decided by the adults that I was the one to do it but it made sense to me because I did something three days a week that took me out that way anyway.

The little yellow bus that shuttled between downtown and the TB San made a side trip over to the Jesse Lee home. That allowed the older kids to get around a bit. The route the bus took was a "U" shape, so that it passed on both sides of the Rec Hall. On the way out to the Jesse Lee Home,, the little bus ran past the south side of the Rec Hall and when the bus left the Jesse Lee home to go on out to the TB San, it ran past the north side of the Rec Hall. So I was assigned to get off the

bus on its way out on Wednesdays -or whatever day of the week it was.

Then I would run up to the Rec Hall, and open the furnace room from the outside door. The furnace was idle so I had to turn on the fan that blew warm air out into the Rec Hall, and had to turn on another switch, one that allowed oil to be fed into the burner. Then I had to open the fire box, light a match and ignite the oil spray coming out the nozzle. This was a safe enough process because it wasn't like gasoline.

After I had the furnace started, I'd shut the firebox door, go out the back door of the furnace room, and run across the other side of the Rec Hall lot for the road on that side. I'd stand there and wait until the little bus came by, flag it down, get on and continue on my way out to the TB San where I'd administer the ultrasound treatment to my right calf.

## 19. Tonsina &amp; Trapper's Cabin

We went down the bay to Tonsina for a 4 day camp-out in the fall. It was cold and rainy but we were used to that so it didn't bother us. This photo shows us in that weather on Milo Martin's boat as we are returning to Seward which is far off in the mist. I think that's Lowell Point right in front of us. The second lighter gray mountain is Marathon so you can see where Seward is. The little guy pulling a face was my shadow, Andy. I'm the kid kneeling up on the left in the bow, without a hat.



Tonsina was one of the few beaches along the west side of the bay. Most of the bay was lined with cliffs so the beaches were special places. Tonsina was situated near the mouth of a small river that drained glacier water down from the mountains, hence was icy cold. After we had walked in the river, it was a relief to walk in the comparatively warm bay. There was a train along the north side of the small stream that we decided we needed to explore when we were given some free time. North of the camp site there was a large flat marsh that communicated with the ocean, and which was situated between the beach and the foot of the mountain.

We located the places we wanted to pitch out tents and set about getting them up. Night fall was coming and we didn't want to be left out in the rain so we got tents or lean-tos ready. Some kids cut boughs to sleep on. Andy, my little Indian Shadow, made himself a particularly irritating pest on that trip by deciding he would steal my axe. It was a single-bit BSA axe that I was proud of which I had received for my birthday. I kept it in its leather scabbard to protect the edge that I carefully honed with dad's whetstone, so I was worried that Andy would ruin

the edge. I chased him all over the camp but he was faster and always got away from me. I finally got angry at him and called him some names, or told him what I thought about it. That finally got to him so he later brought the axe back, but instead of just handing it to me, he buried it inside of my sleeping bag. He was a constant pest. I don't know why he picked me out but every campout we went on, and troop meeting we had, he hung around me.

We set up cooking facilities along the stream where the bank was clear, using wood we chopped and dragged in. In those days there was plenty of deadfall or trees and we just took what we needed. I suppose that today there are all sorts of rules about this sort of thing. After camp was pitched and we had eaten, we were allowed to explore with the absolute requirement that we have a buddy with us. It was an unbendable rule that would earn a kid a severe punishment which was motivation to obey it. More importantly I think, we actually felt the need of having someone with us when we went out of camp alone, and for good reason.

The next afternoon when we were allowed to explore outside of camp we started walking up the trail along the stream. One of the adults saw it first, a brown bear track. We could tell that what it was because it was enormous. Here's a photo of a brown bear track that dad took over at Kasilof. His belt knife which was 8-9 inches long is lying in the middle of the track. That gives you a sense of the size of these creatures so we were nervous from that point forward. As you look at it, you might be suspicious because the print looks like a human hand with long 'fingers', so just remember that the knife is 8-9 inches long and is about the width of the print. These bears are just huge.



## Snipe Hunt

On the second night, something remarkable happened. My brother and I suffered from a severe case of naivete, plus we were inflicted with a sense of the scientific world that Bailey the Blacksmith reinforced. As a result of both, we were taken advantage of and have a marvelous story to tell about it though at the time it wasn't too exciting. As dad always said, an adventure is something that's painful at the time, or something to that effect.

The way Bailey the Blacksmith unwittingly prepared us to be taken care of was by giving dad this marvelous, huge book, the biggest book we ever had in our home, entitled "Hunter's Encyclopedia." I sat down and pored over that thing for hours on end. Seward winters are dark and darn cold so there was a lot of time to kill inside. Even if we wanted to go out side and play it got pretty boring when we were doing that alone, so we opted to stay inside a lot of the time. The Encyclopedia was filled with details about guns and ammunitions as well as nature lore.

It contained chapter after chapter about deer and wild cats and ducks and geese and upland game birds and lowland game birds and so on. It was filled with facts and information, the kind of thing that our dad loved, the kind of thing that captured his attention faster than anything else. So between dad's fixation of science and facts, and this dang book, Dick and I learned about the bird named "snipe." In keeping with our interest in seeing any unfamiliar creatures, we wanted to see any kind of bird. So it was easy to take advantage of us.

The snipe was a beautiful small bird that lived in marshes. Note: marshes. This bird was speckled like sage hens and Hungarian partridges and ptarmigan, a familiar pattern. The Encyclopedia described how they were hunted, and the zig-zagging flight pattern they had when flushed. It also explained where these birds made their nests and how many young they had. All in all, the snipe became an absolutely real bird to us, as real as Canadian geese, pheasants and mallard ducks. Whenever anyone referred to these birds we had a good understanding about the basic information about them. The fact that they



Figure 405

<http://www.habitats.freeserve.co.uk/aylesbea.htm>

were rarely talked about didn't mean a thing to us. People didn't talk about gorillas in Alaska, either. As long as we read stories about creatures and saw photos of them, we knew they existed.

So there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to raise a sense of suspicion in us when our trustworthy patrol leader, Marshall and assistant patrol, Robert, told us about snipe the previous summer on our day hikes. We knew these birds from the Encyclopedia. We knew they lived in marshes so it was entirely believable that they were in the environs.

This night as it was getting dark, Marshall told Dick and me to go get a gunny sack. There were several by the cook tent. He then explained that he knew a place where there were snipe and that the snipe are easily spooked so we wanted to go along to try and catch them. He said not to tell anyone what we were going because other kids would want to go with us and would spoil it. We didn't say a thing and trustingly followed Marshall and Robert.

They took us out to the beach and we walked north several hundred yards before we cut back through the willows toward the mountains. When we got through the willows we entered a marshy area, open and flat, across from which we saw trunks of spruce trees standing over bare ground. Marshall led us across the marsh to the bare ground and then explained what we were going to do. He said that snipes are not terribly smart birds and that they preferred to run instead of fly. Snipes hunt for holes to hide in when they are chased so we were to sit quietly and hold our gunny sacks open while he and Robert would go back along the marsh and flush the snipes in our direction. They said that we were not to talk to each other because the snipe had good ears and would be spooked if they heard us talking, so if we really wanted to catch them we had to sit absolutely still and quiet.

What did we know. We knew there were snipe and had never encountered them before so when our patrol leader gave us these instructions, we believed him. It didn't bother us that none of the other boys knew what we were doing and in fact, we felt special. We saw or squatted underneath the spruce trees, looking across the marsh in the direction of the ocean. We couldn't tell where Marshall and Robert went after a while but we heard them walking away from us. We sat there quietly, waiting. While we sat there we had visions of catching a snipe and quickly closing the mouth of the sack to trap it inside, after which we'd show it to admiring envious kids.

As we sat there, we heard small creatures around us. That persuaded that

we only had to wait, innocent souls that we were. These creatures must have been chipmunks or small squirrels though we couldn't see them. They didn't scare us. We just waited and hoped. At one point I had to stand up and pee and then sat down again, hoping I hadn't broken the spell. We got a bit impatient and whispered something to each other but still trusted. We really wanted to catch a snipe. But after a long period of time we decided that Marshall and Robert had gotten lost so we figured we might as well head back to camp. It was probably a quarter mile away so we couldn't hear any noises or see light from the camp fires.

We stood up and stretched our aching legs and shook our gunny sacks. Empty. We brushed leaves and needles off our back sides and then started back to cross the marsh. We had to look hard because the light was minimal. Suddenly, straight ahead we saw a large black shape that was moving. We didn't know what to think at first because we knew we were alone out here in the marsh above Tonsina and that everyone was back at the camp. We stopped and looked hard, thinking that all of the people are over at the camp, on the other side of this black shape. We weren't spooked by it at first but as we thought about it, and saw that it really was moving up and down, that huge bear print began to bother us. That black shape was large and really was moving up and down. About now we were ready to scream and bolt but didn't.

Our training was sufficient to allow us to keep our wits. What we did was decide that instead of going south across the marsh in the direction of the camp on the river, we would head north through the marsh and find an opening to cut through the willows. We walked as quickly as we could but started getting wet feet. While we had been setting there, the tide had been coming in and filling the marsh, but we hadn't noticed that. When we realized that the tide was coming in, we did get real anxious. Neither of us could swim, both of us were afraid of the water, we were alone, there were no adults around, we didn't know where we were, and there was a big black shape coming for us.

We found an opening through the willows to the beach and quickly passed through. The problem, obviously, was that we had to walk south now to get back to camp so we headed south. We were nervous and alone but the idea of staying out there alone all night was worse than the anxiety about the bear through the willows that we had to pass. The willows were all that separated that bear from us as we passed it but there was no other way. We each whispered to be quiet at the point where we figured we were across from the bear. We finally got all the way down to

the river and turned upstream to find the camp.

When we got back to camp, no one was up. Everyone had gone to bed. The big campfire was still burning a bit but was almost out. We couldn't figure out what had happened but were relieved to have made it back safely past the bear, even though we didn't catch any snipe. The next day in the sun light we went back to the marsh to see if there were signs of a bear and we found it. It was an empty, rusty 55 gallon barrel. As the tide came in, the waves gently lifted the barrel up and down, creating the sense of a walking bear. Marshall didn't say much when we told him what had happened. I don't remember how we found out the truth about "snipe hunts". When we did, we were sort of embarrassed but we weren't the first ones to be fooled that way.

### Breaking & Entering

On the last full day we were at Tonsina some of us kids decided we were going to explore the little river. We started going upstream from the camp site, further than we'd gone before. The leaders trusted us so no adults were with us. We were on our own. No way to get into trouble they thought. Well, there was.

As we got up the stream a good distance we came across a trapper's cabin. We knew it was a trapper's cabin because only trappers -or hermits and there wasn't one of those- built cabins out there in isolated lonely places like that. It was a log cabin and set back about 50 feet from the river bank. We poked around the outside to see what was there. Things were OK until one kid, whose name I don't know, decided that he'd try and see if he could force the locked door open. There was only one door, the one in the front, and we found that it was locked. Most of us didn't think anything further about it. But this kid couldn't resist the challenge apparently so he worked on that door until he broke it open.

That as bad enough, but what happened next was worse. He and several other kids went into the cabin to see what was in there. That's trespassing but didn't cause damage, but for reasons I never understood those kids turned into hoodlums. They threw the bedding onto the floor, they opened flour sacks and spilled the flour on the floor, pulled metal dishes and cups out of the cupboard and generally made a real mess out of the place. Some kids took fishing gear. I looked

inside but what I saw bothered me enough that I didn't even go in. Call me a chicken. I just carried such an enormous alarm bell about doing bad stuff, a bell that rang 'serious punishment'. When I saw the vandalism, I knew I wasn't going to go inside. I stayed outside playing until things settled down inside which wasn't very long. We wandered around some more and then returned to the camp.

Nothing was said about what was done and none of the adults asked. I wouldn't say that anyone was actually trying to cover up the event, rather, it was just sort of forgotten. We struck camp the next day and boarded Milo's boat to return to Seward. The event at the trapper's cabin was forgotten. For the present time. But the trapper didn't forget.

### Inquisition

Later that fall the trapper went to provision and prepare his cabin for the winter when he would set out his line of traps. When he got there, he was shocked. He had no idea that anything had happened to the cabin because it never had before. The damage and destruction outraged the man and he returned to Seward and talked about what he found. I don't know whether he had any knowledge at that time about Troop 620 spending a few days at the mouth of the river at Tonsina, but if he didn't know, it didn't take long to find out. One thing led to another and people talked. Finally, the trapper approached Mr. Phyles about the vandalism and told him that he suspected that the scouts had done it.

At that time, Mr. Phyles did not know anything bad had happened. Nothing had been said about it while we were on Tonsina, but he could tell from the trapper that the timing of the event raised the suspicion that the scouts had been involved. That of course was a violation of the scout law and civil law, and boys can stray. So Mr. Phyles told the trapper that he would go to the Scout Committee to discuss the trapper's experience and decide how to proceed with an investigation.

The Troop Committee met together, consisting of Mr. Phyles, dad, Don Lee, Mr. Aylen, Mr. Muller, and I believe Art Schaefermeyer. These men listened to the meager evidence, compared the chronology and with sinking stomachs decided that they better do an official investigation to see if the trapper's suspicions were justified. They decided that the most efficient and effective way to do this was to summon all of the troop who had been on the Tonsina Camp Out to an 'interview'.

We were all summoned out to the Rec Hall on the next Saturday and we were not given a choice. Law enforcement officers weren't required to round us all up but that's about how it felt to us, summoned to appear in the Rec Hall to meet with the Scout Committee. The Rec Hall was eminently suited for this sort of formal proceeding. The large booths on the south side of the hall were large enough to hold the entire committee. Imagine that this booth is filled with 6 adult men, none of whom are smiling, none of whom are angry, but all of whom are asking you, a 13 year old kid, pointed questions. This may even be the exact booth where they sat.



All of us boys were held at the far end of the hall in front of the large fireplace. We sat on the floor. Mr. Phyles announced to us what was going to happen. He said that the trapper, by name, had reported that his cabin on the river at Tonsina had been vandalized and that the trapper believed that us scouts had done the deed when we were camping there. Mr. Phyles then explained that it was important that the Troop Committee do a complete investigation to find the truth so that the wrong doers could be punished and so that the trapper's cabin could be restored. That sounded like Zeus speaking from on high. His voice didn't thunder, but it resonated inside my skull. Man alive, I didn't do anything, yet I had been there.

Kids were called up one at a time, and instructed to stand at the end of the table. He faced the six adult men arrayed three to a side. The men then interviewed the boy carefully. These men were not trained lawyers or investigators or interrogators, but they were decent men and they were worried that the boys they were responsible for had violated the trust placed in them and had committed vandalism. They knew what they had to do and how to do it. It was a solemn occasion for all of us. One of the men was secretary and took down each boy's name, and his answers to the questions that were asked. When the committee was through with the boy, he was dismissed and another boy was called.

I was nervous as a cat again. Some boys spent only a few minutes before the

committee and others spent what seemed like a long time. When I was called I walked nervously and stiffly up to stand at attention. My dad was there at the table but he didn't smile at me. He didn't say anything to me. I was alone before the awful inquisition. By the time I went up, the committee had its basic format down so they went quickly to the heart of the matter. They knew I had been at the camp-out because I was there on that day so they didn't need to confirm that.

They went straight to the issue:

Did you explore with other scouts up the river on the last day?

Did you see the trapper's cabin?

Did you see that it was broken into?

Did you see any kid break the door in?

Did you see what was done inside the cabin?

Who did those things inside the cabin?

Why didn't you tell an adult this had happened?

Did you help break the door down?

Did you commit vandalism inside the cabin?

Did you take any fishing lures?

Did you enter the cabin?

What were you doing while you were there?

Is that all you did?

Are you sure?

These sound like simple enough questions but they weren't, particularly those that reminded me that I did know that something wrong had been done, and I knew that I really should have told someone about it. Since I didn't, I was now part of the problem. So when they asked me what I was doing if I was hanging around, I had to tell them my sin. While kids were rummaging around inside the cabin, I was outside by the river playing with an old clothes wringer. It looked exactly like this one. The barrel was deteriorating and the white rubber wringers were crumbling along the ends. What I did that was so evil, that I hated to admit, was this: there was a bunch of head-high



fire weed growing along the river and I got the clever idea of pulling the stalks and running them through the wringer. It was an interesting exercise and made a purplish tint on the rollers.

When I had to admit that I did know something bad had been done, that I had not told anyone about it, and that I had vandalized the wringer, I was mortified. The men just looked at me as I spoke, while I stared at the floor or out the window or at the ceiling, avoiding their eyes. No one lectured me, no one criticized me. They didn't need to. The experience itself of standing before them was punishment. All they were doing was collecting facts from all of the boys so that they could find who the problems were and then advise the trapper. But it was punishment of a sort. After they had finished their questions and I had finished my answers they dismissed me. That is the correct word, "dismissed". There was a simple earnest military bearing to the investigating body. I returned to sit down and await the end of the inquisition, thinking that I was going to be punished by being thrown out of the troop which made me feel bad.

The committee finished its interviews and the boys were then sent home. Today I don't remember precisely what was done. I do know that the ringleaders were identified along with those who participated with them, and I do know that they were punished in some fashion. I was not punished which is probably why I've forgotten that part of the event. It was a sobering thing to stand before that body that felt to a kid like a court martial and to be questioned directly and personally about me, the kid who stood on the river bank and let it happen and didn't report it.

Justice became more than an abstract concept. It existed in that room that day, in the eyes of Mr. Phyles, my dad and the other committee members and I cherish that experience. These men were deadly earnest in their desire to find out what had happened. They were fair but there was no letting anyone off the hook. Nor was there a wish to somehow pin anything on anyone. They were simply seeing to find the truth. They were simple men with minimal educations but they had the wisdom that comes from a life of simplicity and fairness in their dealings with others some of who were con artists. Out of this ground came the ability to tell when someone is dissembling, the ability to ask reasonable questions that follow the line of a person's responses, and to ultimately discern what had happened. I wish the justice system today could have those attributes. In that event, Bill Clintons wouldn't exist.



## Gorsuch Pioneers

The Western Alaska Council of which Seward was part had managed to

pull together the funds and cooperation to create an official boy scout camp out east of Anchorage. We had the good fortune of being one of the troops who signed up to go

there the first year, 1955. In commemoration of this, we were given cloth patches saying "Gorsuch Pioneers" that we sewed over our council patches, as you see here. It was an honor.



The camp was so new that it hadn't even been completed. I don't know the size of the camp area but it was large. A few weeks before we arrived a headquarters building had been erected along with a trading post. They sat on a knoll above the swimming area. There was a road, more like a trail, that vehicles could navigate to get around. It had been created by a D-6 Cat "walking" in a long loop that must have been a mile or more long in its entirety. I walked most of it so know it was long. It looped around a small lake before it turned back to the point of origin.

Well before we left Seward for Gorsuch we were hearing stories about what it was like. All of them made the place sound glamorous. The camp was rough and wild and offered real wilderness camping opportunities for us eager kids. The distance from Seward added to the glamour of the place. As we were getting our gear loaded to head up to Gorsuch, we continued to get tidbits of news calculated to whet our appetite. The most exciting involved black bears in camp. We were told on good authority that two bears had actually been killed that week right there in camp, by men using axes! Amazing. Today I have to chuckle. I doubt that any man would risk attacking a bear with an axe. That would be sheer stupidity. But the fact was that bears did get into the camp and did raid people's food supplies that weren't properly protected.

## Teepees

This shows the five teepees that mom and dad made, set up in the field in front of the Jesse Lee Home. Dad laid the designs out on the canvas and allowed us scouts to paint them with latex paint.



When we set these teepees up on our campsite at Gorsuch they looked totally different. One shows here on the right,

sitting in brown birch trees that had to be cleared out so that we had enough space to set them up. The white tent on the left is in fact the Jesse Lee tent that was used to store our cooking utensils and supplies. They were spaced about this far apart so we had a large camp. I'm the kid in the front with had on sideways. Right in style today.





## Cooking Detail

The cook stoves were set up in front of the tent which meant that we all went there to get grub three times a day. We were allowed to take our food to eat anywhere we wanted. This was a great place to camp because there was plenty of birch trees that had to be taken down. That was fun. Chopping trees indiscriminately was frowned on so this



gave us freedom. The other benefit of the plenitude of trees was the amount of raw material we had to use for lashing everything we could think of. How do you like the size of his frying pan hanging there?

Don Lee is standing there over the griddle that has been leveled to compensate for the hill we're sitting and you see the fancy framework we lashed over his cook area. We had a great time lashing that frame, was just in case there was rain at which time we'd put a large tarp over the frame to keep it out. We hung around while he cooked like a pro. Nothing fazed him. Like the size of the basin of pancake batter? We had all we could eat.



Marshall and I are sitting on a mound looking at some critter on the ground while we are eating out of our trusty aluminum mess kits. The road made by the D-6 Cat is just behind us. Notice the tripod to my right? It's holding a large round object that happens to be a heavy-duty canvas bag that is filled with water. The water was treated with halazone tablets to purify it which made it taste like diluted Clorox which is precisely what it was, but at least it was safe to drink. We'd fill our canteens out of the spigot at the bottom. Dick is there on the left digging in the dirt with a stick.



### KP Detail

Of course, after we ate, we had the privilege of washing dishes. This troop was set up, thanks to Mr. Lee, to do the whole cooking and washing thing right. Mr. Aylen is standing over one of the barrels made to wash dishes. See the stove pipe coming out



the near side of the barrel?

That's because it was two barrel halves welded together to create two compartments, one on the top for water and the one on the bottom for a fire. That way we boiled, literally boiled, our water and thereby were able to basically sterilize our pans and dishes. Diarrhea from grease and bacteria was a problem with some troops that didn't have this sophisticated arrangement. That's Billy Schaefermeyer standing to my right. I don't know who's got the diving mask on but I don't imagine it really helped. The kid standing behind the steam



was Beaver Nelson. He was an Indian kid who had been adopted by a family who lived out north of the San. He claimed that he was descended from an important chief and referred to himself as 'royalty'. He was a nice kid and quiet.

### Swimming & Canoeing

**G**orsuch was constructed on the edge of a fair-sized lake that didn't have any houses on it. Indeed, the ride out to Gorsuch from Anchorage seemed to take an hour or two which was an ordeal,



given the fact that we did it in the Jesse Lee bus, the same one we traveled in from Seward to Anchorage. This water was cold, real cold. The ice had all melted, about a month before but the water never warmed up. We froze when we got in the water and since it was mandatory we all did it.

This was my introduction to the "buddy system". I imagine that the boy scouts still use this safety system when kids are on the water because it is simple, easily monitored and effective. It keeps kids from drowning. A plywood sheet was painted and set up with a bunch of cup hooks screwed in neat tidy rows and columns set off with lines both ways to make a grid. We were each given a round disc with our names on it, that hung from a small metal loop. These discs were stored in our troops section of the board. Whenever anyone went to the water for any activity in or on it, he absolutely had to take a buddy. The two kids would take their discs and hang them together on a single hook on the activity side of the board. That way the troop could tell which kids had checked out and which kids were together and where they were. So in a glance the scout master could keep track of his boys on the water. I was too afraid of the water to spend much time there, only when ordered did I get in and then only in the shallows.

Looking at the raft the boys are standing on, I conclude that army surplus pontoons were used. The military was everywhere and provided all kinds of things to us for all aspects of our lives.

All of the water-related merit badges were offered which included the life saving, rowing, canoeing and swimming. Dad is out in a canoe with one of our kids. The setting was beautiful at the foot of large mountains that are behind the person who took this photo. There was little rain while we were there so it was about as good as it could get. We had a great time here,



particularly since dad was there.

### Black Bear Scare

You ever been chased by a black bear? I mean for real, not in a dream? It's pretty scary and makes you run really fast. We'd been there in camp for several days and for some reason one night my little Eskimo shadow, Andy, and I decided to sneak out alone. That was forbidden but we did it anyway. Other kids had done it and I guess we wanted to try it just for the heck of it. Taps was played at 10:00 p.m. so we had been in bed for an hour or so, waiting until we figured the adults would be asleep. When we judged it safe to get up, we crept out of our sleeping bags with our shoes and quietly snuck out of the tent. Our idea was to just explore the rest of the Gorsuch Camp site. We had not been taken around the loop road and didn't know what was out there. We had been told that there was nothing on the far end but we wanted to look at it anyway as any reasonable kids do.

At that time of year, night is never really dark. We got our shoes on and then started to follow the road to the right which took us out to the uninhabited portion of the camp. The D-6 road was rough but passable. Trees squeezed close to the track because no one had cleared out any of the brush. We were having a great time just walking around the area looking and wondering. There really wasn't much to see but the freedom was wonderful. At one point after we were on the far side of the loop we heard the bushes rustle next to us. Remember, I was 14 years old. We figured there was just another kid who was out disobeying curfew like we were, so we called to him. No answer, we called again. No answer. so I walked over to the place where the branches had moved. I stepped out of the trail into the bushes and pushed the tree branches back.

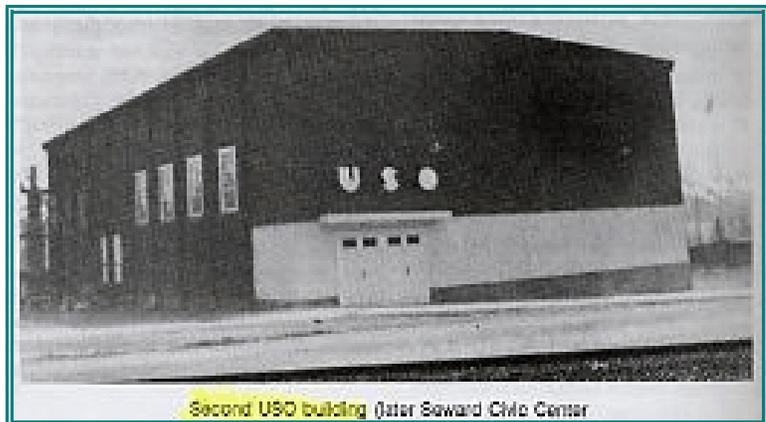
There was a small black bear. Looking at me. He wasn't an adult I don't think and he wasn't a baby but it was small enough that as soon as we saw it we figured that momma bear was probably nearby. That was frightening, so we took off running. We headed back the way we had come trying to get as much distance between us and the bear as we could. I imagine today that the bear also took off in the other direction but that wasn't what we were thinking back then. We were frightened, not out of our wits, but we were frightened because we did think there might be a big bear around who might look unkindly on us being in the environs.

We got stitches in our sides and slowed down, stumbling and tripping on the rough track. We knew we still had a long ways to go, so we decided that we would cut across the road loop. We stepped off into the trees and bushes and headed in what we figured was the direction of our camp. The ground got real rough not and we tripped even more but we were in a hurry. Suddenly we noticed that we were in a marsh. The ground was mucky and sticky. Straight ahead was a small lake. We had run into a lake we didn't know was there so, frustrated now, we turned to our left and headed sort of back to the road and around that end of the lake.

We finally made it back to the track and followed it to our campsite which looked good at this point. We took off our muddy shoes and crawled back into our teepee and into our sleeping bags. The adults never knew we did this because we never told anyone, including the other boys.

### Scout Jamboree

This was a highlight of the scout year because it involved head to head competition between the town troop and the Jesse Lee troop, the only time there was competition of this sort. This was held in the USO hall by the fire department on the main street. Mary Barry's photo shows it just as it was when we went there. The jamboree was about as big a deal for the community as it was for the troops because there was so little entertainment otherwise. Those doors opened and hundreds of people poured in to fill the bleachers in anticipation of the competition.



Second USO building (later Seward Civic Center)

Each troop had been preparing for this day for months. Strategy was developed in each troop by the scoutmaster. Patrols or boys were assigned certain skills to refine so that they could do them faster and more accurately than the corresponding team from the other troop. Our patrol was assigned some first aid

skills. I liked first aid and found it exciting to think I would be able to show my skill. We practised the skill earnestly at troop meeting or at Marshall's house. I learned how to stop bleeding with a tourniquet, how to make splints out of magazines or sticks and socks, how to treat shock, etc. Everything in the Scout Manual I learned perfectly and could apply a splint as fast as anyone.

On the appointed night we all appeared in full uniform at the USO and took our assigned spots down in front of the bleachers. I had butterflies in my stomach and my mouth was dry because public performances always made me nervous, even if I thought I was prepared for the thing I had to do. The rules were simple. There was a master of ceremonies who introduced the troops and explained to the public what he was going to do. He had a set of 10 or so tests that both troops had to take. These tests were written on 3 x 5 cards and sealed in envelopes. They were identical. The MC announced that he was ready for the first test so each troop sent its representatives out to their place. The places were side by side with the MC between them, on the floor right in front of the bleachers where the public was sitting.

The rest of each troop sat in the stands and cheered loudly for their team. Kids are always full of advice and insight so the teams were subjected to an enormous amount of suggestions that probably confused them more than they helped them. The tests were graded on two elements: speed and accuracy. As the first team finished its task, it stood up and dusted its hands while the troop cheered loudly and the public clapped. A timekeeper kept track of the time of each team. After the second team finished, a pair of officials walked up to each product and evaluated them. They read the assignments out loud so the public would know what had been done, and then examined the work. They assigned some sort of score after which the MC would announce that the next test was to take place. The same sequence of sweat and anxiety and cheering took place, followed by scoring. Finally it was our turn. I was a nervous wreck.

We got up off the bleachers and walked down to the floor to our assigned location. There was a pile of first aid supplies, knives, axes, wood, sheets, etc., all of the things that the teams could use in whatever manner they thought they should to complete their assigned tasks. After our two teams stood there, sort of nervously checking out the other team, the MC handed our leaders the unopened envelopes. He reminded us to not do anything until he had yelled, "Ready, set, GO!" After he gave the command to go, we did.

Marshall tore the envelope open with shaking hands while the public was murmuring quietly. He read the assignment to us so we could all know what we were to do. At this point the troops started yelling encouragement which only unnerved us, making us more nervous. What we had was an accident victim with a multitude of injuries and our assignment was to discover and treat all of them. I don't remember whether we had to provide our own victim or whether one was handed to us. In any event, we ended up with a body lying on the floor, dying.

The poor soul had suffered a blunt injury to his head that was bleeding badly. He was in shock. He had broken two fingers on his right hand. He had broken his left femur. And he had mosquito bites or some such little stuff. Marshall, being an in-charge kind of leader, gave us our orders. Dick and I were assigned to splint the fractured femur. That was great. We loved doing that and did it really well. We went to the pile of stuff and pulled out the long sticks that were there and dug out some pieces of rope. We knelt down across from each other and spread the kid's legs a bit so we could put a stick between his legs. We pulled off our neckerchiefs, a heroic thing to do, and oh so gently slid them under the fractured femur. We stretched the neckerchiefs out to give us room to maneuver. We set the other stick on the other side of the leg, slid a few pieces of rope under the leg and then wrapped the fracture part of leg in a small blanket. By now everyone in the place was yelling so loudly I don't think I could have heard Dick if he had tried to speak to me. I wasn't quite sure why they were yelling, whether it was encouragement or criticism. We gingerly moved the sticks closer to the leg, and began to pull the neckerchiefs and ropes tighter. We decided we could tie the ends so did that and finally had the leg immobilized at about the same time the head wound, broken fingers and mosquito bites were treated.

The final task was to build a make-shift litter, load the boy and haul him to a particular place in the hall. We feverishly built the litter out of long poles with a sheet. This neat device was made by simply folding the sheet over on itself around the sticks, leaving enough room between them to hold the body. We then did a special lift and carry technique to safely raise the body and move it over onto the litter. As a group we hoisted the litter and headed as quickly as we could to the designated finish line. At that point, we laid the litter on the floor to loud cheering. We had finished first and stood proudly, sort of dusting off our knuckles, looking at them modestly for slivers, wanting to spit nonchalantly on the floor. The other team followed in more than a few seconds.

The cheering died down when the officials came over to grade our performance. Our patrol was confident that we would win because we knew our skills so well, and because we finished well ahead of the other team. The officials started at the head, checking to see that the right kind of bandage had been applied to stop the bleeding, and checking to be sure that no tourniquet had been used. They worked their way down the body to the fractured femur. I held my breath but was proud because I could see that our job was neater and tighter than that of the city troop. The officials made me nervous, however, because after looking at our victim, they took out the assignment card again, and read, looking for something in particular.

We were heartbroken. The assignment card said that the fractured femur was on the left side. We had carefully splinted the right femur. Our patrol lost that contest, although our troop fortunately won the overall competition. But I will never forget the embarrassment I felt at letting my team down by failing to read the assignment carefully.

### Flint, Steel & Tinder

The idea really appealed to me to learn how to make fires using a piece of flint and a piece of steel. That's how the pioneers had made their fires in the settling of the west and there was romance associated with the idea. So when I was assigned to learn how to make fires that way as part of a merit badge or rank advancement, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I bought a kit from the boy scouts that had everything I needed. This was perhaps the first of the BSA "kits" I purchased and it seemed particularly special because it was BSA. The kit included a large chunk of flint, a flat metal bar about 6 inches long and an inch wide, some outing flannel to convert into tinder and a wad of excelsior. The flint had come from a chalk bed so it had bits of white chalk all over the outside. It was from a largish chunk that had been broken in half so there were sharp edges to work on with the steel bar. The fundamental issue was striking the sharp flint edge a glancing blow with the steel bar to create sparks.



To convert the flannel into tinder we put it in a tin can and placed it in the

oven and heated it to a high temperature for some time. That changed the flannel from soft fabric into breakable layers of carbon that held together well enough to be handled.

The process is not a simple one in practice though the idea is. You prepare a bed of the excelsior, tear off a small piece of tinder and set it in the bed of excelsior, then you strike sparks off the flint with the steel so that the sparks land in the tinder. When the tinder starts to glow where a hot spark landed, you grab the bed of excelsior keeping the tinder in the middle, hold it close to your mouth, blow as hard and fast as you can to heat up the tinder which will then start strands of excelsior to burn, then you roll the excelsior into a ball so that the tiny flame is in the center, then you lay it on the ground, and immediately begin laying tiny dry sticks across the excelsior and continuing adding larger and larger sticks until you have a real fire.

I loved doing this exercise and became proficient at it. We had competitions in troop meetings and I don't recall whether I won or not, but I know that I could get the excelsior ignited and start a tiny fire in less than 10 seconds. That was great fun and very satisfying. It was comforting when I was outdoors somewhere to know that I had the makings of a fire if I needed it. The key to success was to keep things dry. Once you had learned how to hold the flint and strike it with the steel to create large sparks that would effectively start the tinder to smolder, you were set IF you had dry tinder, excelsior and dry kindling. We carried our tinder and excelsior in Band-Aid cans. The flint and steel needed to be dry as well but it was less critical.

### Winter Camp Out Mile 5

**A**round the winter of 1955, our troop decided it would do a winter camp out along about February. Get it? "February"? That's the coldest month with the most snow and we were going to go outdoors and sleep. On purpose. Was there something wrong with us? Not really, but it was an intimidating thing to think about. We knew how cold it was and expected that the nights would be pretty miserable. We were right. It was horrible. Here's what happened.

We spent weeks planning for this event like we always did. But this was a more serious outing. Spending a couple of nights out in the deep snow and cold cold

was actually dangerous so we were careful when we thought about what needed to be done, what we had to take and so on. We decided that we would take the teepees as out tents which solved that problem. Then we had to be sure we had sleeping bags that were warm enough for a long cold nights.

I had a GI surplus mummy bag exactly like this one made for the arctic. It was filled with down and had a canvas cover so it was durable, light, and warm. It had a small opening at the top on the front that you looked out of, so when you turned during the night, you had to turn the bag with you or else your head was buried inside. But it was warm. That was the best thing about it.



Of course, a key to keeping warm out there was to keep dry. The worst thing we could do was to get wet. Cold conducts heat away from your body quickly, and in the cold weather your clothes wouldn't dry off like they will in warm weather. Keep dry. That was one of the primary considerations. When we played in the snow we kept snow out of our clothes and out of our boots.

The day finally came to make the trip so several dads appeared with pickups to load up the teepees, poles, and gear for us kids. We then drove over the ice and snow out to Mile 5. That's where Billy S. lived. We went past his place about 200 yards to a clearing on the west side of the road, next to the bridge over Bear River. The clearing was the remnant of the original road that had been built out there. The road we used was the "new" road.

We situated our five teepees around the space and set them up. We scraped and shoveled snow out of the inside and put down ground clothes which were tarps. Some kids took axes and went to cut down pine boughs to put under their sleeping bags instead of tarps. I tried that one night and discovered that while the idea sounds real good, the reality is not, unless you made sure to use only the smallest terminal branches that had no thick branches. I didn't do that, however. That's why I know about it.

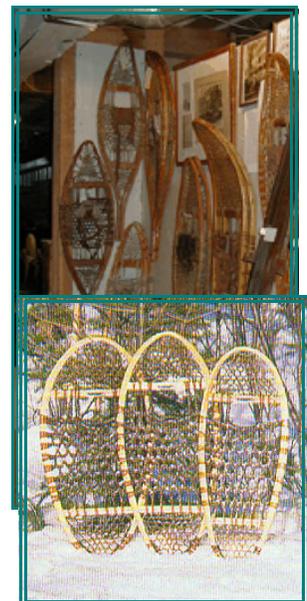
We built a large campfire and found some logs to roll up and sit on to get warm. Mr. Lee had his cooking gear there which was a godsend because the food he prepared was superior to what we would have cooked for ourselves over camp fires. He made hot chocolate which was a treat out there in the cold. I think he also brought chili to warm up because that was one of the preferred foods to eat in the

winter for some reason.

Bear River was frozen over with enough ice that we could walk on it safely. It was particularly fun because we found a side stream that wound through a bunch of trees that had protected the ice from the snow. There was skiff of snow lying on the ice but it hadn't congealed because it was too cold for it to melt, so we could push it aside and see ice like glass. It was a curious feeling to stand over a stream on what appeared to be a piece of glass because we were afraid it would crack and drop us into the water. At one point as we explored this ice, we heard a deep 'crack' that meant that the ice was changing shape at least and at worst was actually breaking. It didn't take us kids long to get off that part of the ice. We returned to the thicker ice where we hadn't heard those unnerving cracks.

We had been trained about walking on ice. If it started to break in earnest, the first thing we were to do was lie down on the ice, which sounds sort of funny, but the point is to distribute your weight over the length of your body on the ice instead on two points represented by your feet. We had also been trained in rescuing someone who had fallen through the ice. The idea again is to distribute your weight over the ice by lying down and to extend something long and strong to the victim who was to take hold of it and use it to pull himself out of the ice at which point he was to stay flat and work his way to the bank. The idea of falling through the ice was terrifying. I was deathly afraid of water and the fear was compounded by the idea of falling through the ice into the water and then being carried a distance so that when I came back up I would be under the ice and couldn't get out. The idea terrified me, so when I heard 'crack' I was off the weak ice about as fast as I could go.

We took snow shoes so spent some time exploring the area that way. There really was no alternative because the snow was too deep and soft to walk on. It was a novel idea to walk on top of the snow, particularly in a location where the snow was up to the top of bushes was walked between during the summer. This image shows several styles of snow shoes. The best kind for the deep fluffy snow was the one that has turned up tips. It was called a "Yukon" snowshoe and was used to break trail because the tips stayed above the snow, making it less strenuous to break trail, at least when compared to what



happens when you break trail with a flat snowshoe.

The other fun kind of snowshoe was the Bear Paw. These have a totally different purpose. They are designed to be used in country where you are walking through brush that would catch the tips of the Yukon shoes. They were also easier to run in so we competed with each other to see who could run faster in both kinds of shoes.

One time while we were exploring the clear ice under the trees, we knelt down to look carefully at the bottom. The water was only a few feet deep there and the water was as clear as the ice so we could see everything. We saw the vegetation but not much else until one kid hollered, "I found a salmon." We all hurried over, not sure whether he was pulling our leg or not. He wasn't. There was a dead salmon trapped between a couple of rocks. It was still bright red and hadn't decayed, due I suppose, to the coldness of the water. I don't know why other salmon bodies hadn't survived but I didn't wonder about it either at the time. It was like a jewel lying there in the darkness, almost shining with red.

The nights -two of them- were pretty awful. The first night I tried sleeping on pine boughs and discovered that was a dumb idea, at least with the boughs I had picked. The second night I slept on a tarp to keep my bag from getting wet in the snow. Even an insulated bag like my mummy bag would still generate heat on the bottom side and would melt snow which would be absorbed into the bag which would make me wet and miserable. So I kept something between me and the snow.

We got into our sleeping bags with all of our clothes, except for our boots which we took off first. We stood on our bags while we took them off and set them by our heads, and then we climbed into the bags. Some kids were stupid enough to climb in wearing their boots which was a mistake because they ripped the bags in some instances. We lay with our coats on for a while to allow our bags to warm up - as much as they would. We took off our socks, which were moist now from perspiration if not snow, and lay them close to our bodies so they would be more likely to dry during the night than they would on our feet at the bottom of the bag. They didn't actually dry, however, rather they just made cold spots by me. All of us took our coats and gloves off but most of us kept our clothing on, in the hope that it would help keep us warm. I expect it did, but by the morning, I was cold and miserable, with two damp socks that I had to put on after which I climbed into ice cold boots. Man alive, why did I ever want to do this?

No one was really warm except for the adults and I never understood what

they did to keep warm. I think Art Schaefermeyer went back home? We stood around the cook stove while Mr. Lee made breakfast, wishing we could get warm, but we couldn't. We realized that this was just the first night and dreaded having to do it again. True enough, the second night was worse and by this time some kids really had wet clothing so the leaders had to do something to get them into dry clothes or they would have been frost bitten. Really. It was cold and I was so glad when we struck camp and loaded up to go back into town. I never wanted to do a winter camp out again.

### Cedar Totem Poles

We carved two totem poles out of good sized cedar logs. Dad was in charge of this project, of course, and in this instance worked to our advantage. We got to go out with him to the shop at the Jesse Lee Home where the logs were laid out to be worked on. The impetus to do these totem poles was to build something to mark the entry way to the scout camp out west of Anchorage named "Camp Gorsuch". Our troop decided that it would make two totem poles, a reasonable thing to do since most of the kids were native Alaskans.

Dad dug up the cedar logs from his friends in town who probably donated them for the project. These logs had aged so were not going to check after we had finished carving them. They were about 2 feet in diameter and about 8 feet long, long enough to be set into the ground and leave a nice head-high totem. Dad researched the patterns in Haida, Tlingket and Tsimshian art and chose several that he liked, including a frog on the base. After the logs had been prepared, he laid the designs out with a soft lead pencil and we set to work with mallets, chisels and files. As we worked, the totem began to take shape and looked like this, though not quite as large.

The best part of carving totems in my estimation was the scent. Cedar is one of the loveliest smells in this world and I'm not sure what its appeal is. It's probably because I grew up in Naples and Vernal where all my relatives oohed and ached over cedar and juniper woods' smell. It really is lovely. To stand at a cedar log with a file making aromatic saw dust was



Figure 423  
<http://georgestorry.com/artist.htm>

wonderful. Cedar wood is soft and easy to carve. With a sharp chisel it cuts easily. Minimal energy is required to carve so it isn't hard work.

Half a dozen of the older boys worked on the project for a few hours one a night other than troop meeting. It was winter so we kept the door to the workshop shut. One evening one of the older kids who I got along with well whispered to me, "How about a fresh apple?" Remember this is Seward where fresh fruit was a delicacy. I don't suppose I ate a dozen fresh apples in a year so his offer of a fresh apple was irresistible. He said to follow him and to not say anything. That was my clue that we were about to do something else wrong. Oh well, a fresh apple is worth a risk I guessed so we went outside like we were going back to the dormitory.

Except that this kid took me out back along one of the buildings to a cooler where he opened the door. I think he had some sort of a key, like he was a privileged upper classmen who had authority that the little kids didn't. He took me inside and found the apples. They were packaged in large crates and smelled wonderful. This was a smell I didn't encounter anywhere except Warner's Market. He pried open one of the crates and the apples were individually wrapped in a heavy tissue paper. He took tow out and handed one to me. We unwrapped them and they were golden delicious apples. We threw the paper aside and started eating. They were cold and crisp and juice ran down my chin. We finished the apples and returned to the workshop.

## 20. Vernal Expedition Summer 1953

Mom and dad had a remarkable capacity to make big decisions on what appeared to us kids to be short notice. And to see them through. The expedition from Seward to Vernal and back again in 1953 was a memorable one. One day they said to each other, "I think it's time to take a trip to Utah. "Let's go, oh say day after tomorrow." We did. As I sit here today writing this I chuckle because you kids will hardly believe what it was like. How can you, kids who have scarcely driven on dirt roads, who have never had to deal with inner tubes or actually remove tires and repair holes in inner tubes, replace the inner tubes into the tires, and re-inflate them? That trip is actually the greatest pioneering-type trip we ever took as a family - next to the Yukon adventure we took in 3 more years. Traveling something like 3,500 miles each way, just the four of us in the car, hauling everything we would need for the 6-7 day trip, on "roads" that had no habitations for 60 miles in some locations. An extraordinary trip.

The "AlCan [Alaska-Canada] Highway" of 1953 was a rugged stretch of road that scarcely deserved the title. We drove "out" two times actually, the other being when we finally exited Alaska in 1956. This scarcely-graded road deserved the title "highway" because it did in fact connect Alaska to the "Lower 48" through Canada -but for no other reason. It wandered from the Alaskan border through the Canadian provinces of Yukon Territory, Alberta and British Columbia, enormous territories each.

The road bed had been graded by military corps of engineers in the 1940's for transporting heavy equipment should that ever be necessary. But the road had not been upgraded from that rugged condition. Some stretches of road were covered with baseball sized "gravel" which quickly damaged regular car tires. In addition to the lack of funding and lack of reason to upgrade the road, the terrain itself contributed to its terrible condition.

Tundra is a flat uninteresting type of terrain that is boring to drive through. But it presented some challenges for road builders because some of it was boggy. In the winter that was not problem but in the summer it was. Road building in bogs is nearly impossible and there was one stretch of road that was surfaced with a corduroy of small logs, such as was done in the frontier days of the continental US. The resulting ride about jarred your teeth out of your head. But this type of road wasn't what destroyed tires.

The road was known to be a tire-killer, and this meant that any sane person - who obviously wouldn't even undertake the enterprise in the first place- prepared for the worst because it always happened. One day in the early summer, dad sort of announced to Mom and she agreed that we were going 'stateside' in 2 days. He had "pulled his plug" on the union board thereby telling the dispatcher that he was not available to work - until he put his plug back. In anticipation of the horrendous road conditions, Dad put a new set of tires and tubes on the car, a brown and tan 1953 Chevrolet, put a rack on the top and filled it with another set of four tires, inner tubes and boots along with a tire pump and tools to repair inner tubes.

Flat tires happened regularly along the way which delayed the trip but afforded us kids a chance to stretch our legs and explore wherever we happened to be. After receiving the standard injunction, "Now don't you boys wander too far." Dad jacked the car up and removed the tire. Then the tough part was removing the inner tube. You've probably seen flats repaired in tire shops? With powerful machines that pop and hiss. Well, dad didn't have one of those so he had to use tire irons made for the job and brute strength to get at the tube and to replace it after it was repaired.

The neatest part of the process was putting the patch over the hole. In those days patches for car tires came attached to the flat outside surface of shallow metal cup-like devices that were filled with hard fibrous material. After one scuffed the area around the hole on the inner tube, one of these metal cup things was centered over the hole and a special clamp that was made for this specific job was applied to squeeze the patch together with the tube. Then the interesting part. The fibrous material was scratched with a knife to raise a few fibers which were set on fire with a match. The whole thing was left on the ground as long it took for this smouldering smoky process to finish, the purpose of the heat being to seal the rubber patch and tube enough that they would bond together. Then the clamp was removed when dad allowed as how the thing had probably cooled off enough to check it. In that instant of truth time was suspended, you didn't dare breath, as you watched him gingerly pull the metal cup off the patch. To see if the patch had bonded to the tube. If it had, then joy of joys and jubilation. But if not, we would creep silently away to poke at something and become inconspicuous, knowing that the last thing we wanted to do at that instant was offer a target.

When dad noted that a tire had been badly bruised from hitting large rocks, he would install 'boots' during the flat-repairing process. These are sort of like

insoles you put in shoes, except they are much larger and are made out of thick layers of rubber. Their purpose was to strengthen the tire and to protect the inner tube. By the time we had finished the trip dad had discarded several tires because they were beyond repair.

The trip took 5-6 days each way. That meant making camp that many times.

As long as there was no rain that meant nothing more than rolling sleeping bags out on the ground for three of us. Under the stars which in an unpolluted environment were just astonishing. Mom slept in the car. Mom cooked on a green Coleman stove that is still in her basement in Provo using aluminum cookware made for the job. I still have that set of nesting pans somewhere around here. She used the trunk to set up the Coleman



stove and the top of a suitcase as her table as in this photo. Dick's rolling up his sleeping bag. We'd just stop anywhere to camp. There were few vehicles so we weren't troubled by traffic. I don't think any vehicles went past during the night and few during the day outside of the small communities that were scattered along the road.

On the way out we stopped by the Matanuska Glacier and got several photos. See the road? Unpaved and we were not far from Anchorage. Identical shirts as usual. Dee and I saaw the glacier in 2003 and it was still about this size which is interesting because the Portgage Glacier had retreated an astonishing amount as had the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Glacier across the bay from Seward.



The way we traveled was to just drive and drive. There was nothing to see

for a thousand miles and no places to stop at so getting as many miles behind us as we could each day was the primary objective. That meant us kids had to sit still for hours and hours. Dad would drive late in the evenings which were extended in the summer. For those parts of the ride, we laid sleeping bags and quilts on the floor of the car behind the front seat. That made a level bed so that both of us could lay down and sleep - or squabble half the time which always got us in trouble, but it was so boring on those long rides.

### Indian Burial Ground

Somewhere in the Yukon Territory dad saw a burial ground with curious houses built over the graves. He stopped the car, roused us out and had us stand amongst the little houses for a picture. In our pajamas. These were perfectly constructed houses with curtains, small tables and chairs, windows, all of the elements of a home. There was no settlement or habitation around so there was no way to get information about this place so we don't know what tribe this represented. It was obviously a burial custom that was a combination of Christian and Indian beliefs. These houses were recently constructed as you can see in these photos. The wood was sound and carefully put together.

Notice the



trees in the background of the top photo. Those are swamp spruce or scrub spruce. They are full grown and represent the kind of trees that survived the terrible cold and conditions of this region. Short, scruffy looking trees. They were replaced by 'real' pine trees as we moved south in Alberta.

### Raymond, Alberta

Mom's sister Bessie lived in Raymond. Her husband, Melbie Libbert, was the supervisor/foreman for the Black Ranch that the LDS church owned in Raymond, an enormous ranch that was the second largest in North America behind the King Ranch in Texas. We spent several days at their home, and naturally went out to the ranch. It was huge. Melbie is the man on the left here.



His kids our age went out to the ranch to play and we all got to ride a horse named "Cannonball". I was familiar with horses so wasn't afraid though it had been a long time since I'd been on one. We spent hours wandering around the place, into barns, stables and whatever other buildings were there. I don't remember the circumstances or details but have a clear memory of a remarkable ceremony that us kids engaged in out in one of the corrals. We apparently were swearing a commitment to each other and acknowledging our fealty to family. At least that's what I imagine we were



going. We had decided to take a blood oath, so we each found a scab from a mosquito bite, picked the scab off, and then rubbed our blood into each others blood. That was a satisfactory thing to do with cousins who liked each other.

### Idaho Falls Temple

It's interesting that I have no memory of going to Idaho Falls except for the flat expanse of rapids in a river. But the photos prove that we passed through. It was only a side trip made on the way from Montana down to Utah. This little excursion fit into a long time plan that dad and mom had. From early on I remember that they talked about visiting all of the LDS temples after they retired. At the time there were something like 14. However, as the Swiss Temple appeared, the New Zealand Temple and then temples all over the place, that little plan sort of went the way of the world. I never heard them talk about it in their later years, but in 1953 it was still feasible.



### Conrad & Viola's Place

On our way to Naples, we stopped in Salt Lake City for most of a week. We stayed with Aunt Viola, dad's sister. She and Conrad had 3 kids and a place up on the bench near the University of Utah.

We slept on the floor in sleeping bags and I don't know nor did I care where

mom and dad slept. I tended to me. Conrad was always a kick, making jokes and laughing. I don't really remember him being angry or sad though I expect he had his share of sadness. He had a fake leg. He worked for the railroad and one night while cars were being shunted around in the yard, he was at the back of the train. He signaled with his lantern to the engineer to start and at some jumped up onto the ladder affair to get into the car but for some reason he missed his step and fell under the train which rolled over and cut off his leg. He hobbled around but didn't pay any attention otherwise.

### Samuel's Family Reunion

While we were there grandpa Jensen and his other children came for a family reunion. These are the five surviving children. Ivan died in childhood but the other



five are here in adulthood. Viola is on dad's right and Wanda is on his left. Ruth is kneeling on grandpa's right and Doris is on his left. Notice the sad look on grandpa's face. He is smiling but is sad inside. His wife Dorothy had been dead for about 16 years so he lived alone in Leamington and came up for the occasion. Neither Wanda or Viola had good health. Wanda died first and Viola lasted for another ~20 years. I saw her many times when I lived in SLC in the 1960's.

While this reunion was going on, family group photos were taken. Here's the entire clan at that point:



From the left in the back: Conrad, I don't know who, dad, mom, Ruth, John Mayfield (Doris' husband), Wanda. Second row from left: Viola, ??, grandpa, Dick, Joe Zezukla (Wanda's). On Viola's lap is Raymond and Connie sits in front of her. I'm kneeling between grandpa and Doris. I don't know the other grandkids' names or relationships. I remember the little kid sitting in grandpa's lap, a wild little kid with hair standing on end.

Our family group looked like this. I like dad's expression. I can't tell if he's smiling, or what he's thinking.

Mom has a bright smile, but dad is thoughtful. It's a good representation of how he looked when he was thinking about something and not quite in the present.

Notice the inevitable sameness in the boys. This shows you just how particular mom was down to the last details, the same jacket, shirt, belt, and



slacks. She was a parsimonious soul so usually bought our clothes a size or two too large to give us room to grow in. Her own dress is one she doubtless made. Even

into her later years she made more of her own dresses than she bought. The only things she always bought were her sweaters.

### Merrell Family Reunion

We spent weeks and weeks with grandpa and grandma Merrell in Naples and loved it. I didn't want the summer to end. There was so much sunshine and cousins and farms and things to do. We met at least one time with as many relatives as could come, which was a lot, not surprising since most of them actually lived on the



road there on the left of this photo. I'll give you a few landmarks in this photo: Ross is on the left back row with his wife Nelma in front of him and his two sons (Dale and Norman) to his left. Carl is next to Nelma and his wife Leah is to his right, barely visible in front of dad. Harold stands next to dad with his wife Marie in front of him. Another favorite uncle is Ted to dad's left, Mable's husband. Leo is

to Ted's left and his wife Laree stands in front of him. Pearl stands to Laree's left and Ray is next to Pearl. Behind Ray is Delroy and Mable. You see mom on the left half, Margarita is pregnant as usual and Boyd sits in the middle of kids with Grant on the right end holding Mable's Brent. I'm on the left end in a white shirt, Denny (Leo's kid) behind me with Tommy behind him and Dick to his left. Marion is kneeling behind me, the same one who lived with us a couple years earlier when we lived in Vernal. Grandpa and grandma are obviously seated in the center. I can't name any more of the adults and only a few of the kids.

Notice the little shabby house in the background. It was 3 rooms and didn't have a bathroom but Grant lived in the fine house while his parents lived out there. I didn't understand that since grandpa owned the whole thing. Seemed more reasonable for the kid to be out in the shack but it didn't happen that way.

That summer was filled with memories spawned of the relatives and all of the things we got to do. The lawn where the family photo was taken is the one we slept on in quilts and across the road was a wide canal where we'd go fish often after digging worms out behind the house.

### Eggs and Chickens

**H**ave you ever tried to get a hen to let you take the eggs she laid last night? Grandma sent us out to the henhouse in the morning to collect eggs for her. Which was OK if there was no chicken in the box. You'd just pick up the eggs out of the straw and go to the next box. But sometimes there was a chicken sitting in the box. That was pretty protective of her work product. It took a lot out of her. You would reach carefully under her to find any eggs she had and take them. But some of these chickens, what Grandma called "brood hens" bitterly resented it. They would strike at you so fast and so hard when you start to reach under them that you will have a painful bleeding hole in your hand before you even realizes what happened. You quickly learned which were brood hens. So we avoided those particular hens and told Grandma that we couldn't check all the boxes. Grandma would go out and forcibly shoo the birds out of their boxes so she could get their eggs. She had learned the technique years before and talked to the chickens as she moved them out of the nesting boxes. Chickens are stupid so this trick of sort of grabbing and shooing them at the same time always worked. Problem is that little kids apparently don't have the authority necessary to make it

work.

Grandma sold some of the eggs and others she turned into custard. One of my favorite dishes. Made with a little nutmeg sprinkled on the top. We felt like we had actually contributed to the enterprise by collecting the eggs that we ceremoniously carried in and handed to grandma. An important learning for a kid to have.

The banty roosters were the most irritating of the chickens. They strutted around as if they were 5 feet tall and challenged anyone they didn't know. Regardless of their size. When we stepped into the henhouse, if one of them was there, he would charge us and peck hard and fast at our legs. This persuaded us to clear our until grandma could take care of them. It seemed unfair to me that an adult could handle these little birds with such success.

### Slaughtering and Plucking Chickens

**A**mong the chores that farm kids have to deal with are those dealing with creatures on the farm that are intended for human consumption. Have you ever slaughtered a chicken? And gutted it? And plucked it's feathers? And then singed it with a burning newspaper to take off the fine fuzz they are covered with?

My uncle grant was my favorite uncle and he was a stinker. When we went from Alaska to Vernal for the 1953 summer, many cousins my age visited us at Grant's house where we stayed. One day he took all of us 10-12 year old kids out into the corral to slaughter a bunch of chickens. He and another uncle grabbed about 2 dozen of the smelly things and then. One uncle held the chicken's head and body over a cutting block and grant whacked it off with an axe at which time the first uncle just let go of the chicken. It flopped about far longer than you can imagine. Jumping and bleeding and flapping. Minute or more perhaps. Amazingly long. Well, these two uncles chopped all of the heads off the other chickens as fast as they could because the result was 2 dozen headless chickens running and flapping their wings in the corral where a bunch of little kids were also running - and you'd swear as a little kid that the chickens could see you! It didn't matter what direction you ran to get away from them, they followed you. Flapping and jumping and bleeding. While Grant and Ross roared at us dumb kids running from headless chickens that really did look like they were chasing us.

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But us kids got "pay back." Turns out that Grant had no allegiance to anyone. So he told us kids what to do to gross out Ross. Pick up from the chicken guts a couple of the eggs that were formed but which didn't have the calcium carbonate shell yet. Soft shelled eggs. Take them and show Ross. At which time he would start to retch. He did. Pretty gross sounding stuff, but that was life on a farm. Cutting off lamb tails and castrating pigs, etc. All part of being on a farm.

## Greenriver Ranch

The ranch was south of Naples what seemed like 15 or 20 miles. I was surprised to discover years ago how close it actually was as the crow flies. The Greenriver is a murky greenish, grayish color, not suited for trout. It has carved deep gorges and canyons over the eons. Uncle Grant worked for the Hatch Brothers running the Green River and Ladore for pay. The ranch was in a sort of bowl stretched along the river, at the bottom of sandstone cliffs and mountains, dry and barren except for the irrigation. The water was pumped out of the river through a powerful electric pump and distributed across the ranch through large pipes. Grant raised sheep now and again and alfalfa and lucerne.

## Peeling and cooking cottontail rabbits

We were allowed to use Grant's single shot .22 rifle to hunt rabbits. Cottontails abounded so it was fairly easy to get one. They're odd creatures because then don't understand the noise of a gun so if the bullet doesn't hit them, they just sit still hoping it will go away. That's not wise, however, so you have a second or third chance.

The process of skinning and gutting these rabbits was simple and crude. Take the rabbit in one hand by the hind legs and lay its head on the ground, step hard on the head and pull. The head pops off. Then you swing the rabbit in a complete circle once to warm up and on the second time you accelerate the swing and just as its coming down swing real hard and then stop as it comes back up. The guts shoot out the neck hole. Then you take the body in both hands, split the skin over the belly and peel it back like a banana. That easy.

We went to the ranch house to cook one we'd shot and cleaned this way. Grant was out somewhere on a tractor so we had the run of the old log cabin that was chinked with white clay. The coal stove was already hot so we just added some more coal and stirred the fire to make it really how. Then we butchered the rabbit into quarters to fit it into the cast iron skillet. We used shortening like we'd seen mom do and dredged the rabbit pieces in flour, getting it all over the table, though we didn't really know why. That's just how it was done. We dropped the dusty pieces in the hot fat and watched it a bit. Nothing much happened so we went to

play in the front room while cooking took place. The inevitable thing happened. We forgot. We eventually smelled the smoke from the burned rabbit and tried to rescue it but it was too late. However, we did our valiant best to eat at least the top part that wasn't burned too badly. We threw most of it away.

### Rattle snake on the Porch

A snake in the porch where you didn't expect to see it, gets your attention real fast. Particularly when it is a rattler. That is coiled and rattles as soon as it sees you. The only question is how to kill it without being bitten. Alone in the log cabin, Grant the adults gone until they returns at noon for lunch which is several hours away.

I think Dick is the one who found the snake. We were in the kitchen trying to cook rabbit on the wood stove and he opened the door to the back room which we thought was empty. He saw the snake and yelled so I went over to see what it was.

A rattle snake. Which was scary. They weren't supposed to be in the house and we didn't know what to do with it. Obviously we could have closed the door and hoped it would stay there or go away but we would still have been afraid that it would get into the house where we were. So we decided to kill it. Which is pretty amazing for a couple of kids who were 10 and 11 and alone.

We hunted for something to hit it with that was long enough that we could reach it, but it couldn't reach us when it struck. Turns out that a house doesn't have too many things of that size and shape. What we did find was a long handled metal scraper designed to pull ashes and clinkers out of the ash box below the fire box of a stove. The long handle was a thin steel rod and a thin metal plate was welded across the end of the rod. We recognized it as a scraper that was used to pull ashes out of a stove so I don't know why it had such a long handle but it did the job. One of us fearfully stepped toward the snake, which elicited the threatening dry rattle and caused it to spread its jaws and reach toward us. Swinging the scraper high in the air, he swung it as hard as he could and hit the snake. That angered it but also broke its back so it uncoiled and started uncertainly toward us across the



Figure 435

[http://www.americansouthwest.net/slot\\_canyons/white\\_canyon/rattlesnake\\_1.html](http://www.americansouthwest.net/slot_canyons/white_canyon/rattlesnake_1.html)

floor. Now the hitting started in earnest. Whacks and yells filled the air. We each had something to deal with the fearsome beast. When it was over, the snake looked like a bag of mush. But it actually wasn't very big, probably 14 or 15 inches. The first time we saw it, it was about a yard long. In reality, I doubt it was a rattle snake. But it made a great story.

### Burning cottonwoods

Chasing mice into fires is probably not an activity that is encouraged by your local N.S.P.C.A. -or whatever it's called- but it was fun for us that summer. Grant actually paid us kids to help him clear part of his ranch. Really. The western-most part of his land right on the Greenriver was covered with old cottonwood trees and he wanted them burned down so that he could pull out the roots and prepare another field.

Cottonwood trees are messy, shedding bits and pieces of themselves all year so there were plenty of branches lying around to use for making fires. Tommy, Lyle, Brent, and Byron spent as much time on the ranch as we did so we'd hike down to this field together to spend a few hours. Doing something that city kids never got to do - set trees on fire. With the endorsement of our elders. Who knew where we were all the time and gave us an activity that kept us entertained so they didn't have to worry about us doing something stupid. Which left to our own devices we surely would have done.

The strenuous part was just pulling the branches over to the base of the tree we were working on. The small stuff wasn't a problem and just took time to get it moved. But some of the branches on the ground were fairly large and required the combined efforts of several of us. After we had put together a respectable pile of kindling and wood, we would bunch up some dried grass and light it with kitchen matches that one of us brought for that purpose. This burning torch was hurriedly shoved under the fire pile to get it going.

As the flames started we'd grab pieces of small branches and shove them into the flames to encourage them. When the fire failed to catch, we'd collect more piles of small stuff and shove it under the larger pieces and repeat the lighting process until the fire really got going. The amount of heat coming off the fires combined with the hot sun to make an enormously hot work area. But we thought it was pretty exciting, and pictured ourselves as firemen heroically doing

the opposite of what we actually were doing.

After a day or so of running around between burning trees in the bits and pieces of charred grass floating in the eddies of heated air, we convinced our mom to buy us hats to protect our heads. Why our mom's didn't freak out is a mystery. If we were in an environment with burning bits of grass blowing around, wouldn't you forbid kids from being there? Whatever, we got real straw hats and wore them proudly. And when burning wisps landed on the brim and scorched it, we displayed the charred spots with nonchalant but prideful grins. Proof of the danger we worked in.

The neatest time to be in this burning grove was nighttime. The remaining flames burned dramatically against the darkness and the smouldering trunks glowed in bright-red patterns. That glowed more brightly when a breeze blew on them. I don't think we actually managed to burn many trees down but we had a grand time in the effort.

### Tiny melons

Part of Grant's scheme for making money off the ranch was raising watermelons to sell. Only problem was that he planted the wrong kind of melon seeds. So he had 10 acres of small round watermelons, not much bigger than softballs, and not the kind the locals considered worth eating.

The melons ripened before we had to return to Alaska so us kids had a grand old time. With Grant's approval, and since he was just going to plow them back into the ground, we spent a fair amount of energy eating melons. In between sweating times in the fires. All we could eat. We would wander down the rows of plants thumping melons to find ripe ones. Probably couldn't tell and probably didn't matter. They were all ripe - but we fancied ourselves connoisseurs of melons. We'd fill our arms with four or five, however many we could hold, and head for a nearby hay stack of baled hay. After climbing to the top, we'd break open the melons and scoop out the sweet heart and sit there in the hot sun under a cloudless sky letting the cool juice drizzle down our faces and fronts as summer breezes flowed over us. Loving the moment of hot sun, the prickly texture of hot dry hay and the smells of it all. And repeat the process until we couldn't eat another one. Until tomorrow.

## Fishing on Green River

**N**igger fishing with bamboo poles and cork floats, overnight, frogs for bait. That about sums up what fishing for catfish was like. We didn't stand there and hold a pole because it was such a slow process.

Catfish are bottom feeders and don't mind dirty water like the Greenriver. Same for carp, but you'd never catch a trout in such water.

We spent long hours prowling the banks of the river, drowsy, feeling the heat, watching for interesting rocks because there were many with fossilized snails and clams. No shirts, barefooted walking in the warm slimy mud that squished up between your toes like paste.



Figure 436

<http://www.stannardhouse.com/images/catfish.jpg>

## Mud puppies

**U**nder ledges in shallow pools that undercut the bank the older kids found these odd creatures. They are salamanders but at the time I didn't know that. All I knew was the country name of 'mud puppy', such an odd useage of the term 'puppy'. The pools were all murky so I wasn't too excited about the idea of putting my hand back under a ledge to see what I could find on the bottom but Dale and Norman did it without fear. Of course, they were nearly adults so I excused myself with that idea.



Figure 437

<http://www.nsm.iup.edu/pha/monthlyherparchive/Nmaculosus.jpg>

## Pitchforks and giant carp

**T**he Greenriver is cloudy murky grayish water, hence its name, so isn't inhabited by clear water fish like trout. But it is home to large catfish, suckers and carp. Toward the end of summer the level of the river had dropped so

low that sandbars began to appear in the river which was probably a quarter of a mile across at this point. These sandbars had odd shapes, reflecting the density of the bottom and the effect of water currents on them. In the middle of several sandbars right across from the burning cottonwood trees were small lakes, that eventually were cut off from the main flow as the river level dropped farther and farther.

The surprise to me was that we could watch these small lakes and see that there were large fish in them, splashing their tails as they tried to find a way back into the main current. We told our older cousins who knew what to do to take advantage of this bonanza. They came down with us the next day with pitchforks. I was afraid of the water so didn't go with them when they waded and swam out to the sand bars but it was exciting to even watch. They got out of the river and waded into the lakes and chased the carp around, stabbing frantically with the pitchforks. I'm not sure what they would have done if they had actually caught one but the yelling and excitement sufficed.

One of the kids got the great idea later to take a .22 and shoot the darn things. Grant or another uncle heard this plan and suddenly shut it down. He explained that shooting guns into the water is very dangerous because the bullets might ricochet off the surface instead of going into it. Besides, the fish isn't actually where it appears to be. And if the bullet ricocheted, it might hit someone or something you didn't want to hit, so no guns over there, boys. This wasn't a problem once we understood the physics. It was part of learning gun safety. We did not disregard our elders' instructions about gun safety. So we were allowed to use the guns to target shoot or to hunt rabbits without supervision of any adults. They were just making sure that we understood the dangers of using guns around the water.

### Tractors and Jeeps

Uncle Grant and Uncle Ross owned a ranch on the Green River outside of Vernal. We went there many mornings standing in the back of Grant's jeep, to kill the day goofing off however we wished. The ride seemed long, probably because we got up so early in the morning to drive out, leaving a large trail of dust. Which would catch up with and engulf the jeep if we stopped suddenly.

Ranches and farms are wonderful places for kids to learn skills that help

them as adults. Grant had us driving vehicles of various kinds, as long as we could reach the controls. One of the vehicles he put us in was an old army jeep. It had a compound gear which is ultra-low, so it didn't go very fast but it could practically climb vertically. On this particular day, Dick was the driver. Grant put the jeep into compound, engaged the clutch and jumped out, grabbing Dick and sitting him on his knees in the driver's seat. While I was on my hands and knees on the floor, leaning across the drive shaft tunnel, pushing the accelerator with my right hand. Otherwise we would have been all day getting across the ranch.

In the manner of children with one large synapse that is easily and completely engaged in an interesting activity, Dick became interested in some geese that he saw in the road after he turned a corner. I couldn't see a thing from my vantage point on the floor where I just kept pushing the accelerator to hear the jeep grind and go faster. Suddenly we took a huge sort of leap into the air and crashed to a stop. Dick's geese got tired of being followed, crossed the road and went into an irrigation ditch to escape. In his determination to catch them, he followed them into the ditch. Grant laughed and pulled the jeep out with a winch on a truck.

Another time he put me on the seat of an ancient tractor, so old that the steering wheel was attached to a shaft that ran horizontally the length of the tractor above the engine compartment joining a vertical shaft at the front attached through a series of gears that caused the front wheels to turn when the steering wheel was turned. My job on this day was to pull a thresher through fields of alfalfa. The thresher chopped the alfalfa into 6 inch lengths and blew it out of a narrow chute on the right side of the tractor. The successful collection of this chopped alfalfa depended on the driver of a truck with a huge bed who had to keep exact pace with the tractor such that the chute blew the chopped hay into the truck bed.

Alfalfa fields are home to a wide variety of things, such a rabbits, dodder [a parasitic plant that will eventually kill the host] and snakes. On this day as I concentrated on the really tough job for an inexperienced 11 year old of turning the tractor at the right time to avoid running off the field but not turning so soon that I missed the last 25 feet of alfalfa, I lost track of the truck - and wandered a bit. As I made the big cut to my right with this throbbing tractor and noisy thrashing machine right behind me, the chute moved away from the bed of the truck which Grant was driving. Without a door. Because I had hit and removed the door in a similar situation a week or so earlier. At the instant the flow of chopped

alfalfa blew into the cab and onto Grant, we picked up and chopped into pieces a huge yellow blow snake. Grant thought that was pretty funny. Which meant he obviously was not a father.

## Bucking bales of hay

A month later Grant had us out behind a tractor and bailer. A bailer is a cleverly designed machine that collects a narrow row of dried alfalfa and chops and compacts it in square tube-like device. When the collection of packed hay is long enough, the machine automatically wrapped wire or baling twine, depending on the bailer, and the pushed the finished bale out onto the ground. Tractor didn't stop. Just kept dropping bales on the ground which weighed something like 75 pounds, depending on how dry that hay was.

Our job was to stand on a metal-covered skid about 6 by 10 feet that was pulled behind the tractor by a chain. Flat on the ground. When a bale was dropped by the bailer, we were to grab it as soon as it was by the skid, and pull it onto the skid. Then we had to stack them in such a way that they were sort of woven together. This task sounds easier than it is and you are covered in a minute with the dry wisps and chaff created



Figure 438 <http://www.hobbyhorserranch.com/used2.htm>

when the bailer compacts and crushes the dry hay. So you itch all over, the bales are too heavy to lift easily, you get blisters, the bales come too fast to be accommodated and you want to die before admitting that you can't keep up. At night you hurt so bad that you would use some of the liniment that grandpa Merrell used on his sore muscles, though it didn't make any difference.

## Laurel & Wolves

The woman who married Uncle Grant that summer, Francis, was from Salt Lake City and her name was Francis. She was a really nice lady and ran the household while we were there. She made custard regularly which was one of my favorite dishes. This was because Grandma's chickens produced more eggs than we could eat so they had to be converted into another kind of food to be sure they

were eaten before they were spoiled. Warm custard with nutmeg sprinkled on the top was heaven.

Francis was not an only child. In fact, she had two sisters, not just one. The youngest was about 11 years old, and the other was between them, being my age and she played a role in my life in the summer of 1960 when I lived at Uncle Carl's place in Salt Lake. The little sister Laurel spent several weeks with Francis. She was a pretty girl and I fell in love right away in the clumsy way cousins do I suppose. She had a sparkly personality and warm smile and ready laugh, a bit of sunshine.

She slept in the house in one of the bedrooms and us boys slept outdoors. Some nights we slept on the front lawn. Those were glorious days. The moon was clear and bright and the nights were warm. There were no street lights so moonlight was what we played in. Laurel would come out and play with us. It was a heady experience to be becoming aware of girls, at age 11. She was a lovely girl and when we played tag or no bear's are out tonight, she laughed and squealed like she should. It was funnest when she was chasing me for some reason. Tommy came over sometimes and added another dimension to the experience. When Dick and I were bedded down in our underwear inside of a quilt on the lawn, he'd come up and try to take the quilt away. That always provoked a lot of yelling and running and threats, particularly if Laurel happened to be standing around.

One of the funnest things we did with Laurel was go into town to the public swimming pool. Admission was a quarter and you got a funny safety pin with a numbered metal disk that you pinned to your swim suit after you had stored your street clothing in a wire basket. Then we had to do a quick cold shower, walk through a funny little pool of water that was supposed to disinfect our feet and into the pool area we went. The sun shined hotly all the time and it was hot so the pool attracted lots of kids. The walkway was jammed by towels and kids and mom. We'd work our way around to the shallow end because I was deathly afraid of the water and then go in. Splashing and yelling was the major activity. There was a life guard who reprimanded kids who ran because they could fall and get hurt.

For some reason it was particularly delicious to go swimming with Laurel. We went other times but the experience was sort of flat. After we got out of the pool and dressed, we usually had a dime to go over to the Rexall drug store. We'd climb up on the stools at the fountain and wait till a waiter came. The smell of these drugstores was particular to drugstores and while we waited, we'd imbibe the smell, a lovely mixture of perfumes, soaps, hamburgers and fries. We'd always order a

large root beer which was drawn from a tap, Hire's Rootbeer which is still the best root beer in my estimation. The soda jerk, as the person was called, would take large heavy glass mugs out of the freezer where they were chilled specifically for this purpose, and fill them with creamy cold root beer. We'd sit there, twirling on the stools, sipping rootbeer from the frost-covered mugs, savoring the flavor and the experience. Eventually, we finished the root beer and went outside to wait for mom to come in our brown and creme Chevy to go back to Naples.

### Castrating Pigs and bobbing Lambs' Tails

Grant had a herd of sheep out at the ranch and grandpa had some pigs behind the house in Naples. The sheep tails were bobbed about the time we arrived which is a simple surgical procedure. While someone immobilized the lamb, Grant would find a joint between vertebrae in the lamb's tail close to the torso and cut the tail off with a large knife. He'd then douse the bleeding stub with a solution he had prepared of something that smelled like clorox or some other disinfectant, let the lamb go and do the next one. This was a pretty straight forward procedure.

Castrating pigs was not simple. The male piglets were identified and isolated for the surgery. One person had to hold the pig on its back with the legs spread so that the Grant could cut the perineal area to get at the testes that he then cut off with a knife. He doused these creatures with the same disinfectant solution and then release the howling creatures. All of them recovered but it was a pretty gruesome procedure in both case.

### Catalpa and Bee Colony

Out in the front yard hanging over the mailbox was a largish catalpa tree. I was fascinated with this kind of tree because of its seed pods, 14 inch long tubes that were filled with peculiar fluffy seeds. Most of them were still green like these so I'd pull one down and split the skin with my thumbnail so I could examine the contents, a whitish, poorly differentiated mass of wet tissue. The leaves were enormous so the whole tree was a curiosity. This specimen had two large



Figure 439  
[www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/Trees/catalpa.htm](http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/Trees/catalpa.htm)

trunks that divided about head level. In the crotch a rotten area had developed like they do in that sort of location. Then a colony of some kind of bees found the spot, excavated the dead wood and set up a colony. Whenever we went near the tree we heard the buzzing of bees lazily coming and going, getting ready for winter.

I was curious to see what this bunch of bees would do if they got wet. I always wanted to try out new ideas so I dragged Grant's pale green garden hose over to the tree, turned on the water and performed the experiment. I stuffed the tip of the hose down in the hole, avoiding the bees that were now upset. I went back to the hose bib and turned on the water, watching to see the effect. Bees accumulated around the location, flying quickly, buzzing anxiously I suppose, wanting to get back in. I showed some prudence here, fear actually, by not going near the scene of the experiment. After a suitable period of time, I turned the water off and just left the hose there until later in the evening when things had quieted down. I performed this experiment several times during the summer and never was stung. I don't know what the point was, except to just 'see' what happened. There was probably the delicious thrill that comes with tempting fate which a herd of angry bees can be.

### Devil's Playground and Fossil Turtles

Aunt Doris and husband John came out to Vernal for a few days so she could spend time with her brother I suppose, though I didn't really think about it at the time. She was my favorite aunt and she liked me as much as I liked her. So I always looked forward to seeing her, regardless of the reason for the occasion. One of the things the adults decided they needed to do was to make an expedition to desert east of Naples. This would allow them to do a variety of things in a single day: visit mom's childhood town of Rainbow and hunt for fossil turtles in Devil's Playground.

In 1953, the federal government was searching frantically for more uranium. The arms race was on and atomic bombs were being built in large quantities either in the expectation that we would might have to use them, or, in the hope that by having so many the Russians would think twice about attacking us. I don't know which it was and suspect that the government really didn't know either. In any event, everyone in Utah who could afford one bought a fancy Geiger counter and

took it everywhere they went "just in case". So John lugged his machine along, knitting his brow and muttering mysterious phrases while he adjusted a knob or two, waving the silver metal tube over rocks, us and the ground. I think the phrases were incantations of some sort, calling down the power of the almighty to help him find a vein - so that he could get rich. That is what it was all about, getting rich. Disease is what it was and an irritating one that John, and Grant and some of his brothers came down with. It ran a natural course like any disease and passed out of the system but only after a fever that consumed the patient. Turns out that fossils are highly radioactive. Fortunately they occurred in isolation from each other, else these guys would have turned them in for cash. The same thing happened in Utah when the big oil companies were hunting for more oil.

The drive with Doris was fun sitting in the back seat between her and Dick.

The road through Devil's Playground was like a roller coaster. Dad drove to accentuate the stomach-churning effect so we had a great time getting to the beds where fossilized turtles were weathered out.

The top of some of those mounds had turtle shells. Sometimes it was the plastron (the belly side),



Figure 440 "Devil's Playground" between Bonanza and Jensen, Dragon-Vernal stagecoach road in Uintah County, Utah.  
<http://gowest.coalition.org/cgi-bin/imager?00138208+GB-8208>

other times the carapace (the top side). We found lots of fragments down in the gullies between the mounds and tried to trace the track of fragments to the mounds they came from in the hope of finding the source. We did find a few shells that were complete so dad and John carefully collected the pieces in boxes or cloth sacks and then took them back to Vernal. I don't know what happened to them but remember seeing some of them years later. The excitement of running up each hill to see if there was a turtle shell wore me out. I was only 11 and the hills seemed much higher to me than they look in the above photo. Perhaps they grew between the time the photo was taken and the time I visited.

### Visit to Rainbow

We did a lot of visiting and exploring around Vernal in the summer of 1953 doing things like hunting for gastroliths out in the burning hot desert, visiting Split Mountain Gorge and yelling to hear the echoes, and going to Dinosaur National Monument. Dad's sister Doris and her husband John came out to Vernal from Bountiful which is just north of Salt Lake. They spent the large part of a week with us, the first time we had seen her for 3 years. Doris was my favorite aunt and I loved sitting by her. She liked me and teased me in a friendly way.

One bright sunny day the adults decided to go to what remained of Rainbow



Figure 441 Rainbow, Utah in 1922 (Bender 1971:97)

to see where mom lived for part of her childhood years.

Rainbow was not a pleasing place to me. The lovely name conjured up the expectation of something colorful and beautiful, but the reality didn't match. Having said that, I have to say that there was something starkly beautiful about the town in its isolated desert setting. It was a ghost town. The desolation of a collection of perhaps a dozen or so abandoned, silent houses casts a spell. The road into Rainbow ran through a narrow canyon with vertical walls that looked like banded reddish-orange sandstone. They were close enough to the road that it seemed like there right over us, ready to collapse. The dusty dry road churned up into billowing clouds behind the car as if attempting to engulf the car to prevent it from entering the deserted town. Suddenly we exited the narrow canyon and entered a large flat area. The remnant of the pioneer town set right there in the entrance of this canyon. The little community consisted of several "streets" laid out more or less regularly and were lined with deserted decaying houses. These buildings had been abandoned many years before by the miners and farmers who finally decided they couldn't make a go of it there. So they pulled up stakes and moved to Naples and Vernal in most cases.

The town was built on a small plain that was fairly flat and was bordered by steep hills of shale. On the far side of the town at the foot of that cliff, there was a wide dry wash. That indicated that a river flooded through the area in the spring. We were there at the height of summer and rain wasn't likely to fall in any quantity for months. But a kid raised in the region had heard plenty of stories of people out camping who were deluged and swept away by the huge flash floods that quickly develop when there is a heavy rain storm. The parched ground cannot absorb most of the water which can actually create sort of an impervious clay seal over the ground that prevents more rain from being absorbed. In this situation, the rain quickly accumulates into powerful floods that unexpectedly tear down dry washes and sweep away animals and vehicles, and campers, killing some of them. I was fearful that might happen to us in Rainbow in spite of the clear blue sky, and my greatest wish was to get out as soon as possible, just in case.

The desolation of the ghost town accentuated this anxiety. What if a flash flood had been the cause of the total departure of the inhabitants? If it happened then, it could happen again. Even Doris' presence didn't deflect this train of thought.

Mom wasn't with us, probably because there wasn't enough space for her to

go. John, Dad, Doris, Dick and myself filled the car. Since she wasn't with us, we didn't know which houses she had lived in so we went into several of them to get a sense of what they were like. The single family homes were divided into four rooms. No plumbing or electricity and no interior doors. The outside doors and windows were missing. Either the last family to live there took them to a new house, or they were vandalized later. The roof had holes in it and the walls were unpainted. I wondered about what it must have been like for Marie to be a child out there in a tiny community, isolated from a town of any size. Kids will be kids and will find things to entertain themselves and perhaps living in this narrow canyon was fun. How did the family get groceries, was there mail service, where did they keep their animals?

There were no people or livestock in the town, no crops, irrigation or vehicles. Just a collection of decrepit abandoned houses that had been left behind because that was all that could be done when each family left. The sky was clear, the sun was shining and nothing bad had happened to us, yet the visit was depressing. I didn't specifically think, "What a sad place for mom to have been a child!" but today that is the sense I have.

I don't know if she had expected that we would be happy to see the place or whether she even thought about it at all. Perhaps she was just curious or dad was interested and since we were in the area, it was a simple trip to get in to Rainbow. Whatever, I was struck by the sadness and desolation of the sad little town, isolated by many parched desert miles from any other community. After spending an hour or so, we got back in the car and returned to Vernal on Route 40.

### Hunting Gastroliths & Uranium

Uncle John was a fanatic about hunting for things in the desert, at least that's how it seemed to me. That was just fine. My dad was, too. And on this trip, the interests of the two blended such that I got to take trips out doing the same thing in their company. The area around Vernal in those days had ample supplies of gastroliths. These things were believed by dad and a bunch of other men to be rocks that had been ingested by dinosaurs to be used in a structure like the crop of a chicken. Chickens ingest small pebbles that are not passed through to the stomach. They catch in the crop so that when grains and seeds are swallowed they can be ground into a fine paste before they pass to the stomach. No teeth

means they had to develop an alternative method of preparing their food to obtain the maximal nutritional value in the stomach. These gastroliths were found sometimes inside of the stomach cavity of some dinosaur skeletons, hence the belief. Dad said that a microscopic examination of the surface of these smooth rocks that obviously had been 'tumbled" revealed patterns of lines that could only be created by an action comparable to that experienced when a muscular crop is squeezing and rotating the rocks against each other. Whatever, I was happy to believe they did come from dinosaurs and still am happy to believe that.

Uncle John was a rock hound anyway, so he got dad to take him, and Doris and me and Dick out in to the surrounding desert to hunt for gastroliths. They were not really hard to find at that time because there were few people interested in them. They were all over the place if you knew where to look, i.e. down in washes in members of the Morrison formation that abounded. So we went out, and we did find gastroliths. The only problem was the heat. Standing out there in the dry desert in the hot noon day sun was to stand in a dryer, but the discomfort was easily offset by the thrill of finding and scooping up these belly boulders as John called them.

The other thing that John did at the time -this was 1953, remember- was haul his trusty Geiger counter around everywhere. Today that sounds like a crackpot thing to do, but it wasn't at the time. Uncle Grant was doing the same thing as were thousands of other westerners because at the time, the federal government was still hunting eagerly for new uranium mines and paid premiums for new mines. This was only 8 years after the Nagasaki-Hiroshima bombing and early in the development of bombs. Intercontinental ballistic missiles didn't even exist so SAC B-52 bombers were the sole mechanism for delivery of the primitive atom bombs that were being built at the time. So people were all hoping to get rich quick by buying Geiger counters and combing the area for the motherlode that would allow them to sell their farms and settle in luxury. I don't know that anyone every did that, but us Americans are eternal optimists so will try any gimmick for a while.

Anyway, John who wore a handkerchief hanging down from his billed hat to keep the sun off his red neck, used his Geiger counter on everything he came in contact with, except for trees. These devices made neat sounding pops or clicks when they measured radiation. Rocks of any kind were of great interest to him as he held his wand up to them, watching the needle on the meter, listening to the audible pops. There is a low level of radiation in many places so we got to hear the

clicks often but he never found a real vein of the stuff. It was neat, however, when we found fossil turtle shells because all fossilized organic items were radioactive and caused his Geiger counter to click like crazy. Too bad it was individual pieces of bone and not a vein of uranium.

### Dynamite & Milk Bucket

Uncle Grant was my favorite uncle because he was the funnest. He did things with us kids that 'adults' didn't which made him unpredictable, and he laughed a lot. He was the one who persuaded Dickie to eat a little fish out of a bottle of fish pickled to use as fishing bait. This summer Grant had just bought a new Pontiac which had a hot engine that he loved to show off. One afternoon he was taking us somewhere and had both of us sit in the front seat with him. Cars were bigger in those days and we were smaller. We headed west on the road toward Naples and stopped at the stop sign on US 40. After looking both ways, Grant did the unexpected. He floored the gas, gave out a loud yell while he reached down and released the lever that held the seat in place. The combination of a sudden surge of speed made the seat which was now not anchored fly backwards, and the yell scared the crap out of me. I didn't know what had happened. He, of course, laughed his head off at us stunned little kids, so we finally did, too.

He had been using dynamite out on the Greenriver to blast out tree stumps so he had some of the stuff sitting around the place. TNT was not tightly controlled in those days although one had to have a permit and do some paperwork even then to get it, but as long as there was a legitimate reason for a farmer to have it, he could get it. It came in fairly small wood crates. Grant also bought some fuses that came in sturdy metal boxes with lids, for obvious reasons. These fuses were the kind that was set off with heat, not electricity.

A stick of dynamite looks like the red cardboard wrapped flares you see the police light and place on the highway near an accident, except that they aren't flares. They blow up. Grant took one stick this afternoon and told us kids he was going to show up something. That was always a sign he was up to no good. Tommy was there as was Byron so we were excited to see what this experiment was. Grant grabbed an old steel milk pail that had a hole in it which had



Figure 442  
[www.westbranch.ciu10.com/cacm/dupont\\_dynamite\\_fuse\\_cap.htm](http://www.westbranch.ciu10.com/cacm/dupont_dynamite_fuse_cap.htm)

been used to haul feed in the corral. He told us kids to climb up on top of the corral that had a flat, sloping roof. We all laid down and peered over the edge to see what he was doing.

He took a stick of dynamite and cut it in half with a pocket knife. Nothing happened which is what we expected but one never knows what will happen, at least to a kid, so we watched with a blend of fear and excitement. Grant put the halves of TNT on the ground and then opened the tin of fuses. He also had a 2 foot length of blasting cord that looked like a thick stiff rope that had a braided exterior and something inside. The something inside was sort of like gun powder I guess. Grant closed the fuse tin and set it aside with one half of dynamite. He picked up the other half and with his knife he punched a hole through the cardboard layer half way between the ends. He put his pocket knife away and laid the TNT down. Then he inserted the blasting cord into the open end of the copper colored metal fuse that was about 2 inches long. He seemed to be doing this carefully. Then he inserted that fuse combination into the slit he had just made. He took the things that were not to be part of the experiment back into the corral.

We were fascinated. We had heard dynamite blasts from a distance but had never actually seen the set up. Grant looked for a good place to set up his experiment which was a hundred feet or so in front of the corral where we lay on the straw roof, sort of protected -we thought- by the roof. Then he set the old bucket upside down over the fused dynamite. He now became very careful. He took a kitchen match from his pocket and lighted it by rubbing it quickly along the underside of his thigh. Then he leaned over the bucket and looked sideways back into the corral to be sure his getaway path was clear. He picked up the end of the blasting cord and carefully lighted it. It instantly began to smoke and burn, a tiny flame visibly crawling up the cord.

Grant ran like hell to hide behind a tractor or something inside the corral below us. We unconsciously held our breath anticipating a loud bang like a fire cracker. Nothing happened but no one moved. Then the tiny flame disappeared under the edge of the bucket. We waited. Suddenly there was the loudest explosion I had ever heard and the bucket shot straight up in the air like a rocket on a trail of smoke, going out of sight. Grant yelled in excitement and we let out our shocked breaths, watching the bucket go up and then return to the ground. We climbed quickly down from the roof and ran around and into the pasture to catch Grant who was headed out to the bucket. When we found it, the thing was a

ragged, flat piece of metal. The circular bottom had been blown completely off and we never found it.

## 21. Woodbury Cosmetics, Lana Turner & Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer

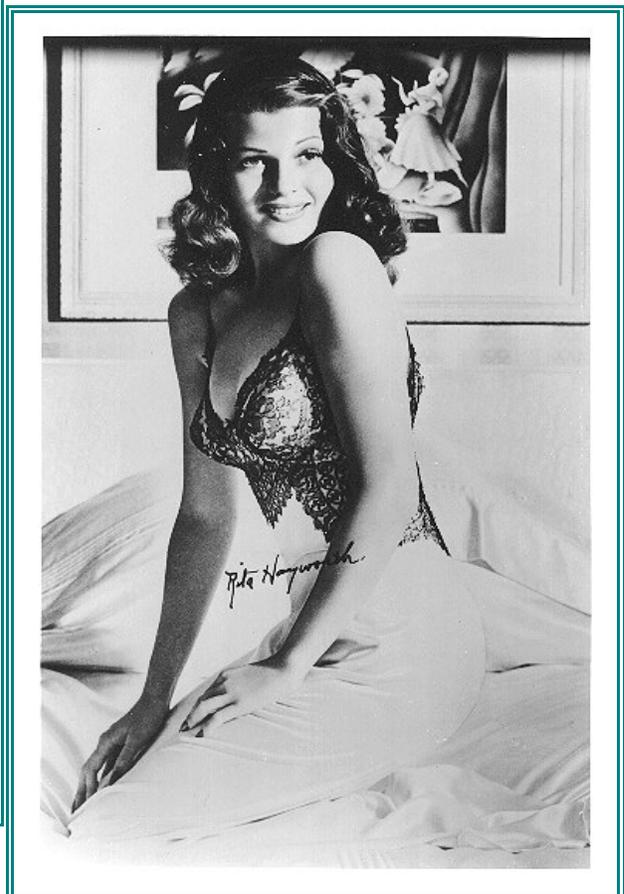
This ad pulls together a combination of three forces of the time, Lana Turner, the gorgeous pinup movie star, Woodbury cosmetics and Metro Goldwyn Mayer, one of the dominant movie producers of the era. (Remember that this is a 13 year old boy talking at this moment.) This has little of the subtle sophistication of other ads I showed you in Volume 4. This one relies for impact on the name of the movie star, a famous movie and the famous movie producer. The text tells the reader that she, too, can be a movie star like Lana if she will only use these products. At the center of these cosmetics ads is the notion that beauty is the way to catch and keep "your man". Sex sold products then just as it does today, but these women were dressed. The plays on this type of image of Lana, calling women to be sultry vixens by using these products.

Pinups were a force that I was dimly aware of even from Vernal years. They were curvaceous movie stars who posed for carefully posed photos that portrayed them effectively. Lana Turner and Rita Hayworth were two of the names I remember from the era and



these photos circulated in the large format magazines at the time, images that I wasn't supposed to look at. But I did. They were images that became part of the life of the military, ending up being painted on bomber bodies, ships and whatever else they were inclined to decorate. They appear in full page size on the next two page. They were, indeed, beautiful women.

Putting these images in historical context is interesting. Today, women have become garish unreal characters. Nudity is the theme of the day and nothing is left to the imagination. These images portray the beauty of the women in a tasteful way. Their shape and hair and face are emphasized. The lighting is skillful as is the pose that emphasizes the womanly features.



## Ptarmagin skin

Taxidermy fascinated me. Dad had mounted two eagles for the Field House in Vernal - for Arnie Lewis, the man who got him the job in a few years at Harvard. I found while researching UBW that dad learned taxidermy when he was a young teen. It hadn't occurred previously to me to wonder just where he picked up this skill. He had so many. What happened was that he hounded his dad to enroll him in a correspondence taxidermy program that was advertised in magazines. Finally, Sam relented, dug up \$10.00 which was a lot of money, and sent it in. The two of them took the course together and mounted whatever they could get their hands on. In Volume 2 - Leamington, dad tells stories about trying to unwrap cats so he could taxidermy them, or catch a few of the local pigeons, etc.

I wanted to taxidermy too, but dad was too busy to help me. He was always so involved in his own art projects that he had little time for us kids and our interests. The closest we came to matching his interests was going boating, mountain climbing, clam digging, etc. - things out doors. Somewhere along the line I became the owner of a complete ptarmigan skin, minus the inhabitant thereof.

These birds are about the size of a skinny chicken. They come in two varieties, a "willow ptarmigan" and a "rock ptarmigan". The difference is in their coloration and habitats but sitting side by side, they look about the same. The thing I found most interesting about them was their feet. Not being carnivores, these birds spend a fair amount of time walking on top of the snow while they hunt for something to eat.

Good ol' natural selection worked and selected the versions of ptarmigan that wore tiny snowshoes. No kidding. These creatures have wiry tufts sticking out all along each toe, creating wide foot prints that distribute weight over a wider area. In addition, the feet are also covered with



Figure 446

<http://www.hominids.com/donsmaps/clickphotos/ptarmigan.jpg>

feathers as in this picture. Pretty clever birds.

The skin I inherited was pretty raw when I got it. It wasn't exactly fresh but it had not been properly prepared to be preserved over time. So, on the advice of dad as he looked up from his easel, I bootlegged a box of Morton's salt out of the food stores and laid the skin down on a pile of newspapers in the basement. The skin had been removed so that it was basically a tube without the head, body and legs. I opened this feather tube and poured salt down into the center. Then I shook the skin around to distribute the salt, looked inside to see how it was and poured some more salt in. After the inside was completely coated with a layer of salt, I set the skin on top of the oil furnace to allow it to dry. The furnace wasn't hot at that point, just warm, so it was a perfect place to let the skin cure.

I replenished the salt several more times to be sure that there was no chance that the skin would decay. It had a strong odor from the fat but not really offensive. I examined it many times down there in the basement during the winter. What else is a kid going to do when it's cold, dark, snowy and lonely outside. I had dreams of sending the skin to the outside to have it tanned, just as dad had done with the seal skins, but it never happened. When we had to reduce our belongings to zero, this wonderful preserved skin went into the trash. I felt bad but there was nothing to be done about it.

### Turkey neck

**A** long about now I got interested in structural features of skeletons. It was natural to collect natural things given the patriarch of the household. I decided about the age of 12 that at the next thanksgiving I wanted to prepare the neck of the turkey. Not the entire skeleton which was sort of overwhelming because of its size and complexity. The neck was complex enough for a first trial.

So after Thanksgiving was over, I talked mom out of the next. She didn't use it for anything which made it pretty easy to separate it from her. The next step was to dry it. The process didn't require salt like a skin, just a location away from water where warmth would remove the water. Over a couple of weeks, the skin hardened up as it dried out. The remaining tissue was greasy, and became crumbly. I took a pocket knife and pecked at the dried tissue in the hope that I could clean

the vertebrae but that wasn't possible. I didn't really know how to do that so I gave up after a while. I stored it in a long, narrow, shallow chocolate box which created a peculiar odor.

The way the vertebrae fit together fascinated me. I didn't understand anything about the purpose of the various elements but was impressed at the complexity of things. This little exercise was the precursor to the work I did a few years later in the Gray Bird Collection at MCZ. I got to prepare the skeleton of the last passenger pigeon.

### Fox Tail

Somehow I came up with this lovely red fox tail. It came from a crittur that looked like this one, a pretty, cattish looking being. The tail was really gorgeous. It was fluffy and had no scent. It had been cut off cleanly from the carcass. The bone that was exposed had dried before it decayed so there was no odor.

It was interesting because the hair was so dense that when I squeezed it together and released it, it expanded like a sponge.

This was about 1954 so the legend of Davy Crocket was a big deal. I think there was a movie about him and I know that he showed up on cereal boxes. There was even a popular song about him.

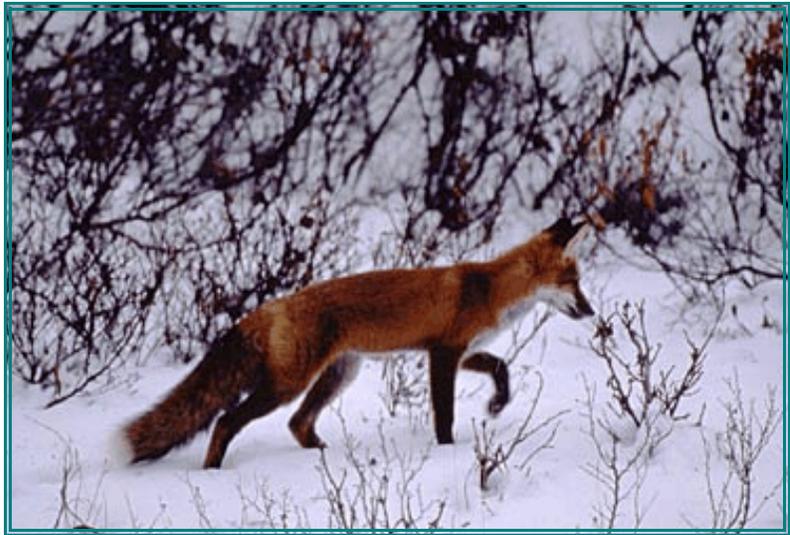


Figure 448

<http://mamasmsfortune.safeshopper.com/images/bi0doi6g.jpg>

## Mahurrin Mountain Tragedy

Marshall was my patrol leader in Troop 620. He had kinky wiry red hair and a face smothered in freckles. When he got excited, he sort of foamed at the mouth, getting flecks of white in the corners of his lips. Here he and I are at Camp Gorsuch looking at something on the ground while we are eating. Marshall lived out by the TB San not too far from Robert Muller, who was his assistant patrol leader. Sometimes we had patrol meetings out at Marshall's home which was a big deal, both in terms of the meeting itself, as well as in getting out there. We'd take the little yellow San bus that shuttled between downtown and the san, apparently paid for by some tax because I never paid a fare to ride it.



Then we'd walk the rest of the way which was probably another half mile. His house was fairly new and was nestled in the spruces and evergreens and didn't have a lawn.

I got to know Marshall well and thought of him as one of my friends along with Brent, Clayton and Jay. We were in the same grade so saw each other every day. I was walking up the north staircase in school at lunch time with him when one of the awfulest things happened that I've experienced in my life. Remember, I was only about 12 years old. Let me tell you the background first and then I'll tell you what happened.

Marshall's only brother who was about 18 had gone hunting in mountains somewhere near Kenai Lake. It wasn't on the lake but was about that far out of town. This is a photo dad took of the mountain. The two kids took their rifles, hoping to get some game before the snows shut things down for the winter. Older kids were allowed to do this sort of thing so it wasn't something bad that he did, just ill-judged. After things were over, the story was clear: this boy, like our Nazarene neighbor, had made the fatal mistake of going up into wet rocks and cliffs wearing shoe paks. Fatal mistake. He slipped and fell to his death over several cliffs, landing several hundred feet below the point he started.



This was probably early October so there was already snow in the higher elevations and the constant rain of the region kept everything wet. The two kids had been scouting in the gray day when the Mahurrin boy lost his footing and fell. The other kid couldn't see just where the body landed because of the snow, and there was nothing he could do about it any way so he descended the mountain and drove back into town. He had the terrible duty of telling Mr. and Mrs. Mahurrin what had happened and that he didn't know where the body was.

The weather was closing in with winter rushing forward so there was enormous urgency to get a search party together to go out and try to find the body. As the team was collected very early next morning from volunteers in the tiny town, dad was chosen to go. He had developed some skill in rope climbing and had a large coil of a stout rope that he would take in case it was necessary. Other men collected a rescue toboggan from the fire depart with rope, first aid supplies, dry

clothing, hiking food and water for the trip.

The other kid took the team out so they could know precisely where they started their climb. The men sent the boy back to town so he wouldn't see what they expected to find. They carried rifles and agreed that if any of them found the body he would fire two shots in rapid succession as a signal. That would allow the other men to stop risking their own lives and to focus their energies on the location where the body was so they could hopefully get it off the mountain before the snow fell.

Men paired up for the ordeal but started their way up the mountain together. Above timberline they split up and went different ways to search. The weather was close, clouds covering the peak, so visibility was bad. Day time was short anyway so they were all anxious, particularly since snow was possible that night in which case the body would be covered. Avalanches were common in the winter which meant that even if the body survived the winter, it would likely be moved from the point of impact and never found.

They labored up the rocky cliffs looking carefully, using binoculars, searching for any sign of the boy. Dad, carrying his heavy rope was the one who found the first sign of the boy. He found a red hunting camp in the approximate location that the other boy had pointed out from the road below. Dad judged this to be the likely point the kid had slipped so he stopped there and reconnoitered. He spent some time looking over the cliffs hunting for evidence of the boy. The day was passing and he was anxious for his own safety, and finally decided it was time to move on, thinking they were probably not going to find the body, part of his brain half hoping they wouldn't. He made one last sweep with his binoculars as he prepared to leave and there it was. He could see a spot of color against a snow covered rocky ledge about directly below where he was standing.

He figured that was the boy's body so he fired two shots with his Enfield and started examining the cliffs to find the best way to get to the body. Other men started in his direction and he hollered telling them where the body was. It turned out that the body was inaccessible by foot and since dad was the only one with any experience, and a rope, he was the one who had to go to the body and bring it out.

He gave someone his rifle and labored over cliffs and rocks to get to the body. The first thing he did when he got to it was to tie a large handkerchief over what was left of the head. He said that is the first thing a rescuer does when finding the body. Then he had to maneuver this stiff frozen body alone out of its

landing place down to a location where the other rescuers waited. This required him to use his rope. He said that the worst part of the descent was a point where he had to tie the body on one end of the rope as a counter weight to allow him to descend a cliff first after which he had to catch the body when he released the rope.

In the end, he got the body close enough to the other men that they could take it from him. They put it in the metal toboggan and secured it in place and headed down the mountain as quickly as prudent and possible to get off before night fall. By the time they got to the road it was dark but they all made it safely.

So that's the background for what happened: A kid who I don't remember had just come into the school through the front entrance and had just heard the news while he was home for lunch. When he saw us coming up the stairs, he ran toward Marshall, screaming at the top of his voice, "Marshall! Marshall! Your brother was killed!" That kid is lucky he wasn't. I was almost as stunned as Marshall was because I knew my own personal dad was out there in the mountains searching for Marshall's brother.

Dad came home and was a wreck for days. He pulled his plug and didn't go to work for some time, sitting at home, struggling with what he had just done, not even painting much. Us kids said little and walked softly, playing in the basement to give him space to deal with it all and to protect from an outburst that would have been devastating.

It was many years later that he recited the entire story for me. I had a general understanding but only because I overheard him recounting bits of the story over the years. This was the first time he had revealed himself. I was on one my quarterly visits, alone, to Provo see mom and dad and he and I had gone to Wendy's to get a hamburger. He loved Wendys. As we sat there near the intersection of University and 12<sup>th</sup>, he felt compelled to tell me his feelings and the facts of the experience. His eyes got red and he teared up as he got into the story. His voice choked various times as emotions overwhelmed him so we just sat looking out the window until he could go on. The experience seemed to be about as vivid to him in 1990 as when it happened 35 years earlier in 1955.

### Adolph's Meat Tenderizer

I was ready for this stuff when it came out in the early '50's. No way I wasn't ready. Some of the protoplasm we ate for dinner was so tough I was sure it came from between the horns of the darn moose. This product promised to make my eating enjoyment greater, reduce my cotton-chewing episodes, etc. We used all of the meat that came from any animal we inherited for food which meant that we had cuts that were pretty stringy and tough. The standard method of making them edible was a wooden mallet that we used to pound the thinly sliced pieces of meat into submission. In the process, the tissues were broken down so that after they were fried, we could manage to chew them. One of the awfulest things I had to deal with at the dinner table was the wads of cotton that developed in my mouth from certain pieces of meat. The flavor was gone, but the tissues were still so fibrous and stringy that I couldn't reduce them to small enough pieces to swallow, so there I was. Taking it out of my mouth and setting it on my plate was not a good idea if mom was around, so I had to struggle with the thing until I could sort of gag it down.

This stuff was my first exposure to good science that produced a product that actually did something novel. Adolph's succeeded. They even got a write up in Reader's Digest which raised their sales. And persuaded me that the extract of papaya did do the thing that the advertisers said it did. Papain actually did dissolve muscle fibers.

### Bear Paw Airlines

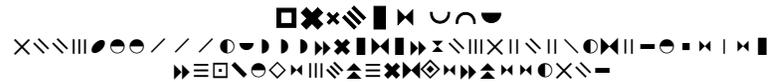
Dad was hired around 1954 to develop a logo for the Bear Paw airlines??. I am not positive of the last word but am about the first two. He drove out to the "airport" which was an airstrip off the Nash Road on the north end of the bay. He ended up painting the logo on several planes that flew out of the airport.

The most memorable bush pilot and airplane was Tiny Trichowski - spelling is probably wrong but the pronunciation is right. He was an enormous man for a pilot, and he flew a Widgeon, a single engined float plane.. The engine was fixed to the top of the cabin and faced backwards, so it "blew" the plane forward rather than

"pulled" it forward.

### Tiny Trichowski & the Republic Seabee

Tiny was not tiny. He weighed 250 pounds and was a pilot. A bush pilot. A big bush pilot. In his bizarre but talented airplane unlike anything I had ever seen, a Republic Seabee. A plane that had its engine mounted ON TOP of the cabin, not on the front or on a wing. It faced backward, blowing rather than pulling the plane along. With a wasp waist that looked like it would break. Bizarre airplane. A bulbous homely airplane. To compound the whole effect, it was constructed in such a way that its hull functioned as a stable pontoon if the pilot, i.e. tiny Tiny, decided to set the darn thing down on a body of water.



This thing was talented, however. Tiny Tiny could coax it into turns and landings and takeoffs that a conventionally designed airplane on outrigger pontoons couldn't do. So when dad and Tom Aldous decided that they wanted to hunt moose up on Crescent Lake that was inaccessible otherwise, they hired tiny Tiny. You should have seen him. I marveled that he could even climb up and into the plane but he was a daredevil of the highest water like all Alaskan bush pilots of the era and he obviously simultaneously gloried and excelled in his work. A craftsman in love with his tool, loving the opportunity to demonstrate its superb qualities and his skill. They had to wait 3 days on the lake after dad bagged his moose due to being soaked in. Finally tiny Tiny managed to get in and hauled them out with the remainder of dad's bull moose- a mere 600 pounds because one fore quarter had spoiled due to the delay. Like most bush pilots, time kept track of his narrow escapes and finally he cashed in his chips on one of his extreme daredevil attempts.

Tiny was hired by dad and Tom Aldous to haul them in to Paradise Lake to hunt for moose

along about 1955. Tiny is standing here by his plane, holding a moose rack in front of him. Notice the size of the man and the size of the plane. It was a match.

The reason for hiring bush pilot to get into Paradise lake is that there were



no roads into the area. Flying in was the only way in.

After Tiny dropped the two off with their gear and rifles, he flew away, with an understanding that he would return to pick them up in three days. That seemed reasonable even with the frequent rain. In those days, there were no cell phones and there certainly were no telephones so we had no way of knowing what was going on with dad out there in the middle of no where.

The three days passed and Tiny left Seward to pick up dad and Tom . But when he got to the lake, the weather was so bad, the rain was so hard and the clouds so dense, that he decided that it would be foolish to try to land. That's a pretty amazing thing and shows just how awful the weather was because these busy pilots would fly in pea soup. So Tiny returned to Seward and let mom know what had happened. She told us kids what was going on and that we had to wait another day for dad to get back. I was nervous inside about the delay caused by bad weather. We hadn't heard anything of course and we knew that bad things could happen out there in the wild and that made me worry.

The next day Tiny tried again with the same result. That made me even more nervous but mom acted like things were OK, like she wasn't worried. I bet she was.

On the third try, however, Tiny was able to get in. He found dad and Tom safe in good health. They had shot a large moose on the second day near the lake but naturally couldn't get it out. By the time Tiny was able to fly it out one of the front quarters had spoiled so had to be left behind along with the head. After the remainder was skinned, cut and packaged by Warner's freezer folks, there was still something like 500 pounds of meat, an enormous quantity of mooseburger, steaks and roasts.

### Mountain goat & Buck Fever

**I**t turns out that I am not a hunter. Oh, it doesn't bother me that men shoot animals, at least if the purpose is to get meat. But I found out personally that I cannot shoot large animals. I hunted rabbits and bagged them. That didn't bother me. I'd skin them and fry them but somehow looking down the barrel of a gun at a mountain goat was too much. I stared at him, and couldn't pull the trigger. Dad took care of the job and we went about the job of getting it down off the mountain but I couldn't do it.

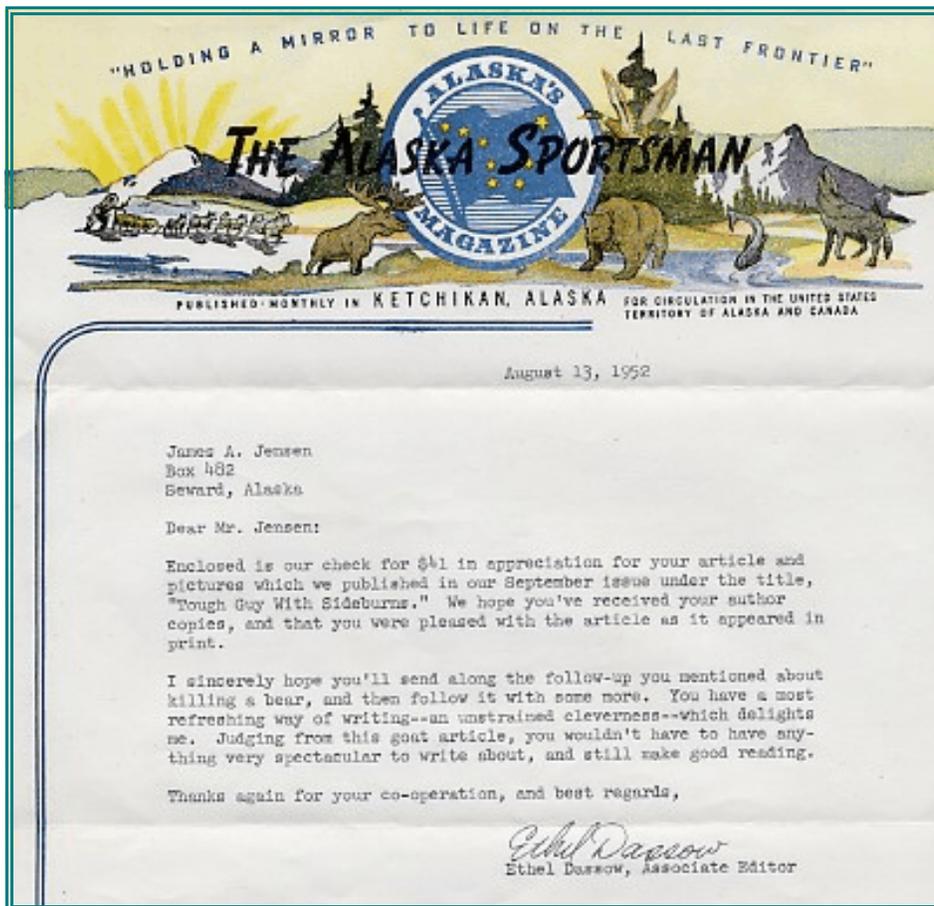


Figure 453

<http://seward-alaska.com/bearlakeair/Hunting/goats.htm>

## Blood in the Snow

Dad and Tom Aldous shot a mountain goat up somewhere in the snow and it hung at Tom's place for a few days. Dad got a few photos of all of us with the critter. Judging from the age of us in the photo, this event actually happened much earlier than I remembered it. He took this event and a few photos and made it into a story that he submitted to the "Alaska Sportsman magazine. It was accepted and published, his first published article. The letter that came with a \$42 dollar check follows.



## Portage Glacier

This was a remarkable sight. An enormous glacier that was accessible by a dirt road. A small lake in front of the lake was filled with small



icebergs that were calved off the glacier. This photo shows dad with us on the west shore of the lake in about 1955. This was in the spring time, and we're wearing identical shirts again. Dad's wearing his fancy fedora that is now in my closet.

Note how full the lake is with ice and how close the glacier is to this shore. On the right side you can see just how large the floes are.



Here are several other images from that visit:





## Moose

These are huge animals.

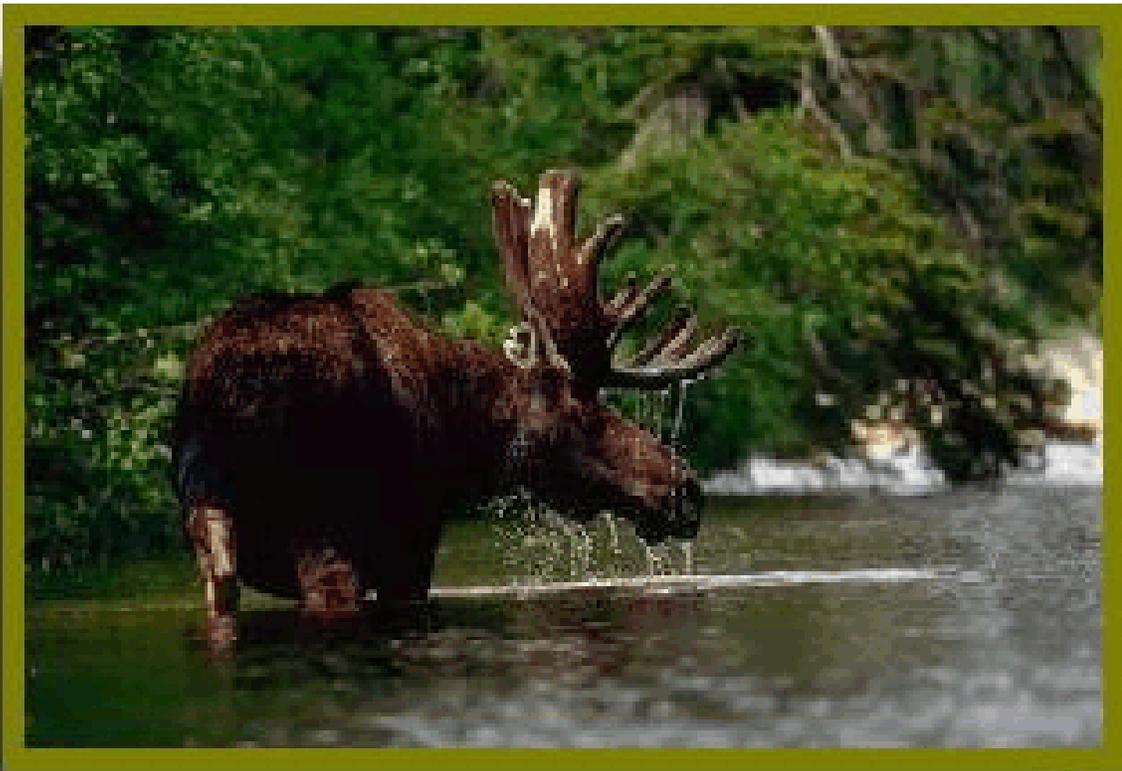


Figure 462 <http://seward-alaska.com/bearlakeair/images/Moose3.jpg>

Foods



Figure 464 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/newsad63.jpg>



Figure 463

<http://theimaginaryworld.com/newsad15.jpg>

## Betty Crocker Cake Mixes

In the late 1940's Betty Crocker managed to create cake mixes in a box that had a reasonable shelf life, and cooked reasonably well. They were a sensation. Just open a box, pour the powder into a bowl, add some water and an egg, mix and put in a pan and bake. What a switch from the laborious process of measuring out every ingredient and getting the batter just right.



Figure 465

[http://www.old-time.com/commercials/stunning\\_upset.html](http://www.old-time.com/commercials/stunning_upset.html)

## Mom's nightly Noxzema Rub

Every night after she carefully washed and rinsed her face in the sink in the minuscule bathroom, she'd do her toilet. She'd open the small jar of Pond's night cream, and look at it while she scooped out a small amount on her two fingers. Then she'd lean toward the mirror, turning her head slightly, looking out the corner of her eye. While she applied the miracle stuff to her neck and under her chin. Repeating the process for both sides until satisfied that she was protected from the rigors of night that would rob her of her youthfulness and beauty.

Then she'd put the lid on the Pond's jar and set it back into the top drawer of the chest of drawers that held her private things. The Noxzema bottle, the same dense blue color, was opened. She'd take a generous dollop of the stuff and put it in her left palm, carefully re-closing the jar with her right hand and restoring it to the top drawer. At this point with her face 'done', she'd slowly wander out to the living room, slowly rubbing the fragrant compelling noxzema into her hands. Smoothing it over the back and up over her wrists, sensuously, savoring the smell and the tactile experience of the slippery stuff. I watched, mesmerized, loving the odor and her

calmness, inner focused on being sure that Jim loved her, that she was lovable by him. Sacred ceremony each night, done religiously.



Figure 466 <http://theimaginaryworld.com/newsad61.jpg>

### Albert the Alligator Pitching Soaps

I always like Albert. Pogo was the first comic strip I liked that was cerebral. Dad liked it and that helped me like it.

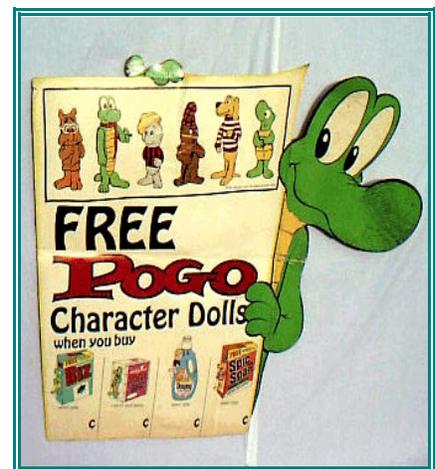


Figure 467  
<http://theimaginaryworld.com/disp1.jpg>



## 1955 Constitutional Convention

In 1955, 55 representatives from all parts of the territory met in Fairbanks at the University of Alaska to frame a constitution. It was anticipated that statehood would be coming and one of the prerequisites for that was to have a constitution. The representative from Seward was Irwin Metcalf, a well-known man. He's the man in the bottom left of this segment of the photo gallery of attendees.

This excerpt is from a special newspaper, dated Nov. 21, 1955, that "...was printed by the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, and is being distributed throughout the Territory of Alaska by the Alaska Statehood Committee... The Statehood Committee is taking this means to inform all citizens of Alaska exactly how the new constitution is written."

I have apparently been a pack-rat, archivist since the beginning because

I saved my own copy of this newspaper. It struck me as a seminal event that Alaska now had a constitution in anticipation being granted statehood. I guess I was



saving it for this point in time when I could tell you that this momentous convention took place while I lived there and that I understood that it was of great importance.

According to the paper, the 55 delegates went to the University of Alaska and were given use of the entire student Union building which was named "Constitution Hall" in honor of the event. Over a period of 75 days -over two months- these men and 6 women hammered out a constitution that was acclaimed as a model. This constitutional convention had the advantage of hindsight, i.e. they could see mistakes made by other territories and take steps to minimize them. For example, this bunch decided that the people who would reapportion the legislative district would be people who were NOT elected legislators. Brilliant. Anyway, they did their work, got a congratulatory telegram from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and went home. Four years later the territory was granted statehood and Alaska became the 49<sup>th</sup> state in the Union. I was in Boston at the time but was aware of the event.

### Ninilchik, Coal and Giant Razor Clams

Once a year in the spring there are ultra-low tides that expose beach that is never seen otherwise. That means that these tides are carefully watched. When they are scheduled to happen, people who want to take advantage of what they offer head to the beach. In our case, we wanted to go over to Ninilchik and on to a place called "Clam Gulch" for obvious reasons. We went over camped on the beach for several days so we could dig giant razor clams.

The beach was long and straight and



some people used it as a landing strip. Here are Nels Hagen and Walter Johnston on the beach in front of two piper

cubs. Behind the planes is the cliff that has veins of coal that we burned when we camped there.

We went over several years for this event and took Art and his family one time. On that trip, someone's grandmother was visiting from Utah so she came with us, a hardy soul who enjoyed camping out and cooking over a campfire in the wet cold.

Here she is stirring the smoking fire with a small shovel I'm the kid on the left eating from an aluminum plate, our '53 Chevy in the background. This beach was terribly crowded. You can see the other outfit camped out there in the background.

Our camp site was fairly flat. We came in two vehicles, Art's pickup and our Chevy. In front of the Chevy is the tent we made. We used poles to lash a framework and threw a large tarp over the frame to make an enormous tent for us all to sleep in. In the bottom picture you see Vonnie standing behind the pickup. She was my age but much



taller. I'm the kid eating

there. Mary is wearing a scarf, pouring water out of a small milk can. Dick's on the left helping mom who's wearing a coat with a hood. In the distance on the left edge of the photo you can see a gray streak that is a little river that figured later in this adventure.

We liked to beach comb on any beach and if it was a new one, all the better. I spent hours wandering along, looking down at the flotsam and jetsam that collected, wondering about things. It wasn't raining so the sand was sort of dry and I was wandering back toward camp. I'd been out alone which was no problem since there was no storm and I knew how to be safe there. I caught up with an old woman, and I do mean she was old, perhaps in her '60's. Perhaps the weather had aged her face but she looked ancient. I did speak first but when she greeted me I replied. We fell into step and wandered leisurely along the beach not thinking about anything in particular, no urgency, just the slow passage of time to the periodic noise of the waves. She sounded like an educated person, perhaps a school teacher. She asked me where I was from so I told her. She asked me what grade I was in and I told her. She asked me if I had to memorize any poetry and I said I did. She asked me what I had memorized and I told her several titles. That launched her into "The Chambered Nautilus" by Oliver Wendell Holmes, one of the poems I had memorized:

"This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails the unshadowed main, --  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings  
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
And every chambered cell,  
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
Before thee lies revealed, --  
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap, forlorn!  
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!  
While on mine ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings: --

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!"

We got credit for memorizing a poem only if we stood in front of the class and recited it in its entirety but I was not used to people doing what she did. Without any stimulus other than the obvious pleasure it gave her, she recited the whole thing. We walked quietly while she almost chanted the poem, a thing she obviously loved. I was fascinated that an old person remembered the whole thing. After finishing that one, she launched into Longfellow's "Ship of State", another one I had memorized, a beautiful poem that was easier to appreciate than the Chambered Nautilus:

"Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
We know what Master laid thy keel,  
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale!  
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee.  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with thee, -are all with thee!"

It sounded like a hymn. About this time we were next to my campsite so I told her good by and she wandered on.

The low tides were about 10:00 a.m. so we had plenty of time to wake up, eat and get on our way. Clam Gulch was on the other side of the small river I pointed out above. We went in Art's pickup. When we got to the river, he stopped and he and dad went to the tires. I had never seen this before. They took off the valve stem caps and with a key they held in the valve to let out air. I never did anything like that on my bicycle but these were adults so had a trick up their sleeve. By the time they had finished, the tires were flatter and bulged widely. I didn't comment for fear I would sound like I was criticizing but I feared they were making a mistake.

They said to get in the back again so I did and we started again. Art drove slowly into the river which was perhaps a foot and a half deep, rushing quickly past us. It was probably 30-40 feet wide. We crossed it without any difficulty, thanks

to the flattened tires that distributed the weight over a larger area. We went on to the clam beds which were a few hundred yards away and parked the truck. We got out and started hunting for clams. They were all over the place. Art had two wash tubs to hold them and by the time we finished, we had in fact filled both. These clams were huge. They were so long that they wouldn't fit diagonally in a square 5-gallon can.

While we were there, something happened that was funny and sad. Another pickup came along the dirt road to join in the fun. They apparently were newcomers to the area. They saw where Art had parked and made an assumption that they, too, could just drive out there. What was the difference between the pickups? A pickup is a pickup, right? Well, not quite but they didn't know the difference yet. They drove up to the little river and bravely started across, assuming they were doing it the way we had, except they weren't. As they crossed they started to sink into the sound and about half way across they got high-centered. The driver probably wasn't too worried yet because he could see us over there so he probably figured he could make it across too, so he rocked the truck back and forth trying to free it. However, all he did was dig himself in deeper and deeper. All of his people were out of the truck pushing and cursing but to no avail.

When we returned across the river, we tried to help him but to no avail. His inflated tires had just cut grooves so deep that he was nearly up to his running boards in the sand. There was nothing that could be done to help him. Niniichik was several miles away and there was no heavy equipment there anyway that could help him get out. So in the end, he had to abandon his pickup when the tide came in. We didn't see the end of the story because we left the next morning.

### Boston Bound

I don't remember precisely when it was but somewhere in the winter of 1955-56 dad got a communication from Arnie Lewis who was a preparator in the Department of Vertebrate Paleontology in the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Peabody Museum at Harvard University. Arnie had hired dad in Vernal to mount several eagle and hawks so they had an acquaintance based on that encounter that blossomed into a long-lasting friendship. What happened was that Harvard came up with money to hire another preparator and told Arnie to find one, so Arnie knew dad and thought he might like the job. So he contacted dad up there on the other side

of the continent and asked if he'd like the job. I was unaware of the details or even the number of letters and/or phone calls, just that something was going on.

In 1955-56 I was in the eighth grade and Seward education was severely limited. Why wouldn't it be. This was a tiny town of 2,000 people without any industry at all, no manufacturers, a minuscule bit of farming, and only a handful of businesses that eked out an existence on the citizens. All 12 grades were crowded into one building. There was simply no tax base to be able to fund fancy schools. So mom and dad were agonizing over the idea of quality education and were thinking already about moving stateside to find better schools for us. It didn't make much difference to me. I had no sense at all of 'quality' in education. I just knew which teachers I liked and which ones I didn't, and what subjects I liked and which ones I didn't.

Arnie's offer came at an opportune time. The fact that the job was in paleontology, dad's life-long love, in Boston which certainly had better schools than Seward made it nearly impossible for dad to turn down. However, he finally said that he would only accept it on one condition, and interesting thing for the job applicant to offer. He said he would take the job IF he was allowed enough time to take the trip we had been planning for several months. He was not going to take any job if he was denied this opportunity of a lifetime.

In the end, Harvard said it was OK if he was late arriving, that they would be in Nova Scotia on an expedition that they needed him on, and that as soon as he was back stateside, he was to fly out to Boston and then up to Nova Scotia. That's what happened. We took that amazing trip down the Yukon, jut the four of us. I've talked elsewhere about the pain of discarding most of our belongings. It was difficult and it was really the prospect of this Yukon trip that made it palatable. I've wondered how much worse it might have been if dad had accepted the job and we had to do this process without any prospect of an exciting three-week excursion.

The final amount of things we were going to be able to take was simply a matter of volume. How much stuff can you fit in the wooden box he had built on the back of his half-ton Chevrolet pickup. That was the limit. We pared things down to the bone and ended up not taking a single piece of furniture, not even beds. Toys were cast off, tools except for basic ones, books, drapes and curtains, everything but the bare minimum was left behind, either given away of discarded.

After everything was condensed, a large woman named Mary Something agreed to drive the pickup out to Great Falls Montana and leave it there for us. It

was her way of getting stateside at minimal cost to her. I don't know who paid for the gas for that leg of the trip. I just remember that when we got to Great Falls a month later, the pickup was in the parking lot of an elaborate funeral home with red velour wall paper and heavy sconces, sort of like something out of an Adam's Family cartoon. She took off on that trip about the same day we drove to Anchorage. We made finally arrangements in Anchorage for the trip, parked out 1953 Chevy and got on the Alaska Railroad up to Nenana.

The story of that adventure follows in the next volume. Just remember that when that was over, we flew back to Anchorage with a few belonging we could carry, got into the car and then drove out over the Alcan Highway.

**DOWN THE YUKON FOR ELEPHANTS ©**



**James A. Jensen &**  
(Posthumously)  
**James R. Jensen**  
5324 SW 153<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Beaverton, OR 97007



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# Contents

## Introduction (Rondo)

The subtitle for this part of Volume 7 - "Down the Yukon for Elephants" - is dad's title for the draft he prepared many years before his death describing our 3 week odyssey from Nenana on the Tanana River to Holy Cross on the Yukon. He had hoped to have part of his manuscript published by National Geographic magazine. I was not aware that he submitted anything to the magazine for review at the time he did it which would have been in the late 1950's or early 1960's, but years later I heard him indicate, in passing during a conversation with another adult, that he had tried to get his story published. He explained its rejection as the result of there having been a recent article on the same topic. I found no manuscript in his papers so can't confirm or deny that memory but National Geographic was the ultimate magazine for dad and publishing in it is something I easily imagine him wanting to do.

Dad chose this title, "Down the Yukon for Elephants", because it captures one of his primary motives in taking the trip: looking for frozen mammoths in the constantly sloughing Palisades portion of the Yukon. He was a fossil hunter his entire life and this trip offered him an opportunity that few have to go up close to the unstable sand cliffs and look. The faint smell was that of rotting flesh, and greeted us before we arrived, and followed us after we left.

I scanned his manuscript and use it as the basic text for the final portion of the Seward volume. He wrote it many years ago, and he remembered more than I do now, though the trip does remain a vivid memory. Over the years I have remembered a string of village names: Nenana, Minto, Manley Hot Springs, Tolovana Slough, Tanana, Ruby, Galena, Kaltag, Koyokuk, Nulato, Anvik and Holy Cross. That is likely due to the fact that mom bought us a souvenir in each town where they were available: tee shirts screen-printed with the name of the town on the front. We wore them for years so had constant reminders of those particular towns. I even remembered them in their approximate order we entered them as we descended the river.

650 -I heard him say 750 so I don't actually know how many it was- miles down one of the great rivers of the world in three weeks in an 18 foot canoe was one of the highlights of my life. Here's a simple outline of this expedition: Dad accepted a job at Harvard University on the condition that he be able to take this trip before flying back to start work. They allowed him that privilege. We

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winnowed our belongings down to what we could fit into a large box built over the bed of a half-ton Chevrolet Pickup. A hardy woman friend of ours drove it out to Great Falls, Montana while we took our river trip. We spent a few days in Anchorage finishing preparations, then took the Alaska Railroad up to Nenana on the Tanana River, a small town south and west of Fairbanks situated at the confluence of the Nenana River and the Tanana River. At Nenana we loaded the canoe with our gear and started the trip. We followed the Tanana down to the Yukon and then followed the Yukon down to Holy Cross. At Holy Cross, we sold the canoe in a few moments to a trader, boarded a pontoon plane a few hours later, and flew away from the Yukon for ever. The only comparable experience I've had since then was a 350 mile two-week trip thirteen years later, alone down one of the tributaries of the Amazon river when I was in Peace Corps.

In this volume I will follow the convention I used in Volume 2 -Leamington. To help you keep yourselves oriented, Dad's writings will be preceded by **(Alvin)** and my own will be preceded by **(Rondo)**. Otherwise, we sound the same.

The photos are the ones he took with his new Exakta Varex IIA that he used for the first time on that trip. He bought it in Anchorage on our way to Nenana. Many of them are referred to specifically in his text so I put them there, but most of them are not specifically referred to. They should be included to complete the picture of what we experienced on the trip, so I open a "photo gallery" at the end of each locale and include all of the photos for that village or location.

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## Map of the Expedition

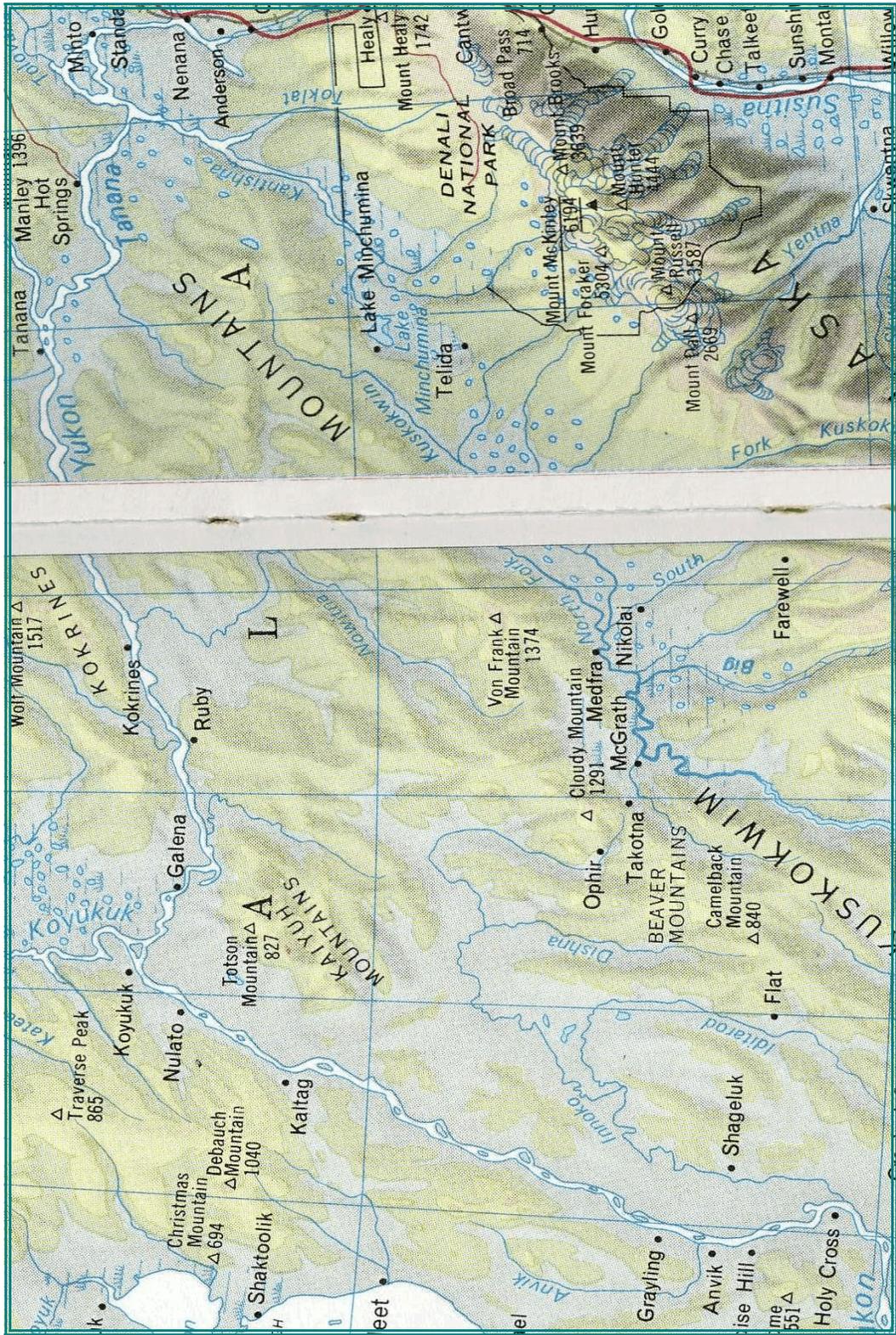
I need to locate our route geographically for you so that the story will have a physical context. The official maps of the expedition were lost in Boston. In a burst of generosity, Dad loaned them to Mrs. Romer for some event in Boston at which she lost them, much to his eternal chagrin. They were special air force maps that were sort of boot-legged for us by the air force captain at Elmendorf who flew reconnaissance and watched over us as we progressed. Dad cut and taped them together to cover the entire route. Because the scale of the maps was so large, he had to roll the final product into a tube that he unrolled sort of like a scroll as we progressed down the river, dropping the thing into the river more than once in the process.

The map on the following page is a snippet from the Britannica map 180 I've used elsewhere. The starting and stopping places for the trip both show on this small map. Nenana is located in the top right corner, and Holy Cross is in the lower left corner. Downstream from Nenana you see Minto and then Manley Hot Springs, and then Tanana. That is the confluence of the Tanana and the Yukon Rivers. We then floated on down the Yukon to Holy Cross, the four of us in an 18 foot canoe.

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Uphill - Both Ways

Volume 8 Seward 1951 - Yukon Expedition 1956



## Seward

### Alvin's Prologue

As soon as I arrived in Alaska in 1940 I came under its spell. I left during World War II and spent a year in the Hawaiian Islands yet in spite of their great tropical beauty I dreamed about Alaska every night. I had to go back, for once cast upon you the spell of Alaska and the Yukon is never broken. Ask any old Alaskan. It is now over forty years since I last left Alaska and I still dream about it. But there is a story to be told here about hunting elephants during a trip down the Yukon.

I had always been fascinated by that mighty river and the part it played in the early settling and development of Alaska. Rivers are a new country's natural highways and the Yukon, with its main tributaries the Tanana and Koyukuk, runs more or less across the middle of Alaska. Up and down this system traveled the prospectors, traders, speculators, settlers, villains, "girls" and gold of a wild frontier. In 1898 there was a fleet of about thirty-four large stern-wheelers plying upper and lower Yukon waters carrying thousands of passengers and hundreds of thousands of tons of freight annually. This commerce lasted barely fifty years then waned and disappeared with the advent of World War II. What is left of this wooden fleet is rotting away along the river front in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada. Only one steamer, the Alaska Railroad's "Nenana," survives in Alaska.

Two years after the last steamer tied up on the lower Yukon I appeared on the scene eager to find out about the river, its commerce and its natives. I became obsessed with the idea of going down-river in a canoe to see the natives in their villages and get more subjects for the pictures I was painting.



Twelve years after Pearl Harbor found me planning that trip with my wife Marie, and two sons, Dick 13, and Rondo 14.

The colorful stern-wheelers were gone forever but I believed there was much history to seek out and breath taking adventures to be had in a small boat. I wanted to see how much of the old romantic atmosphere still drifted over the dwindling native villages and lonesome fish camps. I wanted to discover old gold rush cabins, or see if they had all fallen to decay. I wanted to seek out legends and the invisible suggestions, ghost like, of the throbbing flood of humanity that once surged up river and into the interior.

We were living in Seward where a interesting old sourdough, Hank Pallage, teased my imagination with fact and fantasy. He had lived in Alaska many years and his supply of stories and interest in telling them never diminished. "The Yukon", he often said gravely, "is not to be fooled with". Then with a faraway look in his eyes and lowered voice he would usually add, "You'll see things you'll never forget". He warned me many times not to take my family with me--"go it alone but don't take your family. It isn't safe for them. The natives will steal you blind. They are treacherous and undependable", and thus he played a game of trying to see if he could discourage me from carrying out my plan but he only served to whet my interest.

With the help of a retired river Pilot, Dick Lynch, and a veteran Alaska Guide, "Whitey" Lehto I collected ideas and information about the Yukon and the country through which it ran. Dick gave me valuable information about river currents, flood time, ice passage in the spring, mosquitoes, natives and a list of all the villages and stops he made as a river pilot. He listed 42 villages. We were to find only 17.

"Whitey" suggested I re-finish an old freight canoe I had and use it. It had a four and a half foot beam and was seventeen and a half feet long with a two foot wide square



Figure 478 Canoe on Nenana River in Nenana

stern for an outboard motor. I had a seven and a half horse motor which would be ideal. Just enough to push us along faster than the current giving us the ability to steer. Whitey said you can't steer a floating boat. It will drift into sweepers, snags and cutbanks. His good advice was based on experience.

The canoe was of a cedar strip lattice construction with two bilge keels. These would make the canoe difficult to manage in river currents but were ideal for marine navigation. I removed them also peeling off a thick coat of canvas and paint, replacing this with a heavy layer of ruby red fiberglass. This color was planned for visibility from the air.

Through a friend I managed to be designated an official Air Force Mission of the 71st Air Rescue Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage. I was then furnished with restricted, but the latest, maps to guide us on our way. My mission was to check all marked shelters, deleting those missing and adding new ones to the map for possible use by downed airmen in the future. The Air Force checked on our progress when they happened to overfly the river and later reported us at various points along our route. The little outboard motor was usually running so we never heard planes far overhead. We were once logged as being spotted halfway down the "Boneyard", a fossil elephant graveyard, which experience was of special significance to me for at the end of the trip we would leave Alaska for a new chapter of adventure in the field of paleontology at Harvard University. However, the trip had a purpose beyond adventure. I had been painting Alaska natives and wanted to get more information and material to work with by seeing babies and old people, neither of which had ever left their village. We would see Athapascan Indians. Eskimos traditionally lived around Alaska's coastline with Indians being found along interior waterways

It was my plan to ship the canoe and equipment from Seward to Nenana where we could put it in the Tanana river, go down it to the Tanana slough, through it to the Tolovana river, down it and back into the Tanana and on down it to the village of Tanana at the confluence of the Tanana with the Yukon, then down the Yukon past the "boneyard" and on to its confluence with the Koyokuk, then on to the Catholic mission at Holy Cross where we could catch a mail plane over the mountains to Bethel on the Kuskokwim river, and from there fly by DC3 back to Anchorage, passing near Mount McKinley along the way; but back to the beginning.

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### Where's the canoe?

Out in our backyard in Seward, all but six inches of a four foot picket fence was still buried in snow, even though it was the last of April. Over in a far corner of the yard I fancied I could see a low ridge on the crusted snow. No, I thought, it's still too deep. Another week passed.

"Now?" asked my two sons, speaking in unison, "Now?"

"Okay", I said, "Now". It was April 15, 1956.

Out the back door they flew in their shirt sleeves. The low ridge surrendered easily before their onslaught. In a short time with their two shovels and an old broom they had flailed their way almost down out of sight. It was breakfast time and as I finished my sourdough hot cakes covered with wild blueberry syrup the boys bubbled back into the house.

"We found it! We found it!", they shouted with glee. "Lets get it out now!"

"Hold on", I said, "after all we do have more than a month to get it ready". I pointed out



that although they had found the old canoe the three and a half feet of snow must be given a fair chance to get itself out of the yard and down into the bay. We needed bare ground to work on.

After the snow melted we began work by stripping off the old canvas and paint. Our next door neighbor, Dave Fleming became interested in our project and offered his basement garage for us to use in applying the fiberglass. It proved to be a very good arrangement. With my elbows and knees sore from working over the canoe I sailed many a delicious, imaginary mile down the river, drenched in the sweet essence of anticipation. But there were practical things to be attended to. At the Alaska Native Service Tuberculosis sanatorium we talked with every Indian who had relatives along our proposed route. We wanted to carry messages to them facilitating our acceptance into every native village. We wanted to go as visitors, not as curious tourists. This turned out to be a wise plan. We had many pleasant and happy experiences as welcome visitors.

Preparations for our departure began to accelerate to a feverish pitch. We checked and rechecked lists, alternately glorying in some friends envy while rebuffing negative remarks from others. Finally the equipment was ready. The boys and I had spent nearly a month in Dave's basement putting on the fiberglass covering. It looked good. I hope it works well. I made hoops and put sockets along the gunwale for "wagon bows". Marie tailored a water proof nylon cover to fit which can be pulled over the hoops and secured down along the edges of the canoe providing a snug, dry interior for us and our supplies during rainstorms.



Now we must clear out the house which has been our happy home for five years. We must discard, give away, ship, or load into a 3/4 ton Chevrolet truck, everything we have collected in those busy years. It will be a difficult job. One isn't easily parted from his treasures, and I, especially, have many stowed away in

the basement. As soon as we return from our conquest of the rivers we must grab our few remaining treasures and begin the long trip out of Alaska over the Alcan Highway to Massachusetts.

The day for shipping the canoe finally arrived. The boys and I dragged it out of Dave's basement and secured it on a skid. We dragged it slowly down to the dock behind the truck and helped the longshoremen load it on an Alaska Railroad flat car. It will go to the town of Nenana and wait there until we arrive and call for it a week later. A large orange steel tank was also on the flat car. We were to see it later in several places.

### Refinishing the Canoe (Rondo)

We got the canoe over into Dave's basement where we refinished it. His "basement" was actually the ground floor of a two-story house. He lived on the top floor that was called the "first floor", as if the "basement" was in the ground. It wasn't. Dave drove his car straight from the road into his garage - when our canoe wasn't sitting there.

We hoisted the canoe upside down onto two sturdy sawhorses where he normally parked his car. Then we peeled the layers of green-painted canvas off the frame. The canvas was tougher than I would have expected because the paint did in fact protect it from damage. We tore off in strips with the sound of a zipper being pulled, creating a dust of fine particles that irritated our noses.

After we had all of the canvas layers removed, we saw the bare carcass of the canoe, three criss-crossed layers of cedar lath that had been carefully shaped, probably with steam, into the configuration it had. It looked frail and untrustworthy to do what we had done with it over the years we owned it. No tough, thick boards to protect the hull, just layers of heavy, painted canvas nailed tightly over woven layers of lath. But we knew it was tough and durable when assembled because we had used it for 5 years on the bay and had experienced its durability and quality in different settings in rivers, in storms, and on trips down the bay.

We sanded the outer layer of lath with coarse sandpaper to smooth off irregularities so that the new coat would fit snugly and pulled any staples or brads. After we had smoothed the outer layer of lath, dad then began to cover it with this magical stuff called "fiberglass." He had purchased a bolt of this new stuff.

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It was smooth with wide threads both directions and felt unlike any other fabric I had felt in mom's sewing. He laid the fabric over the hull and drew lines of the sheet of fabric de-marking where he needed to make cuts. The idea in putting fiberglass on was to provide a tougher skin.

Then he used regular scissors to cut this mysterious fabric. It cut as easily as if it were cotton but dad said to not breathe the dust created when he cut it. Then he laid the piece over the hull and examined how it fit to be sure it was large enough. To hold it in place he used small tacks temporarily until he could apply resin to the cloth that would hold it in place. After covering a substantial segment of the hull with this layer of cloth, he mixed two chemicals, a resin and an accelerator in a basin that he knew he was going to throw away. The two chemicals had potent odors that were almost painful to breathe in that enclosed garage where it was too cold outside to open the door and allow a flow of fresh air.

Then he used a wide paint brush to apply this stuff that had the consistency of Karo syrup onto the fiberglass fabric. It soaked into the fabric and caused it to smooth out and lie flat. He applied two layers over the entire hull to be sure that he had enough fiberglass to protect it against being punctured by stray rocks or logs. The second coat was like the first with one major difference: he added a brilliant red dye to the resin. This scarlet syrup was applied as before to the outer layer of fiberglass fabric. The smells were overwhelming but we stayed to watch the magic of red covering the hull.

The net effect of these two substantial coats of fiberglass and resin was the reconstruction of the original shape, except that this time it was a gorgeous red color. After finishing the application of the red resin over the second layer of fiberglass fabric, dad then started to carefully finish off the red skin. He had to figure out how to join the fiberglass resin with the gunwale in such a way that the two surfaces remained visually distinct but such that there was a tight seal between them such that water couldn't leak through. After finishing off the edge of the fiberglass coat, dad then painted the gunwale with bright yellow paint.

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The purpose of the bright colors, red and yellow, was to make the canoe more visible from the air. Dad had arranged with someone he knew at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage to track us on his routine reconnaissance flights over the region as we went down the rivers. This captain flew a Grumman Albatross regularly over that part of the territory and promised to watch for us on his trips to be sure that we were safe. He and dad agreed on some signals that we would use in the event that we needed

his assistance. The Grumman Albatross was a pontoon plane that could land on the river if necessary. As dad noted above, we didn't see the plane many times but I do remember seeing it a couple of times. The plane flew fairly low over us and as he went above us, he rocked his wings back and forth in greeting.

We were proud of the transformation of the canoe from a dull gray-green color into the brilliant, ruby red and yellow for the trip. The only problem we had was that we didn't have a way to test the shell to see if it leaked. We left that problem to be solved after we had shipped the canoe to Nenana. We didn't have a specific plan to find and repair any pin holes that remained but were confident that we would be able to successfully address the problem when we got there. We were.



**Figure 483**

<http://www.steele-family.org.uk/Airshow/aircraft/28Jun38.jpg>

### Loading the 3/4 Chevy Pickup

Taking this trip down the Tanana and Yukon rivers was a condition that dad set when offered the job with Harvard. He told Arnie Lewis, his friend who arranged the job, that he refused to take the job unless he was given enough time to do the trip, which was to be three weeks. Arnie arranged with Dr. Alfred Sherwood Romer, a man who was dad's mentor until his death, to allow dad to do the trip with his own condition, namely, that dad would not spend any more time and would fly straight out to Harvard as soon as he set foot in Utah because

the expedition he was to start on would already be in Nova Scotia. They mutually agreed so the deal was done.

This introduced a major, unanticipated wrinkle. We now had to do those things that were necessary to permanently vacate Seward. It was exciting to think that we were going to move to Boston. We had already made various moves in my young life so I was accustomed to the idea of moves. But at the same time, the idea of moving from Seward to Boston was unsettling. I was 14 years old and had lived in Naples, Vernal and then Seward in my short entire life. They were all tiny, rural towns. Boston was a behemoth, a metropolis, filled with foreign, intimidating things I had never encountered. Dad was going to work for Harvard University. I scarcely understood the notion of "university", but I was vaguely familiar with the prestigious name "Harvard" and was a bit unsettled. Boston and Harvard were sort of mysterious, distant places and dad was apparently going to work there. That was fine as far as he was concerned but I was uneasy about how things would work out for me.

The concept itself of leaving Seward wasn't new. Mom and dad said that they were going to make this move because us boys needed to be able to go to better schools than were available in Seward. What was new was the timing. They had not expected to have to undertake to leave Seward forever at the same time they were prepping for a 3 week expedition on the rivers. I see today that they were right regarding the school situation. Seward's offering was pretty meager, of necessity. The town had few teachers and less money. Twelve grades were crowded into one building that had become too small, so Dick and I spent several years attending school in the rented basement of churches and the Oddfellows Hall. A new high school was being built to take the older kids out of the two story William H. Seward School that I attended, but that only relieved congestion. It didn't increase quality.

I was actually oblivious to the notion of "quality" of education. All I personally experienced was how teachers treated me and how I was graded and how other kids treated me and how cold it was and how wet it was and how much snow there was and so on. Nothing earth-shaking that had any bearing on my future. The concept of 'future' was incomprehensible. All I understood was that Mom and dad thought the school was inadequate. Who was I to disagree. So the offer of a job at Harvard automatically killed two birds with one stone, first, it put us kids in a position to attend good schools, and second, it gave dad a job to make

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the move possible. when they decided that we were going to Boston so we had better schools, that was it. I had no say in the matter.

But I had feelings. I was nervous and unsettled by the idea. Age 14 is a terrible age to move kids. I understand that now better than I did at the time. Don't you ever move your kids when they are 14. It is too late. They are settled into the society and culture of their town at the instant they are in the middle of a tempestuous identity crisis called puberty. They need stability and familiarity and predictability. It is not a good time to uproot them and start over. I understood that finally when I sat in Burger King with Nate when he was about 13 to talk to him about my own possibility. I was offered a risk manager job in Houston, Texas in a 650 bed hospital with a salary of \$75,000. I had made two trips to Chicago to meet with the headhunter who was charged with filling the risk manager position. I was ready to go and took Nate out for a hamburger to prepare him for the change. That was more gracious than how my parents did it.

In an instant I understood I was making a major mistake. Major. I understood it because my own inner child was painfully, powerfully moved by Nate's response. Understand, please, that Nate was the obedient, cooperative child. When it was his turn to speak, he said, with enormous tears but enormous self-control, "It's OK dad. I'll be fine. I understand that you need to do it. I'll be fine."

Well, in that short interchange, I knew. I knew that there was no way in you-know-what that I was going to uproot him. In his pain, I unexpectedly got a clearer glimpse of my own pain at the same age when I had no chance to even express my feelings. I knew I was not going to do it. I took a lot of flak from the headhunter who had worked out this position for me. He felt I had lied to him and perhaps I did, but it was a greater good to preserve my son from the horror I experienced. So I didn't inflict on him what was inflicted on me.

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Anyway, after the decision was made that dad was going to work at Harvard, the over-

riding consideration was how to get rid of most of our things so that we could make the move.

The choices were difficult.

The process

for me turned into

making decisions about what was less valuable to me, less personal, less desirable. All we were able to take with us on this transcontinental move was what we could fit into a half-ton pick up. That was all. There it is in this photo. A small white box.

Do you have any idea how little that is? No couches, no beds, no chairs, no tables, no food, few books, no toys, no model airplanes, no fishing poles, and so on. Hardly anything. So we were forced as kids to give away or throw away virtually of our most cherished belongings. It was a difficult process under the best of circumstances, but under mom's and dad's hand it was a cruel callous process. Neither of them was sympathetic to our clinging to things, neither wanted to hear us plead to take something. To them it was just pointless whining because the decision to make the move was made and we had so little room to take things that they got to take what they wanted, not us. I do understand that today from the point of view of the adult who had to make the thing work but I understood none of that then.

I wanted badly to be allowed to keep my carefully accumulated collection of bullets and cartridges. This collection fit into a small wooden box about 14 inches



**Figure 484** Water stop in Montana

long, 10 inches wide and inches thick. That's all, yet I was forced to give it away. To Darrell Schaefermeyer, a young kid who was our neighbor. I resented that mightily. Among the prizes were a grenade, some 50 mm shells, and an 80 mm shell. I loved them because I had collected them with great expense, yet my wishes were not acknowledged. My wishes created anger in mom who just wanted to reduce the amount of stuff to what we could fit into the truck. Oddly enough, her decisions somehow favored what she wanted to take, not what I wanted to take. I understood that might makes right so gave up externally, yet I resented being forced to give up every single toy I loved without any sympathy or understanding from mom or dad. It was as if the fact that I was standing on the divide of puberty, between childhood and teenagehood, was being taken advantage of as justification for discarding the toys on my childhood, some of which I had brought from Vernal. If I complained about having to leave everything behind, all I got was anger or lectures about growing up and about how duty is difficult and so on.

I see today how extraordinary our preparations were for moving to Boston. We reduced our worldly belongings from a small house-full to what would fit into that white box. You see that box in the preceding photo, the white box on the back of the half-ton pickup. Can you imagine making a move 7,500 miles with only what you could carry in that small space? No beds, no tables, no couch, no chairs, no stove, no refrigerator, few dishes, some bedding, and so on. Hardly anything to start a new life with after arrival. We took only what fitted into that truck so our new beginning in Boston was sparse. We finished this gruesome reduction process as the school year was ending and as we prepared for the expedition on the rivers. The latter made the former bearable.

### Anchorage

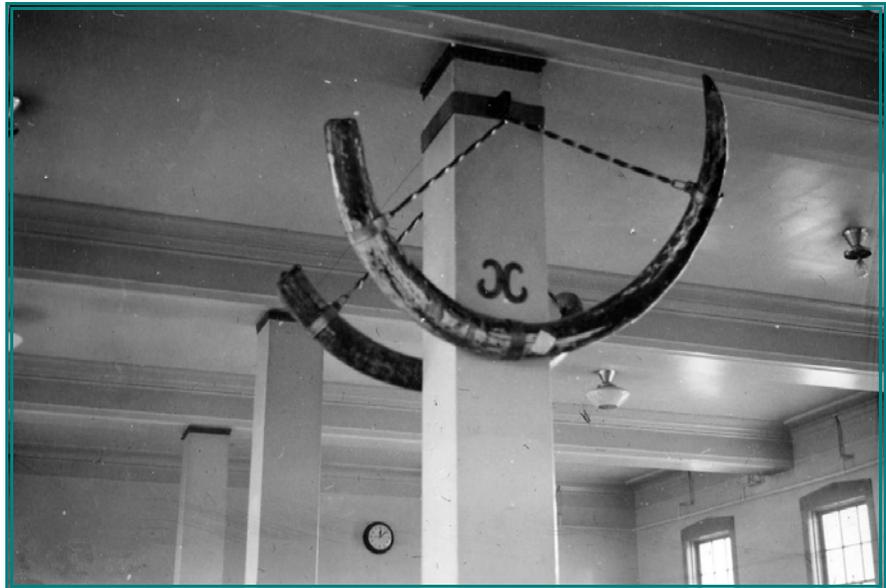
We left Seward and went to Anchorage where we left our 1953 four-door Chevrolet that we'd drive to the Lower 48 after finishing the trip. The hardy woman had already started the trek alone with our pickup over the 4,000 mile Alcan road -dirt, unpaved except with rocks. We could only carry what the car would hold with a rack on the top. That was what we had to look forward to when we finished the river trip, monumental things. In Anchorage, Dad had to meet with the air force captain at Elmendorf to arrange his oversight of us, the emergency signals we'd use if we got in trouble. Dad also had to buy his new

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camera, one of his typical extravagances. I don't know if he had already picked out the Exakta but that was what he bought. It was a single lense reflex, a kind he had never used before. He chose it because it was a top-of-the-line camera, something he loved immensely as shown by his being president of the camera club in his high school. When he let me look through the viewfinder, I couldn't see anything. All I could see was black so I was impressed that he dared buy it. He obviously understood how to use it as shown by all of the slides included in this volume. Except for images from the internet, all of these images are his.

### Alaska Railroad ride to Nenana

**A**fter business was finished, we bought tickets on the Alaska Railroad to take us up to Nenana. The Anchorage Railroad station was not a large building in reality but compared to Seward's station it was large. The most interesting feature inside were the mammoth tusks. They were enormous. I had no memory of seeing modern elephants but based on photographs I



could tell that their tusks were tiny compared to these. They were stained with copper and iron chemicals and were impressive. Even the ones that were broken off were impressive. They represented one of the things that dad was going to hunt for on the Yukon so had special meaning as we looked at them. One of his major wishes for this trip was to find tusks like these, though he didn't really articulate the wish that specifically. His description below of going through the Palisades makes it clear how he felt about it.

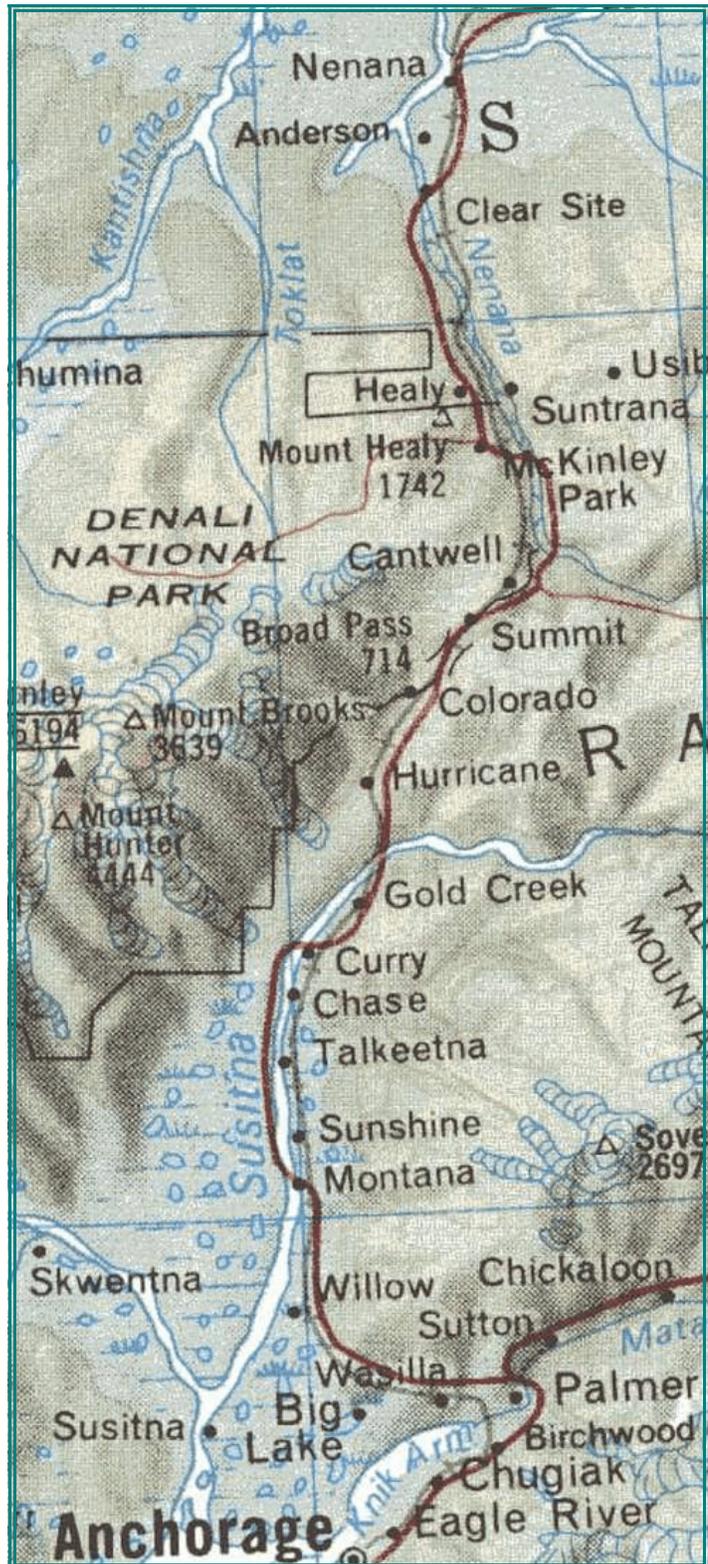
## Uphill - Both Ways

Volume 8 Seward 1951 - Yukon Expedition 1956

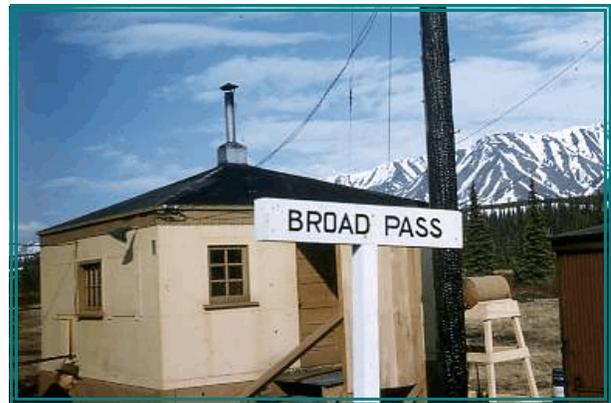
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The distance from Anchorage to Nenana was approximately 300 miles. If I remember correctly, it took all of one day and part of another. We stopped in Healy or some place that had a hotel. The trip was pretty boring to kids because the terrain wasn't all that interesting to a kid. I believe the locomotive was diesel. This fragment of Britannica Map 180 shows that some of the stops we passed through were gone by the time this map was compiled. For example, "Garner" is not on this map but there is a photo below of that stop. Progress, I suppose.

After leaving Anchorage, we encountered tiny towns or whistle stops. Dad tried to get a photo of the sign for each stop that follow on the next page, some out of focus. They are not in order because there is no way to tell now what the order was of the ones that are no longer on the map.



**Uphill - Both Ways**



Uphill - Both Ways



Uphill - Both Ways



Mom took sandwiches and apples and crackers for us to eat so we wouldn't need to spend

money for food on the train. That was OK, though I would have liked to eat in the dining cars. The idea of eating in a car while it was moving was appealing but I didn't get to do it.

The trip took a long time but I don't remember staying overnight

anywhere. The Curry Hotel was a sort of half-way stop between Anchorage and Nenana so perhaps we stayed there, but I have a clear memory of it.



## Tanana River

### Nenana (Alvin)

When we arrived in Nenana we got a room at the Tortella (named after the local Indian tribe) Lodge and did some sightseeing. The last survivor of the Alaska Railroad's fleet of stern-wheelers, the "Nenana", lay on boom anchor in the mouth of the Nenana river near where it empties into the Tanana river. The boat appeared to be in excellent condition. It was retired the previous year to be replaced by tunnel



bottomed diesel tugs which would push barges. (We were to encounter several tugs along our way). Fortunately the Nenana was later acquired by the city of Fairbanks as a tourist attraction to again enjoy the romantic interest of wandering feet, this time as a river-boat museum.

The warm air of an interior Alaskan spring was charged with expectancy. The last grip of winter was passing. As eager as children from school the ice had already shoved its way down the rivers and into the Bering Sea. The sun was remaining long hours as if reluctant to miss a moment of the great vibrating swell of re-awakening life that is spring in the great Alaskan interior.

The village of Nenana, wedged between the confluence of the Tanana and Nenana rivers, was also awake to the promise ahead. The river dock on the Tanana was pulsating with long hours of activity. All available space was stacked with freight awaiting the break-up of the ice and the first barges down river.

Now that the ice was gone, crane booms were busily swinging back and forth off the dock feeding the hungry barges tied up for their first meal of the season. Down-river, depleted trading post inventories were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the years first provisions. The waiting cargo included: heavy equipment and construction material for military bases along the Yukon; supplies for a



mission school; mail-order goods for many an isolated, patient family. But Nenana is famous throughout Alaska for something other than river freight. It is the home of the famous annual Nenana Ice Pool.

In mid-winter a tripod is set on the ice in the middle of the Tanana river with a wire connecting it to a clock in a building on the bank. In the spring when the ice moves a short distance the wire stops a clock marking the "official" time of the ice breakup. Alaskans (no outsiders) all over the territory have wagered their money, a dollar a guess, on the time they think the breakup will occur. The day, hour, minute, and second are guessed on each ticket. Alaskans can buy as many guesses as they wish, or can belong to a pool of guessers. Often the pot of money is split among many winners. We took pictures in front of the



Ice Pool building, having guessed our dollars worth earlier.

The ice pool building is near the dock where considerable interest was shown in a strange blood-red canoe waiting beside a yellow tank. Someone said the canoe had been shipped from Seward and was awaiting "will call". Everyone was curious to see what kind of nut was invading shovel-nosed boat country with a flimsy sharp nosed canoe. Great was their surprise and greater still was their concern when a man with his wife and two kids showed up and announced a down-river trip all the way to Holy Cross.

When I stepped up to the window to claim the canoe the freight agent was aghast, "you're going down-river in that? Why don't you sell it and buy yourself a real boat. In fact, I'll gladly give you a real boat to make it safe for your family".

I assured him I would feel much safer in a boat I had traveled in for five years than I would in boat with unknown characteristics. However had never been on a river before so was innocently unaware of just how much I had to learn about handling the canoe in river currents. His parting warning was, "Git completely out of the river whenever ya meet a tug and barge, ya hear?"

The next morning the crew of one of the cranes obligingly picked the canoe off the dock and sat it down over the edge of the dock into the swift muddy water. With a handline we worked it up-river past the tug and barges, past the upper end of the dock to a firm mudbank used by the natives. I was dismayed to find a hatful of water in the bottom of the canoe. It had a small leak somewhere. I neglected to test it in Seward. The boys and I turned it upside down and I dug out my fiber-glass patching kit and went to work. The best way to tell if a hole was actually a leak was to put your mouth over it and suck.

Occasionally a stray dog sniff-checked us and wandered off again. A few small Indian boys and girls collected out of curiosity. They were very shy and given to girlish giggles. Marie sat forlornly on top



of our monstrous pile of equipment and supplies.

Now that we had everything finally assembled on the river bank it was indeed a formidable amount to stow into the comparatively small canoe. The pile included Marie, four large kapok life preservers, two six foot paddles, one 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  H.P. outboard motor, 30 gallons of gasoline, four pair of boots, one tent, four sleeping bags, one two burner gasoline stove, one 22 caliber rifle, three good sized boxes of groceries, several cameras and a lot of film, one pair of 7X50 binoculars, the tailored nylon tarp cover, six metal conduit bows to hold the cover, a large duffel bag of clothing, eight quarts of oil, a bucket of tools, several heavy coats, a one gallon cooking kit, plus several miscellaneous items. Now add to that the two boys and me and you have what certainly looked like a near impossible stowing job.

I fully expected we would have to shove off leaving part of the pile on shore but when the patching was complete I very carefully stowed it all. The bottom of the canoe was almost invisible. The gasoline and food we would gradually use but most of the remainder would go with us, either over or under us, to Holy Cross our final destination.

Eventually it was time to leave the security of the mud bank and find out what the river was all about. Could we, unaided and inexperienced, cope with all the unexpected emergencies, navigate wisely and arrive at our planned destination safely? We would have almost continuous daylight and so could travel without a schedule. We would be completely out of contact with the busy world almost the entire trip. I therefore forbade the use of the tiresome question, "How soon----". We would travel as we were moved by our needs and interest.

I had planned to go down along the face of the dock and tie up by a recessed stairway in order to take on a water supply for the first few days. Rondo, was in the bow with a paddle and I was in the stern with the other. I wasn't sure this was the best arrangement but we had to begin somewhere.

After launching the canoe from the mudbank we were soon frantically trying to learn just what one did to gain control of it. At first the muddy water pulled us gently then began to push and shove vigorously as we came alongside the dock. Dick had been instructed to heave a line up to 95 pound Marie waiting anxiously on the dock above. The water was about ten feet below the edge of the dock. The canoe gained speed with no effort from me. Nothing like this had happened to us in salt water--which went up and down while the canoe stayed, more or less, in one place. I felt a surge of panic as the bow headed for a wicked looking rusty bolt sticking out

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of a piling in front of the canoe. Rondo managed to fend us off with his paddle and we headed for another bolt in the next piling. As this was happening we continued to gain speed. I shoved my long hickory paddle into the swirling silty water and gave it a quick heave against the outside edge of the canoe in a move calculated to kick the bow away from the rusty bolt. It did, but at the same time it kicked the stern in toward the bolt as the canoe swept along. The river was a wild, eager thing pushing us relentlessly forward in spite of our uncertain efforts to end the process at the right place. I heaved on my paddle again to miss another bolt only to have the canoe end up with a sickening thud against a piling.

"Throw the line up! throw it up", I yelled at Dick. He was frantically fumbling around in a pile of life preservers, rubber boots and rope trying to get something free to throw up to Marie. He finally got a line up to her along with someone's sweater and she threw a couple of loops around a cleat. When the bow was secured the stern swung around and came up with a great jolt against a downstream



piling a couple of inches below a ragged rusty bolt. We had just learned our first, and most important, lesson about landing a craft in river water:

**NEVER LAND WITH THE CURRENT; ALWAYS SWING AROUND AND LAND WHILE PULLING UPSTREAM AGAINST THE CURRENT.** That way you can gradually ease into the bank. Our first landing almost ended in disaster. One of the bolts could have ripped the canoe wide open.

We had just survived the most clumsy, awkward landing ever devised by four people. Looking back beyond the upper end of the dock to the mud bank from which we recently embarked I wondered if we were to have seven hundred and fifty miles of this level of excitement. I also wondered if the locals were not justified in

their misgivings about us and our canoe.

We filled our water cans and finally cast off for whatever adventures, of fun or dangerous excitement, that may develop down-river. It was 5:40 PM, June 3rd. Our first native village would be Minto, about 35 miles downstream, which we should reach that afternoon. Minto was to provide one of the most enjoyable social experiences of our trip. We made good time, adding the little motor's push to the swift river current we soon passed the first fish wheel, I should say, wreck of a fish wheel. It was up on the bank away from winters ice and would need a good bit of reconstruction to get it back in the river ready to scoop up salmon.

Natives along the river use fish wheels to provide themselves and their dogs with the main staple of their winter diet, dried fish for the dogs and smoked fish (squaw candy) for the humans. The "wheel" is mounted on a log raft and held in place in the current by pole booms extending from the bank and anchor



cables secured upstream. The wheel is approximately 16 feet in diameter, is mounted on wooden hubs and is turned by the current. Two fish baskets are mounted opposite each other, 180 degrees apart, with two pusher panels in between. As the current pushes on the paddles a fish basket swinging downstream scoops up the salmon which swim upstream into it. When the basket reaches the top of the wheel the fish slide out the bottom of the basket into a trough beside the wheel. Fish wheels are very effective devices but didn't originate in Alaska. They were borrowed from the Mississippi River. The owners of the disassembled wheels we saw were not yet thinking about them. The salmon they will fish are barely entering the broad Yukon delta more than a thousand miles downstream.

When we had been underway for an hour and a half we sighted a Yutana Barge Line tug coming upstream pushing two barges. River tugs never pull barges, they always push them. We later learned we had met the tug in the narrowest stretch of the river so the wake fanning out below the tug was enormous. When it reached us I swung the canoe around and rode



directly across the wave. I was very pleased by the canoes performance, remembering the freight agent's warning to get out of the river.

We began learning how to follow ourselves on the chart although every island wasn't mapped but I hadn't learned anything about reading the water. We soon found ourselves hung up on a » sandbar. We had to pole ourselves back upstream with the paddles far enough to get the motor back in the water to push us upstream another quarter or a mile after which I swung over into the main channel.

Major lesson No 2: "Read" the water to see where the shallows and deep channels are. With experience you can tell by the little waves and ripples, or lack of the same, where the best channel is. We also learned that the worst part of a tug and barge wake is not the outswEEP but the back sweep where it returns from bouncing off the bank and collides in midstream with the backsweep from the other side. This produces a wicked looking, high, jagged-peaked, spume of water five or six feet high, certainly something to be avoided at all costs.

### Nenana Photo Album

Dad's photos of Nenana and the environs follow.

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## Minto

We arrived Minto at 9:10 p.m., making the run from Nenana in three and a half hours. We were greeted by all the children, and many adults from the village. I was surprised to see all the children in what appeared to be their Sunday best. I later realized our arrival, already announced by the mysterious grape-vine, was a special event. They knew we were a family, which made us a very welcome happening.

Everyone stood quietly by while we made a "proper" landing (only recently learned at Nenana) and tied up alongside the village boats. I then stepped ashore and walking up to the foremost man announced myself as, "I'm Jim Jensen, we've just come down from Nenana" (they already knew that, of course). "Is Charlie John here? We bring greetings for him from his brother in the Seward Sanatorium". This delighted everyone. Someone said he was across the river and they would go get him. Everyone then split up into three groups, as they were to do at every village we visited. The men stayed with me, the women grouped around Marie and

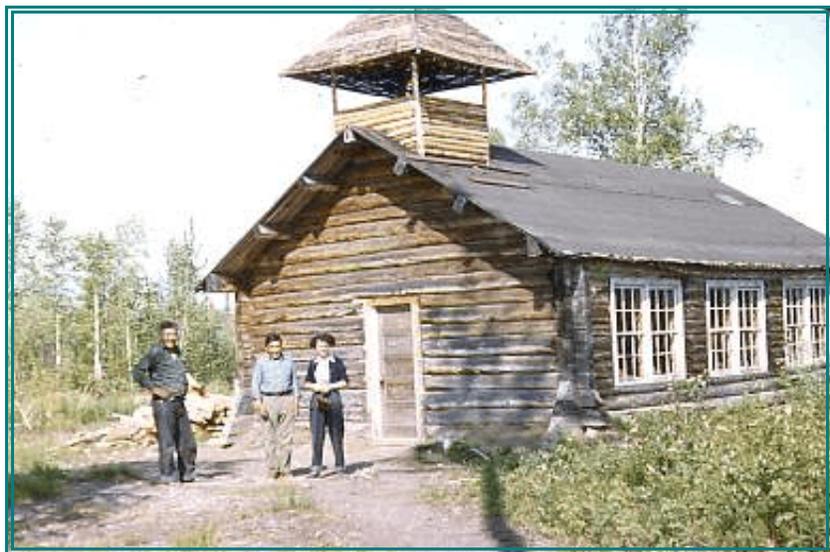
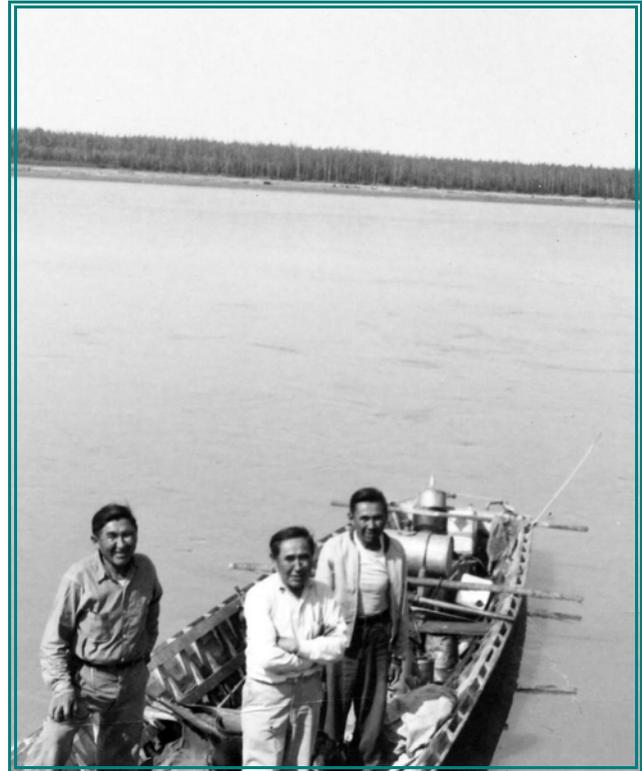
the children romped in a large patch of fireweed with Rondo and Dick, who had belonged to an all native scout troop in Seward and felt perfectly at home. Everyone did a lot of talking and laughing. It was a first class social event. We finally got to bed at midnight in our tent pitched on the river bank above the canoe. Rondo and Dick each had a mosquito bar canopy pitched over their sleeping bags.



June 4, Monday:

We awoke about five AM when the village chief arrived home from down river at Tolovana. We dozed and awoke again about 7:30 nearly smothered by the heat inside our rubberized tent. After breakfast we met the chief, Leo Titus and his three brothers. Two of them had been chief and the youngest would follow Leo in two years. We then began a tour of the village starting at the cabin of 87 year old Titus, John. (he was once in a hospital and that was the way they wrote his name so Titus, John he became). He is the father of Leo and once was chief. However he was upriver in his little canoe checking his fish net but we met and photographed his wife as she sat outside on a mat making birch bark baskets. She was excellent picture material. We bought a tray and a wooden dipper (\$1) which was in use. At first she declined to sell the dipper as it had small crack but I wanted it because it had seen a great deal of use.

Next we visited the home of Rev. & Mrs Olsen, Assembly of God Church. They were white and so didn't interest us much. Next we visited the neat,



well kept Alaska Native Service, Minto school house and met the teachers wife. He was at a convention in Juneau. We gave her credit for displaying an active interest in the school and the village. We then went back to the cabin of Titus, John as we saw him return.

He was a wonderful old patriarch. He had a kindly, weathered face with a ready smile. His ears were very narrow and long, pointed at the lobe. We talked about early village life. Just like our old timers he liked to tell how it was done in the old days before the coming of metal traps and guns. Pleasant children followed us wherever we went. He instructed a great grandchild to climb up in his cache and get his bow and arrows.



The Tortella Indians have a unique bow and an unusual quiver position among primitive people. The bow has a four inch, flat, wooden finger coming out toward the archer, mounted just above the hand, for the purpose of catching the string before it hits the wrist. No other primitive people have this clever device. Their quiver position is also unique. It is slung over the back, behind the left shoulder, allowing the archer much easier access to the next arrow than from a quiver carried in front of the body. The archer simply reaches back over the left shoulder, with his right hand, and in one sweeping motion whips the arrow out, up, and down into position in the bow.

I asked the old chief to pose as if shooting a moose for me. I was delighted with the look of intense happiness that flooded over his face as he pulled an arrow—full length—aiming at an imaginary moose as I snapped his picture. He was typical of most of the villagers. They were very pleasant and friendly. Many of them willingly posed for me with an unaffected child-like grace. Titus, John understood my great interest in old things and brought out a number of artifacts.

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I usually refrained from trying to buy objects of value which were still in use (except the dipper I got from Mrs. Titus) but was interested in buying old things which, like old things we have in our homes, are no longer in use or of great value. He sold me an quaint old knife (\$5) made long ago from a Russian file. The file teeth are still faintly showing in the hammered out blade. I saw several knives of this unique origin and design on the trip. Mrs. Titus invited us into her cabin. Once inside there were no chairs or benches to sit on so we just stood awkwardly feeling like we had surplus hands, not knowing what to do with them. I guess they sat on the floor. It was a one room cabin but I didn't notice a regular bed. I don't know what they slept on.

There was excellent picture material all over the village, in their belongings, caches, dog sleds, the old people and the children-- just as I had hoped, and they didn't mind me taking pictures of everything. In fact they were pleased that as a "visitor" I liked everything.



The day was warm and sunny and all the old folks came out of their cabins to sit on the grass, sun themselves and talk as we came along. I think they all understood that their village was on display and they didn't mind showing it to a family. Someone said, "You first family to come down river in small boat".



Our little tour group consisting mostly of happy children and a few adults, who came and went. We moved along like a floating island. We met old Henry Albert who took me aside and asked for my help. He didn't clearly understand who we were. We weren't ANS (Alaska Native Service) people, nor school teachers, nor postmaster people, or health officials but he decided we were somehow connected with the government. He said his "tension" was too small, \$55 a



month and he wanted me to see what I could do with the government to get it raised to \$85 by next Christmas. He kept talking about his "tension" until finally a small boy disgustedly said he means his "pension". I assured him I would do everything I could, which, of course is nothing. We also met Koschacket Charlie. He had long narrow ears with pointed lobes like Titus, John. Another interesting

couple was Mr. and Mrs. Peter Solomon. They invited me into their cabin. The cabins are built so low that I must duck to go under the eaves when entering. Though the people are clean and their clothing of good quality their cabins are poorly furnished, that is, they have almost no furniture inside.

Almost every cabin had a cache out behind. An Alaskan cache is a small building eight or ten feet square, standing eight or ten feet high on poles to keep bears and wolverines away from equipment and supplies. It has a pole with steps cut out of it or a ladder for access.

We passed a cabin identified as "grandmas". It had no windows of any kind, which was explained by the fact that grandma didn't need them; she is blind. There are three blind women in the village, one so ancient no one knows her age. There are about 150 souls presently in the village. Others are away working in Nenana or Fairbanks. We were told there are no fish in the river this year



but I didn't know what they meant as it was too early for the salmon to arrive. I saw no evidence that any of the villagers used fish wheels but Titus, John had a gill net set upriver.

An curious event happened to the boys. The village children taught them how to make a bull roarer and each boy made one. This consists of a flat piece of wood, roughly teardrop shaped tied to the end of a long string. When swung around in a fast circle the wood spins making a roaring noise. The boys were down near the river having fun when a village elder came down and made them stop because he said if they didn't it would rain. I had only one tense experience and that was with Leo Titus, the chief.

I had looked at a dentalium shell trimmed scabbard for a Russian file knife

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and asked the owner if he would sell it. He emphatically said no, and that he wouldn't sell it for \$50. I was talking to the chief later and recounted the event but he misunderstood me. He thought I had offered the man \$50 and he wouldn't take it. The chief asked me to wait in front of his cabin and he soon came out with another similar scabbard, but of lesser quality. He then set about trying to sell me the item for \$50. Children stood around, forever curious, but he chased them away. He was so intent he began to perspire. Unfortunately I hadn't caught on to his misunderstanding and stubbornly refused to pay him the \$50. He became very agitated before I finally managed to terminate the encounter. It wasn't a good one but was the only event marring our village experience. Otherwise everyone had a ready smile and were willing to cooperate with us on pictures and information.

I asked some men about the next stretch of river and about a white man reported living on the Tolovana River with his Eskimo wife. They said his name was Dick Pritchard and he was peculiar. The Helmricks had reported on him in their book, "We Live In Alaska" (1944) and I wanted to see if he was still there. I was told I would have to enter the Tanana Slough about four miles below Minto and follow the current through a vast area of shallow lakes and devious sloughs to reach the Tolovana River. They said, "Don't use motor. Sit still, no use paddle. Water take you there. It know where to go." We decided to leave Minto that afternoon.

As we were breaking camp, with children around us, a couple of them had a hilarious time. When we opened the valve on our air mattresses two of them lay on the mattress as it deflated shrieking with delight as they felt the air escape through the nozzle. Apparently they had never seen an air mattress. We finally cast off with the entire



village waving goodbye.

Our experience with them challenged what I was told by the old sourdough in Seward, Hank

Pallage—that "they were undependable and would steal you blind". When I tied the canoe alongside the village boats I made no attempt to cover up or otherwise secure any of our belongings. I simply left them all in view, as the villagers did in their boats. We had many things of great value to the village such



as, life preservers, hickory paddles, a .22 calibre rifle, a tent, cans of gas and oil and other things. We trusted them and they were worthy of our trust.

I once saw two small boys examining the side of the canoe where the sunlight came through the latticework and red fiberglass. They had never seen any canoe covering but canvas and were fascinated by the red glow. Their examination was cut short when a mother saw them and yelled in their native tongue something like—Hey, you kids, get away from that canoe. They promptly dispersed. Also disputing the Helmricks report about sullen natives, the villagers were friendly and cooperative. We loved them. We had had considerable experience with natives in the Seward Sanatorium and felt at ease with them. We respected them, contrary to the usual treatment they received from tourists. We were not tourists, we were a visiting family who knew some of their people in Seward so we enjoyed a privileged role. The sun was already high in the sky but a cool breeze fluttered up the river.

### Minto Photo Album

The bulk of dad's other photos of Minto follow with short comments to explain their meaning or content.

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## Tolovana Slough and the Pritchards

In due time we entered the Tanana Slough. Along the river any flow of water, not the main channel is called a "slough" even though it may be a half mile wide. In about an hour I had an accident and lost the gas cap off the motor. When I unscrewed it I was distracted and held it loosely. I pulled it out too far and the safety chain jerked it out of my hand, at the same time the chain parted from the cap and ploop it went into the slough. I was furious with myself but finally realized I must act like a gas cap never existed and somehow get by without it. A cap is very necessary to keep dirt from getting in the tank and fouling up the carburetor. In our first experience of forced improvisation. Marie rolled up a wad of aluminum foil and I screwed it into the gas tank opening.

The high slough banks diminished into flat marshy country full of small lakes and swamps, as I had been informed. So, as instructed, I shut the motor off, laid the paddles aside and began to enjoy the teeming wildlife on all sides. Waterfowl of all kinds were nesting. The air was filled with their noisy declarations. We could almost look into nearby nests as we floated by. We then realized how much we missed with the motor running all the time. Mosquitos were present in dark clouds making headnets imperative. We seemed to be drifting aimlessly at one or two miles an hour but I

trusted the Minto people and let the current take us where it would. Later Dick Pritchard was to recount how a man was once lost in the lakes and swamps and spent a month wandering around in them. He finally found himself separated from the Tanana by a low ridge so he took his



boat apart and rebuilt it in the river and got away. It was a good story anyway. I finally realized we were entering a more defined channel and in a half hour we were in the Tolovana River. Thanks Minto. Thereafter I made it a habit of consulting with the natives of each village about the nature of the river below them and it was an excellent source of good information despite the Helmricks report of sullen

natives. Ha! The Helmricks were tourists. They never even learned Dicks last name although they spent several days with him.

About five miles down the river we found ourselves at the Pritchard landing at 10:00 PM. We saw a large, well kept cabin, neat garden, and two large caches,

the largest we had ever seen. Several dog sleds stored under them. We tied up and were about to walk to the cabin when we were met by Mary, Dicks wife. She was a tiny hunchback Eskimo and carried a fluffy black lap dog. It had a red ribbon around its neck. She later explained she knew she was going to



have visitors so she gave the dog a bath. In answer to my question of how she knew, she just gave me that shy female Eskimo smile and giggled. She said Dick was away but might come home because he would have heard our motor as we came down the river.

We followed Mary up to the cabin where, aglow with hospitality, she sat us down to an well made table, gave us plates and spoons and dished us up a big serving of porcupine stew. While her back was turned dishing it up I kicked the kids under the table and said in a stage whisper, "you better eat it!" It was excellent if you didn't mind picking out an occasional long porcupine hair. We were to have other experiences later which made porcupine hairs in the stew insignificant. We finished the stew just as Dick arrived and a strange situation emerged.

He had a woman with him. He introduced her and said they had been camping (camping ??) and that she was a newspaper writer who was doing a story on him, which explanation left Marie and me in serious doubts as to her character. Just who was she, coming from the outside into Dicks isolated world when he was almost violently antisocial? We learned little else as we talked with him various times during an overnight stay. Marie and I thought the woman looked like a "floosie", rather than a newspaper woman. One of the reasons it didn't add up is that Dick was very upset by the Helmricks book. They spent a few days with him and wrote their visit up in "We Live In Alaska". Some things they said infuriated him. Reading their account now I can see how he would be disturbed by their description of the

miserable condition of his dogs. They also published a picture of him, Mary, and her teen-aged son, which also may have disturbed him.

That evening he said we were welcome to stay as long as we wished and to take pictures of everything--but not of him. I promised him I wouldn't but was tempted when I saw him—in his sixties—shoulder a yoke and carry two five gallon cans of water up from the river. We later learned from the postmaster at Tolovana that people up and down the river considered him crazy and there had been some talk about having him "committed". Dick venomously referred to the outside world as "bean peddlers", and seemed to feel, probably not without some justification, they were all out to get him. Nevertheless we found him an interesting person and certainly one who had carved a place for himself and Mary out of a true wilderness. We were impressed by the quality of his cabin and caches. I was particularly interested in the excellent workmanship in several sleds stored under his big cache. The large yard, more like a meadow, around his cabin and caches was well kept. There was evidence everywhere of much hard work as well as excellent workmanship.

He said he had 75 miles of traplines which he ran with his dog sled. We didn't get a good look at his dogs, which were chained up in a wooded area behind his cabin. Particularly when we arrived, the dogs seemed to go crazy, judging from their howls and barking. Dick was very emphatic about us keeping the boys where the dogs couldn't see



them as he said they may get too excited and break loose. He left a possible resulting encounter up to our imaginations. He said we could pitch our tent wherever we wished. We chose a grassy area in a slope below his big cache and turned in at 12:30. The sun was still up.

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Tuesday June 5, 1956

We awoke at 8:30 to find the sun streaming in through the mosquito strainer on our tent. The air vibrated with the songs of many birds, most of which I could not identify. A gentle breeze rustled the poplars along the river. After breakfast we again talked with Dick. Over 60 years old, he at first glance appeared to be in his forties. In fact, with his shirt off he still appeared to be in his forties. He was a strange person who, though violently anti-social was nonetheless very hospitable.

In one conversation he casually mentioned that when he was digging the pit for his smoke house he dug up some three-toed, fossil horse bones. I had seen scientific books in his cabin so he was probably correct in his identification. The region is underlain by permafrost and to make any excavation one must dig down by degrees, letting the surface thaw between digs. Natural refrigerators are very common, even in Indian villages. Once excavated deep enough and roofed over with moss insulation the interior freezes again and keeps perishables very well. I was not yet into paleontology so was not well enough impressed by his discovery to ask to see the specimens. Now I say, "what a pity I didn't ask".

We finally decided it was time to be on our way and down at the boat landing we found the wet ground covered with a mass of yellow swallow-tail butterflies. I don't know if they were after water or minerals, though I suspect the latter.



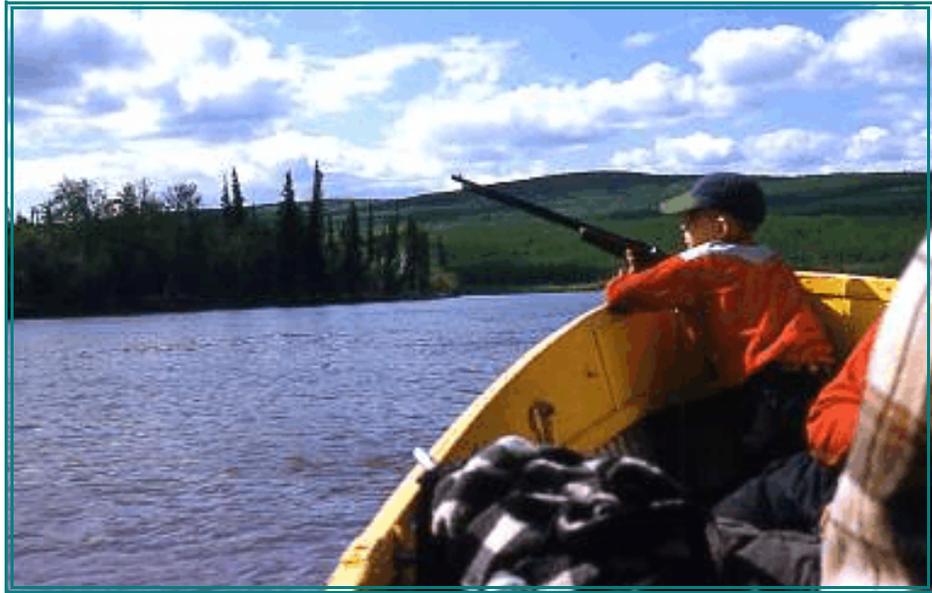
That morning the boys caught a small frog (*rana cantabrigana*) which was later declared by Dr. Williams at Harvard to be much too far north of its reported range. But there it was. I photographed it in Marie's hand. It was about one and a



half inches long.

Warm goodbys were said and we set off down the Tolovana River at 11:25 AM leaving them alone in their isolated world. Thirty eight years have passed at this writing and I cannot help but wonder what became of them and the fortress Dick had built in the wilderness against the outside world; is it occupied now?

The Tolovana was a beautiful, meandering little river which being narrow found us always near a bank. On the Tanana the main channel is always some distance away from a bank so we were never afforded a close look at the resident wildlife.



Though narrow the Tolovana was deep so we could travel relaxed with no fear of sandbars or snags. We soon saw a large bull moose with its horns sprouting in the velvet. He was at the waters edge drinking. It was the first moose we saw. Waterfowl were everywhere as they nested in many places, even at the waters edge. I stopped and cut a curved willow limb to extend the outboard motor steering arm. I was to be very glad of this later on. While in the woods I saw a birch bark chimney, or so it appeared. The tree had died and rotted completely away leaving its tough bark standing four feet high like an empty stovepipe.

The durability of birch bark is amazing. The natives use it for a number of vessels including cooking pots. They heat rocks in a fire then dump them into a bark basket with meat and water and boil the meat. We were nearing the mouth of the Tolovana River and the end of a most delightful excursion, which began when we entered the Tanana Slough. It was one of the most pleasant stretches of river travel on our expedition.

When we reached the Tanana I swung out into its swift current, making a left hand turn to go a quarter of a mile upstream to the Tolovana trading post. The Tanana was fast so our headway was slow then we unexpectedly ran out of gas. I

refueled quickly while we were being swept another quarter of a mile downstream past the mouth of the Tolovana. I then had to fight the current for a half mile to reach the trading post landing. We finally tied up to the Lawson's boat at their landing.

Mr and Mrs. Lawson are the only inhabitants of Tolovana. There is no village. He is both trader and

postmaster. Minto people come down here to shop, not having a trading post of their own. We visited and wrote a few postcards and bought some supplies. Soda pop was two for .35; cheaper than in Seward. Mr. Lawson, seeing my ragged appearance, let me



shave with his

flashlight battery operated Norelco, the razor with the three funny little wheels that go round and round to erode off your beard. I was grateful, but not much better looking. We mailed our cards and left Tolovana at 5:35 PM. We made good time as the Tanana is much faster than the Tolovana. We soon reached the mouth of the Kantishina River, which flows out from the Mount McKinley area. I wanted to go up it for some distance and camp but the black spruce lining the banks were so dark and foreboding that I felt uncomfortable and headed back down and out into the Tanana.

About 9:30 we were running directly into the sun, which stays near the horizon for a long time before it sets. I couldn't read the water and mistakenly ran down onto a shoal. Before we fetched up on the bottom we saw a big bull moose. He came down on the gravel bar near shore to see what was carrying on. We had to work ourselves back upstream and lost a half hour traveling time. After running onto shoals a couple more times we finally tied up at Baker Creek at 11:45 PM. We were about 100 yards below a group of buildings belonging to a sawmill company. Noone was around. We made camp in a delightful spot and watched a long beautiful sunset. There were very few mosquitoes.

## Wednesday, June 6

Awoke at 6:30 nearly smothered in the tent, that is Marie and I. The boys always pitched mosquito bars over their sleeping bags and slept in the open. The sun shone brightly and the woods rang with the song of many birds. We had breakfast by the side of the canoe tied up to the river bank and after making everything shipshape shoved off for Manley Hot Springs, where we hoped to surprise some friends. Chuck and Mary Clements. She played the "Wedding March" on her accordion at our wedding in Seward 16 years before.

We had a wild time getting over the shoals lying off Baker Creek, but were finally free to split the breeze. We ran along with high expectations at full throttle, keeping a sharp eye out for bobbers and sandbars.

"Bobbers" are submerged trees which have their roots anchored to the bottom, the tops are usually broken off and they point downstream. They are held underwater by the current. That is, the current passing over them holds them down until an occasional eddy reduces the pressure allowing the broken end to suddenly bob up out of the water in front of you. It scares the hell out of you. It looks like a huge black sea serpent rearing out of the water to strike you down. In a moment the current takes control again and the serpent is pushed back into the deep. Having seen a number of these you are left to wonder what if one came up directly under the canoe?

Another, even more dangerous hazard along the Tanana are the "sweepers". When the bank is undercut the trees along its edge fall over almost into the water, but are still tied to the bank by their roots. They hang horizontally, a foot or two above the water, sweeping its surface. Goodbye to any small boat caught under them. It is capsized and rolled from one sweeper to the next by the relentless force of the current. Hit by sweepers you are lost. That is why we always stayed well out in the channel.

## Tolovana Photo Album



## Manley Hot Springs and the Clements

One of the boys shouted, "Something is following us!" It turned out to be a boat, larger and faster than us and it soon passed us. It was scouting channel for a small tug pushing a gasoline barge which soon came along behind. They were the first craft to pass us downstream since we left Nenana. We were some distance behind them when they tied up at the Manley Hot Springs landing. We ran beyond the landing as I wanted to go up the Manley slough which Mr. Lawson at Tolovana told us to look for. It would take us in to the village, saving a long walk.

We finally found the mouth of the slough and left the milky water behind. The slough had a

slow, brown current against us and we bucked a strong headwind. It took us one and half hours to run up to the town. The first people we saw were Chuck Clements and his son in a boat. They were towing some logs up the slough to their new cabin site on the side of the hill at



the edge of town. They were naturally very surprised to see us<sup>2</sup>. Chuck said, "but wait, just wait until Mary sees you. She'll be more than speechless". They didn't know we were even in Alaska. We left when the war broke out. We followed them on up to town and found a very charming little settlement. It was one of two white settlements we would visit on our trip.

It is an old town being a year older than Fairbanks and contained many old cabins built in the gold rush days. The Clements were temporarily living in one of them up on the side of a hill. We tied up in the rushes at the sloughs edge and climbed the little hill ahead of Chuck and his son. He wanted us to go first. I knocked. Mary came to the door and her mouth dropped open as she stood several

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<sup>2</sup> There are the same Clements who attended mom's and dad's wedding in 1941.

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long moments before she got words into her mouth. Then she held out her arms saying, "You're,—you're—Jim and Marie".

They made us very welcome and insisted we stay for the "night", even though their cabin was small. We gladly accepted but first they took us for a swim in the hot springs where a simple building covered part of the springs. It seemed to be a community affair although the Helmricks reported it as privately owned. There was an enclosed greenhouse with a good crop of full grown tomatoes and cucumbers. After the swim we visited around town and saw many quaint things. The people were marvelous. They were some of the most hospitable whites we have ever met. During the spring breakup the town had been flooded.

Ice backed up in the river and sent over six feet of water into the town. Mr. Benson, the postmaster, showed us the five foot high-water mark inside the postoffice. A number of log buildings were dislodged and set askilter at odd angles. People were still cleaning up after the water.



Mr. Benson was very helpful with information and materials and had one of the old Russian knives in a beautiful scabbard covered with dentalium shells. It is the best specimen I've seen. He wouldn't even talk about selling it. All I could do was covet it.



Back at the cabin We visited a long time with our old friends before we went to bed very late.

### Rondo:

Chuck and Mary had a very different view of things compared to my folks'. This is where I was introduced to nudity. First time. Please don't be offended by this section. I was 14 and was experiencing the confusion and startling awareness that pubescent kids have of things that had been around them but which didn't mean anything. Until puberty. Blammo. This was part of the experience of my life. To be introduced up on the Tanana river in the house of mom's and dad's friend. Marilyn Monroe herself, the most famous pose of all 1956, was there, hanging in large, vivid color on a calendar on the wall of the living room for all of dad's friend's family to see. Innocent actually. Not sexy in any vulgar sense. A young girl enjoying being seen. And making a heck of a lot of money in the bargain you can be sure. That's all I could think about.



Figure 533 <http://www.marilynfineart.com/pose1a.html>

The hot springs looked like this. We took clean clothes, soap and towels and bathed in them. The water was almost too hot and sulphurous smelling but felt good after not having a warm bath for more than a week. Mom naturally made sure we washed behind our ears and put on clean underwear.



(Alvin)

Thursday, June 7

Awoke to a beautiful sunny day with the air full of birdsongs and little breezes blowing. After Mary's delicious breakfast I lugged the outboard motor up the hill and over-hauled it. With the help of Chuck, the Alaska Road Commission (for which he worked) and Mr. Hubbard of the Roadhouse, I got enough tools and materials together to make some needed repairs. At the road shed in a box of miscellaneous items I came across a large bolt the right diameter with fine threads which matched those in the mouth of the gas tank (practically a miracle). I sawed the bolt off to a suitable length and with the help of some birch bark for a gasket made a very good replacement for the stopper I dropped in the Tanana Slough a few days ago. The canoe continues to travel without leaks since I patched it on the mud bank at Nenana. After more visiting and saying, 'we hope to see you again' we were eager to be on our way and shoved off down the slough at 7:45 PM knowing we would never see them again.

Manley Hot Springs Photo Album

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The motor works much better now. Some of the sediment screens were partially clogged after the loss of the gas cap in the Tolovana Slough. At the mouth of the Manley slough we looked across the Tanana and saw an inhabited Indian fish camp but did not fight our way across the river current to see it. We hoped to make the village of Cosna and camp there for the night. Our course lay directly down the right side of the Tanana parallel to Bean Ridge. For a change, the river ahead ran almost perfectly straight for many miles, its natural tendency to wander held in check by the resistance of rocky Bean Ridge. The channel was deep and "bobber" and "sweeper" free so we made good time but we never found Cosna nor even a village ruin which might be Cosna. It may be hiding in another channel. I pulled across the channel we were in, and entered a slough where we had spotted a fish camp. It was deserted but a rather inviting place so we made camp at 11:45. My trip log comments, "All is well".

### Friday, June 8

I Awoke at 8:30 (by which time there had already been over six hours of sunlight) to the songs of many birds. Shoved off and ate breakfast as we sailed merrily along, (at this point the color of ink in my trip log changes with this comment: "I ran out of ink and put river water in my pen but it was thick and sort of muddy and didn't write too well so this is being written with a weak ball point pen I bought in Nenana") From our map we finally discovered Cosna was behind an island. That's why we missed it. A pity, as we are not finding all the villages Dick Lynch counted for me. I want to see every village we can find.

The river was good along this stretch with a channel as easy to follow as a freeway but I'll admit I'm quite uneasy about the Tanana from here on down to the Yukon. According to detailed instructions I got from Indians at Manley Hot Springs the Tanana is supposed to be rough, windy, full of sandbars, and flats from here on down. Lately I've noticed at times the water itself looks sinister and treacherous. We meet large circular eddies in which the water twists and squirms like a soul in torture.

Occasionally big boils erupt directly in our path, bringing up little sticks and mud from the bottom. These boils appear to be domes of water higher than the surrounding water and they churn and twist like demons determined to get their claws into our fragile hull. But the canoe rides them out in a very reassuring way even though it takes constant work on the tiller to maintain a course.

The river now swung around a high bluff to the right as we passed the end

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of Bean Ridge. We were now in flat country again and are heading into a stretch leading to a feature on the map called "Harpers Bend". The Manly Indians were right as we were constantly running—almost hopelessly—aground. If we get caught and can't move on a bar it is a loose thing which would not support my weight should I get out of the canoe to push us off. I might sink into it like quicksand. All we could do is paddle and shove. I could tell by the sound of the motor when we were coming up on a bar so I'd snap off the kicker (motor), jerk it up and yell, "paddle in the bow, right side", and someone, usually Rondo, would grab a paddle and paddle like mad. I would try and read an escape channel off the bar by following ripples, swells and boils. We always managed to get free. We passed the mouth of the Chitanana River, which has no upstream highlands to feed it gravel to dump in the river, forming hard bars for us to beat our way over.

I began to learn something about the anatomy of a sandbar: a common type slopes gradually up—going downstream, then tops out in less than a foot of water. If you can keep moving downstream (sometimes a quarter of a mile) you can beat your way along the bar to its end where it suddenly drops off into deep water.

Marie and I are both reading the map but she always seems to have a better idea of where we are than I do. I was still trying to get around Harpers Bend when I sighted the large village of Tanana across the Yukon. She knew where we were all the time but didn't want to argue with me. I was always emotionally wound up over the prospect of getting high centered and was short tempered.

We still had to go around Squaw Point, a place everyone upriver warned me about. One good thing about "Crossing the Bar" on the Tanana is that we never encountered any gravel; all sand. Mentally looking back up the river I saw either a sandbar bank or a cutbank with the dreaded sweepers reaching out to clutch you to their watery bosom. After kicking, poling, paddling, shoving, and rowing we finally ran out of the grey silt-loaded Tanana and into the brown waters of the Yukon at 2:30 PM, Friday, June 8. Boy, oh boy what a relief. Man was I ever glad. The broad, brown, slowly flowing Yukon really looked good to me. We had escaped the sand bars, bobbers, and sweepers of the Tanana, and though I was aware that the Yukon would have its own hazards, whatever they are I will gladly trade the Tanana suspense for them. We'll see.

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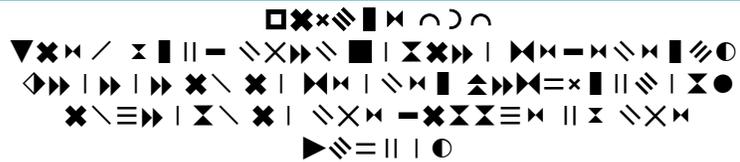
## Yukon River

The Tanana River enters the Yukon, a totally different looking river. The Yukon was wide and slow and more established banks than the Tanana. At that point, we turned west and headed down-stream on the Yukon toward Holy Cross where we planned to get out of the river and head for Boston.

### Christian Indian Cemetery and Yukon

The Tanana River empties into the Yukon through three channels surrounding two islands. By good luck we followed the right (*north-west*) channel to give us a view of an Indian graveyard on a bluff directly across the Yukon. We swung upstream, crossing above the first island hoping to get far enough upstream so the Yukon current wouldn't carry us too far downstream as we crossed headed for the graveyard.

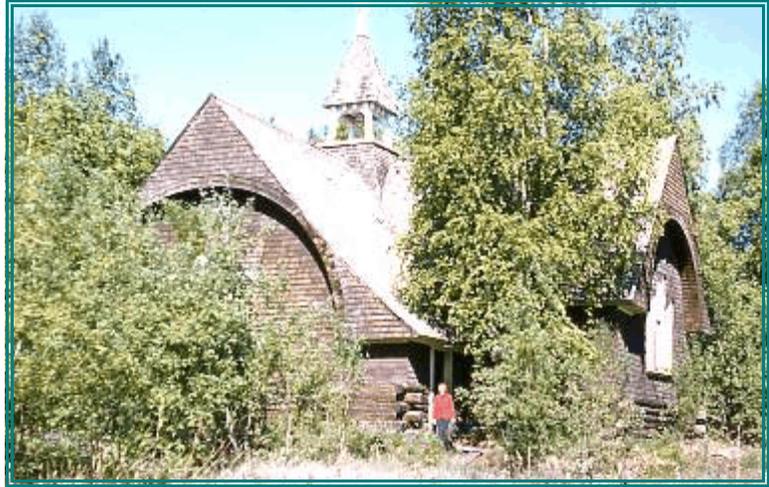
We finally pulled up on the beach below the graveyard to make a landing on gravel, the first solid ground of our trip. We climbed the bluff to the graveyard and found it to be a Christian burying ground; no spirit houses, only elaborate wooden crosses in many styles. There were no recent burials. In fact, from the weathering of the most recent looking cross I judged no burial had been made for ten or 15 years.



## Abandoned "Mission of Our Saviour"

We took some pictures and shoved off again to land a half mile downstream at a large building half hidden in young birch and spruce trees. It appeared to be abandoned.

We tied up and climbed up through tall green grass choked with masses of bluebells to a good sized church, with a central steeple. Near this building I made an interesting find among the grass and small trees; an ancient bathtub. It had the general shape of a modern tub but had a wide wooden rim around the upper edge. It had ornate legs which were nearly hidden in the grass. Part of the wooden rim had fallen off but I felt around in the grass and found it. There were a number of small birch trees growing inside, which was about three fourths full of soil. The central section was ornate cast iron, the front and rear ends were formed from sheet iron. It certainly was a grand affair in its youth when it probably came down the Tanana and was laboriously lugged up the bluff to soak up some important persons hide.



But that was long ago. It appeared to be much older than the building. I cleared away a lot of grass so I could get a good picture then decided to come back later when the sun was in a better position. Alas, I forgot to return. We were too enchanted by the chapel and other buildings we found higher on the hill.

Birch and spruce trees crowded around the chapel, which presented an exterior appearance of being in good condition. We of course had no idea of how long it had been abandoned but decided the graveyard we visited belonged to it for the burials had been church supervised, they were not Indian burials.

The chapel's architectural design was more elaborate than the Episcopal church in Seward and certainly must have filled its role with dignity and beauty. Inside we found a different condition. Rot and decay were well advanced on the main chapel floor.

Crossing it with some difficulty we stepped across holes and loose boards. In an office we found many interesting artifacts. One was a letter addressed to "The Mission of Our Savior" dated 1910, indicating it was in service at least by that early date. I got the impression that it was an Episcopal Mission though Hudson Stuck (1925) said the area was dominated by the Catholics.

We found a five by six foot oil painting of "Christ In



The Garden", which I took outside, photographed, and returned.

In what appeared to be the library we found books around 100 years old also an ancient lantern slide projector. How I coveted it but I had made a hard ruling that we could not collect any Caucasian artifacts, due to a very limited space in the canoe and a small-plane trip on the end of our journey.

There were several brass lamps, the hanging type and some old hospital odds and ends. The place would be a mint for antique collectors. Obviously none of the stuff was of any value to the Indians for it had lain there for many years. We could only guess when the mission had been abandoned. The Helmricks had visited it as an active mission in 1943 when a Mr. Files was the priest ("We Live In Alaska". 1943). They gave an account of a lively evening spent with four other guests when the talk was mainly about the problem Indians face in the modern world. Constance Helmricks made a prophetic statement in her book (1943): "Churches and Missions in Alaska still flourish but seem to be going out as the government agencies come in with their more standardized services".

The death knell had already been sounded for the Mission for at that time an Alaska Native Service school and hospital had already been established in the village of Tanana three miles downstream which duplicated services, except religious, provided for many years by the Mission. The Church must have abandoned the Mission very soon after the Helmricks were there for all the destruction and decay we saw had to take place in the no more than fourteen years since that time.

We climbed up the birch and flower covered slope to the main quarters of the mission.

There was one large log building which had been an impressive one before it was razed by scavengers. All the windows and doors were gone and the roof had been torn off. About all that was left were the log walls. We



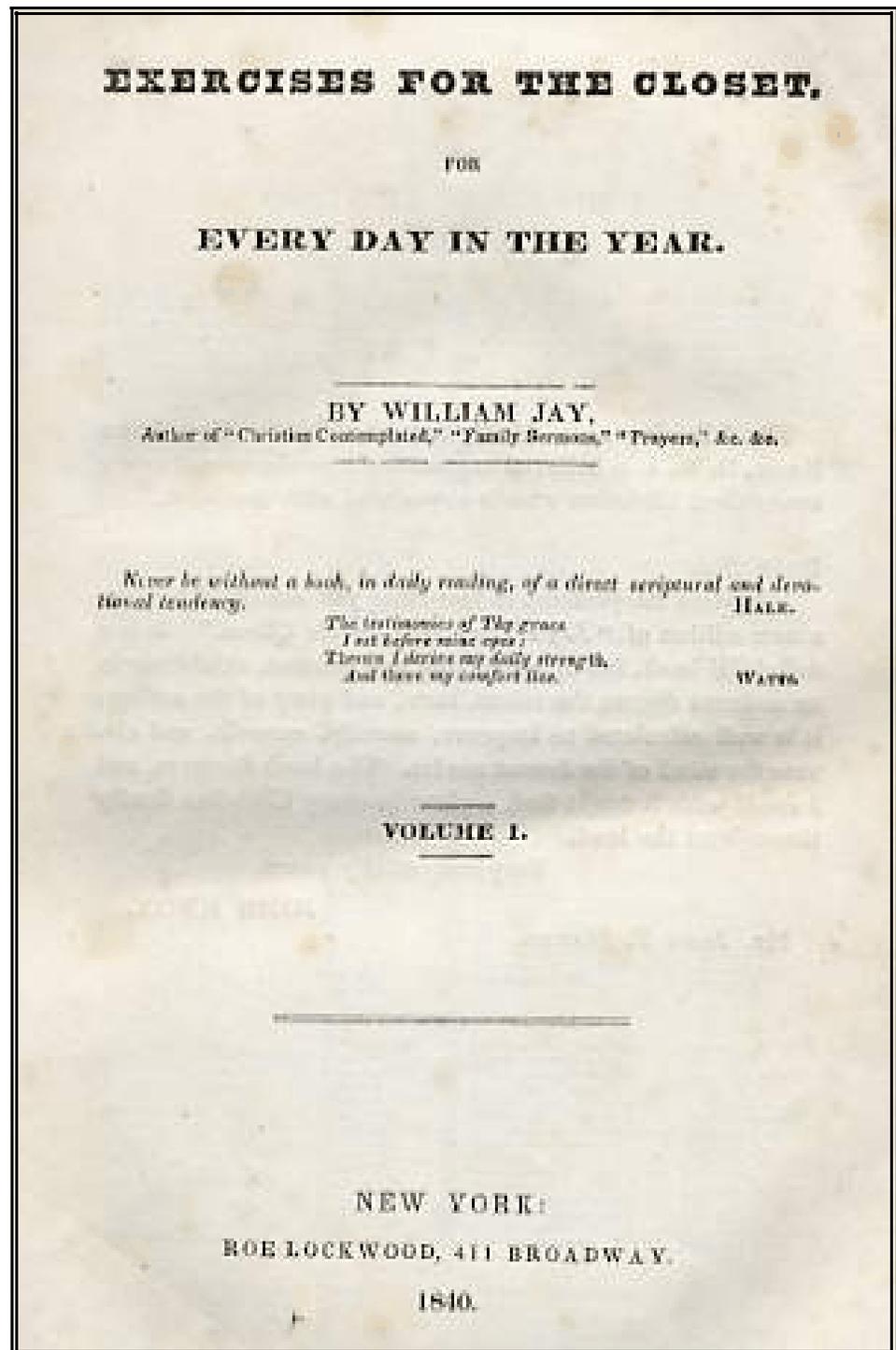
visited a number of other buildings in the area and found old things in most of them.

Apparently, when the mission was abandoned departing officials took little of the trivia of everyday living with them, and left the lantern slide projector and a dozen books as well.



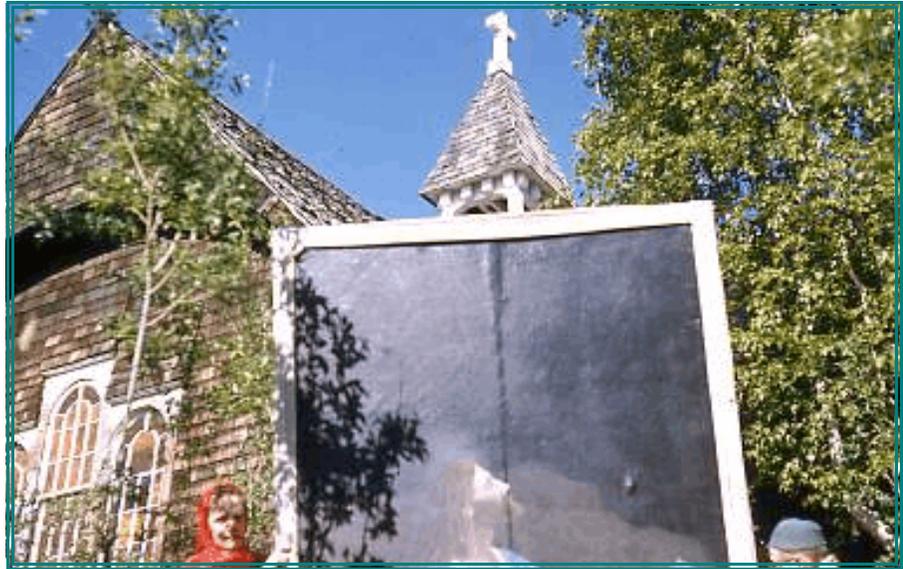
**(RONDO)**

Those books caused him to ignore his "No Caucasian items" rule, the only time he did that on the trip. He carefully selected one book to take with him, sort of memento of this historical setting. It was "Exercises for the Closet", a name that pleased him. He gave it to me many years in a rare fit of generosity. I don't remember the occasion but should have, given its rarity. I have to say that he did do nice things occasionally but so rarely that my general memory of him is how niggardly he was. Which suggests the rare moment of generosity should have been emblazoned in my memory. But it wasn't.



**(ALVIN)**

I shall never forget that lovely old chapel. What a pity for such a good building to be left to rot. Had it been in the town of Tanana it no doubt would have been put to some use. As it was the trees will continue to grow up around and eventually in it. It must have provided spiritual comfort, guidance, and funerals for many natives over the



years. The Helmricks reported that nine funerals, due to measles, had occurred the week they were there.

**Tanana Town**

**A**fter several hours of nostalgia we shoved off for Tanana. The town had been a native settlement for centuries when the Army established Fort Gibbons there in 1900. The Yukon is calm and much cleaner than the Tanana which is fast flowing in a relatively flat country sloping gradually down to the Yukon.



We saw no operating fish wheels on the Tanana but as we neared Tanana Town we saw one lazily looping the loop in the sun. It was new and as we drew near we could see it was well made.

We landed on the Tanana shore and tied up at 5 PM. I asked a small Indian boy if he could direct us to the home of Philip Kennedy. He obligingly led us there. We knew Philip's father in the Seward Sanatarium. We



found Philip's wife who said her husband was in Fairbanks. She was relieved to learn that her father-in-law was in good condition. We chatted a little about him. She was very interesting and friendly to talk to.

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When she learned I was interested in Indian artifacts she brought out a beautiful stone adz of unusual design saying; "We not superstitious but some people say when you find one of these is bad luck, unless you give to somebody who wants it", so she could not give it to her fellow Indians (again I began to covet).

The adz was twelve inches long, doubly tapered from each end to a deep hafting groove in the middle on one side. This groove, going across the length, has a ridge on both sides. The adz is perfectly symmetrical. When placed with the groove up, it rocks on its curved backside. The sides curve from both ends to the middle. It has a finely pecked finish but both ends are ground sharp for a distance of one to one and a half inches back from the edge. It is made from a granular, dark green stone, weighs five pounds, and by any comparison is a magnificent artifact! She could see I was drooling for it so she gave it to us (Marie stoutly maintains it was given to her).

Immediately upon my arrival at Harvard I made a cast of it and sent it to the



University of Alaska for identification and recording in their records. They replied that nothing like it had ever been found in Alaska, making it very rare indeed. Mrs Kennedy, in answer to where her family found it, pointed out in the river saying, "Out there". I offered to pay her for it but she drew back in alarm saying: "No". Apparently the thing must be given away, not sold. We were more than delighted to oblige.

The discovery location has long been eroded away by the river as it gradually cuts the bank away so it is impossible to examine the site for material that might help in its identification. The University of Alaska had absolutely no idea of its ethnic origin. It is not from any known primitive native Alaskan culture but how did it get to Tanana? Hudson Stuck mentions a stone adz being found along the river but does not describe it (1925) or in what institution it was deposited.

### Potlatch

Mrs. Kennedy said she and her small children were just about to go to a potlatch and invited us to go. We gladly accepted. She gave each of us a plate and a spoon then led us to the council house explaining the deceased, in whose honor the potlatch was being given, was a distant relative of hers so we would sit in a prominent place at the front of the hall.

The floor was covered with old and new tarps, cloths of all descriptions and about 180 Indians of various ages and sizes. I saw many marvelous faces but had discretely left my camera in the canoe.

We squatted down and sat our plate on the floor in front of us waiting to be served. Though called a potlatch it was more of an informal memorial feast than being like the "potlatch" of the north Pacific Coast Indians where excessive gift giving of valuable articles was customary. I soon noticed two large Indian men dragging a rectangular tank around the hall ladling out "Indian Stew", saltless moose meat and vegetables, into each plate.

The servers arrived in front of us. One swarthy, sweating man ladled the stew into our plates and as he did so he was sweating so profusely it ran in a tiny stream off the end of his nose into the stew (and it still wasn't salty enough). The tank was made of copper. He used a native wooden ladle. One man followed the tank and slammed down several pieces of bread on the floor in front of each plate; another followed him and slammed down several rounds of pilot bread; another followed and slapped on a chunk of oleo. Then followed gum, candy, and cigarettes followed by a tub containing big chunks of boiled meat, which was quite tasty. I'm sure it was moose.

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The potlatch commemorated the burial of a village man whose body had just been brought up from Ruby. He was lost last October in a plane crash in the river and his body was found at Ruby and brought home for burial. We were introduced to his widow, Pauline, a common woman's name in this area. I noticed they gave Marie more bread and biscuits than they did me. But Mrs. Kennedy was prepared. She pulled a paper sack from her pocket and we gladly gave her our extra bread to stuff in it.

Near the end of the feasting a man arose, called for the attention of everyone and read off a long list of the food and by whom it was furnished. This was the only ceremony, unless something transpired before we arrived. There could have been a speech for the serving began as soon as we arrived. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and for once knew I was completely out of my own culture. When it was all over we went home with Mrs. Kennedy, whose name we learned was Mary.

### (RONDO)

The potlatch was an interesting event for me. Note, however, that I had no issue with being a Caucasian in an Indian setting. It was natural. My entire life I had been exposed to Indians and stories about Indians. They were part of my universe. Both of my parents admired and respected them, which contrasted with their views of "Negroes" for whom they had no laudatory words. Indeed, I picked up hints of prejudice: they "smell funny", they like loose shoes because they have funny-shaped feet with heels that stick out, they wear ugly color combinations, and so on. But there was no derogation of Indians.

I told you in Volume 3 of grandma Merrell's and mom's stories of Indians. Dad obviously admired and was fascinated with Indian culture. Those parental attitudes affected my own which was further developed by being a member of Troop 620 at the Jesse Lee Orphanage. This troop consisted almost entirely of orphaned Indian and Eskimo children, approximately 45 in number, with whom I met weekly for 3 years and with whom I went on hikes and campouts. I didn't see the color of these kids, I didn't regard them as something I somehow had to 'get along' with, had to learn to like, had to not insult with words or ideas and so on. They were my friends.

Indeed, one of them adopted me as his brother and actually became a pest. "Andy". He loved me for some reason and drove me crazy by wanting to be with me all the time, to put his sleeping bag by mine, to go everywhere with me, to tease me, to steal my axe so I'd have to pay attention to him and so on. He was a small

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Indian kid and I really did like him but he made me tired with his attention and teasing. Anyway, the Potlatch was a big party with familiar kinds of people and I was interested because I understood that it was a "native ceremony" that few whites got to experience. It was an honor to be included.

What was interesting was the setting and the gifting. The 150 or so people sat inside of a single large structure. I don't recall precisely how it was constructed but the memory is clear that it was fairly dark inside, the only light be daylight that came in through doors and some spaces in the ceiling. We sat randomly around this large space in groups of familiars, waiting for things to develop.

The gifting we received was food, and lots of it. I believe there were other gifts for the principals but not for non-family members. The one thing I did not like was observing that the man who handed me a huge chunk of moose meat from the boiler was sweating - into the boiler. I don't think it actually made any difference, but I decided I didn't want to eat it. Part of the reason I didn't eat it was the fact that it was boiled, without any spices. Chunks of moose cut randomly into portions the size of small roasts, dropped into large wash kettles and boiled over wood fires until cooked. I don't remember what I did with the meat and suspect I gave it to the Kennedys. But that wasn't because I was being generous. It was because I knew I'd get in trouble if I just threw the thing away.

The pilot bread they handed out was memorable. Men walked in circles around the lodge with large packages of pilot bread. They didn't seem to really pay a great deal of attention who they were giving the crackers to. They just stopped at each person and handed them one piece or two. By the time they had finished distributing the pilot bread that had been contributed I had five or six pieces in the pile in front of me. I knew pilot bread from Seward as very hard, giant crackers that sailors packed for long voyages as their "bread" substitute. But I hadn't been given half a dozen of these huge hard things. These were circles that were about 6 inches in diameter, and 3/4 inch to an inch thick and hard as rock. Obviously, these things were softened by being dunked in some liquid to soften it because you'd break you teeth trying to bite and chew the stuff. The other remarkable feature of this pilot bread was its taste: cardboard. It had no flavor. It was obviously leavened because there were air pockets in the things but the flavor was no flavor at all.

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**(ALVIN)**

Later we visited around the village and took pictures. One delightful subject was an attractive teenage girl "Flora", and equally delightful was her old uncle. His was one of the most interesting faces I photographed on our trip. (*Ed. I don't know what happened to the photos of Tanana. There are only 3.*) The Indians are all rather poor along the rivers. They fish in the summer, trap in the winter and rat (muskrat) in their little canoes in the spring. They wear quite decent clothes but their homes, but by our standards are rather pitifully furnished.

We went to the Northern Commercial Company store and bought a few things. Gasoline cost \$20 for twenty gallons. My trip log comments: "Boy, does the N.C. company rob these people. Imagine sixty eight cents a gallon freight on a gallon of gas from Nenana when it comes on a big river barge. We also found oranges expensive. However we bought a dozen and gave them to the Kennedy family". It was very little to give for all they gave us.

Several Indian men wandered down where we were getting ready to leave. I spread my map out on the back of an overturned boat and they all gathered around as I asked about river conditions ahead. They gave me some good advice, though as it turned out I didn't follow all of it. We finally loaded up and shoved off at 9:45 PM, June 8.

**Fish Camp below Tanana**

**W**e found the Yukon very different from the Tanana. It is deep and wide with little danger from bobbers, snags and cutbanks. We made fairly good time and ran until 11:30 PM when we pulled in at an unoccupied fish camp, threw up the bars and tent and retired at midnight.



*(Ed. The sloping trees here eventually lie flat, just below the surface of the water, and would capsize us if we got trapped in them.)*

The standard fish camp seems to consist of a rather large building, about twelve by twenty feet, covered with sheet iron or bark, where salmon on racks is smoked for humans, and a series of outdoor racks for drying salmon for dog fold, and sometimes a shack for camping.



*(Ed. Note the blocks of bank that have sloughed off, ready to fall into the river when it undercuts them enough.)*

## Grant Creek &amp; Harry Mudge

SATURDAY JUNE 9

A woke at 9:30 to the song of many birds but an overcast sky. It is the first we have been without sun on our trip. It remained overcast all day giving me a mild sunburn. We pulled in at the mouth of Grant Creek where an old

white man stood on a large pile of driftwood at the mouth of the creek waiting for us. He had heard our little outboard motor coming down the river.

His name was Harry Mudge and was very interesting. We soon sat us down to a meal of whitefish and homemade bread. It was not sourdough, but made without shortening. Marie admitted it was about the best bread she had ever eaten. I found the whitefish the best fish I have eaten in Alaska.

We looked around Harry's little settlement of several cabins. He told us about some mines four miles back in the mountains. The Helmricks hiked to them when they went through, but they



identified an old white man at Harry's place as "Old Jim". He gave Marie an old birch bark basket she saw in front of one of the cabins. (*Ed. It's still at 2821 N. In 2003.*) His cabin was a comfortable place and his two dogs were staked out behind it.

The coloration and build of one dog looked a lot like an African cape hunting

dog to me. It's probably a direct descendent from the original Indian dogs of the interior. They are quite different in appearance from Eskimo dogs. I had noticed an Indian dog at Tolovana. It had short black ears and a dark smokey muzzle and a short frame,



much the same as Harry's dog. After a pleasant stay we cast off and left Harry Mudge standing on the driftwood at the mouth of Grant Creek were we first saw him. He wore his wool sox pulled up over the outside of his pants, making a picture easy to recall. We now headed for the village of Kallands.

### (RONDO)

His place was interesting because it was populated with devices that revealed how he lived and what his environment was like. The vertical yellow flare shows that dad's hand brushed the



exposed shutter gear on the Exakta for an instant.

Mr. Mudge's bean pot sits on a round and was obviously used often. Silver 5 gallon cans lie around everywhere. That was the way gasoline was transported on the river. When we needed to buy more gas for the outboard, we'd buy another 5 gallon can at the next village that had them. On the two cans by my legs, you can see the red, hard-plastic lids screwed onto soft, flexible, white plastic spouts. They were depressed into the can until you pulled them out, at which point they became spouts. When you poured, the gas did not dribble down the can.

Behind the bean pot is a horizontal log resting on stout legs created from smaller diameter logs. Two shorter "lets" stick up on the top near the each end. This device held his logs while he sawed rounds off with a heavy saw. Above and to the left of my head you see an odd shape of two whitish curves with a vertical thing between. Those are the toes of his snowshoes stored for the summer. The vertical thing is a stick that maintains the high curve in the tip of his snowshoes. They were what we termed "Yukon" style, a specialized variety developed to break trail in deep snow when carrying a burden that caused the wearer to sink 5 or 6 inches. The upturn kept the tips above the snow so they didn't "catch" when he walked.

In the background on the left is a 55 gallon barrel sitting upright. It's placed underneath a gutter along his roof to catch rainwater for culinary purposes since the river water was cloudy and dirty. I don't know if he'd drink it straight out of the barrel but it was clear and obviously safer. Behind me is an elevated floor so things stored there would escape rain runoff. The roof is extended beyond the wall of the house to provide overhead protection from rain so he had a more or less dry storage space. I can't tell what he had hanging from the rafters but he doubled his dry storage space by hanging a layer of things overhead. That roof area also served the function of a cache, elevating skins and things that animals would otherwise get at them.





**(ALVIN)**

## Kallands &amp; Rhubarb

The village was completely deserted but many of the cabins had interesting things in them. I was sorely tempted but we took nothing. However Marie found an old garden with a healthy stand of rhubarb and picked a big mess. Some of the interesting things we saw included a moustache cup, an old birch wood tray, an old Eskimo basket, an old set of Indian beadwork, a set of chime bells, and some Indian moosehide leggings. Our next point of interest would be the home of the elephants; I would finally get to hunt for elephants. I felt a growing sense of excitement.

**(RONDO)**

Mom weighed about 100 pounds but was as hardy as any of us. Notice the shape of her back. She and I both had polio in Seward. Her residual problem was her lower thoracic -lumbar region. I don't know exactly what was wrong with her back, but Dr. Phillips prescribed a special corset for her to wear when she was not in bed. It was made of a heavy-duty canvas-like fabric that had was fitted with two surgical steel stays. The tops of those stays show here, making the contour of her back look like that of a frog. The thing was supposed to immobilize her back but she disregarded it when she wanted to do things like this. She didn't complain about the things and wore the darn thing for many years.

See the water barrel under the roof in the back of the photo? It was a standard feature along the river.

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**(ALVIN)**

### Palisades or Elephants on the Yukon

Several miles below Kallands we arrived at the Palisades, or "The BoneYard". The Yukon makes a five mile bend against high frozen, glacial-muck cliffs.

The river ran straight for several miles as we approached allowing us a long view of this wondrous place.

*(Ed. The cliffs appear here in the distance as gray cliffs on the left side of the Yukon, an ominous place.)*

House-sized blocks of frozen silt slough

off and tumble away from these unstable cliffs during the long sunlit summer days. Released by thawing, gravity plucks the blocks from the cliffs and slams them down into the river casting up high, turbulent, cross-current peaks. These column-like crests shoot up like water cannons exploding out of the wild, heaving water. All river craft expose themselves to this hazard at great risk.

A summer night in this latitude is a fleeting affair, more imaginary than real. The sun slips below the horizon for an hour and a half to freshen her face; sliding back up into the northern sky to resume her mission of forcing plant-life to continue growth and frozen muck to thaw and calve into the Yukon.

The shallow root-fans of swamp spruce overhung the 250 foot high cliffs of this bizarre graveyard as death of millennia past is revealed in the massive gray blocks which suddenly split and topple into the river, occasionally swamping large boats to kill the over-curious.

Four of us approached this awesome display from upriver in our 18 foot canoe, even though the Tanana natives had urgently, and repeatedly, warned us; "don't go to boneyard; stay on other side of island". This warning was useless. My lifelong interest in fossils overwhelmed my responsibility for my family's safety.



We went in close, not fatally but foolishly. I had been told the thermal erosion of this ancient mud-tomb reveals the rotting carcasses of mastodons, giant ice age Alaskan bison and smaller animals.

Our small canoe was in great danger as I apprehensively angled in toward the



strangest shoreline I have ever seen: strange partly because it is the only shore I have ever approached that, given a reasonable foothold, wasn't safe to land; and strange because of the presence of the hide, flesh and bones of long extinct animals.

I had been deeply interested in fossils most of my life and here was a chance to see big ice-age animals emerging with their flesh more or less intact. I couldn't resist, I had to move in as near as I dared, to see if I could spot the elbow of a mastodon sticking out, or the guts of a giant bison hanging down the cliff—in spite of the risk to my family.

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We had a tiny seven and a half horse outboard Elgin outboard motor on the canoe, which could only, with great buzzing, encourage the canoe to move contrary to the rivers strong will. I instructed Rondo to stay in the stern at the throttle and if I yelled he was to swing the canoe directly away from the cliffs at full throttle, though we would never be able to outrun a crash from the cliffs. *(Ed. He didn't tell me that part.)*



It was only a feeble gesture of preparedness as our puny motor would have no chance against the herculean forces generated by a one or two thousand ton block of frozen muck tumbling into the river. A ten ton boat, forty feet long had once been swamped by devastating cross-current turbulence with a loss of 13 people. We were only a cockle 18 feet long weighing several hundred pounds. Only good luck would get us through if an emergency occurred.

The other three faces in the canoe were grim and silent. I don't know what they were thinking, or if they even knew the extent of the potential danger. *(Ed. I did.)* My face was excited and glassy eyed as I strained to see



something I could identify. But it wasn't our eyes that were affected, it was our

noses. We didn't see any rotting carcasses but the air was heavy with the stench of rotting flesh, a fossil stink, to be exact, so I knew there was ancient flesh and bones somewhere in that tumbled mass of melting blocks and slabs. I supposed we were witnessing the only disintegration presently occurring in the permafrost of central Alaska. We drifted for nearly an hour along the great river bend then the river straightened out and we watched the great frozen cliffs diminish in the distance; we saw no elephants, but will always remember the fossil stench.

Palisades Photo Album

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## Birches and Bill Sauerwine

After an hour's running we tied up at the Civil Aeronautics Administration station at Birches. There, various metal towers were enclosed in a metal fence. The station is part of a network supporting airline traffic in central Alaska. We didn't stay long but saw the lone white man on duty, a Bill Sauerwine. He was naturally very friendly



as he lived a very lonely life. We cast off for Kokrines with Rondo at the tiller. He has taken to it well and seems to thoroughly enjoy it.

## Kokrines and Grandma Bob

After a time I took the tiller and the boys settled down for a nap. After about an hour I happened to glance over to a gravel bar and there stood a nine foot tall Alaskan brown bear! He had heard us coming and had probably come out on the bar to see what was going on. I was very surprised to see him but realized we were parallel to a range of mountains with probably little muskeg in between. For the most part bears stay away from swampy country. He probably came from the mountains.

I cut the motor off and yelled at the boys to wake up. They must have been dead to the world for it was sometime before Marie could raise them. The old brownie finally got down on all fours and after ambling along parallel to us turned and disappeared into thick willows. The boys did get to see him. Rondo even got his binoculars on him.

We were all very pleased, especially Marie as I had told her we would see no big game along the river. We have now seen black bear, moose, fox, ducks and geese, beaver, brown bear and mountain sheep on the trip.

The Yukon is vast with comparatively stable banks, not like the wild Tanana. There are devious sloughs which I try to avoid but once we got hung up on gravel shoals and ended steaming up the Tozitna river. As soon as I realized we were headed against a current I swung back down to find the main channel again. I can now tell by reflected sound from the motor exhaust against the bottom when we are coming up on a shoal and quickly leave it for deeper water. The Tanana was all sand, the Yukon seems to have a lot of gravel bottom.

The river was straight again and at 10 PM we sighted Kokrines in the distance. I mentioned we ought to camp instead of going on down and the boys suggested it would be a good idea to camp on an island (the old brownie still in their minds?) and I agreed. We pulled in to a good looking bank on a long island and made camp. The boys are now skilled at putting in four stakes and stringing up their mosquito bars but we had few mosquitoes at this place. It was an excellent camp and we all had a good night's rest.



### (RONDO)

Each time we landed for the night, we had to secure the canoe. Whoever was in the bow was the one who jumped out first to start the process. Dad always tried to get the canoe up close to the



bank so we didn't have to get in the water, but that wasn't always successful. The first one out took the bow line and tied it securely to a tree trunk or stump during which time that stern was pulled to the shore by the stern line. That accomplished two things: (1) it secured the canoe so it wouldn't break loose and float away in response to heavy wind or the large wake of the occasional tug-barge combos that passed; (2) the interior of the entire canoe became accessible for hauling our gear out. We still had to wade a bit but it was easier than trying to haul everything over the narrow bow.

The first order of business after securing the canoe for the night was to off-load gear. This included the tent for mom and dad, their air mattresses, our mosquito nets, sleeping bags for everyone, the cooking gear, stove and grub. Discipline was always a high priority of those parents so us kids knew better than to jump out and start exploring. As painful as it was to have to wait to get started exploring the fish camp or whatever was there, it was considerably less painful than what happened when we forgot our chores. So we did our duty, not because we wanted to rather to avoid punishment, but turns out that's a good thing to learn to do.

Dick and I could set up our mosquito bars and be exploring before dad got the tent set up, though we usually got roped into helping him. This image shows the method we devised. Note how close the nets are to the tent. We weren't afraid nor were we foolish. We stayed close to home "just in case", though neither of us expressed it that way.



Our method was simple. Take the axe and find some dried branches or skinny trees and cut them off about 4 feet in length. They had to be fairly straight to do the job. Six sticks, two sleeping bags and two mosquito bars. After collecting the

sticks and stuff, we'd locate the area we were going to sleep on and carefully police it for debris, rocks, sticks, etc. We'd stretch the mosquito nets out on that area to get their footprint, side by side, and take the sticks, and the axe and prepare the framework to hang the mosquito nets on. Using the butt of the axe, we'd hammer the sticks six inches into the ground - had to be at least that far we discovered, else we woke up at some point with mosquitos chewing on us through the net that lay on our face after the uprights tipped over. Then we'd hang the nets up on the bars by tying the corners at a height that stretched the sides fully. The nets were constructed so that there was plenty of room for an adult man to sit up in, with four foot-long flaps on the bottom to turn into the middle. The sleeping bag was laid on top of those flaps so the interior was sealed from bugs.

The problem was that we usually ended up with some mosquitos inside of the net because we had to lift the sides when we put the sleeping bags and stuff inside, or climbed inside. So the last act for the night was the take the bug bomb and spray the entire space inside the net to kill any remaining mosquitos. We'd carefully raise a flap and quickly pass the can to each other, after which we'd settle down for the night. We didn't undress until we were inside the thing with the bug killing completed. At that point it was safe enough to take our clothes off and pile them at our feet so we didn't sleep on anything lumpy. We didn't use air mattresses. We'd just push the rocks and chunks of wood and sticks away from our chosen space and sleep which bugged dad because it took him 5 minutes to get his air mattress filled.

(ALVIN)

June 10 Sunday

We awoke to the songs of many birds and sunshine. It was a beautiful day and the scenery enchanting. It was even more delightful than I had anticipated. Most of the way we have had mountains in the background and good photogenic skies. The sunsets were marvelous and last for over three hours. We stopped just above Kokrines at their graveyard. It was the second Indian burial style we have seen on our trip. We had also seen such graveyards along the Alaska highway in 1953.

Some of the grave houses are rather elaborate. We could look inside glassed windows and see valuable things placed there for the use of the dead. One child's grave had a complete set of miniature furniture with a table cloth, rug, and a tiny dolls.

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We went on down to Kokrines and found only four people there. The rest of the village was off in their summer fish camps. We met an old krone, Pauline Bob, and her lovely granddaughter Dolly Titus. Grandma looked to be at least 80 years old and couldn't speak English but Dolly shyly translated for her.



We talked about old things and grandma had Dolly fetch something I had never seen before, a one piece wooden snowshovel made out of a cottonwood log. We bought it from her as well as a wooden dipper.



After small talk we moved the canoe to the upper edge of the village where a sparkling stream tumbled out of a little creek. We filled our five gallon can with ice cold water and shoved off with grandma and Dolly waving goodbye. Dolly said

her parents were further down the river at a fish camp. We promised to stop and see them. We could always tell when we were approaching a village by ringed birch trees where the bark had been peeled off for baskets. We stopped at two fish camps.



## Gladys Pika and the "Drinking Spree"

At the first we met Gladys Pika who was the only sober person there. She said many people along the river were related, which is easy to understand. She apologized saying all the rest of her camp was on a "drinking spree", passed out in their tent—this

because we were only fourteen miles above the town of Ruby where the natives could buy liquor. At the second fish camp we found Dolly's parents and three girls. All were sober and more industrious than poor Gladys and her people. I was



well impressed with Henry Titus. He had just finished anchoring a good looking fish wheel which was operating but had not yet caught any salmon.

They were very friendly, even though they had no relatives in the Seward Sanatorium. As usual I steered the conversation to old things. Mrs. Titus gave Marie a moose-horn handled awl for sewing skins. The oldest girl gave Marie a miniature pair of beaded slippers she had made.

*(Ed. I don't know which set it is but mom had 2 sets of*



*beaded moccasins. The blue ones are one inch long.)*

Henry offered to give me a dentalium shell necklace which was back up in Kokrines. I graciously accepted and gave him my address and a dollar to mail it to me (it never came). He said with the fishwheel operating he was going home for a short stay tomorrow. Our visit with the Titus family was a very pleasant one and we finally shoved off for Ruby arriving there at 7:00 PM.

## Ruby and "Scotty"

This image was taken as we approached Ruby which was on the south bank, the only village on the south bank. The willows and flat country were typical along the river, though there were low mountains in some places. For the most part it's flat, probably planed off by glaciers.



We tied up at the Ruby village dock where there was an interesting variety of boats. These were not the simple shovel nose Indian boats but were more marine in appearance. One reason is that Ruby is an old mining town and the population is still largely Caucasian. It originated in 1910.



The mines, some distance away in the mountains, have been mostly worked out but Ruby is still a picturesque village. It is the home of a number of interesting characters and one we met was "Scotty". Presumably a Scotsman his fish wheel bore this out because instead of having two fish baskets his had three baskets and three paddle panels. He claimed the best way to succeed is to have several squaws to work a good fish wheel. He also had a good sized boat with a cabin on it and offered to let the boys sleep on it—which they did. First, we did some sightseeing around the village but found no natives to talk to. It was the least interesting town of our trip.

Marie wanted to wash her hair so we engaged a room at a road house and spent the most

miserable night of our trip battling mosquitoes. (*Ed. It is the two story building on the right of this Main -and only- Street here.*)

It had no bath, no toilet, no hot water—just big juicy mosquitoes. On the canoe we could put up the cover and

spray bug killer inside and spend a reasonably comfortable night. Not in the Ruby Road House.

The management furnished mosquito incense to burn and though we kept a heavy fog of it going it did little good. In the morning ("morning" here is a figure of speech as it is light all the time) we stumbled over the carcasses of hordes of dead mosquitoes and hurried down to the canoe where we found the boys stretching after a comfortable night. We should have stayed on Scotty's boat with them. It was one morning we did not awaken to the sound of many birdsongs but instead to the hum of rapacious mosquitoes. During the night a tug and barge arrived from Nenana. On the barge was the bright orange steel tank that traveled on a flat car with the canoe from Seward. We shoved off at 10:30 PM,

### Monday, June 11.

I have one brilliant mental picture seen as we were leaving Ruby: Below the village is a huge rocky cliff; Scotty's three basket fish wheel looping the loop in the bright sun is silhouetted against the black cliff and in my minds eye continues to turn eternally, and as already noted it has six



arms instead of the traditional four. A good sized river, the Melozitna joins the Yukon from the northwest and its broad mouth is seen from the village.

Ruby Photo Album

page 2 of photo album



### Melozie and Paul Peters

At 11:30 we stopped at the village of Melozie and talked to Paul Peters who has a very good fish wheel site. He sent his greetings down to Andrew Johnson at Nulato. With the addition of the Melozitna the Yukon is now getting to be a very large river. From the village of Melozie it runs a comparatively straight course to Louden. We made good time as the river current is around 6 MPH. The charts which were so difficult to keep track of our course on the Tanana are now very easy due to the size and straightness of the Yukon. We have lately had almost constant sunshine and as a result all of our noses are peeling. On our right are beautiful bluffs with occasional streamlets cascading over them. Every few miles we see old fish camps. Very few are occupied at this time of year.

### Louden Graveyard

We stopped at the Loudon graveyard. It had several tall flag poles flying American flags. Judging from their weathered appearance some of the grave houses are very old. While we were ashore three Indian shovel-nosed boats skimmed by going downstream, obviously with good sized kickers to zip them along. Our 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  horse kicker is small but we are always headed downstream and not in a hurry so we are quite happy with it.

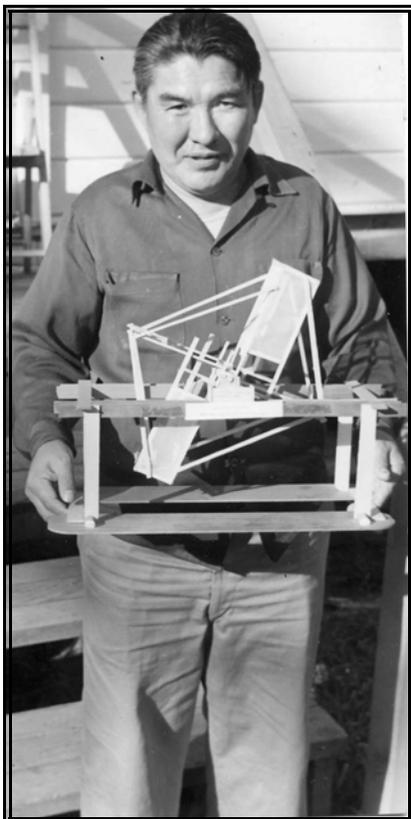
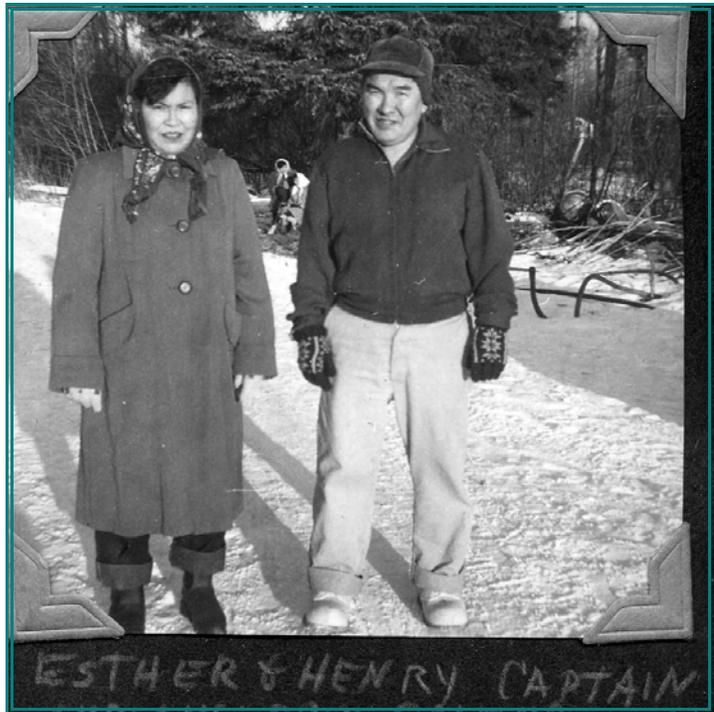
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## Galena and Henry Captain

Arrived at Galena at 5:PM, Monday June 11. Galena is the busiest place we were to see. The village has been taken over by the military which has generated a terrible environmental mess. Most of the men there work for the Army and Air force, both of which have something going on there, what that was I doubted if anyone really knows. They are busy tearing up the environment and leaving monstrous mechanical junk piles all over the place. The river is undercutting the old village. The Army and Air force are dug in further back and have been at work there for at least fifteen years.

We looked up friends we had known at the Seward Sanatorium; Henry Captain and his wife Esther and son Patrick. (Ed. This photo was taken while they were at the TB San in Seward.)

They are not well off. Henry asked me to see George V. Beck in Anchorage and give him a message. The Indians in this



area no longer practice any handicrafts and have long ago lost what they had so we left there empty-handed. It was a most dismal experience. No liquor is sold in Galena but I am not sure the prohibition extends to the military PX. Certainly the Army and Air force would not stand for a lack of life-giving booze. (Ed. This photo of Henry holding the Fish Wheel was also taken at the TB San. The wheel is at 2821 N in 2003.)

There was a tug and barge at dock unloading construction materials, some of which we saw being loaded when we were in Nenana. The tug was a small paddle wheeler.



*(Ed: Leaving Galena:)*



## Bishop Mountain

We are now headed for Koyukuk with warnings from Henry ringing in our ears, "be very careful at Bishop Mountain. Many boats lost there in big whirlpool. Stay on left side". We left Galena at 7:40 headed for Koyokuk at the mouth of the Koyokuk river. There is a trader there Dominick Venetti, whose freight I had handled many times while working on the Seward dock. It will be interesting now to meet him and see what his trading post is like.

We could tell when we were nearing the whirlpool, for Bishop Mountain comes into the river at a right angle. When we arrived it was a chilling site indeed.

A resistant formation of very hard rock crosses the river which has cut a narrow channel through the barrier.

*(Ed. I'm not sure this photo is Bishop Mountain. It gives a sense of what it looked like, with the difference that*



*there was indeed a slowly turning whirl pool that made me very nervous.)* As it rushed through this opening it looked no larger than the Tanana river but before the water rams its way between the two cliffs it is spun around in a huge whirlpool. I judged it to be about one eighth of a mile in diameter. Large whirlpools are always depressed in the middle and this one looked like a huge saucer. There were sticks and other debris slowly swirling around in it. Henry had told me; "If boat get in middle, can't get out. Many boats go down, never come up".

Seeing it, I needed no warning to keep out of the middle. It looked like a monstrous thing out of Jason and The Golden Fleece, lying in wait to swallow us up. I could see now why Henry told me to stay on left side because that was the downstream side; the other side ran upstream.

Looking across this whirlpool was seeing half the river sloping down from you and running one way, and the other half sloping up and running the opposite

direction. It was a giant merry-go-round and over the centuries the water rotating clockwise had bored itself a huge bowl waiting to crowd itself through the narrow gateway. My stomach was a knot as I entered the outer edge of the maelstrom. It was now or never.

My log reads: "I crowded the left bank so hard I believe I got green leaves in the propeller". In passage the water carried the canoe swiftly along, the only trick remaining was to be able to swing out of the whirling water when we were far enough around to pass through the portal. I used a lot of body English and made it. Imagine the entire Yukon river spinning around in one tremendous whirlpool. It was an extremely impressive sight which I hadn't heard about until Henry told me. I will never forget it with its center appearing to be depressed several feet below the outer rim. Once through we all breathed a sigh of relief.

### Koyukuk and Dominic Verneti

**A**t 11:PM we rounded the lower end of a large island and saw Koyukuk across the Koyukuk river. The point looked like a good place to camp; it was not too high, it was flat, and not too many willows, and gave an excellent view in all directions. At once, you could look up both the Koyukuk and Yukon rivers. We decided to camp there for the night and go over to the village in the morning. We swung back around and pulled into the point on the Yukon side and as soon as I shut off the kicker we could hear the mournful chorus of the village dogs. Any arrival in all river villages stimulates this song of the wild. There was also another I chorus much nearer which impelled us to grab our headnets and build a smudge fire.

We no sooner got the smudge going than we heard a kicker start up over in the village and we saw a long boat head out upstream. We wondered if they might be coming over to investigate our presence. We then heard another kicker start up and a second boat head upstream. They ran so far up the Koyukuk we began to wonder if they were coming over to see us.

When the first boat was about a mile upstream they cut over and soon arrived at our camp. They landed and we introduced ourselves. They were two young couples and said they had been playing marbles (Chinese checkers) and saw us arrive. They thought we might be in trouble so came over to help. By this time the second boat arrived with a lone man in it making the number of our would-be rescuers five. We felt privileged, indeed.

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While we were visiting we heard a large boat coming down the Yukon. When it came into view they said it was their trader's (*Dominic Verneti*) boat back from Galena. It was obvious they had great respect akin to affection for him, which was verified by our experiences in the village the next day. Close behind him came the big tug and oil barge we had seen pumping out oil at Ruby.



Being agitated by the arrival of their trader's boat the two couples climbed back in their boat and roared off up the Koyukuk. The lone man in the other boat couldn't start his kicker and soon began to drift down river. He worked furiously, I watched hopefully, without the desired result. It seemed the man was headed for the Bering Sea which would leave his family in a most melancholy mood. I finally untied the canoe and set off after him—to rescue the rescuer. When I caught him I took his line and swung around to head upstream. About all I could do with his large boat in tow was barely maintain our position in relation to things on the bank. It took more than a quarter of an hour for him to start his kicker, after which he roared on up the river leaving me to whip my little seven and a half horse kicker into a frenzy to hopefully regain the company of my loved ones—which I finally did after about a half hour. I was running against the combined power of the Koyukuk and the Yukon. When I regained the point where my loved ones were huddled, with no food and fatherless, it was 1:AM and dawn was breaking. It was never dark, it was just that the sun was sneaking around a distant mountain range getting ready to rise again.

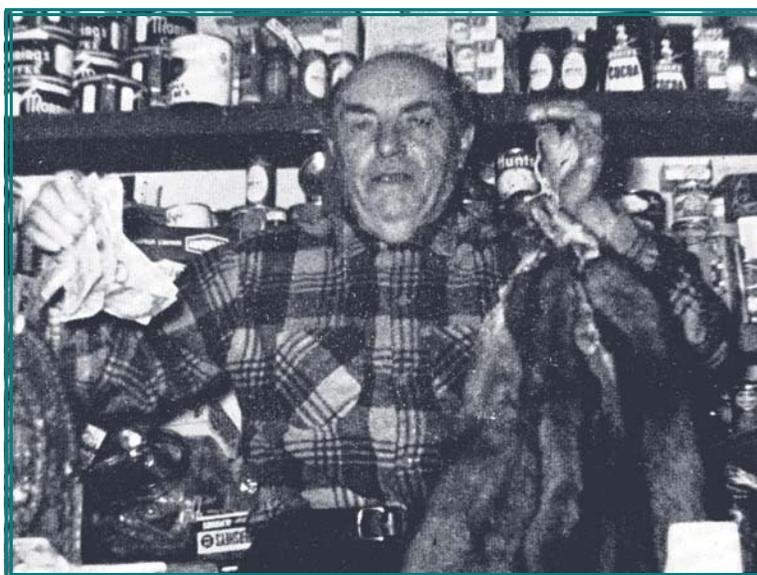
Tuesday, June 12

Awoke at 8:30 AM to a bright sun and the songs of many birds. Sounds of laughter and dogs drifted to us from the village across the river. They were pleasant sounds indicating children and happiness which may be why my log records

the point as being one of the best camps so far. Looking up the Koyukuk from our point we could see a high mountain bluff sloping from the back country up to about a thousand feet high at the rivers edge. Between this high bluff and the village was their graveyard perched on a hill overlooking the river; a typical setting. Between our point and the village landing was an enormous sand bar. This is what the two boats had to get above before crossing over to us last night.

We struck camp and headed up the Koyukuk far enough to cross above the sand bar then turned down to the village landing. We found many children, happy as usual, and many dogs, also very interested. We went to the trading post and met Dominick Venetti behind the counter ready for business.

In a business-like manner we stepped up to the counter and bought two small items, enough to qualify as "business", after which Mr. Venetti took off his apron, came out from behind the counter and gave us a warm, hearty welcome. He introduced us to his half-breed wife Ellen, a handsome woman of 50. *(This image is from an Alaska Sportsman*



*magazine of the 1950's)* He had sent her outside (the states) to college so she was well educated, a charming and most hospitable person. He took justifiable pride in showing us all around his buildings and garden. Mrs. Venetti said she was going to pick her net she had set across the river. I asked if I could go along to get some pictures. She enthusiastically welcomed me.

I put my kicker on her boat and off we went with several small children. I have never been in a more photogenic setting, the boat and Indian children, Mrs. Venetti and then the net. As she pulled it in up came a huge whitefish, then three sheefish, then two more whitefish. They were flopping around much to the delight of the energetic children. What a marvelous opportunity to get pictures of a native woman at work! I took many pictures. It was my first chance to see these two marvelous fish types. The shoe is also known as the arctic char. Our trip back up to the village was rather slow as we were crossing most of the flow from the Koyukuk and the Yukon combined.

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## Koyukuk Rabbit Chokers Club

**M**rs. Vernetti is the only woman along the rivers who is genuinely concerned about the opportunities and development of Indian women. She has organized a women's club, "The Koyukuk Rabbit Chokers Club" which makes handicrafts for sale. We bought an Indian doll which was dressed, from the skin out, just as they dress. They have built a clubhouse and put on an arts festival. She teaches sewing for the mothers and ballet for their little girls. She would like to start some kind of manufacturing to aid the village economy. One can only imagine the tremendous obstacles she has had to face in accomplishing what she has done, in an all male society, among materially poor people, and against the long standing tradition of man the hunter and woman the homemaker. She is truly a heroine among her people. *(This doll is at 2821 N.)*



Mr. Vernetti baked some excellent hot, raised biscuits and prepared lunch for us, including lettuce salad from his garden. Afterward we had a long warm visit with them. They are wonderful people. Later Marie wandered around in the village taking pictures. I have a new Exakta camera, the best money can buy, and am very pleased with the many rolls of film I am exposing on our trip, especially here in Koyukuk. Marie seems to be able to get shy people to loosen up much better than I so she takes the camera and wanders around in a village by herself. She now took it and visited the village boat maker. I watched as she photographed him. He continually ran his hands over the boat, upside down, as he felt every joint and sliver in it. I also noticed he never looked at a measuring stick or tape—he is blind. He can go to work any time of the day or night. He works alone. What marvelous pictures she got of him. I look forward to painting pictures of him, from Marie's

slides, when we return to the states. Now we had some excitement with some small children.

The Vernetti's grandson and another boy, both about three years old were playing in a boat when it slipped its moorings and began to drift downstream. They began to whimper and other children began to shout about it. I cranked up my kicker and Mrs. Vernetti and I were off to the rescue. We caught them about a quarter of a mile downstream. They thought it was great sport when we arrived to take them in tow. One little boy went to the stern of their boat and gave an imaginary starter rope a long jerk and the other little boy started up with the kicker noise.

When we returned the boat to its moorings and made it very fast the second boys mother was waiting for him. She tried to get him out of the boat but he cried, "But I'm the kicker". I bought a ten gallon can of gas for \$6.41, much cheaper than it was in Nenana and certainly far cheaper than it was in Ruby at \$1.00 a gallon. We finally bid the Vernettis a fond farewell and with some regrets left Koyukuk, the most wonderful village of our trip so far. We set out for Nulato at 5:30 PM, June 12.

Along some high bluffs on the right side of the river we experienced strong winds and very choppy water. A stiff wind blowing against a strong current produced a turbulence I've never seen before. Now that the Yukon is constantly getting wider the far shore is little more than a low line of green and as we go further downstream we can expect to face some rougher water than we have had to deal with up until now.

### Nulato and Andrew Johnson

We eventually rounded a high bluff at 8:00 PM and came upon Nulato. What a sight it was. It is without doubt the cleanest, largest and most industrious appearing native village thus far.

Historically Nulato is the most



important point on the Yukon River. It is the site of the first settlement made on the river by white men. In 1838 the Russian half-breed Malakoff ascended the river and built a fort and trading post. This was twice destroyed by the Indians and vacant until 1841 when Derabin, another agent of the Russian Fur Company established the place permanently and remained in charge until he was killed in the notorious Nulato massacre of 1851 (Hudson Stuck 1925).

About forty years ago some government agency, concerned with communications built a 300 foot steel tower back of town. It is a most imposing structure but useless. One native said it was no good: can't eat 'em, can't burn 'em, cant make fish wheels out of 'em. We didn't look for the trading post but the Helmricks gave a very dismal report of general relations between people in town, inferring discrimination and feuding.

Today for about a quarter of a mile the shore next to town was a bustle of furious activity on six or seven fish wheels in the final stages of construction. They would soon be towed to the owners' site up, or down stream.

We looked up Andrew Johnson, visited his home and gave him the message from Paul Peters at Melozie. Andrew's wife was very hostile toward us, though I have no idea why. A good sized mission is present in Nulato but we failed to learn of its sponsor. We did visit the graveyard on a high bluff, however.



I took very few pictures and we left Nulato at 10:00 PM and camped on the lower end of a small island a few miles below the mouth of the Nulato river, getting to bed before midnight.

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June 13, Wednesday

Awoke to the sound of wind, no birds on our small island. This is only the second time on our trip we haven't been awakened by the songs of many birds in the woods. The water looked too choppy to set out so we decided to wait the wind out.

Heard a kicker coming down the river at 12:15 PM. It turned out to be Andrew Johnson and some of his children. We happened to be camped at his fish camp. Marie cooked up a big pot of soup for his starved children. One little girl was wearing men's shoepacs. Andrew loaded up some lumber and headed back for Nulato. The children were all sadfaced. Noone said thanks for the soup. I guess they are so used to handouts they rather expect them and so have lost their ability to feel gratitude—if they ever had one.

### (RONDO)

I have a clear memory of that meal. Mom counted heads silently, put her biggest pot on the Coleman stove and threw in a large share of what we were going to use for ourselves, just to care for their needs in that instant. I felt ill at ease, however, in spite of mom's graciousness, like there was somehow something inappropriate about what was happening. In my heart, I knew that my mom and my dad were sharing freely of our limited goods with others that they perceived to be in need. But something was wrong. I sensed it acutely.

There was no preaching, no churchiness, no simpering "Oh, look everyone at how good I'm being", just a simple, "Come on, we'll give you some of what we got." without being asked. I don't really know how mom knew to do it. She was always the stoic, acting according to her beliefs and when these people showed up, she naturally went about doing her deal.

It makes me think today of the graciousness of her own mom many years before on the Ouray Indian Reservation when braves who spoke no English appeared at her door while fuller was freighting with teams to Price, who pantomimed hunger. She took them in straightaway, set them at the kitchen table and rustled up some grub. And kept at it till they were filled to satiety at which time they left. Recall, please, that there were still Indian troubles in the state, so this was no nonchalant simple-minded act of courtesy. It required steel nerves to have a passel of innocent, at-risk kids out there in the yard, to leave them to their own devices, exposed to threat -real or imagined, it didn't matter- while she attended to their hunger. My own mom did it again. Wonderful pattern.

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But I knew that something was wrong about the event so Dick and I wandered away from the camp a short distance and played in a small creek to keep ourselves away from the heavy-duty happenings. Mom and dad said little so they didn't elaborate on whatever their feelings were about the lack of courtesy, the unwarranted demand for food, or whatever the negative things were. But I knew it was a complex experience.

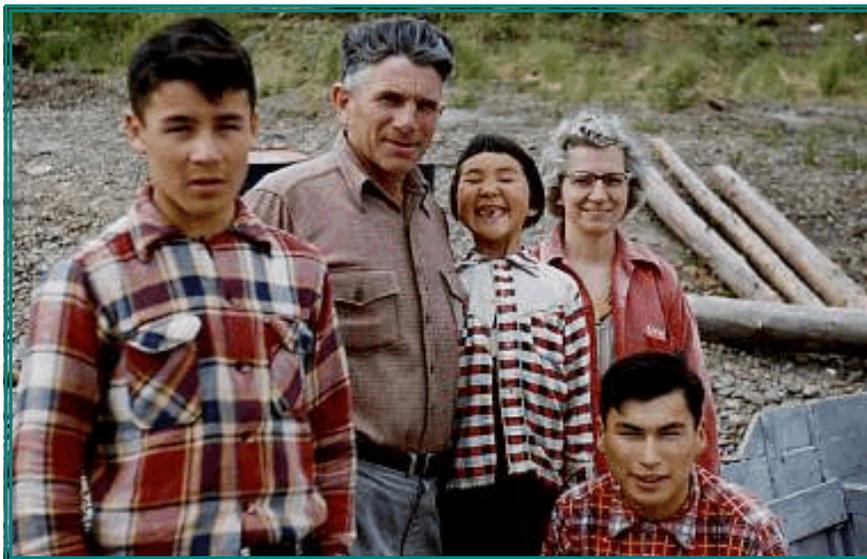
### (ALVIN)

At 4:00 PM we heard another kicker coming down from Nulato. They pulled into shore as soon as they saw us. I suppose they had heard about us in Nulato. They turned out to be a missionary couple from Kaltag, Ed Smogge and his wife and four adopted children. We chatted for awhile and they invited us to stay with them in Kaltag. We gladly accepted so they soon shoved off with our two boys in their boat. Our boys were immensely pleased over the prospect of going in a larger boat with other children. My log comments: "Marie and I then opened a half can of beans, ate them, struck camp, and made off after the others."

### Kaltag and the Pentecostal Smogges

Kaltag is located on a high bank on the outside of a lazy left turn in the river. It has a Catholic church with a steeple high enough to be seen for miles upriver and has a half and half cemetery: half Christian and half pagan. There was a good sized group of natives, and the Smogge children, on hand to welcome us when we tied up so we chatted awhile with some of them and then followed the energetic Smogge children up to their home.

It was a modest, but attractive log cabin with a washing machine outside. Marie's eyes opened wide when she



saw it. Mrs. Smogge had a delicious hot supper waiting for us. It was nice to eat from a table instead of an old log, our knee, or the ground.

The Smogges are Pentecostal missionaries and though they have to compete with the well established Catholic Church and its chapel they feel they have been sent to Kaltag as their cross to bear and are intensely dedicated to their mission. Their adopted children include an Indian boy, an Indian girl, an Eskimo girl, an Aleut boy, all ranging from about 10 to 15 years in age. They have a dog team and make their living fishing and trapping like the Indians, in addition to their proselyting. They have to hold meetings in their home, when they can get Indians to meet with them. The visiting Catholic priest is hostile toward them, which only makes their burden sweeter to bear.

We slept with them overnight and the next day Marie did all of our washing in their gasoline powered machine. In the morning after breakfast we joined them in scripture reading from the bible—the same one we use. We had no bible with us so they gave us a copy. They couldn't imagine us as good Christians being on the river without a bible. I hadn't really thought about it before but felt reassured that someone cared about us and our spiritual needs. They are wonderful people and we loved them.

### (RONDO)

This scripture reading turned out to be embarrassing after all, but not because it was about religion. I didn't mind reading the Bible since it was a central part of the discipline in our home, but the chapter we read one morning was excruciatingly painful. We all sat around the table, four adults and five kids, solemnly taking turns reading half a dozen verses each in order. When it was my turn one morning,



my verses just happened to have several occurrences of a word that might as well have been a four letter Anglo-Saxon word starting with "F". I was fourteen and had was becoming acutely aware of sexuality and was confused about what was proper and what wasn't, what words meant, and so on. You probably could have fried an egg on my forehead when I had to say out loud several times the word "Whoredoms." Tsk, tsk. Such a word to have to read in that genteel company of righteous people. Turns out the Old Testament is actually filled with some pretty racy stuff - read the Song of Solomon and be honest about what it conjures up. Pretty darn sassy stuff that would be judged R-rated, or nearly X-rated if it were in a current magazine. Anyway, we had to buy our meals that way and there was, indeed, a cost on some occasions. The noon and evening meals were free.

The Smogge boys were part of the small scout troop that continued to meet during the summer, which we didn't do in Seward. We attended a meeting with there, half a dozen Indian boys playing roughly. The meeting was in the school house, a tidy building with locked doors and windows. I actually remember that the kids were too rough for me, that I was hurt in their boisterous display and affection for visitors, but didn't show it. That would have been ungracious and I sensed that their hurtfulness was unintentional and innocent.

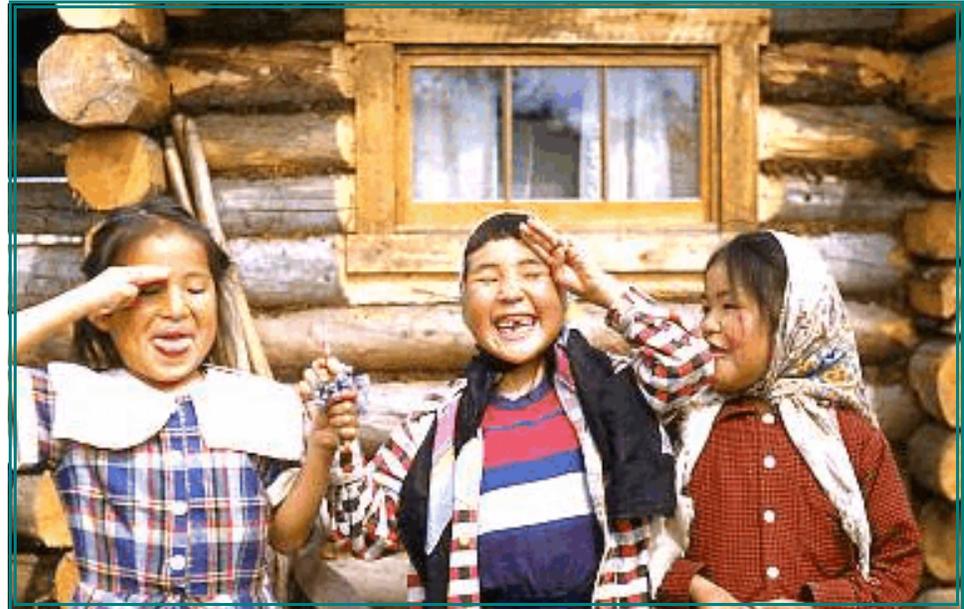
### (ALVIN)

The Smogges told us the white school teacher would like very much to see us. We visited with her and while we were there two Indian women slipped silently into the room and sat down on a bench. I could see they were concealing something behind their backs. Apparently word had gotten around that some crazy white man was buying any old thing he could get. Not all the things this brought out could be called legitimate artifacts and we had to selectively and graciously decline several offerings.

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The Smogges Eskimo and Indian girls brought two puppies for me to photograph.

Their giggling smiles make a marvelous picture as they held their puppies up so I could see their pink toes. The pup's mother was in a den made from an over turned boat cut in half. As I crept up to it the



puppies came out to see what was going on and I got some excellent pictures.

We stayed a second night with the Smogges and the next morning when I was down to the

canoe for something I saw a grayling jump for a fly. I dug out the boys old, beat up steel flyrod and in a few minutes had a beautiful grayling in the canoe.



This created great excitement in

our boys back at the Smogge home and in no time they were down at the canoe pulling in grayling. Catching a fish was as easy as going to market for a quart of milk.

### Old Kaltag Village site

We visited in the village and managed to buy a number of artifacts. We were told that we were in the "new" Kaltag. The old village was a lowland further down the river which was always being flooded in the spring so the village moved (many years ago). They also told us we should stop at the old village as there were many interesting things still there. We assured them we most certainly would.

We bid the Smogges a fond farewell and cast off about noon for a visit to the old Kaltag village site. We found nothing and later learned that a man from Switzerland had cleaned it out the year before for a Swiss museum.

### Kaltag Photo Album

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## CAA Station No. 2 and the Bakers

Further down the river we stopped at a Civil Aeronautics Administration station, part of the system we saw at Birches. The station was on a

high hill and the station master, Mr. Baker, reached it by a small trolley that climbed the hill inside a long, sloping, wooden shed. He took us all up to meet his wife and there I saw for the first time, integrated popcorn, salt and butter in one aluminum foil container. When the

unit is placed on heat the corn pops, mingling with the salt and butter. As it pops the top of the container splits open spilling out the popped corn. I was amazed to see this

clever innovation in such an isolated place. Of course now it is common in Timbuctu.



The Bakers have a regular wild visitor from the woods. A red fox comes to their doorstep every day to be fed. We had a nice visit with them and swooped back down the tunnel on the little trolley to shove off for Anvik 130 miles down river at 3:00 PM.

### Trapper's Cabins

We stopped at a couple of trappers cabins but found nothing of interest except that at the second one we had a choking experience; mosquitoes. The problem with mosquitoes is not so much that they sting you as it is that you can't breathe because they are so thick. Mosquitos apparently hatch about the same time everywhere in interior Alaska. When we began our trip at Nenana the mosquitos were tiny, energetic creatures. Now a couple of weeks later they are fully mature, large and slow flying. When we went ashore to look in one cabin we landed at the edge of a patch of grass. As soon as we started through the grass a million mosquitos rose up like a brown cloud and enveloped us. We couldn't breathe as we had unwisely left our headnets in the canoe. We were a short step away from sheer panic, the frantic horror of choking to death. It is impossible to brush and swat them away from your face as they are as thick as a cloud of smoke. We managed to get back in the canoe and immediately pulled out into the channel where there was some breeze, and got our headnets back on, after which the panic gradually subsided.

I once heard an old timer describe the loss of a horse in the interior where the mosquitos were thick. He brought the horse into his camp in the middle of the day when the bugs were not too bad. Near evening mosquitoes covered the horse in a thick blanket and by ten o'clock the horse fell over. The mosquitoes had sucked all its blood out. It was empty. I know how that horse must have felt.

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## Eagle Slide and Leo Demoski

10:30 PM.

**A**rrived at Leo Demoski's at Eagle Slide for a short visit. I was worried as the motor had begun to complain about its job so we didn't stay long there but shoved off again. The motor trouble increased and at 12:30 I decided we should stop.

## Blackburn and the Thurston Brother

**T**here wasn't time to find a proper camping place on the tip of an island as the river was too big so I simply pulled into the right bank about 15 miles above Blackburn and tied up. We would have to sleep in the canoe so we unloaded most of our baggage (all in head nets) on the bank and I put up the hoops and we stretched the cover and unrolled our sleeping bags. The canoe has a four and a half foot beam so in two sets we could easily sleep side by side. When we were all in our bags and heads covered, I laid down a thick fog of insect killer (can't remember the brand) filling the space inside the cover with a deadly dose. It worked. We slept as well as might be expected and when we awoke later on, to bird songs, I had slat marks all over me from the bottom of the canoe. I hadn't blown up my air mattress. No one else complained. Our bags were all covered with a thick layer of dead mosquitoes. We cradled our bags to concentrate them so they could be dumped over board.

We made short work of reloading our baggage and got out of there as fast as possible, to eat later. Ah, sweet breeze back in the middle of the channel. The natives have been telling us the mosquitoes are extra bad this year, which we readily agree with. I was very worried about the motor. It sounded very bad when we pulled into camp last night. I began to work on it. I took it apart and put it back together five times in as many hours and still it wouldn't run. All during my work we drifted peacefully along. We startled another big moose with its horns well developed in the velvet. We saw many things and heard much more that we miss when the kicker is running. We finally arrived at Blackburn and two Thurston brothers helped me fix the kicker. Left Blackburn at 4:00 PM with the kicker running fine.

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## Holikachuk Villagers at a Fishing Camp

We passed an operating fish wheel and pulled in at an occupied fish camp. There were three tents and a number of people. They are from the village of Holikachuck up the Innoko river. It doesn't have a large enough salmon run to support them so yearly they come down to fish the Yukon. One old couple turned out to be Nick Nicholas and his wife, parents of Gregory Nicholas who we know so well.

Another old man, Peter Rock, had such an interesting face that I asked him if I could take his picture which precipitated a rush all over camp to get everyone, even waking some people up, to get them in the picture. They all considered it a high compliment for me to want to take their pictures. I was delighted. They are about the most friendly Indians we have met so far (I keep saying this).



## Rapids and Johnny King

We visited several more fish camps and finally tied up at Rapids. Here we met a white missionary and his wife and kids. They are in service at Holikachuk and are down here fishing for salmon to feed their dogs. They are living temporarily on a natives house boat until they finish a summer cabin they are building. They seemed like very nice people (even as nice as Indians). I met and visited with Johnny King, the oldest man from the village. I had once planned to go up the Innoko river to see the people at Holikachuk but they are all down here on the Yukon so that plan was abandoned.

The missionary couple brought their dogs with them, which were tied up in typical fashion on the river bank. The din from their welcome was deafening. We pitched out tent near them (the only flat place available) and spent a restless night. Marie later said she was terrified all night long, as were the boys. I subjected them to more fear than they usually use up in a years time.

**(RONDO)**

The fish on the far end of these drying racks were a mixture of salmon and white fish as it evident in this photo.

The slicing of the flesh is to expose more surface area so that drying is faster and



more through than otherwise. Sticks hold the fillets flat to dry better.

(ALVIN)

June 17, Sunday

### Fishwheel and King Salmon

A woke to sunshine and the chorus of Indian nightingales (dogs). Without waiting to see what our missionary family might be doing for Sunday we loaded up and took off. In a few miles we came to a working fishwheel and stopped to have a look at it. The fish wheel is part of a log raft. We tied up to the raft and climbed aboard.

While we were watching the wheel turn a big salmon came up in one of the baskets and according to plan ended up in the box where it flopped around. The boys decided to get hold of it but it was a king and a big one so they had a hard time subduing it.





I took pictures of them and finally of the fish being held by a grinning Marie on one of the raft logs.

We heaved it into the canoe and paddled ashore to have our first salmon feast. It is an unwritten law that a traveler can help himself to a fish from any fish wheel. We invoked it with no feeling of guilt and later when the owner of the wheel came down to have a look we waved greetings to each other as he turned back upriver empty handed. I'm sure he could see what we were doing—cooking his only fish of the morning but it certainly didn't bother him. There will be many fish in his wheel later on. It is too early to catch many salmon but they do catch shoe, whitefish and gooneys (I never found out what they were).



The fish was delicious and certainly fresh. We washed and I shaved after we ate. It was a beautiful day with the fresh green trees, the colorful bluffs, the marvelous clouds in the sky, what a trip! (my log exults). We stopped at another deserted fish camp and again nearly choked on mosquitoes. We hurried and got back in the canoe and out in the river. We sprayed and swatted, beat and thrashed around and finally got rid of the wretched things.

**(RONDO)**

At each fish wheel that had salmon in the bin, we saw something that bothered us. Large black ravens would fly down and sit on the fish. They first peck out the eyes which wasn't a real problem, but they'd end up attacking the flesh of the back as well. We thought that was a problem.

Dad, thinking he was enlightening these people to a chronic problem that they had obviously lived with forever, suggested in one of the villages that this problem could be remedied. He explained how a cover could be constructed over the bins that would allow the fish to fall but keep the ravens out. Sounded reasonable to me.

Well, the idea didn't go over too hot. The explanation wasn't easy to understand but when it was understood, we were glad that we hadn't taken pot shots at the birds. The reason the Indians did not take steps to prevent the ravens from eating the salmon was that they believed that the ravens were reincarnations of their ancestors. After we understood that, we didn't make the suggestion again.

Rapids Photo Album

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Rapids page 1

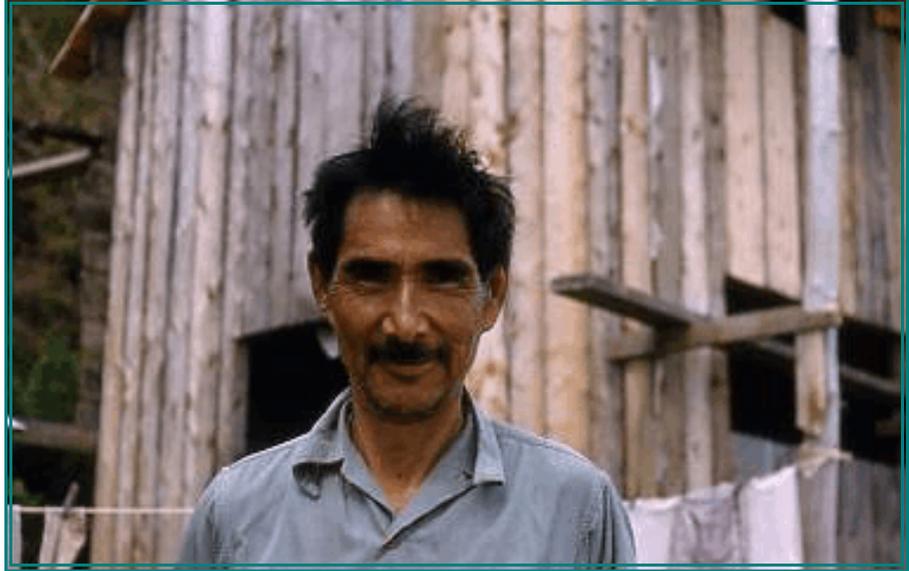
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Rapids page 2

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## Johnny Deacon's Sawmill

Late in the afternoon we pulled in at the operations of the most unusual Indian we met on our entire trip. Johnny Deacon's fish camp and sawmill. Johnny is an enterprising man. He is living in a log cabin but has a two story house all framed in, made from lumber produced by his sawmill. I asked him if I could take pictures and in



return he asked if he could take a picture of us. I was dumbfounded when he came out of his cabin with a Polaroid camera, one of the first I've seen.

His wife does the best willow root weaving we've seen along the rivers. Unfortunately she had none finished ready for sale but I photographed her holding a nearly completed one to show her style in design. (*Ed. We bought it and it's in my house.*)

We left Johnny Deacon's enterprise with a new respect for the cleverness and ingenuity of one very isolated Indian. How and where does he get his logs to saw, and who helps him? All we saw was Johnny and his wife and some children. How did he raise



enough money to buy sawmill equipment when fishing along the river provides little more than a livelihood for other Indians? He is certainly endowed with an inner fire of ambition and ability not common in his fellow tribesmen. And by what means did he get a Polaroid camera? He is a most amazing human. We visited awhile then shoved off for Anvik. With the exception of Ruby, all villages are on the right bank of the river. This is explained by Hudson Stuck (1925) as being due to the rotation of the earth, though I doubt this explanation is a scientific one.

Johnny Deacon Photo Album

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## Anvik and Billy Williams

Some of the first people we met at Anvik were two whites: Dr. Osgood, an ethnologist from Yale University, and his daughter. I showed him the adz we got in Tanana but it only mystified him. He could give us no information about it. I told him and his daughter we were interested in buying native crafts.

She went with me to meet Billy Williams, the man who made the model fish trap we have. (*Ed.*

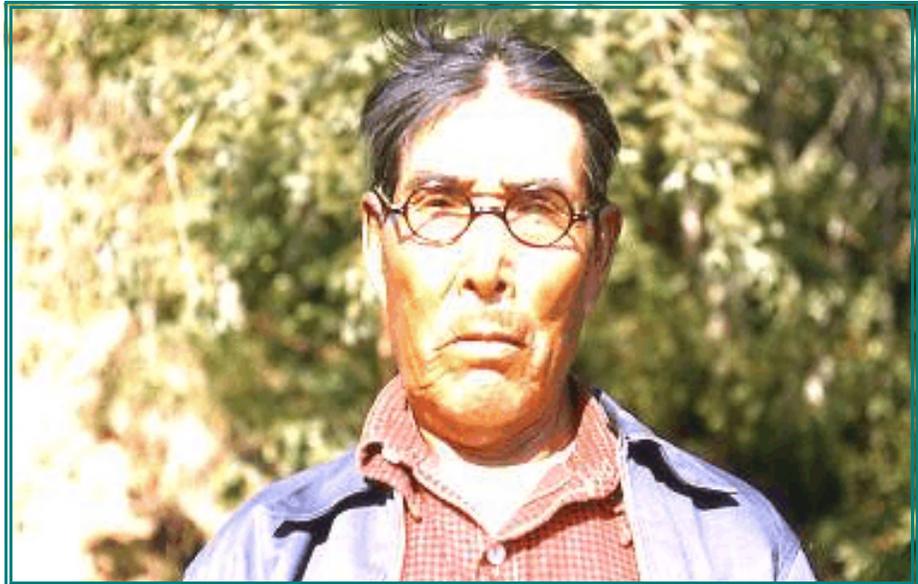
*It's in my house*)

He had a collection of models of various things he had made and was intent on selling them to me.

I was used to the quality of items made by natives at the Seward

Sanatarium and found his models too crude for my taste. He was so

determined to sell and I equally determined not to buy that the Osgood girl became embarrassed and left. I later bought some old artifacts from other people. Nothing else was of any particular interest to us so we shoved off at 7:00 PM for our final destination. Holy Cross.



## Anvik Photo Album

Dad photos of the drying fish were the finest he took on the river..

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## Paradise

A tantalizing spot on the map, lying on the far right bank of the river was "Paradise". The river was now like a broad sea with only thin green lines defining each bank. Paradise was so far away and Holy Cross so near I couldn't divert our course at this late stage. We were like an arrow falling to earth. Our course was ordained; Paradise would have to wait.

## Holy Cross

When Holy Cross came in sight I pulled over to the right bank and stirred everyone out of the canoe for an "end of the expedition" picture. Judging from the expression on the face of one of the crew it was a most unnecessary chore. We tied up at the Holy Cross landing at the head of a short slough at 12:00 midnight and camped there.



My first errand after breakfast was to find out when the mail plane would come in on its tri-weekly schedule. I learned it would be at noon, next plane in two days. This precipitated a near panic as we stumbled around trying to dispose of almost everything and be on the float by noon.

I went to the trader, a Mr. Turner, and simply said, "I'm Jim Jensen, my family and I just came down from Nenana in a freight canoe."

"How much do you want?" Mr. Turner said without waiting for my recitation of statistics on the canoe, equipment and motor.

"\$175.", I said and he counted it out.

"Just leave it at the landing in the slough", he said, and that was it. No, "How big is the canoe, what is it made of, what kind of shape is it in, what kind and

size of motor and how old is it, what kind of gear--oars, life jackets, gas tank, etc.", not a single question. He knew that if we came down from Nenana, that whatever it was we came in was worth at least \$175. I could have gotten twice that amount but I wanted to dispose of it as quick as possible, no haggling. \$175.00 did the trick. Now it was back to the landing on a trot.

Marie knew a girl from a Holy Cross family. She looked them up and donated various foul weather gear items—slickers, jackets, etc, to them. We took our sleeping bags, a .22 rifle, and a small two burner Coleman stove with us, leaving all else for Mr. Turner in the canoe. It was now 11:30 and time to make a run for the plane float. We didn't even kiss the good old canoe goodbye.

The plane was on time, a Grumman Goose float plane.

### (RONDO)

No, I don't think it was a Grumman Goose. The Grumman Goose has two engines. My memory is that it was a Norseman. But comparing the shape of the tail and horizontal stabilizer of the preceding plane with that of this Norseman, I am not sure they are the same. In any event, it was a pontoon plane. I'd never been in one. When the thing took off and landed, the pontoon created high hard rooster tails of water that beat loudly on the fuselage. It was like being inside of a bass drum while someone was trying to pound in the heads.







(ALVIN)

### McGrath and the Forest Fire

**H**oly Cross was soon tilting away into oblivion as we headed for McGrath on the Kuskokwim River.



Our route took us over a forest fire in the muskeg. The air was like a downhill ski course full of bumps and dips. I soon asked Marie for the Dramamine and gulped down two. The flight was rather long and I went to sleep before it ended.



**(RONDO)**

I was terrified on that ride. We took off in Holy Cross and went back to Anvik where we landed, going through that frightening drum-beat on the tin fuselage, fearing it would rupture. Then we took off in Anvik and flew over that forest fire that was on a low mountain range. As we flew directly over the fire that covered a wide expanse, there were thermals and down drafts that scared the crap out of me. We'd suddenly plunge what seemed like a mile before the plane stabilized and resumed level flight. Then we'd as suddenly rise quickly upward another mile, finally stabilizing. Actually, the changes in altitude were probably something more like 500 feet but they felt like eternity. And I was terrified. This happened for a long time, making me sick. But the fear was a greater problem than the airsickness. Dramamine didn't take it away. I couldn't wait to land in McGrath, even though it included another nerve-wracking thundering stop.

**(ALVIN)**

Marie woke me up to get a picture of the braided stream channels of the Kuskokwim, shrouded in smoke from the forest fire. I ran out of film and, groggy as I was, I reloaded the camera. We finally landed down on a slough at McGrath, next to the DC 3 landing strip. We had a two hour layover waiting for a DC 3 to take us to Anchorage so we wandered around the main drag.



It wasn't much but there was a log cabin library (closed) so the village wasn't without all conveniences of civilization. Mom's holding her share of the only belongings we salvaged from the ol' canoe before heading out of Alaska for good.



Figure 608

The DC 3 taxied up and we climbed on with several other passengers, including three sled dogs. The DC 3 was reassuringly more stable than the Grumman Goose (*sic*). We'd carrying on board all we possessed at that point, the stuff we were going to live with on our trip out to Montana.



The pilot said Mt McKinley was cloud free—the first time for two weeks so he flew off course nearer to it. I kept my camera going getting some excellent shots of the peaks and glaciers thirty and forty miles long. It certainly was a chance of a lifetime. I would never see the mountain again. As it faded in the distance I realized I had taken about forty slides. Apprehensively I took another shot and watched the spool monitor. It didn't turn.

I opened the camera back and the film had been improperly installed when I was groggy with Dramamine. It wasn't passing through to the take-up reel. I had nothing. I was numb with disappointment. Few people have the chance I missed. I felt like someone who had ten pounds of gold tossed to them only to let it slip through their hands into the river.

[McGrath Photo Album](#)

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## Benediction

(The following paragraph was originally placed at the end of the Anvik section. But the beauty of his language and images, and the poignant emotions reveal that it was Dad's carefully-constructed benediction on our Tanana-Yukon River trip. He just didn't know where to put it.)

The five hour run from Anvik down to Holy Cross was a memorable one. I don't think it was much of an emotional experience for the rest of my crew but I was enthralled. The sun shone from the northeast and looking back as I sat at the tiller, the ripples in our vee-shaped wake were like corrugated liquid copper which we seemed to be dragging down river.

My great adventure was near its end. It had been an experience of a lifetime, one I would not be able to repeat. The canoe and the ages of its occupants are locked into a fleeting time frame of memory as the miles of liquid copper will forever follow us in memory. No matter how exciting the prospects for the future, nothing is as sweet as memory.