

Call number: 94-13-01 PT. 1 SIDE A

Cliff and Orea Haydon are interviewed with Margaret Van Cleve

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Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

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Cliff and Orea are long-time Badger Road residents and they are this year's King and Queen Regent for the Golden Days celebration in July. The tape is made possible by a grant from Igloo No. 4 foundation of the Pioneers of Alaska. They are recording in Haydons' home in North Pole, Alaska. Margaret says that Orea is a 3rd generation Alaskan and asks if she heard her relatives talk about their early times in mining. Margaret continues that she enjoyed Oria's article about her aunt Blanche Cascaden, which appeared in Heartland, January 31st edition. She asks about Orea's memories of Blanche and asks if Orea ever visited her mining operation in Livengood. She tells that she spent many summers with Blanche at her mining operation. Her sister and she rocked out some of the piles that they had mined and Blanche would put monies from gold dust into bonds to benefit them. Margaret asks if that was around 1930s, and Orea tells it was from 1935 to 1940.

Margaret jokes that Orea's first job was mining, and Orea tells that that was her summertime job. She did babysitting and house work in wintertime while she was living in downtown Fairbanks. Margaret asks if her auntie was an unusual woman since she was running a mining camp, or if there were other women who did that. Orea says she didn't know other women like that, but there might have been some – she just doesn't know them.

2:09 Blanche worked like a man. She'd go out, do clearing for assessment work, carry water back and forth, and funnel it through hoses into her mining claims. She had a bulldozer that someone would run for her, and they would wash dirt into the sluice box. She did all the cooking and took care of all the equipment. Margaret jokes that she had a 18-hour work day, but says that they all worked like that in the summertime. Orea says people never saw Blanche without a pair of boots, shirt and

a hat. She loved to wear men's woolen shirts. She worked very hard and everybody loved her since she was lovable and considerate of all her friends. She would visit her friends when she traveled.

In 1935, there was no road to Livengood. In her article, Orea wrote about building the road. The people who wanted to visit the town would fly in summertime, and in wintertime they would use dog teams. In summers they would also use the river to ship their supplies in. Orea and her sisters flew over the mining claims the first time they went there on a 3 passenger plane. Margaret asks if Orea remembers who the pilot was, and she says it was Frank or somebody [cross talking about Pollock Airlines].

4:50 Margaret tells that Cliff came to Petersburg, which was his point of entry to Alaska. He was a tourist in 1935. Margaret asks what it was like when he returned for work. Orea tells that he came as a tourist with the intention of going to Fairbanks to get some work for the summer, go to school at the University, after which he wanted to go to Washington State. However, on the boat Queen Victoria, he got acquainted with a couple of ladies who had been going to school for a year or two down in Seattle. Their father was George Ringstad, who was the head of the Pacific American Fisheries for the whole State of Alaska. He had made his home in different places but by the time Cliff met him, they were heading to Petersburg. They said that the first of April was too early in the season to go looking for work from Fairbanks, and suggested that Cliff should see places like Ketchikan, Petersburg, Juneau and others.

Cliff tells that when he got to Petersburg, he visited with them and the father suggested that he should try fishing for a season and work for him. Cliff declined the offer, saying that he wants to get to Fairbanks. The girls' father said that it must be because he wasn't interested in the girls. He called Oscar Nicholson who had a cannery down in the Scow Bay narrows two miles south of Petersburg and asked for a job for Cliff. Nicholson only had a position for a cook on his flagship, and Cliff took the job.

8:51 The next morning they took Cliff to Petersburg and he spent the summer at the boat, becoming famous as a doughnut cook. They traveled around southeast. The engineer had been a cook one time and could tell Cliff what the Scandinavians

liked to eat. He, Tony Saffler [sp?], and the captain couldn't eat much else but crackers and milk. Cliff had a wonderful time and he was treated nicely.

The first day Cliff was in Petersburg, he met a person named Douglas Colp, the son of Harvey Colp, who worked for the Glacier Seafoods and was a captain of *The Louise*, which was a shrimp boat owned by Earl Omar. Cliff and Douglas became acquainted. Douglas was going to go to University of Alaska, but Cliff had to go back to eastern Washington because his mother had had some problems and wanted Cliff to help her. After that, Cliff went to Butte, Montana, because he happened to have a scholarship to go to Montana School of Mines. He didn't stay there too long, but became very good friends with the superintendent of the school. He recommended Cliff different places besides Montana, because it would have been difficult for him to travel there every winter.

12:07 In fall of 1935, Cliff went to Mojave desert and he became partners with a man who had a hard rock claim. He was a good hard rock man and in those days, the mine inspectors didn't come around to get after you, but they helped people out. They taught Cliff a great deal about hard rocking. The young mining engineer he was working with helped too. They explained the different things one has to do for safety and health, so Cliff spent the winter doing that job. They had an opportunity to sell their interest in the mining project to a promoter, and that was the first real money Cliff made by gold mining.

Old Oscar Nicholson asked Cliff to contact him or come stay at his home in Seattle. He had a beautiful home there, but at the time Cliff's mother and stepfather were living there and he just went to visit there [at Oscar's]. Oscar promised Cliff that he can do other things than cooking, which happened. Cliff worked at Butte for quite a while for different people who were recommended by a professor at Montana Mines, and then in the spring he returned to Alaska [?] and met the fellows who were coming back north to Petersburg. The young Norwegians taught Cliff how to do everything they didn't want to do, and complemented on how good of a job he was doing. He worked at the top loft of the piledriver.

Oscar encouraged him to do all kinds of things. Wherever they were driving, he'd be on the shore [?], asking Cliff for his opinion about going more towards port or more towards starboard.

16:37 In 1937, when Cliff was first in Petersburg, Cliff didn't know anything about navigation. As soon as fishing was over, they had fish traps that were both floaters and [unclear] traps, but as soon as their area was closed for fishing, they had to go somewhere and buy them [fish traps?]. They went to Cape Ulicka. He [Oscar?] had one of the best captains, but sometimes he couldn't stand up well, and once Cliff had to bring the boat home. Oscar instructed him to bring the boat home and buy the fish, and said that if Cliff sees someone who has had "bum luck," he can give them more clips [not sure what this is. More fish?].

18:50 Then they were on a big wooden boat that was one of the larger ones that Oscar had. It was called the Yugoslav, and when they pulled her around Cape Ulicka, the fishermen would come and [unclear] always had all things to drink, like straight alcohol that he mixed with distilled water. He invited everybody to come into the pilot house for a drink.

Once when they were having very good luck fishing, they were 6 inches away from having water come overboard. The captain was passed out, and everybody else was asleep, so Cliff had to pilot the ship through some narrows.

22:21 Margaret says that then Cliff gave up fishing and moved up to Fairbanks to do mining around 1938-1939. Cliff tells that he headed out from Spokane around the usual time, around April, and met some young fellows who were going to Fairbanks and Juneau. They got on the boat and headed to Seward but a fellow talked them into... [Unfinished thought.] There was a general transportation company in Fairbanks that was owned by Maxi Miller.

Margaret asks if he was of Bobby Miller's company, and Orea says that he was. Cliff continues that the brother was an admiral who had a younger brother, Bill, who studied to become a lawyer. He was bringing a state bed truck for Maxi and offered Cliff to take them to Fairbanks for \$20 dollars. At that time, there were 20 of them traveling together.

24:45 Margaret asks what the road was that they were going to travel along, and if it was Valdez-Richardson. Cliff says it was. They had some money – every one of them – so they weren't too excited about it. They stayed in Valdez for about a week, but they didn't want to stay in a hotel at that time, so they asked the town marshal for a house to rent. He told about a lady who was cooking for a mining

camp but she left and each year her house is rented out. It was a little, old cabin with three rooms and three beds, and the rest of them slept on the floor in their sleeping bags.

Cliff did the cooking and the others were willing to do the dishes, so when the week was up, they saw Bill Miller who said they were slow on leaving, at which point Cliff and his companions started being anxious to get to Fairbanks. Bill called his brother Maxi in town and they made an arrangement to meet on the other side of the [unclear] where they had a little bulldozer and a boat.

27:30 Cliff says that wherever he goes, there's something unusual happening. There were a couple of brothers by the name Smith. The other one was heavy set and he knew Cliff's uncle, to whom he had worked for. They had gone lake fishing and George Smith slipped into the water but they even got his sleeping bag and suitcase out of there with their fishing poles. They had to build up a fire and get him warmed up, and anybody who could spare a shirt that fit, would give them to him.

31:06 George Smith was a good carpenter and he did some work for Bill Stroecker. Bill just loved him, since he helped build little cabins and worked around. When the war struck, George took every dollar he had and bought government bonds and sailed the South Pacific with the Navy, but he got malaria. He died while he was operated on.

32:46 Maxi Miller met them where they were supposed to meet. He didn't have a fancy truck, but one with an old stake bed. They stopped at Black Rapids Glacier. Margaret asks if there was a roadhouse there, and Orea says that there was. Cliff continues by saying that the glacier was threatening to block the river and the road, but then it started receding rapidly. They got into town in first day of June, having made their deadline.

Some of the fellows asked if they are going to stay for the night. Maxi was building the Miller apartments, and Cliff asks Orea to tell where they were. Orea says they were on Illinois Street. They pulled in and saw a cute girl who was about college age. She was driving "these big trucks around." Cliff wondered aloud if Maxi hired women to drive the trucks but he told that the girl was his sister and that when she's home, she works.

34:52 Max told Cliff that some of the rooms were closed down, but invited him to stay for a day or two if he would sleep on the floor. The next day Cliff started looking for a place for the 8 or 10 people who were hanging out together. Margaret asks if it was hard to find housing and Cliff tells that it was at that time of the year. Orea says that it was definitely hard to find housing and that the constructors couldn't keep up with demand. Cliff says that in wintertime one could stay at the Nordale [Hotel] for \$30 dollars a month, but in summertime the prices went up.

Cliff and his friends found a big old house that they rented and the one thing Cliff remembers about the house was the little beds. One of the guys hit the water under the bed [not sure what he's talking about.]

36:58 They hung out closely together. George Smith and his brother got jobs carpentering. A young man named Brenton Dipple was from Northeast corner of California and he was traveling with a fellow Fred Ozano who was his age and was from the same town with him. They had gone to school together. Cliff got a job from Charlie Mortimer, repairing houses, and Ozano asked if Cliff could get him work too. The other guys were trying to get hired on the creeks and do mining, but Cliff never intended to stay out of town.

Old Charlie paid them pretty well and fed them. One weekend he asked Cliff if they would like to drive down the Badger Road since he has to take some stuff out there to his little homestead. He asked them to at least go out for the weekend. They went out on Sunday since they worked 6 days a week. At that time Cliff hadn't been acquainted with Harry Badger but only with Jack Horn. Old Jack was angry with Charlie who built a cabin about 1/8th of a mile behind his place. Jack had queer sense of humor, so he bought bacon that he nailed on the trees around his [Charlie's] house, which drew in bears, and the trees had to be chopped down. They got some pictures of the bears.

40:58 They had time to go over and talk with Jack, who told them to send a message to Charlie that he could get his wood cutting permit easily and build a cabin. When they got back to town, Cliff got his wood cutting permit and they built a little cabin. It was hard for him to learn to use a swede-saw because he was used to big bucksaws.

Margaret asks what a swede-saw is and Cliff explains that it's a little metal bow with a blade on it. Margaret says that that's a bow-saw. It's more or less like a bow-saw but it's not that old-timey. Bucksaw is a big two-man saw. Bow-saws can be of any size. Cliff continues his story by telling that they went back to town when Charlie had work, which was most of the summer.

42:55 They had a Chena Country Club at that time. Margaret doesn't remember it. Cliff tells that that was CC-Camp [not sure what that is] that started around 1938 or maybe 1939.

[End of the recording.]