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Name and place: Martin Ott interviewed by Margaret van Cleave

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Martin talks about his involvement with politics: He wasn't as well informed as Joe Vogler, but Vogler explained different reasons of why he was opposed to statehood act. The settlement where they'd get about 1/3rd of Alaska and the rest would be federal land didn't seem like a fair deal. If they were going to be a state, the state should have control over most of the land. Martin says that he never trusted the federal government and he learned a lot from Joe.

He also tried to figure out why their country got the short end of the stick, communists making them look like fools, and got interested in politics. Martin knew that with statehood, they would have more bureaucracy.

2:00 At the time, the [Fairbanks Daily] News-Miner published articles in support of statehood, making fool of everybody who was opposed to it. Criticism was put on the last pages. Father Herbert was against statehood and said that the politicians are the only ones who would benefit from it.

Martin has a statement out of a book that's called Revelations and Messages of Mary-Ann Hoof [Revelations and Messages as Given Through Mary Ann Van Hoof], which is dated to November 18th, 1960. It says that Alaska is open to ungodly enemies of Christian world by becoming a state. Martin says that the statement comes from a saint, not a radical.

4:29 Margaret asks if Martin quit mining because the regulations were making it more difficult, and he explains that the reason he shut down was to comply with regulations. He would have had to get more equipment that would have cost a lot and he knew that if he would have started to transition, they could have changed the rules. He decided to shut down instead. He kept the savings instead of investing them in risk.

Margaret asks if Martin did mining with Joe Vogler, but he says he didn't, although they met frequently over lunches and stuff like that. Martin knew that the Democratic and Republican parties weren't very different, although Martin says he favors the Republicans although he's with Alaska Independence Party. He and his wife don't see eye to eye on politics.

6:40 Margaret says that Alaska Independence Party was founded in 1972 as an offshoot of statehood. Martin tells that Joe was building up to it over the years. He and Fred Wilkison, a friend from the Circle country, put the platform of the party together. Martin was always close to Joe and they shared ideas. He hoped the party would become viable enough to get to the ballot.

At the time when [John] Coghill and [Walter] Hickel got together to get on the ticket, Martin was in board of the Central Committee of the AIP and the 6 of them, Joe and Doris Vogler, The Roberts, Rosalyn Stowell, Frankie D. Shay [sp?] and Martin himself sat down and discussed whether they wanted Coghill and Hickel on their board. Joe was in favor of offering them the party. Joe approached Coghill and they talked Hickel into running. Coghill had gone to their meetings for a number of years and he was closely associated with AIP even though he was with Republicans.

9:52 Getting Hickel on was a good thing. [Unclear] was running as a Republican but AIP didn't feel like he was a good Republican and thought they did Alaska a favor by having Hickel run. Hickel was a long-time Alaskan and they expected a lot from him. They wanted Hickel to change things but they haven't changed and Martin was disappointed with Hickel who didn't live up to their expectations.

Margaret asks if Martin thinks that he'll be a one-termer, and he says he does.

Margaret asks if there was a deal where they would have told Hickel what they wanted. Martin tells that Joe Vogler was in a close contact with Hickel and the rest of them went along with him [Vogler?] because he was a strong leader. He was always elected to be the chairman.

11:58 Martin alludes to Vogler's disappearance and says he's got a few ideas [as of why he has disappeared. At the time of the interview, Vogler's body hadn't been discovered yet]. Martin thinks that the government got rid of him because he was an outspoken and influential member of the society.

Margaret wonders if the party has changed much since Joe's disappearance. Martin says it hasn't and that they even improved their platform in a convention in Wasilla in 26-28th of February. It was a nice convention but the daily news in Anchorage ridiculed them. They couldn't really condemn AIP philosophies or political views so they made fun of them for their clothes, coffee habits, and cigarette smoking.

Margaret and Martin discuss casual dress choices of Alaskans in the political scene.

15:13 Margaret asks about the confusion about what the Alaska Independence Party stands for and if it differs from Populist party and some of the other parties. Martin tells that Joe's plan was to convince the legislature and the people of Alaska to vote again for deciding between commonwealth, statehood and independence. In 1958, they weren't given the chance to vote for what kind of a government they wanted. They weren't given more options besides statehood or remaining as a territory. They should have been informed of their choices. The other thing was that the military could vote for that one time only, but Martin says they shouldn't have had the exception since they just voted once and now the people are gone. He adds that they were told how to vote.

Margaret clarifies that the military weren't residents of Alaska but they were allowed to vote that one time. Martin says that that was a sore spot with Joe and there was nothing legal or constitutional about that.

18:51 Martin tells that he was "so damn mad" when he saw the military people lined to vote. He was working at the base at the time and he didn't lower his dignity with voting himself.

Margaret asks if Alaska Independence Party is still working towards the goal. Martin tells that they have to educate the public because lots of people don't know the difference, the advantages and disadvantages. Lots of people think that Alaskans for Independence and AIP are the same thing, but they are a political party who don't want to be associated with other parties. A large number of Alaskans for Independence are swinging toward goals of AIP.

21:12 Margaret asks if they have different infractions within the party, and Martin says that they do. He tells that Alaskans for Independence isn't a real, organized party, but a group to which the AIP is a parent party. Joe Vogler got the AIP to be legal on the ballot.

Vogler ran for a governor, and Margaret says he did that 2-3 times. Martin tells that he's trying to remember if they had petitions with enough people backing them up to get a party established.

23:32 Margaret says that the party has been in existence for almost over 20 years, and asks if the party is growing. Martin says that the party is increasing in size and that it's up to about 18,000 members. Joe started with just a few people. Martin tells that their last convention drew in about 100 people.

Martin asks if they get most of their members from cities, and Martin says they are mostly from Fairbanks, Anchorage, Kenai, and Wasilla. 2-3 members are from Southeast, and 3-4 are Natives.

25:18 They elected a new chairman, Bob Logan from Fairbanks, and a fellow by the name of [Doyle] Holmes, who is from Wasilla. Lynette Clark from Fairbanks was their secretary and their treasurer was Rita [Leake], whose last name Mark can't remember. Margaret asks if they served for a couple of years and Martin says they serve until the next convention happens, which is every two years.

Margaret asks if the government regulations that Martin ran into when he was mining sparked his interest in politics. He tells that it got him into politics, but he had been interested in politics for years. What really sparked his interest was John Birkeson [sp?] who came "up here" in 1966. Martin went to one of their presentations and found that they are an educational, not political organization. He had a lot of questions in his mind because he felt that he's been manipulated and driven into confusion by news reporting. He joined them and learned a lot over the 9 years.

27:53 Joe Vogler didn't always agree with [John] Birch Society because the society criticized the U.N. They exposed the U.N. to be the fraud that it is, but Joe Vogler wanted to work with the U.N. because the United States had a treaty with them for non-self-governing territories to vote for their form of government. Vogler figured he needed to get somebody from the U.N. to sponsor their vote.

Martin thinks that "that's what's done him in" [referring to Vogler's disappearance]. Birch Society thought that the UN wasn't more than a communist organization that was controlled by the Russians, U.S. didn't have a chance in the UN and the Birch society wanted to get UN away from the US. The war in Korea was UN doing and the Russians knew what US was doing.

30:18 Martin says that Birch Society's coordinator wanted them to stick with Birch Society's material only, but Martin didn't want to limit himself to one source of information only. He started getting information from many other sources and really got an education. He learned a lot from Celestial

Revelations that was written by a saintly lady in Wisconsin. She detailed everything that "our enemy" was doing. Martin went through hundreds of dollars' worth of information with the Birch Society that was overlapping with what that one book, that cost less than 5 dollars, told. The book told about the treachery in their government and what the Russians were up to.

Martin likes to have some backup to the information he has and Celestial Revelations has been a good one. There's another saint in New York who has been giving warnings and messages for 25 years. She's ridiculed but so were the prophets in the old days.

Margaret recaps the interview and thanks Martin for his time.

[End of the recording.]