

**Dal Valley**

**by**

**Penny J. Russell**

**Alaskan History**

**April 1996**

**Gary Stevens**

Penny; When were you born?

Dal; March 26. 1915

Penny; When did you come to Alaska?

Dal; 1937

Penny; What brought you here? Were you Navy ?

Dal; I always said that the back door was on the North side of our house when I left home.

Penny; So you kinda had to move out. What did you do when you got here?

Dal; Originally I came up here I had a cousin who livin here in Kodiak and I decided to come up and see what all this fishin was about I guess, I didn't go fishin when I first came though, I went to work for Harry Howel running a little logging camp over in Afognak.

Penny; How many years?

Dal; I went to work for Him in spring of "38" and I worked for him about a year I guess, went partners with him on a sawmill, boat, and logging camp.

Dal; Then I quit that and I went to work in 1940 on a suction dredge, Georgia, it's a Navy base, helped set it up, eventually I became mate on it, a lot of local boys worked under me on that, then from the dredge I went to the beach, drove truck, drove the fuel trucks on the base during the construction then after the fuel trucks I went to the big dump trucks,

*continued:* helped build the runways all over there, and there is another little thing

Dal; they had ten yard trucks with a long gravel deck on the bottom of them, so when they loaded them to heavy so when you would dump the front of the truck would go up in the air. There was a hill right in the middle of the runaway we took out and we would back up to the ocean there and at times you truck would go up so as your front wheels was as high as the cab one beside you dumping, scared the life out of you.

Penny; Now was that here in Kodiak?

Dal; Ya and from there I went fishing again.

Penny; And you started a family up here? When did you marry your wife?

Dal; In "47"

Penny; So you were single quite a while.

Dal; I was married first in "39" to Laura Larsen and that is were my son Bob Freeman... There was two boys and a girl and we were separated and after the war why I married Ann there in "47".

Penny; Now did you stay here during the war in Kodiak?

Dal; I changed jobs 25 times during the war. My birthday was the 26th. of March and I was just one year above the age for drafting and then April one they raised it a year but I had my birthday five days ahead of time and I was a 1A but I wasn't called. I worked everyplace, I ran boats between

*continued:* here and Seattle, I worked for the Army Engineers in Anchorage, drove truck up there, I worked 29 days at Boeing on B-29's, I worked for Foss Tug and Barge, for Smyth Tug and Barge, Lotten Lumber Company, Renewed Pulp and Paper, Bonaville Power and Light I was the head faller between Allen and Briminton then I skipped there and went back and went back and joined the Merchant Marines in the South Pacific.

Penny; How long were you in the South Pacific?

Dal; Just one trip, the war ended before I shipped out again, of course I skipped ship and they wouldn't catch me anyhow, but I was back here fishing when the war ended.

Penny; Did you ever get caught for that?

Dal; No, fact is I got an Honorable Discharge from the Merchant Marines.

Penny; Well good, thats not too bad.

Dal; You know they never considered the Merchant Marines like they did the Army or the Navy or Marines. They had no benefit what so ever and yet percentage wise for people enlisted the Merchant Marines had the heaviest loss of anybody and just about three-four years ago the changed it and I finally my Honorable Discharge showed up.

Penny; Only a couple years ago then.

Dal; Ya, it's kinda funny another party on the same boat with me, we shipped the same boat, and he sent all his stuff in and they got no record

*continued:* of him even being on a ship and I know he was cause he was my half brother.

Penny; Not anything?

Dal; When I came back after the war here and I made a deal with Port Bailey for piling for the salmon traps, so I went over to Port Bailey to see about getting out piling and they didn't want to take anymore, Howard Bailey said no, that they had gotten poor piling during the war and about that time Chuck Turner walked into the office, shook hands, chatted a minute and I said something to him about it and he said they would take some riders for the trap if it was okay with the big owner... So riders would go on top of the trap to hold the web up. So I asked Chuck Turner well how long are they? And he said what's the matter can't you tell in the dark how long they were? Cause they knew I used to rob their traps in Raspberry Straights.

Penny; So you did that with Port Bailey for how long?

Dal; I just cut the timber on Afognak Island, delivered the piling to them. I never fished for Port Bailey over the years or worked for them just sold them stuff.

Penny; I see, so you were independent?

Dal; Ya, then in "46" why I started the sawmill on Afognak Island and I sold lumber all over and sold about a million feet a year there. I had the

*continued:* mill for about 18 years I guess. The tidal wave took the mill away it was all built over the water. Lost the whole deal and the shops and powerhouse, didn't lose any family houses but lost a lot of equipment, so then I just decided to fish from then on again. I fished salmon every summer practically, we'd run the mill all winter and fish in the summer, except I think 2 years when we were building housing on the Navy base, I sold so much lumber I had to run through the summertime, and when they built these houses(Aleutian Homes) I furnished the timbers underneath all 344 of them. All the foundation work is from our sawmill.

Penny; Wow, that is a lot of wood.

Dal; Used to tow it in, I had a seine boat called the Lois Lee before I bought the power scow I had built in "46" in Seattle and I went down and ran it up and I used it for delivering lumber and stuff and towing a 60 foot flat barge and then later on I bought the Rosemary for that purpose. Then I delivered lumber to a lumber yard in Homer and one in Kenai, hauled lumber down to Juke Bay, to the oil fields, all around the Island, then when the tidal wave came along why I took one look at that and decided I was a crab fisherman for sure.

Penny; Decided your fate right there uh. That must have been real hard; you lost everything.

Dal; Yep, and during all this years of milling I also did a lot of

*continued:* construction work. I built the original boat harbor(docks, piers, piling) in Kodiak, all the running facilities, helped design it and everything and built the docks at Old Harbor and then I works as an engineer for the state; built a 300 foot suspension bridge in Karluk, I hauled everything down there and raised the towers and all that kind of stuff. I wound up finishing the bridge and turning it over to the state.

Penny; Is the bridge still there?

Dal; The bank slid in and collapsed and the rivers changed and they don't even need it anymore.

Penny; I see.

Dal; The river don't come out at Karluk where it used to at all.

Penny; Right, I have never seen it over there.

Dal; I have got pictures of the bridge here. (attached to transcript)

Dal; About 1960 because I used the power scow to haul everything down in one trip.

Penny; Now 60 is when you built this bridge?

Dal; Yes

Penny; And when did it ...

Dal; I don't know just when it collapsed.

Penny; 300 feet, that is something else.

Dal; (showing pictures) Here is one of those towers being built on the

*continued:* ground, then it was my chore to set them up.

Penny; Oh I see, this was for the bridge. Did you go to school for architecture?

Dal; No I just grew up in the logging camps and stuff. Fact is when the state guy wanted me to work down there after I hauled everything for him, I wouldn't do it and he said darn he just had to have me cause I was so used to all this stuff. I said I never even graduated from high school and you have to have a licensed engineer, so he went to the governor and got a special permit for me to work on that.

Penny; Really!

Dal; This is all my equipment that I used down there. This is my flat barge I put my donkey on it(logging unit), and I anchored that in the river, two anchors up river and two anchors down river then I could move it anyway I wanted it. We had to pre-load this stuff on the bridge in order to get the cables to stretch the right way before we really built the thing. It was quite an operation.

Penny; I tell ya, 300 feet is a long bridge.

Dal; This one(picture) was in 1958 when I was building the inner boat harbor here in town, the one that went out in the earthquake...

Penny; Ah, look at you(picture of Dal on boat).

Dal; Those were the days when you had no rigging on the boat, you pulled

*continued:* your seine by hand, you pursed it, and bailed and pitched them with no power on the boat at all...

Dal; There is a boat I was laying along side when a big explosion started a fire on it.

Penny; Did you get it out?

Dal; No, I took all the people off.

Penny; That was in 1970?

Dal; I guess it was. The Fransico V. was the name of it.. It is called East Point now... I took 35 people off of it.

Dal; This is a little boat called the Fu-Fu... I used it to raise the boat I had sank...in fact I am anchored right over the top boat that is on the bottom, 43 feet under.

Penny; What boat is laying on the bottom?

Dal; The Uyak, the boat that I sank.

Penny; Oh, how many boats did you sink?

Dal; Just one. I was all alone when that happened...

Penny; So Dal are you going to tell me about the water?

Dal; Well there was a lot of things that happened in town and one of them is in "41" I was living on Mission Road and we rented water from two city officials, they had a pump at the foot of 7th. street in a big well house and I think we paid 10 or 15 dollars a month for water(I can't remember what

*continued:* it was). That went on for a couple years and until the city extended the street and dug up the water line on what is Rezanof now and our water was shut off. Come to find out those guys didn't have a well they had it tied into the city, selling city water.

Penny; We can't say who those city officials were but...

Dal; I don't know if I ever told you we had a jail break here in town too.

Newt Salburg was the jailer, the old jail is long gone now, they had a couple of Ouzinkie boys in for some reason I don't know of it but during the night they conked him on the head and beat it and they were trying to find them. Finally the boys went out Mill Bay and hiked through the woods and they were over by Ouzinkie Narrows and Burl Climber and I had an airplane... Burl took the U.S. Marshal and Mac and flew them over there and the two sheriffs were going up the beach into the alders, they thought the guys were in the alders and they were yelling and Burl was taking movie pictures... Mac McKinley was behind the U.S. Marshal and he took his gun out, pointed it in the air and pulled the trigger thought it might scare those guys in the bush but that Marshal jumped that high in the air( indicating about 4ft.).

Penny; Did they get the guys out of the bush?

Dal; Ya they got them out of the brush and brought them back to town.

That is the only jail break I know of, although they had one woman

*continued:* prisoner "Fanny Fury" that set the jail on fire when they put her in, she tried to burn it down when they were in it. A lot of the guys knew her by a different name but...

Penny; One of the local women?

Dal; Ya.

Penny; So when did you retire?

Dal; In "83" I sold the boat and quit fishing, but I worked for King Crab, I had been fishing for them for 17 years so I repaired their forklifts, some of their trucks and took care of their hydraulics power cords and stuff like that until they changed hands then I just quit altogether.

Penny; But you still go out to your cabin and where is your cabin?

Dal; In Afognak Bay-Litnik River or Afognak River. It goes by two names, depends upon whether your a new comer or an old comer...

Penny; How long have you owned that?

Dal; Well I really don't, it's my son who owns it because I can't own property on the Island, it has to be a Native. We built it in "78"...

Penny; Well do you have anymore people you want to get in trouble Dal?

Dal; Well I could say a few things about Harold Haglin I suppose.

Penny; Ya tell us about Harold...

Dal; Harold was a nice guy to hunt and fish with. We fished together a lot and boated together, bear hunted. At one time we were on the main land

*continued:* and we seen a bear way up on a ledge in the grass land...I wanted to get a picture of a bear standing up looking at me with my camera so Harold took my rifle and I took my camera so we sneaked up through there, came up behind some alder where you could look behind and the bear was laying down. He looked at us and I stepped out and he didn't move, I walked toward him a little ways and he didn't move so I waved and hollered at him and all at once he jumped up and turned around and ran; I was taking pictures and I heard Harold make a thump and I looked back and he was stretched out on the ground with my rifle. There were humics and the grass was high, he fell over one of them and fell down and when he got up he had a ptarmigan; the gun barrel had broke the ptarmigan neck that was hiding in the grass...

Penny; So any other good stories about Harold?

Dal; I can tell you about the first time I knew who he was in "39".

Penny; He will never hear this tape Dal.

Dal; Buskin River doesn't enter the bay now where it use to, they moved the river over this way so they could build the airport, and where it used to come out was right straight into the bay and I was fishing with Jack and Jimmy in "39" and we went to the Buskin to see if we couldn't scrape out a few fish and there was a boat with gear right across the creek; they did this all the time with the little boats; there were two guys up the

*continued:* river with plungers coming down chasing fish and that is the first time I met Harold Haglin.

Penny; Creek robbing eh.

Dal; Oh, everybody did it..Those little boats would only carry 7-8 hundred fish you really didn't hurt nothing.

Penny; There wasn't that many boats around either.

Dal; No there wasn't. I can remember when there was only 80 units of gear fishing on the whole island counting gill-netters.

Penny; How many canneries then?

Dal; See Kodiak had a little over 600 people when I came here, it was all down town, up here where we are sitting now was a lake(King's Dinner); all timber; but there was only one cannery in town a little floater, Frank M. had a little barge that had a cannery on it and I think it was his second year in town; he used to have the cannery at Kukiak and it burnt down so then he started a little floater here in town. Port Bailey used to be on this dock down town "Kadiak Fisheries" and I think in "36" they built Port Bailey and in "37" was the first year they canned fish at Port Bailey.

Penny; Do you know anything about the cannery at Kaluta Bay?

Dal; That was Shearwater Fisheries and that belonged to Port Bailey.

Penny; How long did that run?

Dal; I really don't know but I think the tidal wave put an end to it, I know

*continued:* it did in fact...

Penny; So Harold is still alive.

Dal; Harold and I went trout fishing when I had an airplane of my own for 4 years, I think that was along about 1960. Harold was Fire Marshal in those days as well as driving oil truck... I picked up one morning and went up to upper Paramosa lake and hiked up the creek and started fishing. It was real brushy so you couldn't just cast out like you do in a lake so we just took a hook and swing it out and the fish were so hungry sometimes if your hook didn't touch the water the bait fish jumped at it...

Penny; So did you live at the mill until "64"?

Dal; No, we moved into town; the kids had to go to high school. We had our own school you know...

Penny; How many people did you have working for you?

Dal; The most we ever had was 22 people. We had 8 families all together, built it up to 8 families and I forget what year it was when we had to start our kids grade school, so I built a school house and hired a teacher myself and got books from Oregon and Washington, from Kodiak (schoolbooks), got the desks from a school in Oregon and we hired an elderly woman named Mrs. Ross. She couldn't get a job teaching school on account of her age but you couldn't have found a better person. I had her for three years so I was the school board you see; my wife and I. That was

*continued:* quite an experience being a complete school board. Then I talked the Territory into furnishing a teacher. We had a couple of good ones but then we had a couple of terrible ones. There were ten children in school; took ten to open a school, could drop down to eight and at times we did have only eight after school got going. One year we were two shy, so I borrowed three kids from town for six weeks to open the school and then brought them back to town.

Penny; It was a state law or rule?

Dal; Yes, state law. We had a woman teacher who was separated from her husband, I guess she decided to give it another try so midterm(Christmas time) she left so the state gave us another fella by the name of

Toothacher... So on the way over I picked him up in town. He came on the boat and I told him we were having trouble with one kid in school, the teachers couldn't handle him, I don't care what he did to break him and if you can't do it I'll just have to fire his dad and move the family out of camp. The way the deal was set up on the edge of the beach family houses started on one side right on around to the other...The school was about 100 yards from the back of the mill and there was the family house (I won't say the name) was on the other side. The mill was shut down and I happened to walk out of the back of the machine shop just as I heard the school door slam, big kid yelling " I'm going home to tell my dad and he'll

*continued:* come over and beat the hell out of you for that." Evidently the school teacher had whooped him in school, he'd had all he could take. This kid went running across, I watched him going slamming into his house, about 2 seconds later out of the school house came Toothacher right across, he never stopped he just barged right into that house. Sometime later the kid's father was down on the dock, I said "Have a little problem with your place?" Problem! Man he said, " That school teacher comes barging into my house and says I whooped your kid and if you don't like it I'll whip you too. They never had any more trouble at that school.

Penny; That probably took care of it.

Dal; That was the best teacher I've ever had.

Penny; So you've done about everything; you've been a school board, a logger, a machinist.

Dal; I put in 3 years on the harbor board. Put a year on the planning and zoning board but I don't care for those committees I was never built to go along with a lot of things.

Penny; Ya, it is real hard to be part of a group like that. Sounds like you did enough on your own. So did you ever own any property in Kodiak?

Dal; I owned 6 lots out on Mission Road and I built a home out there and I then I built an apartment building, then I cleaned up a big area and was going to put in a big apartment building and I wound up in a boat accident

*continued:* with the power scow; the guy was drunk and I couldn't prove who's fault it was because you can't prove they were drunk in court and it cost me my home and all the property...

Penny; So you lost everything with that one.

Dal; Yes, I lost my home and duplex and the lots I had all surveyed and laid out, the city had put the water into it. I was all set...

Penny; So you just had to start over from scratch. How old were you when that happened?

Dal; That happened in "66" so I was 68...

Dal; I'll tell you about the winter of "46-47" was one of the coldest ones we've ever had here, Afognak Straights all froze, Kuprionoff Straights froze. You couldn't get into the village of Afognak, couldn't get into my sawmill and I was in town... I was stuck in here 6 or 7 days or longer until the northwest went down, it was 6 below zero. A bunch of people wanted to go back to Afognak and the Wakefeilds were in town; it was January. So I had 20 people on board the Lois V when we left town. I had to put it in on the beach between where the ice broke and my sawmill above where we lived; we didn't have the mill yet, we had just a little piece of dock built. I went to my house and there was nobody there and Ann had hiked over to the village and had to pack our daughter who was just a baby those three miles, snow was about that deep(indicating apr. 3 feet) and down below

*continued: zero...(Ann Valley)"I went to Gertrude Berestoff."*

Dal; Anyhow I didn't know what had happened; the fire was out, the house was froze over, the only thing that didn't freeze was a half a sack of potatoes because the dog was asleep on top of it. The people walked from our place to the village except for Howard Wakefeild and his wife and we stayed over night and in the morning when the tide floated the boat off the high tide mark I took the Wakefields but I had to go up and down Kuprionoff clear out into the Shelikof and back in the other end of Raspberry Straights...Next day I got home and got the fire going, what had happened was the oil pipe had froze up and the stove went out. So I got that going and I hiked over to the village and found her(Ann). A couple days later her brother came hiking in from up Raspberry Straights, he walked across the bay with a packsack on his back with a pup in it. He walked right down Raspberry Straights, the ice was that thick...What happened was kinda unique, everything was froze like a billiard ball and it turned to pouring down rain just as hard as you've ever seen it for a day and a night and the water couldn't soak in it just ran off the land. There wasn't a breath of air moving and the temperature dropped down to 6 below zero and that fresh water standing on top of the bay froze set up right now...

Penny; How long was the ice around for?

*continued:* It lasted for probably a week...

Dal; We also had a lot of bear coming around the camp all the time we had the mill. It was a great place for bear there were always hanging around. I don't know how many bears we killed altogether but there was a big one hanging around, he had a track 11 inches across and they would find his tracks around all the buildings around these little kids so I had my riffle loaded and setting up high so the little kids couldn't reach it. I got up just at daylight one morning, I had to do something down on the beach and I looked out my window and the house was about 40 feet from the beach and there were 4 bear coming up towards the house so I ran and I grabbed my rifle and I ran out the door and down the porch and up over the bank come these bear... when the big one stood up and looked at me I shot it from the waist in his chin he went over then I shot 2 more. I killed the three with the first three shots and by that time a little dog had run up under the house and was barking at the other and I wounded it(bear) and I thought well now it is safe to reload my gun and I went to get some shells and discovered i was naked, I didn't have a stitch of clothes on. So I was really bare shooting...Six days later we killed 3 more bears.

Penny; How many kids do you have?

Dal; 3 by my first wife then adopted 2, then we had 4 more...

Penny; Do they all still live here in Alaska?

*continued:* From my first marriage Bob is the only one living in Alaska, Dick the younger boy is single and I don't know he is at any given time, he trades in ivory and ivory work; beautiful work, he is an artist...and the girl after Bob she is way up in the government in immigration, right now she is in Portland Oregon...

**Skipped to the middle of side B of tape**

Dal; After I came up here I told you I was married first to Laura Larsen then eventually I married Ann.

Penny; And that is your wife now?

Dal; That is the wife now and she had 2 children and I adopted them and then we had six more and the oldest one was a girl Virginia and she lives in Seattle and her husband is Walt who just died here a few months ago...and the next one is Howard who is here with the Native Corp. all this years; runs a computer system...travels all over for the company... And then the next ones were twins (a boy and a girl) Jerry and Tessy and Tessy died in "79" she was in Denver. Jerry is living at Wasilla...Perry is after that he is the one at home and then Carolann and she is the youngest. Danny and May were the two of Ann children I adopted. Danny is here in town in fact he is here loading ship in Danger Bay and May died a year ago last July "94" and I've lost track of how many grand children there are and I know there are some great grand children.

personal note: Dal Valley has many more great stories on logging in Washington as a child, the earthquake of "64", and the building of Kodiak so there is probably another 40 minutes of tape left that I could not transcribe due to time and length.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

For an index of other recordings in this collection see the index:

96-49-01\_I01.pdf