

2014-07

Elizabeth Baker

April 1, 2014

Fairbanks, Alaska

Leslie McCartney, Interviewer

Robyn Russell, co-interviewer

Leslie McCartney thanks Elizabeth Baker for donating her collection of tapes of interviews with Alaska missionaries. Elizabeth Baker talks about her personal background. She was born in 1943 in Seattle, Washington. She talked about the small Assemblies of God bible college where her parents met in the late 30s and early 40s. At that time it was called the Northwest Bible Institute. They were trying to start a little church in the Boeing area of south Seattle. They actually lived above a bar and held services in the cleaned up bar. Her parents are Arvin W. Glandon and Luana Mary Hurd Glandon. She grew up on Whidbey Island, Washington. Her dad's family had moved from Colorado. He had always been involved with the church. Her father was a bible teacher. Besides small churches they also went to Texas for six years in 1947-54 during her grade school years. He taught bible school classes. He had known someone in Texas and he was invited down to Texas. In 1951 he and another family drove from Texas to Alaska. They ended up in Seward and got jobs for the summer. They returned to Texas and came back to Alaska in 1953. They used to have slide shows of their trips to Alaska. John C. who was a student at the time came to one of the shows. He and his wife eventually moved to Alaska to be missionaries and he still lives in Wasilla.

Elizabeth said there were many students that eventually came to Alaska. Ruth Anderson was one of the students who came up to Alaska. She started a small church in Talkeetna and was a teacher in Alaska. Stop in the recording. On one of the return trips to Alaska Ken and Velma Garrison were with them. They were also students in Northwestern. Elizabeth and her sister stayed in the northwest with relatives while her parents were on the Alaska trips. She thought Ken Garrison was in politics at one time. He was the manager of the Fort Yukon Northern Commercial Company store. At one point her parents were teachers in Fort Yukon. The Kovloskies were the pastors of the Assembly of God Church in Fort Yukon. Ken and Ethel Andrus spent their whole life in Alaska pastoring small churches and was a pilot. They were also in Fort Yukon at that time.

Elizabeth said pastors had other jobs on the side. Some were subsistence hunters and fishers.

After six years in Texas her father was invited to teach at Northwest Bible Institute. He taught there for three years. One of her mother's college friends, Lillian, married Alvin Capener. They ended up spending their lives in Alaska. The Capeners were in Alaska before 1957. Alvin Capener built churches in Nome, Pt. Hope, Barrow, Wainwright and Kaktovik. At this time Elizabeth's family was still in Seattle. The Capener's suggested they come to Barrow and teach. They applied to Juneau for a job and one was offered to them. Elizabeth was going into ninth grade at that time and her sister, Gwendolyn, was going into fifth

grade. They came to Barrow. Since there wasn't a high school in Barrow at that time Elizabeth took correspondence school through the University of Nebraska. They stayed there for two years.

She said they loved living there. The Inuit were very friendly. She enjoyed getting dog sled rides. She describes using ice for their water source. She talked about the disposal of honey bucket contents.

The Capeners were living in Barrow at the same time. They left the following summer. Their children were Wragner and Howard. Paul and Margery Bills came in after the Capeners left. The Bills pastored in Beaver and North Pole. They adopted two little Inuit girls. Paul Bills wrote a book. He is buried in Barrow. She talked about Paul Patkotuk. Agnes Rodley eventually wrote "Alone in my kayak." Paul Patkotuk had been abandoned during starvation times as a baby and was rescued. When they were there in 1957-58 there was an evangelist that came to town, Oscar and Gladys Butterfield. After church was over they would have testimony times. They recorded the testimonies with reel-to-reel recorders. The testimonies were then sent to the other villages. At that time some of Paul Patkotuk's children were spiritually saved. There was also a Presbyterian Church in Barrow. There was also a small Catholic Church. The Wartes and John Chambers were also there in Barrow. John Chambers encouraged her father to go to Princeton Seminary. Elizabeth said she worked by mopping floors at the Hopson Grill.

Ned Sungniuk, who was a dog sled mail carrier, was the first Native to be ordained an Assembly of God preacher. He pastored for some years at Pt. Hope, Wainwright and Kaktovik.

At this time her father decided to go for more training. He wanted to have Natives teaching the bible. Her parents went to Fort Yukon with her sister. She went to Fairbanks and stayed with the pastor's family and attended school. She talked about where the old Assembly of Church was located. The building was moved to Nenana in 1963. It was eventually torn down. She met her husband in that church. She lived with B.P. Wilson who was also a pilot. He was the overseer of the missionaries in the small villages. She met the people coming and going from their assignments. She enjoyed her life in Fairbanks. She walked from Third Avenue to Lathrop High School. She talked about walking in the cold temperatures. The missionaries would come into town frequently. Her host family was very hospitable to everyone. The Wilsons later built a house in the Aurora subdivision. They still had a lot of visitors. She learned a lot of things from Ruby Wilson.

The next year her father went to Princeton and became a teaching fellow. He was always taking classes. Elizabeth said she graduated from high school in Trenton, New Jersey. It was also a good year for her. She loved moving from place to place. She was a little behind in her schooling, but caught up in New Jersey. Her sister lived in Fort Yukon and it had an effect on her. Her parents returned to Fort Yukon. Elizabeth said she started at college at Northwest Bible College. Today it is a university in Kirkland, Washington. Her father wanted to teach the Natives systematic Bible study. Her father was the pastor of the church in Fort Yukon. Her sister attended school in Fort Yukon. Her father tried out his ideas for in-depth Bible study. In 1962 there was a conference of the Assembly of God in Fairbanks. Her father was authorized to start his itinerate school. He also went to Stevens Village to teach.

Elizabeth traveled with Don and Jen Nelson. They planned vacation Bible school in the villages. They held school in Fort Yukon, Beaver, Chalkyitsik, Stevens Village and Venetie. They had singing at night.

She talked about Jen feeding them. The Nelsons were with another organization. Don was a prisoner of war during WWII. He wrote the book "Shadows on the Arctic snow." His life had been changed by God. He was called to Alaska and served first at Stevens Village.

Her folks were still teaching at Fort Yukon. They had a trailer in Fairbanks. Elizabeth transferred to the University of Alaska. Her sister was living in Fairbanks and attending school. Don and Jen Nelson started a radio station in North Pole.

Elizabeth got married in September 1964. Since she had attended a Bible school some of her credits did not transfer so she was a year behind.

Her parents at this time were itinerate teachers. They spent time in Barrow, Pt. Hope, Nome, Wainwright, Kaktovik, Unalaska, Minto and Angoon. When her parents were traveling village to village they had a clergy fare from Wien Airlines. Ken Andrus would take them some places. They also had to go to churches in the lower forty eight and tell people about their work in Alaska to raise support. At one of the churches they invited one of the pastors to come to Alaska. This was Roland and Iola Peretti. They served in Angoon and experienced the benefit of the Far North Bible School. They later came to North Pole and eventually Roland Peretti became the superintendent of all the pastors. Her father ran his itinerate school and Wien cut off the clergy discount. At the same time her father was offered a teaching position at the Assemblies of God college in Lakeland, Florida. Her parents moved to Florida and stayed there for nine years. Ken Andrus started a resident bible school in Bethel. That school eventually moved to Anchorage. It was called the Far North Bible College. Peretti wanted to revive the itinerate school. It was called the Village Bible Training Circuit. The teachers David and Debbie Wilson they started the program. They took the plans from her father and brought it into the computer age. She talked about the use of flannel graphs and visqueen. Her mother would illustrate the stories on visqueen. David and Debbie Wilson, Henry and Yvonne Ryberg, and Arliss and Bea Roberts are traveling teachers in the program. The resident school operated for a while. After retirement in Florida her father worked at the residence school. The resident school eventually stopped. Another Inuit who became a pastor was Greg Tagarook. His wife is Dorcas Tagarook. She talked about going to general counsels in the lower forty eight with her father.

Her father didn't establish churches. Elizabeth said people were called to build churches in certain places. Elizabeth said his father was successful in getting Native people involved in the church. She said there were strong Christians in the villages. She talked about a ministry that has traveled on the Yukon.

She talked about her oral history collection. She took a course from Dr. Schneider. Her father was also interested in the project. There was a state convention in Kenai and she got a number of interviews there. She said there were a lot of interconnected people in Alaska involved with the Assembly of God.

Elizabeth said the very first Assemblies of God missionaries came to the southeast in 1917. They were Charles and Personius. They were in Juneau. Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Johnson invited children to come to their home. One of the first children was Lillian Capener. Her life was changed by the church. She ended up on St. Paul Island with her husband. She talked about interviewing Lillian Capener. Eddie Hughes and his

brothers and sisters came into the Children's Home. Eddie's life changed in the home. He married the Johnson's daughter and became a pastor.

Elizabeth said her husband's family came to Alaska in 1947. Her husband's father worked for the FAA and worked in several villages. Her husband joined the National Guard. She graduated and started teaching at Hunter School. She taught there for three years and quit after her son was born. Ted then graduated and taught at Ryan for 27 years. They also had a daughter. She substitute taught after her children were in school. During the summer her husband worked in construction.

She talked about the flood in Fairbanks. They were living in a trailer on Airport and they had two feet of water. She talked about feeling the 1964 earthquake.

Leslie asked her about memories of UAF. Elizabeth said she was remembering the old library. She remembers holding the hands under the table. She worked in the cafeteria and made sack lunches for the students. She lost her husband's class ring in one of the lunches. Her first date with her husband was at a bowling alley. She talked about her first official date. She talked about some of her teachers, Dr. Skarland, Elaine Jacobs, and Jane Williams. Red Williams was her English teacher at Lathrop. Her social life was at the church. Anna Lee Cusart's grandparents were the first missionaries that came to Alaska. Her parents were lifelong pastors. Anna Lee wrote a fiction book. She interviewed Anna Lee's parents for her oral history project, too.