

Lola Crimeans Tilly
Head, Dept. of Home Economics
University of Alaska
autobiographical; also about husband, Gray Tilly

Interview by Neville Jacobs
At Tilly Home, Fairbanks
2 hours

Lola Tilly came to Alaska to teach in 1929. Head of the University of Alaska, Dr. Bunnell, wrote to the University of Minnesota to recruit teachers, and to say he was coming to interview if any were interested. Lola Tilly replied to Dr. Bunnell affirmatively, and he came from Washington D.C. to interview her. He assured her the job could be hers although she wanted to leave her Univ. of Minnesota post for only one year.

Thus Lola Tilly came to the University of Alaska in August, 1929, and retired in 1963. Now, nine years later, in order to keep busy, she is substitute teaching and many of her students are grandchildren of former students, she says.

Lola came from Southern Illinois to Minneapolis. She was joined by a friend on her trip to Alaska--they took the train to Seattle, ship to Seward, and train to Fairbanks. They had trouble getting information about travel to Alaska but a travel agency made reservations. They took the "school teachers special," a Saturday sailing/^{normally}early in September, but Lola and her friend's ship actually sailed earlier and stopped at ports along the way.

Lola lived at the Nordale Hotel when she first came to Fairbanks. She lived there with other teachers and they ate most of their meals at the Model Cafe.

At that time, seven years after the University opened, there was a small student body but a very cosmopolitan staff. Many teachers had lived and worked around the world and students

were both from Alaska and the main 48 states.

Lola describes life at school and particularly the home ec department. They experimented with local foods and that led to publications. Bunnell originated research in other areas and founded the museum.

Conversation about University life continues through World War II to the time of her retirement as head of the department.

About two-thirds of the way through tape #2, conversation turns to her marriage to Gray Tilly. They were married Commencement night, May, 1937.

Lola describes Gray, his work, his service activities with the community of Fairbanks, and their life together.

Toward the end of Tape #2, conversation moves into the present ~~time~~ time. Dr. Tilly discusses her philosophy of life and teaching. It reveals an outstanding woman who was an important part of the University of Alaska for over thirty years.

Series: Tanana Yukon Historical Society Tapes