

**Call number: 94-13-15 SIDE A**

**Name and place: Barbara Lindberg interviewed by Margaret van Cleave**

**Date: April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1994. Lindberg's home, Fairbanks, Alaska**

**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonен**

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

**Series: Pioneer Tapes**

Margaret introduces the recording with Barbara Lindberg whose parents participated in the gold rush. Lindberg's home, where the interview is conducted, is next door to Barbara's childhood home. Margaret asks Barbara to tell what she remembers about her parents' stories from the Klondike Gold Rush and other places. She tells that she remembers her father talking about coming over the Chilkoot Pass. He headed up for mining since he worked for the Guggenheims in New York and did prospecting for them. He went to Dawson, Nome, and to other places.

Margaret asks what year he ascended the Golden Staircase in Chilkoot Pass, and Barbara tells that it was in 1897. Barbara's mother arrived in 1898. She was a school girl at the time and her father brought the whole family in. William Waechter had a meat market in Dawson, and later in other places in Alaska.

2:17 Barbara's grandfather brought cattle into the country. He brought them in with a barge and drove them a lot of the way. He had a large family with more boys than girls and he brought them all with him. When they had to cross the Whitehorse Rapids that were much worse than they are now, he tied a girl to a boy since he thought that if they capsized, the boys would have a chance but the girls didn't. They never capsized, however. He took his family in in the spring and out in the fall because the daughters were going outside to go to school. Barbara doesn't know how often they went back and forth.

Margaret asks where Barbara was born, and she says she was born in Flat, Alaska. She doesn't remember anything of it because she was two years old when they

moved out. She had her third birthday in Fairbanks that has been her home ever since. There were many more people in Flat at the time when Barbara's family was there, but now there is very little anything. Barbara and her younger brother were both born at home and they had a doctor for help.

4:08 Margaret asks if the house next door to Barbara's current residence was the only house where they lived in while in Fairbanks, but Barbara says it wasn't. They used to live in James House that was across the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the main junior high school. High school was a little red school house that later had a gymnasium added. They lived on the other side of Cushman Street and moved a full block when Barbara's parents bought the house. Barbara was 8 years old at the time.

Margaret asks how they got water to their house, and Barbara explains that their father drilled a well. Then he sampled the water at the College [Alaska Agricultural College and the School of Mines] and they said the water was no good and that they have to find a new system. Barbara's father built a large tank in the basement of their house and had it filled with water. They always had running water.

6:53 Barbara's father and younger brother chopped ice and stored it in saw dust so they had ice all summer long for refrigeration. Usually the ice lasted all the way until the end of the summer.

Margaret asks if they got their saw dust from Independent Lumber that was close by and Barbara says that they did. They put a big bunch of ice together and then covered it with canvas.

Margaret asks about heating, and Barbara says that she was very familiar with wood heat that they used even during the first few years when she and her husband were married. They wouldn't have managed without their neighbor, an elderly man who was wonderful about helping them. Both Barbara and her husband worked all day, but the neighbor kept the fires burning. He would even come in the morning before Barbara and her husband got up to build a fire, and the only thing he asked was for Barbara to make pies for him since he didn't know

how to make them. He also brought wood into the house if they ran out. He watched fire for other houses too.

10:02 Margaret asks about electricity in Fairbanks, but Barbara says she doesn't remember ever not having it. Barbara and her husband built a cabin at Harding Lake and for quite a few years they didn't have electricity there. That was after 1939 and even her two girls remember Barbara cleaning the lanterns that she lit outside, prohibiting children from going close to them. Some of them were kerosene and some gas.

When they got electricity, it didn't seem much easier since they were so used to lanterns, but they didn't have to clean lanterns anymore.

11:54 Margaret asks what Barbara remembers about going to school for first grades. Barbara says the classes were usually quite small and the school was right where there's now another school, but a bit closer to Cushman Street. When it burned, it burned fast because it was a wooden building with oiled floors.

When the building burned, Barbara's father took her to a bay window to see it. Barbara had been ill for several weeks so she couldn't go outside to watch with the rest of the family. The fire happened in the middle of the night.

Margaret asks about fire whistles. Barbara tells that they always blew a whistle when there was a fire so that people would know where the fire was. People could call the telephone central who would know where the fire was.

13:54 Margaret asks if that put them out of school for a few days, and Barbara tells that it did, although the school resumed soon at the Presbyterian Church, Moose Hall, Masonic Hall, and at the Eagles' Hall. Margaret asks if it was according to what grade one was on. Barbara tells that the people who were in high school had to go back and forth depending on period. They had to run if their one class was at the Masonic Lodge and the next one at the Presbyterian Church. Barbara remembers that it was hard to get from one place to another, but the halls were very good and they didn't miss much school.

Barbara's sister says she graduated from the halls around town since she finished her school during that time.

Margaret asks Barbara's memories of Christmas traditions. She tells that their mother had family in Fairbanks since her two sisters lived there too. Their family got together and they had many guests at their long dinner table since their mother always invited lots of people to come. That happened every major holiday.

16:52 Margaret asks if it was her brothers who had the Waechter Meat Market, and Barbara tells that her father started the stores and eventually the brothers took over. Waechter Brothers were Barbara's uncles. The brothers didn't actually live in Fairbanks but for a short time but they lived in Seattle and just visited Fairbanks. They had a manager at the store. The daughter of the manager was at Barbara's school, but she lives in Seattle now.

Margaret asks how 4<sup>th</sup> of July was celebrated. Barbara tells that July is usually a nice month and they spent 4<sup>th</sup> of July at Harding Lake. Barbara has done it all her life. Judge [Cecil Hunter] Clegg gave property to the Girl Scouts but in early days they used to walk from the road and go to Cleggs and to go to the lake for 4<sup>th</sup> of July. They always had a parade for the 4<sup>th</sup> but Barbara's family didn't go there. Swimming season was usually just starting that time.

19:40 Margaret asks if the solstice parade rivaled the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Barbara tells that they always had a baseball game on 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the Midnight Sun baseball game. That was made up by local people and they didn't have organized teams that came from other areas. Barbara tells that at the time, traveling was difficult. When they came from Iditarod, they came by boat and got into a train in Nenana.

Margaret asks if the baseball game was at Week's Field. Barbara says it was, and eventually the airplanes started landing there.

Margaret asks about recreation in wintertime. Barbara tells that they skated and skied and they didn't have as many places to skate then as they have now, and no indoor skating, but they skated outdoors and went sledding a lot. They mostly skated on the river. Barbara remembers how they skated at Independent Lumber

Company, which is east side of town and back towards Airport Road. They used to flood the place to create a skating rink.

22:38 They also used to skate in front of the Main Junior High. The fire department flooded that for quite a few years but that was when Barbara's own girls were young. She skated on the Chena River. They had lights and they built a small building there where they could keep a fire going in order to have a warm place for putting their skates on.

They used to play "Crack the Whip" a lot that Barbara was warned against. In Crack the Whip, "you [unclear] long line, skating, and of course the guy at the end got swung [around]." Barbara ended up in the hospital. One girl that [unclear] and they were going pretty fast and the four of them were going towards each other. Barbara pushed one girl out of the way but couldn't get herself out of the way so she hit [what?] head on. She still has a lump in her forehead. Some of the boys carried her to the hospital.

24:50 Barbara's oldest daughter also did something she wasn't supposed to do and ended up in the hospital: She wasn't supposed to put on her skates and then cross the street but she did, fell, and broke her arm.

25:28 Margaret ask if there were events that were geared towards children or families in the various halls around Fairbanks. Barbara tells that there were dances and that people dressed up in their long dresses. The parents went to the dances with their kids every Saturday. There were dances both at Eagle and Moose halls but Moose Hall has now been torn down. They were still having dances when Barbara and her husband were married. They used to go square dancing.

They had local musicians playing, and Margaret asks if Barbara remembers any of the musicians from when she was young. Barbara says there were piano players and that Billy Root used to play with a group of musicians. George Rayburn and Charlotte Ames, who was a piano player, were playing too.

28:07 Margaret asks if Barbara played music herself, and she tells that she and her sister took music lessons. Her sister studied piano and Barbara violin. She was

better at it than Barbara. She took her lessons with a piano that had gone over the Chilkoot Pass. Barbara's family had it for years and Barbara's parents gave it to somebody. They bought it only after it had come up north.

Margaret asks about a German piano teacher. His name was [William] Gorbracht. He and Dorothy Loftus taught the piano. Gladys took lessons from the both of them. Margaret wonders if teachers came to their students' homes, and Barbara says that Gorbracht always came to their house, but recalls that Gladys often went to Dorothy's place. Gorbracht was also Barbara's violin teacher. He played lots of different instruments but Barbara doesn't remember seeing him perform. Jim Hutchison used to sing.

30:54 Margaret tells that Fairbanks has lots of musicians. Marie Quirk, who is Marie Haggard now, took lessons from Gorbracht too.

Margaret asks if Barbara remembers President Harding's visit to Alaska for the opening of the Alaska Railroad. Barbara says she knows that she was there and has vague memories. She's heard stories that her younger brother was there too and that he got away so that their mother couldn't find her. Then they noticed the car where Harding was waving at everybody and he had Henry on his other arm so their mother was able to get him. It was hot that day and Barbara thinks that it must have been close to 100 degrees. Lots of people fainted during the ceremony.

33:10 Margaret asks if Barbara remembers the early bush pilots. She knew Ben Eielson who called Barbara's sister and Josephine Stewart, who was of the same age, the Gold Dust Twins, because they had a difference in size and because the other was dark and one light. He was a teacher for a while but Barbara wasn't old enough to have him as her teacher. She also doesn't know how Ben knew her sister.

Barbara tells that their mother was very interested in flying and when they knew that an airplane was coming, they often went to Week's Field to see it land.

Barbara remembers once how Ben Eielson was late one time and they had to turn

their car headlights on to give light because the field was too dark for him to land in.

35:54 Margaret asks about the fires and floods that were a common occurrence. Barbara tells that sometimes they had flooding during the breakup and sometimes in the fall. Margaret says that the 1967 flood wasn't that unusual in terms of time. Barbara tells that the time of year was usual but not the size of the flood. When she was in school, they always blew whistle when the ice was going out and they were dismissed from school so they can go watch the ice. Even when she was in college, someone would call and tell them when the ice was going down so that the people who lived on the other side of the bridge would get home that night [since the bridges often were destroyed by the ice]. The big chunks of ice sounded thunderous. Margaret says she's never really seen that, and Barbara tells that they don't have that anymore. The old bridge went up with a broach [?] where one had to drive first up and then down.

Margaret says they don't have that volume of water anymore because dams and diversion have tamed the Chena.

38:37 Margaret asks if Barbara remembers school closures because of epidemics. Barbara says she doesn't remember others except for the scarlet fever during which the school was closed. She forgets how long it was closed. She was probably the first in town to get the fever. She doesn't know how she got infected and the doctors came to her house a few times because they couldn't believe she had scarlet fever. It was Christmas time and the day she got sick was the day after New Year's. She was quarantined at home and wasn't able to go to school for a long time, not until the snow melted.

When the quarantine was over and Barbara wasn't contagious anymore, she still couldn't go to school, but her siblings could. Henry came down with the fever the day before the quarantine was lifted so he and Barbara were quarantined again. They missed almost half a year of school.

Their doctor put a sign on their door that nobody should visit. Barbara's father was able to continue working but he could only go to the kitchen of the house. He

stayed elsewhere. After Gladys could leave, she had to live two weeks with a family with no children and after that, their aunt took her. Aunt Rainie [sp?] had two children of her own.

[End of the recording.]