



ORAL HISTORY REPORT

Interviewee: Jim Ramaglia
Interviewer: Elizabeth M. Tulio

KODIAK/KODIAK SCHOOLS/OIL COMPANY
JIM RAMAGLIA

Interviewer - Elizabeth M. Tulio

1. Tell me something about your family such as:

- Parent's origin (Country)
- Reason for migrating to the U.S.
- Reason for moving to Kodiak
- Schools in Kodiak

Could you tell me about the schools in Kodiak during the time you attended?

Do you have children who attend schools here in Kodiak?

Compare the differences in the school system from the time you were in school versus the schools you know now.

What kind of problems do you see that students now faces in Kodiak?

2. **OIL COMPANY**

- When did your family start the oil business in Kodiak?
- Where did your supply of oil come from?
- How was it delivered in Kodiak?

THE GREAT TSUNAMI OF 1964

What were the effects of the tsunami disaster to your company and what kind of steps did you undertake to prevent oil spill or other related problems that could have occurred during this time?

Was there a break in service?

How did you meet the demands of your customers?

EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL (PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND)

We are all aware of the disastrous effects the oil spill had on our environment and fish and wildlife. What kind of pressure (I'm sure there are some) do the environmental groups or organization have on oil companies?

What are the regulatory changes imposed by the government to oil companies to avoid such disasters?

How about training of your personnel? Do they have to be certified in the proper handling/delivery of fuels? Who trains them? How often do they have to update their certification?

LETS TALK ABOUT A HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO HERE:

-THERE IS AN OIL SPILL IN KODIAK SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE ONE IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND.

What kind of actions would you undertake so that the spill will be contained?
Can we handle it locally? If not, how fast can we get help to avoid the spread of the oil spill?

Do you think Kodiak can handle such an emergency?

NOW LETS MOVE ON TO THE LIGHTER SIDE OF THE INTERVIEW.

-Would you share some colorful stories about Kodiak?

-What was Kodiak like then?

- What changes have you seen over the years?

- If a new comer comes in the area, what would you want them to remember of Kodiak when they go back to their own communities?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN REMEMBER ABOUT YOU?

E.T.

Could tell me something about your family, such as family origin. Where did your family come from?

J.R.

Seattle and Italy. How far back?

E. T.

As far as you can go back as you can go.

J.R.

My dad's side his parents came over from Italy. That was in 1912. Then around 1920, they moved to Seattle. My mom's family came here dating back during the revolutionary war.

E.T.

Okay, your mother's name is Sally?

J.R.

Yes. My grandmother was from Illinois and his grandfather was from Massachusetts. Then they moved to Seattle as a young man. My grandparents (maternal) were German immigrants. I'm not sure how they got to Seattle, but he got there as a young man. He went to spent some time in Alaska to travel and then went back to Seattle and he always said that he had fond memories of Alaska and the opportunity came and basically they moved up here in Alaska.

E.T.

When they first moved here in Alaska, was it right here in Kodiak?

J.R.

No, it was in the Copper River Delta knit town called Chitna. Its kind a ghost town now.

E.T.

You mentioned something about Italy? Where in Italy?

J.R.

Rebatoni

E.T.

Oh! Okay, is that about the Sicilian border area?

J.R.

No its about 30 miles South in the outskirts of Rome.

J.R.

Did you lived there? I lived in Catania, Sicily.

J.R.

Okay, how about schools? Could you tell me something about schools? I assume that you went to schools here in Kodiak?

J.R.

Yes, I went K- till I graduated here in Kodiak.

E.T.

And I assume you also have kids in school?

J.R.

Yes

Could you tell me something about the differences that you see from the time you went to school, the changes that had occurred, lets say the number or size per classroom versus to today's.

J.R.

I guess, its seems like classrooms may be bigger now than then. The first six years I went to school downtown about where the Kodiak _____ is and it was after the or it would have been condemned after _____

E.T.

It that a public school?

J.R.

Yes, it was a public school. And I got to seventh grade

Classes were smaller, much smaller in the systems. The grades school and the high school were all housed in what is now _____. My graduating class that was in 1969 about 80 students.

E.T.

What kind of problems do students faces now in Kodiak?

J.R.

Lots of peer pressure, and that's more complex than what I had to put up with. Such as gang related, drugs. The drugs of choice when I was in high school was alcohol but now I really think that there is little bit more that, that gets around but it wasn't really a problem. Now, drug and alcohol are a problem and gangs. My son is enthralled by all of them. You know certain kind of enhancement about them and

there something about them and we toss about it a lot and then there is racial. Its kind of upsetting me. Most of his friends are Hispanics and there is this racial pocket that Hispanics are saying they don't like Filipinos, and Filipinos don't like the Hispanics and some whites don't like the other Asians or something. When I was in school, there was basically the natives and Caucasians and there is always the Filipino people, we never really see each other different. We didn't normally.

E.T.

Could you perhaps give me some ideas on the difference because, I presume that there were lots Filipinos, during the times when you were going to school.

J.R.

No, not really a lot.. Most of them were natives. And anybody who was in the bottom of the wrung it wasn't the kids of Asian extracture. If somebody made some racial slurs it was against natives. There's only one or two blacks in the schools, never more than that and say they weren't viewed a whole lot different. We knew they were different but there wasn't enough of them for a racial identity, so they mix in but there rest of us. there wasn't even that.

E.T.

Before I came to interview you, I checked the list from which Gary had and oil business has never been one that has been interviewed and I said this the big thing here in Alaska and nobody had even thought about that so I think its really fascinating to do your interview.

E.T

When did you family start the oil business?

J.R.

n 1950.

E.T.

Was it here in Kodiak?

J.R.

Right. Right here.

E.T.

I assume that your father who started the business?

J.R.

No, it was my grandfather.

E.T.

So how did he start the business?

J.R.

It was Union Oil Company. It was the Union Oil that first distributed oil here in Kodiak. Then Union Oil got a contract to service aviation gas to several airlines all thru Alaska and they got to be able to provide it from services here in Kodiak. So they decided to start the services in Kodiak. Also, they considered the contract but lost the contract that year and the few years. Those are the tanks that were original, couple of the buildings, that part of the dock structure is the original.

E.T

During the 50's, where did you get the supply and how were your supplies transported? T

J.R.

ill 1978, Union Oil supplied from California and Anchorage.

E.T.

Did you say most of the structures you have here are mostly still the original ones?

J.R.

E.T

Yes. During the great tsunami of 1964, was any of the structure destroyed. Never. The building you see there and building right of the garage and the other buildings were built on the dock when the water came in it tore part of the deck and pulled the building up and down and back then they look at things differently and had boulders and the value of salvaging the buildings wasn't even considered.

E.T.

What about oil spill? Did you have any?

J.R.

That wasn't even an issue back then. If you had drained, you just drained into the lot and not even worry about it. That became an issue in the 70's. You couldn't do things today that you did in the 70's or 80's.

E.T.

So basically, you say there was no federal regulation as far as...

J.R.

No environmental stuff happened in '87. I started working in 1971 and but I didn't really start full time till 1975. We didn't worry about that stuff. I remember a spill up at the tanker in 1973.

E.T.

What sort of like a guideline did the environmental group set in 1971 and compared to that one we have nowadays?

J.R.

I don't know what the guidelines were, but you were not supposed to get any oil in the water and if you did you were supposed to take it off the water. That was the way it was in '75.

E.T.

Did they impose any type of fines?

J.R.

No, they would kinda slap on your hands and ... but I only remember one incident that involves a tanker but there wasn't really a whole lot.

E.T.

When you are talking about oil spills then, and in comparison would you consider them as minor incidence?

J.R.

Of before?

E.T.

Yes. No, people would discriminate spill and I remember working here from college and stuff, and guys would put the hose in and they just drink coffee and would go by and eat and they go buy to find that they come out and fuel had gone in the water and its just not much of a concern till we got the first change.

E.T.

Do you think that could have added to some of the depletion of some of the fish....

J..R.

No. Not at all because years after that, were some of the biggest years for salmon season. They were not that big. They were 50 to 100 gallon could have happened that and so much have changed now.

E.T.

Is it because of the strengths of the environmental group or is it because finally they are feeling the effects?

J.R.

Well, no I think its the effect that is really doing it. I think it is the laws and the people enforcing it. Before there wasn't anybody really enforcing it. And the Exxon tank spill

pretty. Big oil losses, big oil lawsuits.

E.T.

As a matter of fact my next question is about the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

We are all aware of the disastrous effects the oil spill had on our environment and fish and wildlife. What kind of pressure (I'm sure there are some) do the environmental groups or organization have on oil companies?

J.R.

..... (inaudible after new tape) Refined oil in scope is one of the smallest companies in Alaska now. We still share the same common problems .

E.T.

Such as?

J.R.

Not an annotated amount of time. After the Exxon, State of Alaska and the head of the Federal Government task, all of these laws, to make sure all this won't happen again. To do all this things to fit oil companies and would have gotten here eventually but it would have much more organized and much more directive to our exact needs. It could have been done rationally . We have horrendous amounts of demands. We are trying to fulfill them now.

E.T.

What kind of changes that, in your own view, would like to see as there are lots of pressure and there is the demand that might not even be related to you or your needs (oil company)?

J.R.

That is probably hard to explain to somebody else. One of the things we have to do is by putting these liners on and now water sipping thru the ground will kinda handle a lot extra gallons of water a year that's going to be caught and will be dump there. Those are the kind of issues we're facing. A lot of equipment upgrades to prevent spills.

E.T.

How often do you check if your equipments are up to par and won't be any concern?

J.R.

That's uh.. we have a schedule set up and we're suppose to check so many times a year. ... (inaudible) we just get in the office and say what has happened, what we're supposed to do and all.

E.T.

Do you have somebody to do the cleaning?

J.R.

We do everything sometimes. We do most everything. Most of it is just common sense. You know, we just have to scale up the bulk of the spill and we've all done it here.

E.T.

Do you provide some sort of training to your personnel to handle the fuel?

J.R.

Yes.

How do they get that?

J.R.

We provide that, most of the training is really done on the job.

J.R.

So, you don't have ... say like every year they need so many hours.

J.R.

Yes, yes that's the environmental kind of stuff, to provide some sort of training.

E.T.

Do they need to be certified?

J.R.

Yes, they get certification called HAZ-MAT.

E.T.

Let's talk about a hypothetical scenario here:

-There is an oil spill in Kodiak as big as that of the one in Prince William Sound. Is your company fit to handle it

J.R.

We couldn't do that. It will be a million gallons.....

E.T.

Well, that is why I said hypothetical question. What would you do?

J.R.

This plan here which is the Discharge Prevention Contingency Plan. All three government agency is required to plan around it. We basically pull it off the shelf open it up and it tells us who we're suppose to call, what we're suppose to do and all that., its about 250 pages.

E.T.

Do you have the personnel in the area that would have a quick response?

J.R.

We have an operating agreement with Petro Marine. That,.. if one of us has a problem, we'll respond. So that doubles up our force. There are some other group. We belong to Spill.. well its called Alaska Chaudux Corporation.

E.T.

Where is the base?

Chaudux, the office is in Anchorage. We started off... I say we because I'm one of the board of directors. It was formed by the refined oil transport in the state, because we needed coverage in order to transport the oil. We have probably about \$80K worth of equipment \$80K to \$100K, maybe more than that worth of equipment here in Kodiak to band together, to respond to sort of thing that is in addition to the resources that of Kodiak Oil Sales has in place. So, we have the capability of a pretty good response on water response. We did a drill last year and we had an hypothetical spill and we responded with our own personnel and while we were responding Petro Marine showed up with personnel and equipment and assisted our group. That was a joint drill.

E.T.

Where did you have the drill?

J.R.

Right off the dock and then Alaska Chaudux had brought in a team and helped do the training for us. So we start off the spill, activate our resources and brought down and within one hour from when it happened, we had three boats in the water, formed 2,000 feet of boom in the water. We had the whole thing boomed out. We were prepared for it. We had another drill. Same scenario, its by DEC and it was about two weeks later. It was unannounced. When they say unannounced they'll say "in this month's period we're going to show up and you'll have a drill".

E.T.

What is DEC?

J.R.

Department of Environmental Conservation. We did the same drill, but we didn't pull in the bigger resources but we did have Petro Marine's response people and we surrounded the spill and had cleanup in roughly less than 45 minutes and the Coast

Guard and DEC said that next time consider doing this and that. There is some criticism (critique) form.

E.T.

How often do they (DEC) do that?

J.R.

We have unannounced drill and response every two years. And when they say unannounced they give you a month and that is when they're going to do it. In my case, I was getting ready for a trip or something and so I called them up and they squeezed the time frame. I was going to be out of town at the beginning and so they move it up.

E.T.

Lets say they did the drill and you were out of town. Who is going to head it then and who's going to lead your group?

J.R.

We have other people that is in the plan, that would be in charge and the women in the office, know what they are supposed to do and their jobs is to make calls and do some observation and some guys will be in the boats. But there is enough training that I wouldn't worry.

E.T.

So, 250 pages of the plan?

J.R.

We have 250 pages of the plan and that is partly to satisfy three agencies and there is a lot of stuff in it that some of it was never required to have it (Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan).

E.T.

What is the title of the plan?

J.R.

Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan.

E.T.

How often do you update the contingency plan?

J.R.

In the plan, we outline improvements that are required by the law Different agencies definitely have different times. There is the EPA is out there, the Coast Guard is certainly out there too, three years. I think the EPA has a longer time frame because

they know that the states has a requirement .

E.T

Now on the lighter side of the interview:

Would you share some of the colorful stories about Kodiak since you have been forever almost?

J.R.

Since birth.

E.T.

Just talking with some people and they are all saying that there is a big change in Kodiak, like the mode of transportation, more people. What are some of the things you can share?

J.R.

Kodiak's changes.... it has come become a lot more civilized in the last 20 years.

E.T.

What do you mean by civilized?

J.R.

It used to be a lot more fun free spirited. The fishermen were always independent . A lot of these guys, if they were not doing this, they're probably be in charge of big corporation. A lot of them are smarter. They don't fit that kind of a mold there. Real independent....Risk takers. They put their own lives on their own and that's what they wanted to do and makes them different. They are a more uncivilized from the 30 years ago when there were more bars than churches. People were rowdy. They did a lot of drinking in the bars. It gets them something to do. Its really something different now. Its the frontier type of spirit. Carefree. And people that were here, didn't fit somewhere else they were different, they were higher class.

E.T.

I know that there are also some physical changes in the area. Would you name some? Let's go back from the great tsunami. How did after it (Kodiak)?

J.R.

What the water didn't take out, has been removed. The Federal Government funded that. The buildings in the downtown area is pretty much everything had been washed away or tom down. And Kodiak had grown from there. When I was thirteen years old I remember going up rabbit and duck hunting in what is now known as Selief Lane. That was really getting out in the woods.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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