

Call number: 09-13-03

Name and place: Marge Haggland, interviewed by Margaret van Cleave

Date: October 6th, 1993 at Pioneer Home in Fairbanks, AK

Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

Date of summary's creation: 04/18/2014

Series: Pioneer Tapes

Margaret introduced Marge who has been active in civic affairs in Fairbanks, and who is one of the founders of the local gardening clubs. The recording is sponsored by a grant from Igloo no. 4 Foundation, Pioneers of Alaska.

Margaret wants Marge to describe how she moved to Alaska in 1939, and asks about the means of transportation. Marge tells that when they left Seattle to Alaska on a steamship boat, their whole neighborhood was down to see them off. Their neighbors thought they were going to the end of the world. Marge's group ["we"] left Seattle on 19th of August and arrived in Juneau on 22nd of August. From Juneau, they took a Pan Am[erican Airlines] Flight to Fairbanks and arrived on 22nd of August in 1939.

1:38 Margaret asks how Marge felt about it, and what was her first impression. She recalls that they landed on the Week's Field's dirt runway and Marge wondered what she was getting into. Margaret asks if Marge's husband was already in Fairbanks, but she tells that they came together. They didn't know where they were going to stay, but Dr. Carter, who was one of the Pioneers in Fairbanks, was renting a house from Dr. [Daniel Alexander] Sutherland up on Noble Street. Of course he was a bachelor and he told that Marge, her husband, and their twins could move there with him. They had a lot of rain. Marge didn't have a push chart those days and the children were only 3 months old when they arrived in Fairbanks.

Marge didn't know anybody at the time except for Mr. Dikham [sp?], and it was surprising how people in Fairbanks were willing to share anything they had. Soon one of them was knocking on Marge's door with a big bowl of blueberries or cranberries and vegetables from their garden. It didn't take them a long time to get

acquainted with people since everybody was so friendly those days. They never locked their doors.

4:10 The community was quite small. Margaret says that one could go anywhere on foot and it was all dirt streets. Margaret asks how long they stayed living with Dr. Carter. Marge says she doesn't remember that, but they moved five times in two years. There were few places to rent or buy in those days, but the prices were very high, and Marge's husband, who had been working on wood mills in Seattle, couldn't consider buying a place with nothing but dirt [unclear] and no sidings on walls. Most of the places didn't have a central heating plan in those days either.

Margaret says that they had a wood stove in the living room and that was about it. Marge agrees. Margaret asks if most of the houses were made of logs or if there were some frame houses too, and Marge tells that there were some frame houses too. One place was owned by a teacher who tried to sell it to Paul [Marge's husband] for \$15, 000 but finally, after moving from one place to another, Paul found a lot for them from a corner of the Kellum Street where they eventually built a home. Margaret says that the house is still there.

6:56 Margaret says she needed to leave that place and that she remembers crying when she moved to Pioneer Home after living in her house for so long.

She remembers how one morning, really early, when the boys were still in their bathrooms, the doorbell rang. Paul had already left for work and Marge opened the door to an old gentleman who introduced himself. He was an old German and he explained that he had promised to take Marge's husband some moose stakes.

They lived at the Chena River and there was no road at the time. It was at least -30 below that day and Marge invited the man for a cup of coffee. Marge made breakfast for all of them, the man sat by the fireplace and talked with the boys. They found out that he was experimenting with different fruit trees at his place. Marge has often wondered what happened to that place, because the man had only one daughter and she came up [to Fairbanks] during the time he was ill. She told Paul she wasn't interested in the property at all, and gave it to Paul who turned it over to the University.

9:18 Margaret asks where it was located in terms of where they are now. Marge tells that it was upriver from town on the Chena River, going up towards the Base [Fort Wainwright, then known as Ladd Field] and Chena Hot Springs Road. Marge doesn't remember the man's name, but he was one of the old-timers and had been "up there" for years. He had done lots of experimenting with different fruit trees.

Margaret says that lots of people did agricultural experimentation in those days, including Mr. Lawson who lived across the street from Marge. Now he is staying with a young couple after his house burned a long time ago. John and Marge drove past that place and there were 3-4 couples of young people there.

Marge has tried to get Mr. Lawson into the [Pioneer] Home and he recently had an interview, but they have a waiting list of some 45 people.

11:26 Margaret asks if Marge saw a lot of change with the building of the base, Ladd Field. Marge tells that at that time, they had just started working on Eielson Air Force Base, and Marge adds that they were building Ladd Field too. They knew most of the doctors at Ladd Field, and used to go back and forth all the time. They saw differences between the Army personnel and the Air Force personnel.

Margaret asks if Marge remembers the fire of 1946 that happened downtown, and says that Marge was probably only three blocks away from it. Margaret says that the fire of 1946 happened in the middle of winter and that it was on the south side of Cushman [Street].

Marge tells that during the flood, they would stand at the window and watch the boats with big pans [?] on the back go by and splash water on their porch. Marge threw a fit because they had nice hard wood floors. The floors survived the flood, however. Their basement, on the other hand, was full of water right up to the ceiling. The weather cleared, and once they cleared the water from the basement, they opened all the windows to dry out the house.

13:52 Margaret wonders if Marge had treasures in the basement that were destroyed by the water. She tells that her whole library and mementos from her father's family were down in the basement. She tried to save some of the books and things, but a lot had to be taken to the dump.

They moved. There was a young couple with a couple of children living right next to them. The couple moved in with them. The husband still visits Marge and brings her flowers.

Margaret says that Marge is a charter member of the Gardening Club and a sponsor of the other gardening clubs that came about. Margaret asks Marge to tell how the clubs got started and how they came about. Marge tells that they wanted to get more people to grow things – flowers particularly. The original intent of the garden clubs was to beautify their homes and to make the community more attractive. They grew everything.

Margaret asks what flowers Marge loves the most, and she tells that she loves all of them. Margaret asks if she did some planting at the log cabin and then she asks, to which public places where they first planted flowers. Marge tells that they started around the old library at 1st and Cowles [Street] and one year they put a lot of wild flowers there. People in those days would come along and dig up stuff, like from the garden of Mrs. Sutherland's who lived across from the old library.

18:33 One year Fairbanks planted delphiniums near the airport. They were beautiful and quite an attraction for people who were coming to town. When they decided to revamp the airport, the roots were all dug up and they never discovered what happened to all those roots. Margaret says that they might be growing somewhere else in Fairbanks and that she sees lots of beautiful delphiniums around town.

Marge tells that she had a beautiful deep blue delphinium that somebody apparently wanted, so they came in and took all the seed pods. They left behind a handkerchief but Marge never found its owner.

Margaret wants Marge to tell more about dances and what it was like to get dressed up at -50 below and go to a dance. Marge tells that there was a lot of competition between the ladies at the town over cooking and trying to out-do one another. Marge remembers how they always dressed up in long dresses and the first time they went to a dance [she hesitates, trying to think about the place]. Margaret lists venues: Eagle's Hall... Marge says she was thinking about the dance club that doesn't exist anymore.

21:28 Marge says it was cold that night and she was flabbergasted with people with skirts above their heads, removing their long underwear and getting ready for the dance.

Margaret asks if most people walked to town to get to dances after having their cars “put up” for the winter. Marge tells that they never put their car up because, since he was a doctor, Paul had to have a car all the time.

Margaret says they lived pretty close to the hospital. Marge tells that when they were building the house, everybody wanted to know why they were building so far out of town. They had great big windows in their living room and dining room that extended from the floor to the ceiling. Everybody knew they were going to freeze to death. [Laughter.] Children would lie on their bellies on the floor in front of the windows and see everything that was going on. Marge says that some places still have small little windows, and Margaret says that she likes to have big windows for mental health reasons.

23:42 Margaret says that she’s heard that Marge is a good cook, and wants Marge to tell something about their Christmas celebrations they had for people. Marge tells that they just put on a dinner and tried to see that everybody had a good time. Paul would take out his accordion and play it. Margaret says that that was when they were living at their house on 5th [Avenue] and Kellum [Street]. [Unclear.]

Margaret asks about housewives. Marge says that they were fortunate that they had good babysitters. She always tried to have three “on the string” so that if she couldn’t get one, she could always get another. Mrs. Maggie [?] down the street was French and very excitable. Marge remembers that one time when she returned from Harding Lake. Maggie had been babysitting for the children – it was during the war time – and “she was just up in the air” because she was worried about France. Hagglands had built their summer cabin on Harding Lake in 1948. Lately, John and Marge have been going there on Sundays since the weather is nice. [More talking about weather.]

26:35 Marge tells that John starts the fire at their cabin to warm it up a bit and he and the dog go on a several hours long hike while Marge keeps the fires going. Margaret says that lots of people built cabins out on Harding Lake those days. Marge says that she thinks that recreation “out here” has started drawing people

from the lake since it's an hour of drive to get down there and there's increasing amount of recreation activities [in town].

They used to go to their lake place even in winter, cut ice for the ice house, and they would often have a [unclear]. People who wanted to go ice fishing and skiing could do so.

27:58 Margaret asks where Fairbanks clinic was located at the time when they moved in, and Marge tells that it was up by the First National Bank building on 2nd and Cushman. Margaret asks if Paul was often called to the bush to take care of patients and Marge tells that he oftentimes flew out regardless of the weather to bring a badly injured patient into the hospital. If they were really bad, he had a nurse to accompany him. Those days, one was on-call for 24 hours a day. Sometimes he had to go to work at night and Marge would have 2-3 calls waiting for him when he got back. If a child was ill, he would never turn down a call and sometimes he didn't even bill poor families.

30:40 Margaret asked if they bartered produce or labor for medical attention, but Marge says that she doesn't know since she was never consulted in those matters. Ever since Paul was 12 years old, he wanted to be a doctor.

Margaret asks if Paul was also from Seattle area and Marge tells that he was born on Bainbridge Island that is across from Seattle. His brother-in-law, George Dowling, was one of the founders of the Mason Clinic along with Dr. Mason. Paul did his medical residency in Seattle and served some extra time in the University of Virginia with Dr. Fonston [sp?] in the orthopedic area.

Margaret wonders if there were many doctors in town, maybe 6. Marge lists: Sutherland, Gillespie, Dick, and Swartz. Margaret asks if they were all associated with Fairbanks Clinic, and Marge tells that Dr. Swartz wasn't and that Dr. Sutherland was on his own. Margaret says that Dr. Sutherland was one of the first doctors to come to Fairbanks. Marge tells that he had a clinic up on the Cleary Summit and that she has pictures of it in one of her scrap books and Cleary Mine was "just over the hill."

33:55 Margaret introduces the topic of family life and wonders what the closest elementary school was. Marge says that as far as she is concerned, the schools did

a good job. She remembers when they first started having the school bus for the winter, her boys were going to main school at the time and they were all excited. Marge managed to get the boys on the corner at the right time to wait for the bus, but they didn't like waiting and decided to walk to school most of the time. Margaret notes that they probably stayed warmer if they walked.

Margaret asks where they got their groceries from, and Marge tells that Lavery had a store at the corner of 2nd and Cushman, and there was a meat market down on 2nd Avenue. Margaret asks if it was between Cushman and Lacey Streets, where there is now a parking lot.

Marge remembers Lindy's [Grocery Store], which came in later to Barnette Street, and Margaret chimes in by saying that he was there until the 1970s. Marge says that old-timers Bill, Bob and Mary Cloth all worked for him there. Pinkses are mentioned, and Marge says she knew him. Margaret said that it started out as a general merchandise store into which Lindy's later moved. That was at 3rd and Barnette. Marge says she doesn't know what happened to it after Lennie died and says she thinks that his wife sold it. Ken Murray was "on this side" of the corner. He is in the [old people's] home right now.

38:32 Margaret asks about Eva McGowan. Marge tells that they didn't know many people but soon after they arrived to Fairbanks, they had an invitation from Dorothy Robe to come to her party. Eva had met Paul a couple of days earlier and she was very excited to meet them. Margaret agrees that she was quite a dynamo. Marge tells that she went to the hospital every Sunday and had something, like a candy, for all the old-timers there. Once she brought Marge a couple of fresh eggs that she had got from her neighbor. In those days one could buy eggs but they might be months old when one got them.

Margaret asks what the occasion was for her to give out eggs. Marge says it was just a social visit. She was a great person who always had [unclear]. Margaret says she is sorry she never saw Eva's room at the Nordale Hotel with her delicate china cups. When Eva introduced Marge at that party, she was a little bit embarrassed.

41:44 Margaret asks if Marge knew lots of the original settlers of Fairbanks. She tells that her husband knew more people because he got around more. Fairbanks Exploration Company [Later, FE Company] people were wonderful people and

Fairbanks wouldn't be what it is without them. They built roads to the outlying areas and to the gold camps. Margaret says that some of the houses at the Illinois Street were FE-Company's. Marge says that they were all FE –homes. When they first were looking for a place to live, they spent a few months in one of those houses. Jack Boswell spent summers out on the creeks so the FE Company officials gave Hagglands a permission to move in there. Margaret tells that they had nice screened in porches and lovely trees.

Marge tells that they didn't have refrigeration in those days. One just put stuff on a box on the front porch during the wintertime. In summer they just used up their supplies so they wouldn't have anything to freeze.

44:45 Margaret asks about Marge's sons' orthodontia and asks what she did about that. She tells that they went Outside for that. A friend of theirs, who lived in Seattle, asked them to go fishing at Green Lake and the boys were thrilled about it, but had a hard time with all the population around the lake. They were used to fishing on the Chena River, which they had all to themselves.

Margaret asks about the changes that happened in Fairbanks during the 1950s and prior to Statehood. Marge says that she sometimes wonders where all the people come from and why they are in Alaska.

Margaret asks if people from town visited university very often and Marge tells that students used to walk from town to University Station over railroad tracks. They could also take Paul Greimann's bus that went between University and "here" on occasion. Margaret wonders if that seemed like a long ways in those days. Marge says that people didn't think about it then, but now they are spoiled, not wanting to go from one block to the next without a car.

47:32 Marge talks about his son who lives in Seattle and whose wife works for the Northwestern Airlines. She also worked for the Fort Wainwright before returning to Seattle. Margaret says that airplanes are a strong influence in Marge's family since Pete too is flying in Fairbanks.

Margaret asks what Marge thinks about Fairbanks after having lived there for 54 years. She tells that she never regretted moving "up here." She finds that people who now move to Fairbanks are very different from people who moved in when

Marge and her husband arrived. In those days, they never locked their doors, but now one can't feel safe even with one's place locked up. There's difference in attitude too. The new people are looking to make lots of money and spend it Outside, not realizing that they have to work just as hard for the big money as they would anywhere else.

50:12 Margaret asks if it's a good life in Alaska if one works for it. Marge tells that they sometimes ran into people who hated being in Alaska and left quickly only to return after a while and loving being back. Margaret thanks Marge for the interview.

[End of the recording.]