

Interview of Arliss Sturgulewski by Mike Dunham
Transcript

Oral History 2016-18-09

(Summit Day Media No. AA485601) Begins

Time Code [01:00:30:00]

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Bob Curtis-Johnson: Ok, we're rolling

Arliss Sturgulewski: In all seriousness, we are now about to begin.

Mike Dunham: Yeah, ok. Please give me your name.

AS: Arliss Sturgulewski.

MD: We're recording you today, uh, to record your memories of Anchorage, and this tape will be for public use, sometime in the future. Nothing gets used without- it remains confidential until you've given permission. And, uh, and you're free to discontinue the interview at any time. Clear on all of that?

AS: Thank you, I understand.

MD: Well in that case we'll proceed.

AS: Alright.

[01:01:09:00]

[00:00:39]

MD: Tell me where you were born and when.

AS: A long time ago. As a matter of fact 85 years and born in a very small farming community in northwestern Washington. Um, sometimes I say I'm from Ferndale, sometimes I say I'm from Pleasant Valley, sometimes from Blaine. (laughs) But it's the same, same place in Washington.

MD: What, what did your parents do?

AS: Well my dad was a logger, um, started out in the early 30's, in, uh, around Old Darington, uh, Washington, which is out of Arlington/Everett area, and, uh, actually started out with horses in the woods. And then of course went on and I had a twin brother that, uh, really, uh, didn't want to be in the logging business, that was a dying business in many cases, and so bought a firm that does heavy hauling in that same- the five northwestern states, so. The family has been there for a lot of years.

MD: What was your brother's name?

AS: Oh twin brother-

MD: Your twin brother.

AS: -was Art, it was Art and Arliss. Arthur and Arliss.

MD: What, um, so, it- what was your education like?

AS: Well you know that was a, a big uh, a big issue. My mother, way ahead of her time, had been um, a teacher. She'd gone to what they called 'Normal School.' That was two years of, of university. She died when I was very young, but I so admired her. I had a dad who said he would help the boys but not me, in terms of a higher education. So I worked my way through the University of Washington before I knew that there were such things such as possibly grants or loans. And it was a struggle, but I was really proud of myself that I had, uh, gone on and gotten an education. My brothers went immediately into the, into the family business so they didn't go on with getting a higher education.

MD: What is your degree in?

AS: Oh, economics and business. I-

MD: When did you get it?

[01:03:51:00]

[00:03:21]

AS: At the University of Washington.

MD: When?

AS: Oh. (laughs)

MD: The year you graduated?

AS: The year I graduated: 1949, a long time ago.

MD: What brought you to Alaska?

AS: Well it's very simple or complex. I had pioneer family in, uh, both Juneau, and then a cousin here who was head of the Division of Aviation. And they used to come and visit us and they used to seemed such an interesting crew. So I was, after the university, I went to work for, um, a cosmetics firm in Seattle, and was doing bookkeeping and so on for them. But they were sold to an eastern firm, and here I was, young woman, a few years out of college, had a- well not very much money in the bank but a little bit, and I answered an ad in the, in the paper, and ended up

coming with these people I didn't know who were coming to Alaska to homestead and they were going down to the Kenai peninsula. And anyhow, we came up, it took us ten days I think to come up that not-too-old highway at that point, the Al-Can, and that was quite an adventure in itself. Came here, uh, planned to stay for a couple weeks and then go back home and find a new job, and fell in love with the place and I just stayed.

MD: What year did you drive that Highway?

AS: Well that was in 1952, so been here now unto 60 years now.

MD: And what was your first job?

AS: Well at the time that I came, it was just at the beginning of the Korean War. And Anchorage, among other things, and I could tell you a lot about early Anchorage, but among other things, it's a place where the military has always had a very, uh, major part, and I think a lot of people that live here now don't understand just how important the military was and is to this community. And so, with the buildup of the war there were all kinds of jobs, particularly in, uh, oh, working for banks, working for all kinds of, uh, institutions that were growing because of, of the, the war years. And so I got a job with a couple of guys who were running a bus station, and they were also had what they called the Tops Drive-In on 4th Avenue, and I kept the books, and it was very easy, as I say, to get a job. So, uh, and the particular skills I had fit very much into what was needed in the community. So it was a good relationship.

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MD: Where did the bus go?

AS: Uh, they were kind of a terminal. It was located on 4th Avenue, so they didn't drive the buses but they were there to.

MD: And what were your quarters like when you, when you settled into Anchorage? Where did you live?

AS: When I came I first stayed with my, uh, cousin Hermie, and he's gone as is his dear wife. But they had, um, two little boys and accommodated me, but I soon saw that you could wear out ones' welcome (laughs) rather quickly, coming into a family that filled the house. It was out on, um, Fireweed Lane, and that was way out of town in 1952. So I stayed with them for a short time and then found, uh, housing down closer to downtown, so. 'Cause at first I didn't have a car and I walked everywhere, and. But it was a different community; I think we had around 30,000 people and what do we have now? Close to, uh, 300,000? There's been a little bit of growing and a few more roads. There was just one road leading into Anchorage and that was,

uh, 4th Avenue, and my impressions of the town were- it's a very different place, let's just put it that way.

MD: What were your impressions when you saw the place?

AS: Well I came from, um, a background that we had trees-I mean, real trees, lots of fir trees and big trees. And I saw these swamp spruce and that was (laughs) a real disappointment, like, this is a forest? And so there was that, and no paved roads, just 4th Avenue. And as I recall it had more bars than other businesses. And, uh, a very small town feel to it. We didn't have the Hillside development and the development to the South that we've had. But it was such, I was fascinated- I came in April- I was fascinated by the long daylight hours and there were a lot of young couples, young people like myself, that were here that were, um, I guess later-day adventurers, that we didn't adventure very far, I mean we came to a, to a city. But it was such a vibrant place to be, and I can remember still how impressed I was over the long daylight hours. And that just, for years was one of the wonderful things about it, and I still feel that way. When I get up in the middle of the night and it's bright outside and I think, "oh, isn't this a grand place?"

MD: So, how did you become interested in politics?

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AS: I don't know that you become interested in politics as a, as a one thing. I, I was very lucky when I came. My husband was with the Corps of Engineers, and he traveled throughout Alaska working on the White Alice and DEW Line, uh, Projects. And that meant that he was, uh, gone a great deal. We had a son, just one son. I was a stay at home mom, and I was invited, I believe it was, um, in 1959, after I'd been here for about 7 years, met my husband, you know, established a family and so on. And I was asked to come to a League of Women Voters meeting. And the League was very vibrant in those days. Picture if you can the small city surrounded by what turned out to be the greater Anchorage City Borough, which for some things included the city. And there was so much to be done. It was a great time for the, for the League. We were involved in how the school district was set up, we were involved in the issues of bringing together the city and the borough; and I threw myself into that because I'd always been used to working, was now at home, uh, since my son was born, and it was just a natural thing to get involved in the community. And there was lots of stuff to do, so, uh, that's what happened to me. Uh, at a certain point, Mayor Sullivan spotted me and I went on the Planning and Zoning Commission, 'cause I was always a hard worker, and, uh, just became involved in one thing after another. So it wasn't so much 'how did you become a politician. I certainly eased into it doing work in the community that I loved.

MD: When did-

BCJ: Would you pause for just a second?

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BCJ: Now we're rolling for real.

MD: Ok.

AS: Ok.

MD: K. Um, what was your name before you married?

AS: I was, uh, Arliss Wright. And, hmm.

MD: When did you meet your husband?

AS: Oh, I met Sturge- everybody called Bernard Sturgulewski Jr. 'Sturge', um, through my cousin Hermie Porter. I'd been staying with, uh, with them. And I can still remember him, uh, he was in the National Guard and he had this lovely blue, uh, scarf, and was dressed in uniform, and I thought he was quite the most charming man I had met in a long time, so I met him very early in my stay here in, in Alaska.

MD: And what year did you marry?

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AS: Ah, we married in 1953. And, uh, there was, 'y'know, a lot of dating, there were lots of young single men, and, uh, wonderful time for friendship. We had, um, a lot of fun. It was, its a good time.

MD: How did- what was your entertainment like, what did you do for entertainment?

AS: Well, there was lots of entertainment. We had lots and lots of military, it was the build up again for the, uh, for the war. So there were nightclubs that stayed open, you know, twenty-four hours a day. But that wasn't, uh, you go out to dinner, that was about the amount of excitement. The bar scene didn't, um, didn't really have it. So, um, we did a lot in terms of, there was a lot of getting out and picnics into open places, and, um, entertaining in the, in the different homes. If somebody had a home they could be very sure they were going to get plenty of company. And, you know, you had barbecues and just getting together. I guess we all liked to talk! And we

liked to stay up with the beautiful long hours that we had in, in summer. And, um, little different in the, in the wintertime.

MD: In 1952, was there television yet in Anchorage?

AS: Yes, but not very extensive.

MD: The, um, if, if you were downtown and coming South, more or less in this direction, what kind of, what kind of buildings, what kind of structure or community did we have?

AS: Well, you know, Anchorage-

MD: Like Fireweed lane, for instance.

[01:16:40:00]

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AS: Yeah. Fireweed Lane was out of town. And, uh, we didn't have the, the bus systems. We didn't have the road system completed that we did. So it really, really was very much of a developing area. And we were starting to get the, uh, some of the commercial development down south. But, you know, just think of it without most of the shopping centers, without the south part of town developed, the hillside undeveloped. And again, in '52, that one road that was paved, and that was 4th Avenue, so, uh, it was a small town, it was a frontier town. Um, had lots of bars, some beginning businesses, and the military. The military, um, you just can't overstate how important it was to the community and to the life of the community. Uh, we heard about the military, they were more visible in our town, they were our parades...and we in Anchorage have always benefitted from the fact of our- we're on that natural air route. We don't realize it, but I think we have the second busiest airport in the, in the world, in terms of-
(phone ringing)

AS: Well that takes care of that, doesn't it. I don't have to get it, but.

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BCJ: And you're ready to roll. We're rolling.

MD: Were you on a party line with the telephones?

AS: (laughs) As a matter of fact, we were on a party lines with the telephones. Uh, back in those days. And, uh, you know, I think I'm of a generation that doesn't, uh, I'm not linked to a cell phone as tightly as some, lets put it that way, but its still- it amuses me to this day to see three or four friends together and everybody's (laughs) busy with their, their own cell phone and their own conversation. When people are out and should be enjoying one another. So its kind of a different world than, than I grew up. It was much simpler.

MD: How many people were on the party line?

AS: Oh, I don't recall.

MD: Yeah.

AS: Not many, as I recall.

[01:19:19:00]

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MD: So, and you and Sturge moved to this house in the year of the earthquake? Can you tell me about that?

AS: Well, uh, in the year of the earthquake- we had had plans to build. And we- uh. (phone beeping) Sorry.

MD: That wasn't a problem back then either.

AS: Yeah.

MD: You hung it up, it was hung up. (laughs)

AS: Yeah. Uh-

MD: Back to the earthquake.

AS: Back. You know, Sturge and I had plans to build our home We had gone so far as to buy three pieces of property. One on a bluff out in the, uh, Forest Park or Turnagain area, which suffered some damage in the earthquake, by the way. And, uh, then a couple of lots in -(phone beeps) (laughs).

MD: I'll turn mine off. Couple of-

AS: And we had a couple of lots in, uh, College Village. And decided we would build here. And I've been very grateful, uh, to be in my present home. But the year that we built happened to be the year of the earthquake, and since we were acting as our own builders- we had certainly some work done, we had a lot of work that we did ourselves- it was a hectic thing. My, uh- Sturge was on what they called the Denali Residency. Located downtown. And it was the headquarters for a lot of government assistance, rebuilding after the earthquake. And so we had the, um, house that we were building. And I can (laughs) remember going to, uh, job sites to get workers that had committed to come to our place to do some work, literally begging them off of that job to come over and do some work for us. It was an incredible scene, just, uh, you know, people had streamed in to help with the reconstruction. There was building, there were projects going on all over town, it was one of, uh, a lot of dynamic action. And yet we were able to move in to our home here in late fall. And such a blessing, we were close to schools and church and midtown and all things. So its been a wonderful, wonderful home.

MD: What were you doing when the earthquake hit?

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AS: Well, as a matter of fact we lived in a subdivision on the east side of town, about two miles from my present home. And when the earthquake hit, my son was playing with good friends who, um, our back lot lines were adjacent. And so he was not with me. And I remember running, and the ground was literally going up and down, and heaving, and I was terrified what I would find. And it turned out that, um, later he was to become Fire Chief Bennett, but good friends of mine where my son was- Gene had- Mr. Bennett- and Mrs. Bennett, had made it a game. And they had all of the kids sitting around the perimeter of the house, 'cause they had a large family. Um, you know, and the, the kids thought it was great. They wanted to do it again. (laughs) So they were fine. Our home was, um, was really, was as I say, a pretty small frame-built home. Very little damage. We had some cracks in the driveway and so on. So we did very well. And we didn't get the feeling, the enormity of what had happened until later that evening, when people we knew from downtown kind of staggered into our house. They had been, uh, in an area where they lost just about everything. And they were looking for a safe haven. And then it- you know, it was a very confused, uh, time. And I must say that we escaped the, uh, some of the horrors that a lot of families went through. When I saw the Turnagain area, certain areas of 2nd Avenue slide area, and so on, it was almost impossible to believe. So. We came, came out of it pretty well, but boy (laughs) it had- Anchorage was up, up, and away after that, you know. There was tremendous change took place.

MD: Was it, um, perhaps been official that so much of 4th Avenue was cleared for the present construction?

AS: Oh, I, you know I guess you could say that. But a lot of people lost a lot in that, and, uh, you know, there was, uh, certainly some lives were lost, and there were a lot of sad stories that, uh, that came as a result of that, so, uh. And yet, the feeling of vibrancy and growth that came after that tragedy was really pretty amazing to go through. Interesting times.

MD: Tell me about how you became involved with politics.

AS: Well, one thing leads to another. (laughs) The, uh, certainly planning and zoning had started me. Then I, I ran for and was elected as an area wide commissioner on the charter commission. We brought these two kind of warring local governments- I think at one time they had like seventeen lawsuits going between the city and the borough area. And, uh, then serving on the assembly. Um, seeing an opportunity to go on and, and serve in the state senate, which I did for fourteen years. And except for one office that I ran for, I've always been very well accepted by the public. And, uh, when I did run for governor, and I ran twice, in '96 and '90, I of course did not get that. But I had very easy elections to the assembly, to the charter commission, and certainly for my terms in the, uh, state legislature and the state senate.

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MD: What were your years on the Assembly?

AS: Um, '76 to '78, then I ran, I was a short timer. Uh, ran for the, um, state, for the state senate. And, um, was elected in '78 and served through '92.

MD: The, um, what were the issues you were dealing with, with Anchorage in 1970, '76 there? Its shortly after the unification I guess.

AS: Yeah. Um. Hmm. You know, there was a lot in, in putting the two governments together, I think. To make the- I've always been interested in how stuff works, and there were conflicts along the, the way, but, uh, I don't see that Anchorage had, uh, we had planning, we had zoning, we had a pretty good sense of where the community was going. Um, there were issues that didn't get easily resolved. I remember, its, its kind of a kick today to see us debating over cutting through the campuses between APU and the University of Alaska Anchorage. That was an issue for years, where that road should be. And then it kind of went away, and things happened, and now its back on the burner again. And so there were some of those, um, issues that the community had. But we've been so lucky in that we're a transportation hub, the military's so important, that we've had a future. And I think people always saw that. So even though you might have your battles, you still had a bigger picture in mind of, of what this community could be. And I know through the, the years of, uh, seeing the rural development, it was a big issue in statehood that there was no structure there. And we had to, one of the early things I did in the legislature was work on those issues of, of structure. Now Anchorage didn't have

that. We had the people coming through our airport, our airport was, uh, started I believe in 1951, so that was there and was, you know, serving all of Alaska as well as the, uh, routes to Europe and to, uh, to Asia. So we, we had a lot of the structures here, and didn't have the problems, I think, that many rural areas and outlying areas of, of Anchorage had.

MD: The- you mentioned earlier that there was an attempt to unify the city of Anchorage- the Borough of Anchorage, the Greater Anchorage Borough.

AS: Right.

MD: Um, and it failed in the early '70s.

AS: Right.

MD: Succeeded in '75. Can you identify what may have made the difference? Why were people ready to go for it five years later?

[01:30:49:00]

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AS: I don't know. I, I think the (laughs) I think the fact that there were a lot of lawsuits going on, that there was conflict over, um, people that worked and lived together, and we weren't that huge of a, of an area. People just kinda got tired of it. And we had some pretty strong, uh, leadership. There were people like John Aspen and George Sullivan and, and, uh, it, it took a while for the city council, which had been established, to kind of find its peace with this new organization. But, um, all in all I think that, that people, and to a degree its still true, wanted to make things right, wanted to work together, wanted to look at the whole area. Not everybody. (laughs) Believe me, we had those that were very resistant to change, but there were a lot that had, I guess, their own personal vision of what this place could be.

MD: And how did you see your role in the legislature, when you went to Juneau?

AS: Well, when I went to Juneau I had a lot of names, like 'Ms. Goody-two-shoes' and I came out of the League of Women Voters and really had this very- high aspirations, I think, for government and for getting things done. People could, could see I was sincere, but they didn't quite understand where I came from. So it wasn't, I wasn't the typical quote unquote politician of those days. Um, we had the Bill Rays and a few others to deal with, who, um, didn't quite see that Ms. Goody-Two-Shoes bit. And so I had to learn that, you know, I'd always had the feeling that you took a problem, you studied that problem, you got to the point where you understood it and you knew the action that should be taken. Well, in the legislature that's just the beginning. You go through that, then you have twenty people, as we had in the senate, or forty in the house, that you had to convince, along with the governor and

so on. So I had some learning to do. Uh, you couldn't just do the quote unquote right thing, you had to do the smart thing, the political thing. So I had some learning.

MD: Were there any legislative accomplishments you're particularly proud of?

AS: Well, yeah. I, a lot of things. But it always took help. But the one that I really am proudest of is probably getting the, uh, inflation-proofing to the Permanent Fund. Hugh Malone and Jay Hammond had done so much on the, on the fund, and when it came along, you know, it wasn't as universally, uh, accepted like it is now. And we had a darned hard time getting that, um, inflation-proofing for it. And my rounding up, uh those eleven votes that we needed for that to pass in the senate, I felt, was an accomplishment. I had some- I always had a marvelous staff. And, uh, a young man by the name of Steve Rieger, who's active now, was most helpful in that. But then I, I worried about the- worry, I don't know if that's the word- but I was concerned about, um, certain areas in rural Alaska. And I pushed- its kind of an archaic word, but- for what is now called the ardors. It allowed for larger community, uh, areas, larger areas to come together and work with across business and government and other lines, to, uh, coordinate services for areas. Like, uh, we have, uh, Sea, um Sciatica- we have Juneau and the southern areas are, have an economic development area, Anchorage has its economic development area, and those are located around the states. And these ardors were very helpful in establishing those. So I've always been interested in, uh, economic development issues.

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[00:17:34]

MD: The, um, this, this is to go backwards, but with referring to economics, were the prices a shock to you, when you came up here?

AS: talking about prices, things were expensive, but I came from Seattle, and Seattle's not really that low cost an area. Uh, and prices were were high, but our salaries were pretty good too, 'yknow. So that, that was not a barrier to me as a young single woman.

MD: Right. As, as a mother, where did you go shopping for groceries, or?

AS: We've always had a Carr's store. (laughs)

MD: You always had (inaudible), yeah.

AS: No, we did- in those days we didn't have the shopping complexes that we have, and I can remember, I have a wonderful picture, of, uh, pulling my son on, my husband and I pulling our son on a sled on what is now the Carr's Sears shopping area. That was a very swampy area. Congratulations to the builders who were able to do that. But that was a lake! And, uh, so the, the scenery, the physical scenery has changed from those early years.

MD: Right. Yeah. And when you were living on Fireweed Lane, were you ever, did you ever stop by Blueberry Lake?

AS: That, right. That's the lake I'm talking about.

MD: Oh, ok. Its no longer there.

AS: (laughs) No, its gone.

MD: The, um, in the early '60s, a store opened called Super S. Did you ever shop there?

AS: No.

MD: It became a Safeway on Gambell.

AS: Oh. Was it Super S?

MD: It was called Super S at that time.

AS: Huh.

[01:38:11:00]

[00:19:47]

MD: That's- but anyway. In- we'll break it into two pieces.

AS: Ok.

MD: Within the city, um, your experiences working with the city, were there any people you particularly admired, um, that you worked with, who you thought gave- I mean, things they did to help direct the city in the right direction, perhaps.

AS: You know, its really interesting, the people that stand out. I've mentioned them several times. Uh, George Sullivan and John Asplund. Quite different personality, but men with really strong, uh, vision for the place, and love for it. And, uh, it was interesting to me to see how different leadership styles were able to accomplish things. We didn't have a lot of women that were active in government, any- but they were very active in League of Women Voters and accomplishing, uh, getting things done. So we've, we've had, I think we've had good people along the way, that have provided good leadership, men and women. And of course, uh, women only in later years have really gotten into the leadership roles, and we're seeing more of that now.

MD: But you were part of that in Juneau, to go to the state side now.

AS: Yeah, and the same thing. We did have some strong women, you know, I respected what, uh, Irene Ryan did, for example. Irene was an engineer, but she was also an astute politician, and did a good job. And we've, uh, had some good women leaders from, uh, rural Alaska. Never enough, I'd like to see more involved, and taking part in things. And Bettye Fahrenkamp was a good friend. Betty and I were different parties, and she liked to have her belt of scotch in the evenings, and she could be a tough gal, but boy she really cared for people, she cared for her community, she loved this state. And that to me cuts through all the political stuff, you know? To get to somebody genuine who really loves this place. And she did. I mean, it was Fairbanks, but that was ok.

MD: The, uh, when, uh, in going back to the '50s for a while, how did you- how far out of town could you get?

[01:41:21:00]
[00:22:58]

AS: Oh, you know, I, uh, going back to the '50s, we did have the road that went all the way to Homer, but it was not much of a road. And, uh, there were parts of it that were at times not passable. Uh, I think it was better coming from uh, say Tok and coming in to Anchorage than it was going south. But that developed pretty soon, those major things. But you didn't have, I do remember the development of, uh, the, on the Seward Highway, coming from, oh, say, um, 9th Avenue going on south. It was pretty tough construction. And it was much later that that became paved. And the paving I do remember from all of the, what we then called the Eastchester flats, that area. And those were kind of outside of the urban core, and developed a little bit later. So, uh, when you stop to think of a community going from 33,000 or so and then getting ten times that population, there was a lot of development over a lot of years. Um, and the issue of widening of Spenard Road, uh, the issue of the construction of Northern Lights. So there's constant change. I don't get, I don't get that sense of as much change nowadays. But then, we've a larger area, and so if you're not driving down that road you might not be aware of the development that's taking place there.

MD: Um-

BCJ: Can I interrupt for a second?

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MD: When you lived on Fireweed, early on there, was Northern Lights even there, as a road?

AS: I can't- I don't recall.

MD: That must be something.

AS: Yeah, I believe it was. I, I can't remember the state.

MD: And were you familiar with the Eastchester flats neighborhood?

AS: I've always, since I've been in Anchorage all these years, (laughs) I've always been aware of Eastchester, I've always lived on the East side of town, not too far out of town. And, so, that was a very, uh, prominent area in development, and, so, y'know, close to downtown. Yes. I do. I have been very aware of it.

MD: It seems to me there was a time when much of Chester Creek was, uh, occupied by what we might describe as shanties. Um.

[01:44:55:00]

[00:01:14]

AS: Chester Crick has had a- I pronounce it "crick" (laughs) I come from, uh- has, uh been evolutionary. I don't think in early days as much care, love, and attention was paid to our various cricks and lakes, that, um, that we may see now. And I think Chester Crick was one, it wasn't- part of that was, uh, that it was kind of a dividing line between city and the area outside the city, and then the city and the borough area. And subdivisions would come that might back up on those, but not front on them. So I think they had a little tougher time, some of the cricks, um, developing, but I think that's changed over the years and there's value to that now. But, but somewhat different than it was.

MD: Um, what are some of the, what are some of the things that are better in Anchorage than- I mean what, what would you look at as the major life changing improvements or alterations that happened to the city of the years?

AS: (laughs). Y'know, I've lived here so long, and I love this city, and I love the parts of it. And I've changed myself- I've changed as the city has changed. And, uh, I think we like, I happen to be one that likes the public service. I like the fact that the garbage man comes on a regular routine. I like the fact that the police are very responsive and good, that the fire department is too. Um, I like the, uh, uh, fact that we have paved streets and we don't have dusty potholes. Well, y'know, we have

maybe a few potholes, but it seems to me that we have been lucky as our city has grown, that we have had a government that has been pretty responsive to the people's needs. That doesn't mean that everybody's just been great and I love it all, but I, I think we've had pretty darn good government. Pretty honest government. Uh, we've had a few little egos that get in the way, but, uh, all in all, as the populations has come, new people have come in, we've built schools, we've accepted a responsibility for schools, I've seen tremendous, um, changes at the, at the University I'm very active on the University as a whole, but I love UAA 'cause its in my backyard. They may think I'm in their backyard, but, uh, its been very visible, the ability for kids to get an education. They're not able to go outside, or they want to stay here. So all in all, I, I like a lot of the changes. But I've been a part of those, and so no one area stands out as superior to another.

MD: Is there anything about old Anchorage that you miss? Anything that we've lost?

AS: I think, in some ways, as with change, you find neighborhoods changing. And I don't know my neighbors as well as I knew my neighbors when my son was of an age. Then the kids were in the houses and, y'know, there was a lot more camaraderie, I think, based on the fact that the kids were out there playing and so on. As we've become more, uh, grown-up and the kids have gone off to colleges, some staying Outside, some coming back, starting their own families, neighborhoods have changed. But I think that happens everywhere. It certainly happened in the farm community where I grew up. So change has been a part of it. There's been quite rapid change, I think in um, Anchorage and Alaska, partially because of the base, the job situation, partially because people don't want to put up with another winter. I've become quite adjusted to (laughs), to the winters. They're just there, and then we get the glorious of a beautiful spring day and its all forgotten, so.

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MD: How, how do you go through a winter? And, I mean, what, do you have any kind of thought process or plans you make for things (inaudible)?

AS: No, I'm a pretty social creature, so I continue to, to do those. I think that's- as I'm getting older I may have to adjust what I do, but, um, y'know, I still, uh, I drive, I get out to things, I attend, uh, y'know, I love theater, so. There, there's a lot to do in Anchorage. But its not the active, dependant on the- getting out into the, the countryside as much as I used to. Um, y'know, when I travel now its usually to hop on an airplane to go somewhere, its not to take a trek into the, into the wilderness. So I think adjustments come because of age and ability, but, uh, winters don't depress me. I've known people that get really, really down in the dumps and, uh. To me I find a new book. I might shop a bit more at Barnes and Noble. And, uh, I can be lost in a good book and then another day comes, so. Its not so bad.

MD: Would you consider yourself a lifelong reader?

AS: Oh absolutely, I love to read. And I, I no longer apologize for adoring mysteries, and y'know, what might not be considered great literature, but I love it. No, and I, I have a wonderful- my daughter-in-law is a writer, and, uh, she too appreciates books, as does my son, but reading was the one thing we could do as a, as a poor farm kid, and you read, uh, the same books over and over, 'cause you didn't have the wealth that we have now. You go to a library, and I think its a sad thing if a child grows up without that love for books.

MD: Were there any particular books that had a large impact on you, either as a young person or-

AS: Well how about Gene Straten-Porter and the Girl of the Limberlost? You've probably never- but I reread Laddie, and I reread those stories, 'cause those were the few books that we had, so. (laughs)

MD: What was, what was the book about?

AS: A young girl that was kind of lonely and growing up into the world, and, uh. It was amazing. (laughs)

MD: Where did she live?

AS: Oh, I don't have the slightest idea.

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MD: I mean was it in a city, or- was she a farm girl too or was she a city girl?

AS: As a matter- small-town, as I recall.

MD: Interesting.

AS: It was a long time ago, my friend.

MD: The, uh- (inaudible)

AS: (laughs)

MD: Uh, which camp- hiking, uh, any particular memorable hiking or camping trips, wilderness excursions?

AS: Well I, I absolutely adored, uh, the place we had at, uh, Nancy Lake, its, uh, in the Valley. Well, first of all we'd started out- very good friends of ours who've, uh, both gone now, uh, had been up at Big Lake, and we used to visit them on weekends. I mean, after all, they had this wonderful place. And then we, uh, built at Nancy Lake,

and that meant carrying every bloody stick of timber and, and all the rest, and doing the building of a, of a nice cabin. My son and daughter-in-law have it now. And it was not a weekend now and then, it was every weekend, it was late into the fall when we could skate on the ice, and it was anticipated with great joy when the ice would go out and we could start in the, in the spring. And so, uh, did more of that than the hiking that so many people enjoy now. And I think one of the good things about the, uh, community of Anchorage is the bike trails, and the hiking trails, and the fact that so many people, ah, get out, and I'll bet they're out today. Just enjoying this wonderful scenery, and, uh, y'know, people really love this countryside. Getting out into it. And I think that's just great.

MD: Um, if we go back to state politics now, any of the governors with whom you worked, uh, any reflections on those people?

AS: Y'know, I served with a, a number of governors, and without question, the one who was, uh, I consider is the best friend and such a lovely human being, and that was Jay Hammond. Um, Jay was, uh, a storyteller. He was, uh, friendly, he loved- about everything, I guess. I mean he loved his family, he loved his place in Alaska, he relished his role as, as governor. And someone that's now gone, by the name of Lee McInerney, was uh, very good friends with Jay, as was I. And he was, on a human level, was one of the nicest guys I've ever met. Not that I didn't respect a number of the other governors, but nobody as close as Jay Hammond.

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MD: You socialized with him then?

AS: Well, yeah. It was just an easy, friendly relationship.

MD: Are there any examples or stories you could give that would sort of bring his personality into focus? Something he said, or-

AS: Oh gosh. Any Hammond-isms. (laughs) Not right off hand, but, uh, I can usually tell when someone is, is full of artifice and they, they don't always tell it like it really is. Jay could embellish things, but always the truth. And, um, I mean, his, his love for his role, his wife- all those things came through. In other words, just a real genuine, uh, person. And he fit into his skin very nicely, as I say. And I've known, I've known the other governors, uh, pretty well, and I can't- I don't feel as comfortable in that kind of a relationship as with him. It was always easy to go to, uh, Jay with issues that you were working on. Of course he thought a lot like I did, so that was good. Uh, Tony Knowles was a person of great, um, respect too, and I consider Tony a friend.

MD: Did you ever cross paths, paths with Mike Stepovich?

AS: Um, not really. He was just, he was in the '70s, just a little bit ahead of, ahead of me. Well I certainly knew him, but not on as close a relationship as some of the others.

MD: Yeah. The, um, you mentioned loving theater. In the '50s and '60s, uh, did you go to much in the way of plays and concerts?

AS: Uh, not a lot. Um, my husband traveled so much during those years, and so it, that was not the kind of thing that, uh, I had friends that frequented the theater so I would go with them, and that, that came later I think. And back when I was in the single, uh, single life again.

MD: Right.

AS: Yeah.

MD: The, um, do, do any productions stick out-

AS: No.

MD: Local productions- yeah. The, um, let me think.

AS: We've gone on for quite some time!

[01:59:44:00]

[00:16:04]

MD: We have. And I think, if its all right I'd like to talk to you about your runs for the governor's office.

AS: (laughs)

MD: Um, I'm, and my mind is spinning- 1990?

AS: '86 and '90.

MD: '86 and '90.

AS: Yeah.

MD: '86 was, uh, refresh my memory. You ran in the primary in '86 against?

AS: You know, I don't even remember.

MD: We can't remember. (laughs) This is terrible.

BCJ: Which one was, uh, Wally's?

MD: Um, Wally got elected in '90.

BCJ: '90, was that it?

AS: Yeah, he was in '90.

MD: He was in '90.

AS: Yeah, '90. Uh, Tony?

MD: And that was very strange. Tony came after- was beaten by Hickel, essentially, in '90, so he was-

AS: '86.

MD: '86, ok.

AS: Yeah, yeah.

MD: Mmkay.

AS: Yeah.

MD: And, uh, but it, you won the primary though, in-

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AS: In both.

MD: In both, yeah, ok.

AS: Yeah.

MD: And, uh, and so, uh, so in 1986 who was your opponent?

AS: Well, Tony.

MD: Oh yeah, Tony. 1986. Ok.

AS: Was he?

BCJ: I'm pretty sure he ran twice.

AS: Yeah, he did.

MD: Yeah, he did, 'til he got it. (laughs)

AS: Yeah. How soon we forget.

MD: Yeah, I know.

AS: I didn't win that one.

MD: Yeah. Well, is there anything you would have done had you won, that you think still needs to be done? Lets say they recount and they discover a terrible error has been made-

AS: (laughs)

MD: And you're on your way to Juneau now, to take over.

AS: Y'know, both times I ran for governor it, uh, came out of love for government, love for, uh, getting things done, love for the state. And I, I didn't have any burning desire to make things better. I've always had a strong interest and have worked a lot with local government and kind of serving communities. And my vision for the state was perhaps, uh, narrower. I wasn't out to do anything big in the whole wide world. I've had through, uh, the things I've done, I've been active on a number of international, uh, boards and endeavors, but my love has always been for the state. And so I'm a strong supporter of, uh, strong women being involved in government. Of one that is very, uh, open to not only ethnicities but people that might be a bit different from you and I. So I felt that I could provide leadership in the, the broad sense of healthy communities. But I don't have any, uh, we've solved a lot of problems as we've gone along. Uh, structure of the schools, um, structure of government, and I don't see any huge big issues other than good government.

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MD: Um, and as you've noted there are many more women in politics, in prominent positions in politics, than there were 60 years ago.

AS: Well, not, not too many. But anyhow.

MD: But are there, uh, women currently involved in let's say state politics that, that have caught your eye, that you think are making a mark?

AS: Well, I've had a lot of friends as the years have gone by, and we've got some young people, uh, coming up, and I think they have some proving to do, y'know? Uh, you need to, uh, you need to be consistent, you need to stand out, you need to do your homework. And, uh, we have a few that I think are working to that point, but they're not ones that I'm intimately involved with.

MD: How do you spend your time now?

AS: (laughs) Well, how do I spend my time? Kay. I've maintained an office, because I collect things and people and ideas and paper. Don't want that in my home. Uh, so I try to separate that. And its amazing, I'm still on a number of boards. I do a lot with, um, the University of Alaska, 'cause I believe in higher education. I was just looking up the length of time I've been associated with the Anchorage community YMCA, its amazing. Number of years that I've been on the board I should be booted off, but I don't have enough sense to boot myself off. Have done a lot, um, and I'm not really sure how I got into it, on fishing things, Alaska Sea Grant, the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. And kind of policy-making role, I'm good there. And, um, so I, I keep my hands in that. I've managed the finances for the family for a lot of years because my late husband travels so much that was pretty impossible for him to do. And that comes out of my background. Um, and I'm asked to do a lot of, y'know, public speaking here and there. And I try to help, I try to help in a lot of, uh ways, to the- I'm delighted to see the YWCA is also doing great work with their different programs. And so I'm involved, I would say, in the community. Certainly not on statewide things, but, uh, enough to keep this old girl happy.

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MD: You have a lot of lovely art by Alaskans here in your house. How many of these artists did you meet?

AS: Oh, oh I've really met most of them. Not, not all of them but I remember one time I was out traveling in rural Alaska and here was this person just sitting on a corner, and turned out to be, uh, Ahgupuk. There's just, uh, its almost to me, and I've collected a lot of Native art, what a wonderful thing that these people during the 1900s, uh, were creating this wonderful art that had not been appreciated, I don't think, and here they were. And George R. Ahgupuk lived here, and, uh, in Anchorage. I never met, uh, Florence Malewotkuk, I wish I had, I have several of her things. But I still admire the work that's, that's being done. And I'm, I really hope that some of these older artists are working with the young people to, uh, continue their, their handiwork. Its great.

MD: Excellent. Kay. Is there anything you'd care to add to all of this that we've been talking about?

AS: You know, if I were to try to sum up all these years in Alaska, it'd be pretty darn easy. It would be, to live here, I was lucky to love here and have people that I love here, and just to be a part of a place that's growing and changing. I realize there are young people coming up doing spectacular things that I won't be and I can only watch in, in admiration. But its been a wonderful place because we had an opportunity to be involved. And I've been involved. Isn't that good?

MD: (laughs) That's good. Thank you very much.

AS: Yeah. And I am tired of hearing Arliss Sturgulewski pontificate!

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