

Call number: 94-13-14

Name and place: Patricia Rogge interviewed by Margaret van Cleave

Date: March 25th, 1994. Rogge's home, Fairbanks, Alaska

Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

Date of summary's creation: 07/17/2014

Series: Pioneer Tapes

Margaret introduces the recording that is with Patricia Rogge who belongs to the pioneering Hering family. She asks Patricia to tell when her parents came to Fairbanks and what their background is. Pat tells that her father, Ed Hering, was born in Kansas in 1874 and he moved to California and then to Seattle, Washington. Pat's mother, Agnes Potts was born in Ireland in Ballybeg County in Ireland. She and Ed were married in 1896. She took a business course and worked at a general store in Seattle.

A couple of years ago when Pat was in Circle area, she found a gas can that had the general store's name printed on it. In 1898 Pat's father got the Klondike fever, took the boat to Skagway and went over the White Pass with a mule or a horse and in 1899 he went back to Seattle to get Agnes and their son, George.

1:43 Agnes had written a little account of that trip. [Pat reads it.] On July 26th, 1899 her husband came to take her and her son to Dawson. They took the mail boat Rosalind [?] and it took them 8 days to get to Skagway where they stayed for two nights, waiting for the train to take them to Lake Bennett. They waited in Bennett for a boat from Canyon for several days. Bennett is just above Whitehorse. In Bennett, they had a room that had been divided in half by a partition, which was not comfortable for them. When the boat arrived, they got on board but the boat didn't leave for a few more days.

They arrived at Canyon and had to wait for a crowd to come from Whitehorse. They slept at the floor of a dining room and Agnes writes that she still remembers the breakfast of ham and eggs that cost them \$2 dollars per plate. They had time to visit Miles Canyon but the mosquitos were terrible.

They had to be able to leave on a moment's of notice and they finally traveled to Whitehorse, making the trip around Canyon and Rapids with a freighter who had a 2-horse team. At the time, they didn't have homes in Whitehorse but only tents. While freight was being loaded onto the Nora, they could see the Whitehorse Rapids.

3:16 On their boat trip, they saw the 30-mile River, Five Finger Rapids, and many other things. They went straight from Dawson to Dominion Creek and lived there for 7 years, moving to Fairbanks in 1906.

Pat talks about the account and how interesting it was to hear about Miles Canyon that is now quite a big tourist attraction. At one time it was so narrow that they had to unload the passengers and walk around before they could board again.

4:06 When Pat's parents came to Fairbanks in July 1906, the big fire had just occurred in May. Fairbanks was hustling, trying to get things ready for winter. Pat's family lived in a tent with their 11 children while their one room cabin was being built on their new property at 7th and Lacey.

Their father had to work hard to provide for their family of 7 boys and 4 girls. He worked at the post office, then hauling wood, and at a laundry. Margaret asks where the post office was at the time, and Pat tells that it was at 1st Avenue. Then a new post office was built on 2nd Avenue.

Margaret asks if the house was the family home where Pat grew up in, and she says it is. She tells that it seems like they built a new room every time they had another child. It was a great, big and friendly house with a big living room and a big kitchen where nobody took off their boots. They just came in and stood by the fire. Company was always welcome and the house was built in a circle and the kids ran around which was fun for them.

5:48 Margaret asks where they got their water. They didn't have water in the house and Pat can't imagine how their mother managed, but their mother melted ice and snow and every once in a while they got water from the laundry for washing. In summertime they had rain barrels and the NC Company ran water on the surface and Pat's mother used to "break it" with lye so they had water for washing. The drinking water came from Fred Musker who was an old-timer with a walrus mustache. His wagon was wood on the outside and it had a tank in the inside with a little stove in it so the water wouldn't freeze. If one wanted one bucket, one put out a blue sign and it was 10 cents a bucket.

When Pat was in high school around about 1928 or 1929, they got well water. Margaret asks if Fred provided cooking and drinking water for the large family who would use lots of water. Pat still wonders how her mother managed everything.

7:31 Margaret asks if the children worked and did chores. Pat says that everybody worked. They baby-sat and worked at the garden. Boys delivered papers and all the money went to the family. Nobody kept their own money. One of Pat's brothers delivered telegrams.

Margaret asks about electricity. Pat tells that Fairbanks was an enterprising town and that the NC Company had the electricity, telephone, steam heat for some houses, and water in the summer. Fairbanks was very dependent on the NC Company and they burned firewood. Their wood yard was where Barnette School is now and there was a line that went from there to the power plant and horses pulled on tracks that made it easier to load. Wood was cut further and further from Fairbanks and Pat remembers how, when they were young, they used to have a picnic at the wood yard where they also got all the birch bark that they needed for the winter.

The wood was stockpiled and there were many people cutting wood. The yard was full of wood that had been cut to lengths for burning at the NC Company. Pat's family also burned 17 cords of wood every winter and the wood was hauled to them. They were unhappy when they got wood that was burnt [from forest fire areas] since it was black and messy to handle in the house. Later, they burned coal and then oil.

10:01 Margaret asks about some of the memorable holidays, and says that the Christmas was exciting time in Pat's household. Pat tells that they didn't have any outside things in the early years and Christmas at home was spent with very practical gifts. Pat's father put up Christmas lights but the electricity wasn't always laid right so it was a tough evening getting the Christmas tree decorated with kids running around. They went to the church in the evening and had their presents in the morning. School had a gift exchange and the kids loved it.

Moose Lodge and Eagles Lodge had Christmas parties for families. They did very little shopping in town but once a year their mother would take them downtown to Snooskan's store [sp?] and to the NC-Company so they could buy things with the money they had saved so they could give them to others. That day was special because they all went to Model Café and had a cream puff. That was a part of their Christmas traditions.

On Thanksgiving they used to get boxes of oranges and apples. Because they were such a big family, stores used to send them food, which was nice at Christmas time. The store keepers just liked their family.

12:12 On Thanksgiving they had a turkey that were skinny, old, turkeys that their mother would hang from a wire to singe off the feathers. They had Thanksgiving one year at their house, and one year at their aunties' place. Their father's brother, John Hering, lived also in Fairbanks and they alternated giving thanksgiving dinners. They walked to their home at Windle Street. Pat remembers walking there with the moon and the stars over them. It was often -40 below and it didn't matter a bit.

They celebrated the longest day of the year with a parade on June 21st. The boys and girls who were born "here" [in Alaska] had an organization that was called the Native Sons and Daughters and they participated in the parade and had races. There was a ball game in the evening. They played baseball and they still do – that's the only remnant that's left.

Margaret asks where the baseball games were played. Pat tells that all the parades and happenings were at the Week's Field where the library is now.

The 4th of July was grand and the celebrations took place at the ball park too and they had races and contests, there were bands and baseball and later they had the first automobile races.

14:07 Herings were "the large family of Fairbanks" and the Miller family was a large family who lived at the Garden Island, across the bridge. That's where the Samon's [Hardware] and the [St. John's] hospital is. There were lots of competition between the Millers and the Herings. Pat doesn't remember how many children they had, but it was a large family.

Margaret asks about the old school on 8th [Avenue]. Pat tells that the school burned down in 1932. She thinks that the school house was typical: red, not very large, and when Pat started, it wasn't very modern. They had bathrooms in the basement.

Their brothers would help shovel pathways and help the janitor to take wood inside. That was part of the game. Teachers didn't travel much because it was difficult to travel, and they stayed long, so they

knew everything about the children. Pat's mother used to have all the teachers over for lunch once a year.

There were 17 people on Pat's graduating class in 1930, and some of them are still in Fairbanks. Charlotte Lynn Thomas, Edith Clausen Hall, Lila Rust, Bill Lavery, Jimmy Morgan, Marie Haggard, Paul Lynn, Jimmy Stewart, Louis Spencer, Austin Gibbs, and Bill Thompson were some of Pat's classmates. One of their early teachers was Mrs. Kelly who taught 1st grade. She thinks they all [Hering children] had Mrs. Kelly as their 1st grade teacher. Pat's sister was only 4 years old when she was admitted to 1st grade because Mrs. Kelly felt bad for the mother who had so many children.

16:38 Mrs. Collins, Mary Adler, Mrs. Tuppa and Anna Beth Reiningham [Unclear] were some of the early teachers. Ben Eielson taught Pat's older brother. He taught either math or science and he was courting one of the 5th grade teachers, which the kids thought to be exciting.

Margaret says that Ben Eielson only taught for a couple of years and he was more into flying and wonders if Pat's brothers got interested in flying through him. Pat says they probably did.

17:36 Then Margaret asks what the children did for recreation in wintertime. Pat tells that they had a great time and it wasn't boring. They were completely dependent on the weather and each other since they didn't have TV or radio. They did lots of ice skating and once Pat skated from Fairbanks to College. It was a good year with wonderful overflow. There were also a couple of skating rinks.

In summertime, they had picnics. Mrs. Bloom was an outdoors person and would take them for walks to Graehl and back. Sometimes an old gentleman who lived in Graehl would take them across the slough by boat. There was also a Norwegian old-timer who made the Hering family skis and stilts.

They walked to the gravel pit and swam there. Herings had a big house and a big yard and all the children came to their house. They had baseball games on the side of the street and they used to roast potatoes in the evenings, so they were never bored. On Fridays they went to the show at the theater for free. All the children in town got in for free. That was in the Empress Theater. There was the John C. Thomas Library that was run by Episcopalians with Mrs. Dunham as the librarian. They were only allowed to check out two books at a time. They read the Rover Boys and Pollyanna books.

20:30 They did some gardening but reluctantly. Their father was a good gardener and they had to have a garden to feed their big family so the children had to do weeding. They picked lots of blueberries and Pat loved to do that. Their mother would put them in a crock with a little bit of sugar. They were put in the basement but nobody thought about freezing them at the time. Towards the spring they'd get strong but Patricia's mother would use them for desserts all winter. She made shortcake topped with blueberries. Margaret asks how far they had to go to get blueberries and Pat tells that their patch was near Gaffney and Airport, and along that way.

As they got older, basketball was the main thing in Fairbanks and everybody played it. They competed with the College team and with Anchorage, and in one year, they even had an Alaskan Tourney where Petersburg won. Everybody in town would go to see the games and some of the boys who played were

Johnny Butrovich, Johnny O'Shea, Millers, Austin Gibbs, Edson Moody, Don Hering. After the ball games, they always had a dance and the manager of the Empress Theater let the high school students use the ball room.

Basketball games were held at the gym and later there was a big gym at the original school that burned down. Pat can't remember the date when it was built. Everybody from town went to see the games. It was something to do on a Friday night.

22:56 Margaret tells that she saw in a paper that William R. Wood said that basketball is the one sport that unites the country. Pat tells that the dances at the Empress were for high schoolers, but they got to go to the town dances later on when they got older. Many young men came for work in summers and there were 10-15 boys for every girl and that was nice for the girls. They had a hay day.

Margaret asks if Pat remembers President Harding's visit to Fairbanks. She says she does. The railroad was completed in 1923, and Harding hammered in the golden spike in Nenana. Then he came to Fairbanks and the town celebrated him with flags on windows and with speeches that were given by citizens. Herings were fortunate to live close to Mayor Marquam who gave a garden party to the president. Hering kids were hanging over the fence. Pat's youngest sister was picked up and she had her picture taken by [unclear] and that was pretty special.

25:08 Margaret asks if Pat remembers the early pilots. She tells that she remembers the early flights and says that she is one of the lucky people who have seen the gradual change from dog team transportation to airplanes.

Pat remembers watching how the first planes flew over and later on, when Will Rogers and Wylie Coast were killed, they all felt really bad. It was a small town and they knew all the bush pilots.

Margaret asks when people first started going to Harding Lake for recreation. Pat tells that the judge's wife, Mrs. Clegg was the first one to camp out there. She took "us" [Herings] out when their father died in 1927, so she must have had that camp from 1925 onward or so. She often took people out for a day or two. Later on, Pat often went there with Clausen family until they got their own place around 1945.

27:26 Margaret mentions that Harding Lake was named in honor of President Harding, and that before, it was known as Salchaket Lake. Then Margaret asks about store keepers that Pat would remember. Pat says they had lots of [unclear] citizens, one being Hjalmar Nordale who owned the Nordale Hotel. That was the hotel where Eva McGowan lost her life. E.B. Collins was a lawyer who was also the mayor of Fairbanks, and a legislator. Ed Stroecker was a banker in Fairbanks and Bob Bartlett, who later became a senator, was with the News Miner and in mining industry, W. F. Thompson was a colorful man and the editor of the News Miner. Pat has a clipping about when her older brother was born in January 25th and the headline says that "Stork freezes tail on way to Hering house." Then there was Tom Marquam, Luther Hess, and Dr. Bunnell who were the leading citizens.

They also had characters. One was a black man was called Hatless Joe. He never wore a hat even in the coldest days because he had so much hair. Then there was Dog Sam who had a red beard and he looked

like a dog. He was a grave digger. One man was called Waterfront Brown. He looked like a detective with his hat on and he met all the boats when they came in the summer and he had an idea of credits and debts of everybody in Fairbanks. Then there was Tanglefoot Merton who sold peanuts, popcorn and pop at the ball games. His voice is unforgettable and he yelled like an auctioneer. He was called Tanglefoot because he often got tangled [?] going up and down bleachers. One man was called Dirtyface Porter. He got his name because he hauled wood and his face was always black. Two-step Louie liked to dance and he'd spend most of his money dancing with girls. Then there was Sourdough Ellis who had the Sourdough Express that Pat's family owned later. There was a Pirate Shop that sold odds and ends and that was run by J. E. Ellis who was called Pirate. Then Burning Daylight was in Fairbanks. Pat doesn't remember him but her brother does. Burning Daylight's name was Elam Harsnish and he was Jack London's good friend. London wrote a book called Burning Daylight.

31:30 Margaret asks about Sourdough Express. Pat tells that her father purchased the business from Sourdough Ellis in 1923. They pulled with horses and the first truck was only just coming in. Pat explains that her father just hauled things that had to be moved around Fairbanks.

Margaret says there must have been very little road system then, and Pat tells that she went once to Richardson with her dad. She had to sit at the back of the truck in case it backed down. They didn't have good enough brakes to hold it, so Margaret had to put blocks behind the wheels when they were going up Richardson Hill. That was a poor road system.

Pat's father continued with the business until 1927 when he died of pneumonia. Pat's mother and brothers ran it until 1935. The boys drove the trucks and Pat's mother kept books.

33:36 Margaret asks when the telephone work came along. Pat tells that her family sold the business in 1935 to Pat's husband Gene Rogge and his brother. They branched out to highway business. Gene took the highway business and later sold the town business to Leo Schotfeldt.

Pat's mother had to work so she worked nights and ran the household at daytime. She worked with Clara Rust and Mrs. Weare. Mrs. Brand had just retired. When people called the call center during Mrs. Brand's shift, she would tell about the whereabouts of the people. For Pat it wasn't good having her mother be an operator because she always knew where Pat was and who was calling her. Also, all the fires had to be reported at the telephone office.

35:03 The fire system was interesting since the alarms had different sounds for different regions. Pat's house at 7th and Lacey would have 7 short alarms and at the other side of Cushman Street it was one long and seven short ones. When the alarm went off, everybody went there and not just the fire fighters. She doesn't know if the people wanted to help or if they were just curious. Pat says that even today, she feels like a fire horse: When she hears the alarm, she automatically wants to go there.

Margaret says people are concerned with fire, and when the Nordale Hotel burned, they wanted to get in their car and see it but they didn't because they didn't want to get in the way. Pat tells that they had spectacular fires because of heavy firing [wood burning stoves?] and because there were no ways to get water to the burn site fast in 60 below weather. They had some disastrous fires in her time.

Pat tells that one year the telephone house burned and they didn't have phone calls all winter. It was in Christmas eve of 1946, says Margaret. Pat says she doesn't remember but it was a quiet winter.

36:58 Margaret asks what happened after Pat graduated from high school, and if she graduated before the school burned. She tells that she graduated before the school burned, and that the fire happened in the middle of the night. She went to see it. It was quite an experience for her younger brothers who now had school all over Fairbanks. They had classes in Eagle Hall and in different churches, but they managed.

Pat and her family only lived a block from the school, which they always found disastrous because the kids who lived further away had to walk to school even if they lived by the library, and they were allowed to bring in lunches whereas Pat and her siblings had to eat lunch at home. Pat felt a bit deprived because of that.

Pat worked at the Empress Theater in the evenings when she was in high school. She earned money ushering there for many years. She continued that even when she went to college for the first year.

38:39 Margaret asks if Pat went to college after she finished high school, and she tells that she did. The school [University of Alaska Fairbanks, then known as Alaska Agricultural College and the School of Mines] was dedicated in 1922 and it was a landmark event. Classes started that fall. They had autos and a couple of motorcycles to join the dedication up the hill. Pat and their large family went with gondola car on the narrow gauge railroad to the foot of College Hill. She remembers that the ceremony had quite a few talks by local leaders and Governor Bone.

When Pat first started the school, she commuted with the little railroad car that left from the depot and went to the foot of the College Hill from where they walked up. The locomotive engineer was Mr. Marsh. Pat isn't sure what they paid for the ride, but it might have been 25 cents a trip. There was only 2-4 trips a day going back and forth. Pat took the car for two years and then Paul Greimann had the bus service. He even picked people up from their homes, making a little route from Cowles, Lacey and those streets.

40:32 It was cold walking to the rail car. Pat lived at 7th and Lacey and had to walk to the depot in dark at 7-7:30 am. Margaret asks about the professors who used the car, and Pat tells that Lola Tilly and Professor [Unclear] and Professor Softwick [sp?] used it. They tried to do a little studying in the car.

Margaret asks if it was a single, steam driven car, but Pat doesn't remember how it was run but thinks that her husband might know.

There was a little path by the University Hill, which was close to where Dr. Bunnell's house was, and went to Old Main [Building]. Pat tells that all the students worked, and the college was wonderful. Boys worked shoveling snow or at the power plant and Dr. Bunnell got them jobs in order to help them go to school. Pat studied business law with Dr. Bunnell who was eager to have students. Pat thinks she wouldn't have gone to school if it hadn't been for the University of Alaska.

Pat worked half-time at the warehouse of the FE-Company [Fairbanks Exploration Company] that had come in to mine, and her sister worked in the accounting office half-time. People tried to accommodate them so that they could continue working. Pat especially remembers Dr. Ryan who let Pat walk from Fairbanks to College on tracks twice a week for a semester so she could get credit for PE because she had no way to attend the PE classes and work.

43:29 Margaret asks if Pat stayed at the campus for social functions, but she tells that she didn't get to enjoy much of the social life because she worked. If she could have, she would have stayed at the dorms. There were lots of parties and dances, and Pat belonged to the business club because she studied business at college. The business club had their own dances, the miners' dances were supposedly the wild ones, and the engineers had their dances too. They didn't have facilities to have large dances so they just had smaller ones.

Pat didn't take a part in the theater but she would have if she hadn't had to work. Sometimes she worked for the FE Company and after that for the Empress Theater in addition to going to school, so she kept busy.

Margaret asks if most of the students worked, and Pat tells that they did. Everybody worked at the dorms, the dining room, the experimental farm, the power plant, and so on. President Bunnell created lots of the jobs. When Bunnell lived in town, he lived a kitty-corner from where Herings lived, so Pat was also familiar with their family. Mrs. Bunnell and Jean Bunnell were her good friends.

45:41 Margaret asks if the president's little yellow house was built later, and they discuss that the house still exists although it may have been moved. Pat says she thinks it's used for a nursery school. When they walked up the hill, they walked right by the president's house. Now it's at the north side of the campus. Pat thinks that Bunnell kept his eye out for everything that they did.

Pat thinks that she was fortunate to be able to take business law with Dr. Bunnell because he had had the experience of being a lawyer and a judge. She graduated in 1935. She tells that she had met her husband in January. She went to College for 4 ½ years but didn't get her degree until that spring. They were married in December of the same year, in 1935. He was in the trucking business at the time and Pat quit working although she worked sometimes a bit for the FE Company if they were busy, and sometimes she did bookkeeping for Northern Commercial Company.

47:42 Margaret asks if by the time the WW 2 started, Pat had her children. She tells that she did have 3 children: Judith, William and Kathleen. Ladd Field and Eielson had been built and there was an influx of military. When Pat looks back to Fairbanks, it started as a small mining camp but later on the big mining companies came in and provided boom to the community. Their social structure changed when the big mining companies came because they had engineers and leaders come in who had nicer houses than the rest. Pat doesn't believe in social status, but there was a difference there. It lost the frontier just a bit, but the [new] people were lovely. Railroad made a change and the military too. Last big change was the oil [pipeline that provided employment for thousands of people from outside of Alaska, booming the economy in the 1970s].

Both Eielson [Air Force Base] and Ladd Field were built, so there was influx [of people] that changed the pattern of their lives.

49:11 They had blackouts during the war because Fairbanks was in a very strategic position. They had wardens to check people's houses and Pat remembers it was bleak to come home from work with no lights anywhere. It was black. Some demolition men were ready to blow the bridges if Fairbanks would be bombed at any time. They would also explode the power house to put it out of commission. It was a difficult period.

Pat had one of her brothers, George, in WW 1. He was in the Navy. Her brother Tom was in WW 2 in Ladd and then in Canada, her other brother Walter was a lieutenant commander in the Navy and he was killed by a Japanese Kamikaze pilot at Okinawa. Hering auditorium was named after Walter. It was a small town and everybody cared.

During the World War time their letters were censored. Pat had lots of letters where things were blacked out or cut out. They mainly censored location information. Travel too was restricted because there was a large amount of soldiers.

51:10 Pat's husband was in trucking and he was very much in demand. At one time he and his friend were running 42 trucks out of Valdez. They were building the different bases and hauling oil. He was very busy at the time and he was at home only very little.

Pat started teaching in 1958 and she taught for 16 years. Her children were grown up so she would go to school to get a few credits and had a wonderful time teaching from 1958 to 1974. He taught the Denali Primary School. Then her and her husband retired in 1974.

Margaret mentions that they were the king and queen regent for the Golden Days. Pat says that that was in 1985, when it was their golden wedding anniversary year.

52:39 Margaret recaps what Pat said in an article: She said she grew up with Fairbanks and talked about the changes. Pat says she never objected the change because it's necessary, but she feels happy for having had the chance to be a part of the early life of Fairbanks. She doesn't feel like she would want to go back in time, but it was a great feeling to have people be like a one big family. There was social equity and no crime.

Margaret asks if there were problem with communicable diseases in school and Pat says she doesn't think there was. Pat says she didn't get chicken pox until she got married, and she didn't have measles either, so there weren't lots of diseases. Pat wonders if it was because of the isolatedness of Fairbanks.

Dr. Sutherland delivered all of the Hering family babies who weren't born in Dawson. There were 11 of them and they were delivered at home except for the youngest one who was delivered at the hospital.

They had scarlet fever when Pat was in high school. Pat's brother and she had to move out of the house and live in quarantine. That scarlet fever was worrisome and then polio came in. Margaret says there

was a bad epidemic in the early 1950s and it was everywhere. Pat tells that it was disastrous and they lost lots of friends. She thinks it was bad all across the United States.

56:20 Margaret says that there was better transportation at the time with highway, air transportation, and says that Pat has seen the change in transportation. Pat tells she remembers when the first cars came in. One of their neighbors had a ford and all of the children sat on a fence, just waiting and hoping that the owner, Bill Hanley, would take them around the block. Bill Hanley had a sheet metal shop and he sometimes took the children for a ride. Margaret says that they lost innocence with increasing transportation but the ladies agree that Alaska is still great and Pat enjoys outdoor activities. Her husband is 83 years old and has 2-3 snowmobiles and is good at running them.

Margaret closes the interview.

[End of the recording.]