

Call number: 94-13-19 SIDE B

Name and place: Harvey Marlin interviewed by Margaret van Cleave.

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[Harvey continues the story of how he met his wife.] Harvey and the girl he was picking up from the train station became very good friends who saw each other when Harvey was in town. Harvey got a word that they were going to be sent to Fort Richardson after they were incorporated into the regular army. Harvey told the girl that he was serious with her but the girl didn't want to be hasty because the war was on. They didn't get married then, but promised each other to keep close contact.

Margaret asks if they had problems getting mail in and out of Fairbanks, but Harvey tells that there was a good service within the military. Trains were going and the air travel was picking up so there weren't problems with mail service.

1:56 Margaret asks how long Harvey was at Fort Richardson. Harvey says he doesn't remember exactly but they were federalized in 15th of September, 1941 and they weren't in Fairbanks much more than two weeks after that. They were at Fort Rich for December 7th [the day of Pearl Harbor attack].

Don Adler was their company commander and a well-known person around Fairbanks. He was Dave Adler's brother and an organist at Empress Theater. Don had been a machine gunner in WW-1 where both Don and Dave were wounded.

They were the Company C, D was Anchorage Company and B was Juneau.

3:36 Margaret asks about Harvey's time in Valdez. He tells that Valdez didn't have military and they were brought there to build an encampment. They built one near Mineral Creek where they built a place for a battalion, although they didn't have a full battalion of 1,200 people there.

They had headquarters in Valdez. Military positions were established throughout Valdez Harbor and across the bay. People were signed to duty in those various places around Valdez.

They had a shortage of help in unloading boats that came to Valdez with supplies that were going into the Interior. They couldn't service the boats as fast as they would have liked and asked Harvey and the men to build a port to handle loading and unloading. Most of the people who were drafted in the original group were the hands-on type who took pride in unloading faster than the people who did unloading on regular basis. They took it as a challenge.

7:00 Margaret asks where they went after Valdez. Harvey tells that they came to Fairbanks briefly to relieve the 4th Infantry who were going to European theatre. They were back to Fairbanks for 3 months in the middle of the war.

Harvey tells that he and Patty got married. Harvey got a 24 hour pass out, which wasn't enough to make it back and forth from Fairbanks. They were married in a Presbyterian Church and had a very short honeymoon at Harding Lake where they stayed at Mr. and Mrs. Roy Lund's cabin.

Walt Wiggerson was trucking at the time. The road between Fairbanks and Big Delta was terrible and it wasn't possible to drive it with a regular-sized automobile. Walt took him and Patty to Big Delta with his truck [Harvey's car in the back?] and in Delta people passed the hat so they got enough money for one month's rent. Then the military shipped all the military dependents out of Alaska. Most people went to their families in lower states.

9:24 Margaret asks why people were sent away and if it was because of shortages in Alaska. Harvey explains that the men in military couldn't be concerned for the safety of their families and had to devote their concentration to the military. Today it's different and families are close.

Margaret says that at the time, Alaska was more vulnerable than most places, and Harvey agrees with her. They had already experienced Dutch Harbor. Harvey wasn't at Dutch Harbor but they were sent to Attu Island to guard and do a cleanup at the same time since fighting had been finished. They were monitoring the island. There was quite a bit of debris left and it was in the dead of the winter.

Harvey tells that him and Patty's second daughter Diana [Marlin] was due to be born and needed a caesarian section. Dr. Haggland wrote to the military that the father of the child needed to be present and Harvey got a pass to go back to Fairbanks in January of 1945. Diana was born and Harvey was reassigned to Fort Lewis in Washington.

12:00 Harvey got a gang of military people who all went on a troupe train to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma where they trained a little bit after which they were sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. There they split up their personnel. Harvey's group was sent to Fort Ord and Fort Ansa in California for army tactics but they were there only for 2 weeks, after which they were sent to Camp Kansapera near Calcutta, India, which was just a tent city at that time.

They had a deal with China to be able to use China as a back door to Japan and the [atomic] bombs were dropped in August, 1945. They had heard that something big was going to happen and the bomb was dropped. They didn't get details of the utter devastation and the finality of it all for a while and when the dust settled, they were shipped to New Jersey and across the country to California. There they could either stay in the service or get discharged. They were given a number of reasons to stay but they didn't buy them.

Harvey explains that he talks about "we," but the only two people who stayed with him from start to finish was Jack Kunkel. His wife ran the hotel at 1st Avenue. There's a parking lot where the hotel was.

16:24 Margaret asks if Harvey went back to gold mining after the war and he tells that he started dredging at Cripple Creek. Quite a few of the old workers returned.

There was Sorn Thorop [sp?] and his nickname was Pinky. Harvey had some time to go to city of Calcutta and he saw Pinky coming down the street there. He was in a different organization entirely, in the other side of the world, in a city of several million people, and it was quite a coincidence to meet somebody from Fairbanks.

Harvey went to work for the FE-Company at Dredge no. 10 and he was there until 1951. Mining was winding down even though they had had a wonderful life out there. They moved to town, which was better for the children. When they first moved to creeks, they had no electricity and no running water. It wasn't a problem

and they got electricity and some of the amenities and found themselves from “a hog heaven.”

18:37 Bobby Mitchell who was their good friend and one of their partners asked them to go to find work from town. They took the plunge and bought a house from Al Lennon. It was on Clay Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues, right where the Medamore [sp?] Dairy was located. Charlie Wehner was in water business, delivering water by bucket, and he asked Harvey to come and deliver water with him and told it wasn't hard. In truth, it was 11 hours a day, packing 5 gallon buckets of water.

They delivered to individual residences that put a little card on their window if they wanted water. There were two water services in town at the time. Charlie had one and there was another one too. Each water service had different color cards and water was delivered according to each customer's preferences. Their jugs were made of glass and they were pretty heavy.

21:13 Some people didn't take time to clean their barrels. After a while, Harvey was asked to go work for Clyde Geraghty and Bob Mitchell to Mitchell Truck and Tractor Service. They did freighting from Valdez with highway trucks and heavy hauling and earthwork. They dug many of the basements in Fairbanks and moved houses. “If any house was moved, I'm sure Mitchel Truck and Tractor had a hand in it.”

They moved houses from Chatanika, Ester, and the outlying camps and took them to town. People had smaller houses those days.

In 1952 Clyde and Bobby decided they wanted to get out of the business and get into something more expansive so Harvey and his friends decided to buy the business. They took the first letter of each person's last name. Carl Hefflinger, who was a miner, Erickson, Mitchell and Marlin formed the Ghemm Construction Company. They decided to get into heavier earth work, but after a few more years Heffy decided to get back to mining because that's what he liked.

24:07 Con Frank was an outstanding civil engineer and a good friend so Harvey and others invited him to take Heffy's place and he agreed. They left the company's name as it was and kept going until 1959 when they started bidding

more work and got into a street program in Valdez. They finished the job in good time and kept bidding for more work. They did quite a bit of work in remote outlying sites but stayed north of Alaska Range. Only later they did a joint venture in the Anchorage area, building a bridge at Eagle River. They've been to practically all of the DEW-line sites and St. Laurence Island communities where they built houses.

26:46 They took all the work that they could get and they've completed over 250 projects with \$300 million dollars' worth of work all over the State of Alaska.

Margaret asks what were the challenges in building in "this environment," and Harvey tells that one has to be able to put together a crew who doesn't have to go home every weekend. When they geared up for a job in a remote area, they wanted a crew who knew that they wouldn't go back to town until job was completed and sometimes jobs lasted a full season. Cape Lisbon kept on going for 2.5 years. They have had people lose their minds. Luckily the most severe case recovered fully.

Some people can't stand being in a remote area for a long time. They had a person work in the kitchen who started saying that he's a Peruvian Ambassador. "He didn't have all his ducks in a row."

Their bookkeeper died of a heart attack and they had no way of taking him out because the weather was bad, so they had to keep him in the refrigerator unit at the mess hall and finally Francis O'Connor, who was their superintendent, volunteered to fly the body out if the weather cleared despite of it being against regulations that say that they need a double coffin. The weather broke and Francis asked someone to go with him to keep him company. Don volunteered and went to get food from the mess hall. He asked a waiter to make them some lunches for the flight, and the guy made them three lunches.

31:31 Another chap "flipped his lid" too. He started getting funnier and funnier all the time due to pressure and a doctor was called. The doctor said he would only fly with the person if he was sedated and in a strait jacket. They wrestled with the man to make this happen but after being treated at Kotzebue and Fairbanks, he recovered fully. He just cracked and that happens.

One electrician would get drunk at the bar almost every night but was a harmless chap. One night he got drunk and stood in front of a mirror, lashing himself for a long time, and finished with: “And on top of everything else, for crying out loud, you are wearing my hat!” He was a good journeyman but the remote places make people squirmy. It happens in remote sites when loneliness sets in and one is in very limited parameters and working long days. They kept the days long to prevent people from having too much time on their hands, but they very rarely worked 7 days a week because that caused burnouts. The production curve started going down rapidly after 9th hour. They worked 9 hours, sometimes 10, and tried to give people one day for laundry and things.

35:41 Margaret asks what they had for living accommodations and Harvey tells that they built their own dormitories with mess hall, rooms, office. They could be disassembled.

Once they took one of these buildings and put it on a barge and took it to Kotzebue where they had a permission from one of the people to use their property to store it. In winter, one of the locals was clearing snow and he didn't know his locations too well so he plowed the camp to ribbons.

Margaret asks about working during the pipeline construction. Harvey tells that they didn't work at the pipeline but they built the bridge over the Yukon River with a Seattle-based company. That was their biggest project. They also built a camp at Delta for the Alyeska pipeline crew.

38:34 Margaret and Harvey discuss the business partnership: They went school together, were friends, and stayed in a 5-person company for 42 years. Margaret says that there must be lots of buildings in Fairbanks with their work, but Harvey says that they did more for bridges and road work. They got away from roadwork since they all didn't want to do that and worked more with structures.

They built a bank that is now occupied by [Unclear] office and is now a Jimmy Huntington Building. They've built schools all over the country, done improvements to some of the clinics and the University.

Margaret thanks for the interview.

[End of the recording.]