

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

Cliff and Orea Haydon are interviewed with Margaret Van Cleve

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Recording continues with Cliff talking about mosquito nets over beds. Everybody in Alaska seemed to have them, and they had one. They put some bed [unclear] down, and a mattress and then [unclear]. Off center, they had a taller one [mosquito net] where they could have a little rope run through to suspend the netting on top of them. That was in 5th of July. Anyway, they woke up the next morning and it was dark under the net. Brendon [sp?] said that he didn't think it got dark in Fairbanks in summertime, but that it sure was dark in there. He put his head against the bedding and there were a million mosquitoes on top of that.

They decided that Cliff needs to build a fire and Brendon would make the pancake batter. They had citronella to smear around themselves to repel mosquitoes.

2:28 Cliff was cooking the bacon and he had an extra pan to put the hotcakes on, and finally Brendon bit [?] them up [and said] "they will eat you." When everything was cooked, they had to pull mosquitoes out of their cakes. Next night they had a better setup, but the mosquitoes were tough.

Margaret asks how far they were out of town [cross talking]. Cliff asks if he should talk about Mrs. [LaDessa Hall] Nordale. When they got their cabin finished, the wind was blowing on a nice sunny day, so they hiked up to Jack Horns' place to get a few vegetables. They were returning home when there was a car with a man [Hjalmar Nordale], woman [LaDessa], and a child who was Tony Nordale – a little fellow at the time. The man came to meet them and asked if they had a cabin out there, so Cliff explained that they had indeed built a little cabin out in the slew. The man offered them lunch and they talked about how Hjalmar though it would be nice to have a place out of town even though Fairbanks was a very small town in 1940s. Margaret says it was maybe 4,000-5,000 people.

5:19 Cliff mentions how Orea gets mad when he talks about how small Fairbanks was at the time.

Cliff and Brenton offered Nordales that they could stay at their cabin while they are going to College in the winter [?]. LaDessa always got excited about everything, but Hjalmar wanted to think it over. Brenton thought LaDessa was a funny but intelligently acting woman. [Unclear story.]

8:05 It was getting late in the fall and Hjalmar came up with another basket, and the boys wanted to give him the ground, 160 acres. A young forester from CC-Camp came looking for Cliff and he wanted to hire Cliff to be a cook at their camp since the government didn't think they wanted one. Cliff explained that he had wanted to go to the University and wondered if he could feed 40 men too. The man explained that they have forms to order food with, but that they have to buy locally before their stuff comes in. He suggested that Cliff could do it at night and go to school in day time. Margaret laughs that he wouldn't have time to sleep. The man told Cliff that he's a young man and would find time.

Cliff said he would do it if he got all kinds of help from the fellows at the camp. Margaret asks where the camp was located, and Cliff tells it was back on the other side of Chena, about quarter of a mile away from town. They went by the railroad station and down a little ways to the other side of the river. Cliff agreed to the job, which included writing the menus and doing the baking.

13:16 It was never a big concern whether he got a full year at the University or not. Around April of 1939 [he went to University?]. Then a man contacted him and wanted him to go to Circle Hot Springs. It was Jack Boswell. Margaret says that he was one of the early graduates at the university and also affiliated with the FE-Company. He was one of the early graduates at the university. Cliff says that he still has a son around, and he worked for the FE-Company. His brother-in-law was Bill Shoddy, who was a mining engineer, and then Olga Steger's father, Pete Steger, was the third partner. Tom McKennan had also thrown some money in and he came out on cleanup days.

They explained that they had a really good cook but that he's finicky and didn't want to go out. There was be 3-4 log cabins, and he'd cook for the men before starting mining. Cliff agreed. Those days it was working 7 days a week, 10 hours a

day. Margaret says it was good summer employment. Cliff continues that it was \$1 dollar per hour and Cliff got another dollar per hour for being the only one foolish enough to crawl on top of the dragline and inspect the equipment, lubricate it, fill everything with gas and oil, check sluice boxes and do those things that he was familiar with.

17:39 Unfortunately, the outfit went bankrupt but the workers didn't lose money. Every time there was a cleanup, they had a big panful of gold, but it was only \$36 dollars per ounce. Margaret says it wasn't that much those days. Cliff continues that the thing that busted it up was that Pete Steger's rules for the operation were bad. In other mining companies, they had to have the ground thawed. Sometimes when they were [in the dredging pond] with a boat, the motor was ripping up frozen muck.

19:16 That winter Cliff wanted to go to school but people offered him jobs with decent wages. A fellow from Hauling Johnson Logging Company came in and that was up away from Tanana. They went down above old Chena City, a few miles [away], and there was beautiful timber there. Margaret suggests that it was the Rosy Creek area. Cliff says that that road was his dream of Alaska, and he didn't expect that big timber being there. There was moose, wolves, and lynx. Cliff was cutting timber at first, but then they needed a cook and he was back cooking again.

One could just go out and look around there, and there would be wolves or lynx. Cliff stayed there until the spring came early that year and they had to stop. There was a young fellow who was a nephew of Lou Hall. He came up from the states and wanted to catch a lynx. [Otto] Bayliss was still around and he had quite the sense of humor so he told he'll eat the tail off a living lynx if the young fellow catches one. Two weeks later, the boy had a lynx because an old trapper who was working at the camp had showed him how to catch them. After dinner, they went to the bunkhouses to relax for a while and Otto fell asleep. Then they went to get the lynx that was tied from his feet to a pole and slammed it to Otto's bunk. It was dark except for dim kerosene light. They twisted the lynx's tail so that it "screamed up to high heavens" and woke up Otto.

24:40 Margaret asks Orea if she was going to school in Fairbanks while Cliff was mining and cooking. She was going to the Old Main [School?] that was recently

vacated. That place housed all grades, and Orea completed her high school there. Margaret asks what life was like for young people in those days, and what they did for entertainment. Orea tells that she has all that written down. Her sister and her both worked and went to school. They didn't have a happy home life. Their father installed the first projector at the Empress Theater and they spent many nights there, watching movies.

Orea was born in Fairbanks but they left for a while. All she can remember was that she worked all the time when she was going to school, but there were some school dances to which Orea went to whenever her stepmother didn't insist that she has to work. She did baby sitting and house work. When she graduated, she worked at St. Joseph's Hospital through the summer and the following winter. She cleaned instruments and scrubbed floors. Then she worked making beds and helping patients with writing letters. She scrubbed all the floors, fixed little dishes for them, and she also did laundry.

27:36 She had to spend all the money she earned by getting her teeth fixed. She also worked for Nordales, to the brother of Hjalmar Nordale who had children Mary and Jim. Hjalmar and the other brother have also a sister, Mary Nordale, who lives in States now. Orea took care of the children. The other brother's wife [?] was also a school teacher, like LaDessa. They worked at public schools in Fairbanks. She was a commissioner [of Education], just like LaDessa. Orea remembers her name, Kathryn. Orea babysat for them, cooked, and did a little bit of cleaning because Kathryn wasn't able to be at home with her children and her husband was dead by that time.

The next semester, Orea started going to the University and she did one semester in 1942. Then she went to work at the Base [Fort Wainwright, presumably, then known as Ladd Field]. She met Cliff in the summer before since her father invited him to the house. Cliff says that he was just trying to get rid of his daughters. [Laughter.] Orea tells that her father always invited people over and that they might have just enough food for the four of them and he would invite people for dinner. Everybody else came first.

30:09 Cliff was one of the people Orea's father invited over. When Orea came from work, she came in from the back door and her stepmother told her to get

coffee and make cinnamon toast for their guests and that's when she first saw Cliff. Orea remembers that Cliff had a shaved head after being one of the "original hippies" in Petersburg. Orea says that he only had a beard.

Cliff tells that one night he was with a really curly-haired friend of his and they went into the barber shop. Cliff wished that he would have curly hair like that and the barber said he could be if he shaved his head and then rub his head with "this very expensive whiskey." Cliff was only able to do that a couple of times before he got caught and his friends took the bottle, sat on top of him and drank the whiskey. 30 years later, a woman came up to Cliff and threw her arms around him and remembered that he was called Whiskers.

32:08 Orea tells that when she was working at the Base, she went from purchasing supplies to running away and getting married. When they came back, she went into Lieutenant Ashlog's [sp?] office in the post office and was hired as his secretary for doing mail. Orea got pregnant and the gal she was working with insisted that she had to eat all the time, and Orea gained lots of weight, 75 pounds. Orea's boss said she should quit because she was embarrassing the men. She really needed the money because Cliff was in service at the time, and had signed up to go with the Air Commando with Gaffney. Orea didn't know anything about it before they got married, so Cliff was in service and Orea had to live alone.

She had a hard time finding a place to live, but her Aunt Blanche let her live in a place next to hers. It wasn't a modern place but had an outside toilet and a little [unclear] pump in the corner. She had a kitchen stove with wood and then there was another stove in the living room. There were just the three rooms: a little room in the back for the bed, kitchen in between, and then the living room. That was their first home. When Orea and Cliff first got married, they lived a couple of months in a place that was ready to be torn down. That's where Orea got the flu and was unconscious for quite a while. Her auntie Edith, who was Orea's dad's sister, came in and took care of her.

35:16 When Orea's first child came, the flight sergeant delivered him at the hospital. She had a hard time with her labor, but Orea presumes that people don't want to hear about that in the recording. Margaret asks if there was a hospital other than St. Joseph's, but Orea said there wasn't. She used to work at St. Joseph's and

at that time they told her that they didn't accept military payment, even though they knew Orea and liked her. They had a hard time, especially since Orea had stopped working.

36:28 Margaret asks when they started homesteading. Orea tells that Cliff had taken it [homestead?] out before they got married, in January 1940. It was "right here," but since Cliff had gone into service, he couldn't prove up on it. By 1945 they had two children, Cliff was out of service, and they were able to prove up on the homestead.

Everything was cleared back on both sides of the Badger road, and the ground was planted with barley, oats and wheat. Margaret asks if it was a federal requirement and if there were no special provisions for Alaska homesteaders. Orea says there weren't, and because Cliff had taken the place before the war, he wasn't allowed to homestead the same way as the military did after the war.

Cliff tells that one could homestead after the war as a GI and one had five years to do anything with their land. GIs didn't have to plant barley, oat, and wheat like Cliff did. Margaret asks about the acreage he could acquire and if it was 160 acres. Orea tells that the old rules were 320 acres that people like Jack Horn and Harry Badger got. Nordale who got the property across the road had also 320 acres. That was under the old rule, and the new rule was 160 acres. That was after 1940, as Margaret says.

39:25 Margaret wants to talk about some of their neighbors who were Badger, Holmes, [unclear]. Orea says that at the time, Nordales were their closest neighbors and then there were Harry Badger and Walter Creek who lived up the road, and then there was Jack Horn right on the other side of Badger and Creek. [Unclear] came out, and there were Lou and Gladys Joyce living down at Four-Mile with their four children. Bill is still living at the original homestead.

Margaret asks what Mr. Badger was like, and Orea tells that he was a large and tall man who was more or less a PR-man who was into politics and sold real estate. He was busy in different organizations. Walter Creek, who lived in a same house with him, did all the farming for him. They had big strawberry batches and everybody from town would come pick strawberries.

He would have a big dinner that Walter and Harry had cooked. Orea always remembered the cream potatoes, peas and carrots, as well as the strawberry shortcake.

[End of the recording.]