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INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE HATFIELD

AT KODIAK, ALASKA

VR: Could we talk about your move to Alaska, when that was, and most importantly, what were the reasons surrounding the move?

CH: OK. We came to Alaska in September, 1970, to a school in Larsen Bay. The school at the end of August, early September, didn't have any teachers. The superintendent at the school here in Kodiak, Dr. Marshall Lind, knew Dr. Paul Jensen, Professor at O.C.E., who lived at Monm<sup>o</sup>th, [Oregon]. Dr. Jensen had had Doyle [Charlotte's husband] in a class and knew that Doyle wanted to come to Alaska at some time or another, and so he wanted to know whether Doyle wanted to come on over and talk to him about Alaska. We really didn't know that this was going to be an interview as such, but anyhow we went to his house. He said that there was an opening in Larsen Bay for two teachers, and I had just gotten my degree and didn't have a job, so it seemed just opportune for us. So we got on the phone with Dr. Lind at his home and interviewed over the telephone. We were hired in the middle of August, like the 25th or something like that. Doyle had already been working at the school there, and he had to get out of his contract at the junior high in Independence. We closed up a five bedroom house and we were here the 5th of September, with four kids in tow.

VR: So, you have four children. What are the children's names?

CH: OK. Our oldest is Gwen, our only daughter, then our sons Ken, Dennis, and Ben.

VR. That was a big move from Oregon to Alaska. My goodness, were you excited about that?

CH: Yes! excited, and a little scared I think, moving so far from home.

VR: So, tell me about the trip. How did you get here?

CH Well, we came on Western. I told you the other day I thought it was Wein, but it was actually Western Airlines. It was a prop plane, and we flew direct from Seattle to Kodiak. It took five and a half hours. I thought we would never get here. We stayed overnight in the K.I., which was the Kodiak Inn, which is now the Westmark. I still call it the K.I.; a lot of people here in town do if they knew it back in those days. Then we took the Kodiak Western Goose out to Larsen Bay.

VR: Goose? Now, I am not familiar with that plane. Tell me about it.

CH: That's a plane. A Grumman Goose. It holds about seven or eight people, or something like that, plus a pilot. We, Doyle and I, and our four kids, came here with sixteen pieces of luggage. All that we owned in the world we brought to Alaska. Well, it wasn't all that we owned. We left all the rest of what we owned in Oregon, but that's what we brought with us sixteen pieces of luggage; one of

them was a big trunk. We put all of that in the Goose and took off from the channel where the Kodiak Western building was. The unique thing about the Goose is that it has wheels on it that can drive on land. You can drive right into the water, and it's a float plane. The wheels come up into the body of the plane and you take off from the water. Then, when you get to wherever you are going, you land in the water, and he puts down the wheels, drives up on the land, and puts you out. That's the way he dumped us on the shore down on Larsen Bay. We, our kids, and our sixteen pieces of luggage, and I thought I was at the end of the world.

VR: Were the children very apprehensive about the ride out there?

CH: Oh yes. Our son, the eldest son, is afraid of heights, and it was a very bumpy ride. It was his very first flight on a little bitty plane, and his fingers were glued to his seat. He was hanging onto the seat bottom. We had to pry open his white knuckled little fingers when we got there; he was scared to death!

VR: Now, exactly where is Larsen Bay? Isn't it due west of Kodiak?

CH: Well, it's west, and what I would say south, southwest I guess. It's about a forty to forty-five minute flight. I don't know how many miles it is exactly.

VR: So tell me exactly what your reaction was when you arrived in Larsen Bay?

CH: Well, like I said, I thought I was at the end of the

world. If not the end, you could see it from there anyway! I just looked at my husband and said "Whoa! what have we gotten ourselves into?" It was really a cultural shock coming from, well we didn't live in the city in Oregon, but it was definitely bigger than what the village was. The village had about seventy-five to eighty people. The school was a two room school and the student body averaged about twenty five. I think our highest, at one point, was about thirty-two students, and four of those were our own kids. There weren't that many children in the village. It was different!

VR: What exactly did you have in the school with regards to rooms and so forth; how many teachers were there; and how many people were on the staff?

CH: There were just two teachers. My husband was what they call the principal, the teacher principal, and he had the upper five grades. Let's see he had the fourth through the eighth grade, so that would be five grades. I had the kindergarten through the third grade. There were just two rooms. We had a full time aide, and that was Mona Johnson. We shared her between the two of us for the day. Then we had Scotty Broughton, and he was our custodian. He was also hired by the school district to keep the generators going because the electricity for the school were these great big humongous diesel generators, and we didn't know anything about those. It's a good thing Scotty was there because he kept them going. In fact, a kind of weird thing happened

one night. We were in bed asleep in the middle of the night, and we both woke up and said "What was that?" It wasn't that any sound had come, it was that the generator had quit. It woke us up because the generators went night and day, and when it quit in the middle of the night it woke us both up, because all of a sudden it was quiet. It woke Scotty up too!

VR: Tell me about the area you were in. Just exactly what was on Larsen Bay?

CH: Larsen Bay is a fishing village mostly, although there were large canneries there at one time. The canneries were not working when we were there, but the buildings were left and that's where the store was. It was the cannery store. The post office was in the store also, and the planes that we flew out in were our link to the outside world. In fact, it got so after we had been there a while that you could hear that plane coming two or three miles away. That was the mail plane. That was your tie to your family, or whoever you left back home, your town or whatever. You know it brought in all kinds of supplies like food, besides the mail.

VR: I assume the food was pretty expensive?

CH: Oh yes, very.

VR: What did you do for entertainment on Larsen Bay?

CH: Well, this was in 1970. They didn't have T.V. out there. In fact they didn't have too much T.V. in town I don't think. So, we decided, in fact I think Pictures Inc.,

from Anchorage, sent us a catalogue of films, and we decided that we would rent films and then charge the people to come and see them. We thought we would buy something for the school with the money, if we made any money, because the films rented for oh between about sixty dollars, and the more expensive ones maybe went up to one hundred and twenty, or something like that. We felt for the good ones we could probably pay that, or it would all even out or something or other. Our very first film that we rented was "Old Yeller," and the village folks they just loved it, and so we showed it on Friday night, and they wanted to see it again on Saturday night. We said "Well, maybe this is a two nighter," and so we did it again on Saturday night. We popped popcorn and put it in a big yellow rubber waste basket, and then sacked it up and sold the popcorn. We made juice and Koolaid, and we sold that. We made enough money to buy books for the library, and also to buy wide angle lens for the 16mm because a lot of the movies that came were wide angle films. Then we put paper up because we didn't have big screens. We put paper up across the whole front of the classroom so that the wide angle movie could be shown on this home made screen. That was our entertainment in the village.

VR: Sounds like an inventive way of making money. You mention that there was a library. Where was that?

CH: It was just in the upper grades schoolroom in the corner. There were some bookcases that held the books for

the library. It was very informal, and the teachers were in charge for checking things in and out.

VR: How long did you stay in Larsen Bay?

CH: We were there for just that one school year. Actually, school was out for us about the fifteenth of May because we went to school on Saturday. The kids were at school anyhow. There wasn't anything else to do in town, so after Christmas we went just about every Saturday because the weather wasn't so good and they couldn't play outside. We made up about two weeks of time there by going to school on Saturdays, so school was out about the fifteenth of May. One day I remember, it was about the middle of February, and it was a day like today which was nice. We had had about a week and a half of yucky weather. We called school on account of sunshine, and went and had a picnic. You can do that when you are the only teachers in the village.

VR: I am sure the children appreciated that.

CH: Yes, they liked that.

VR: What made you leave Larsen Bay?

CH: Our daughter was an eighth grader and there were no high schools in the villages at that particular time. I just looked that up yesterday just to make sure when that Molly Hootch case came before the legislature, and it was in 1975.

VR: Explain that to me please.

CH: Molly was a girl in one of villages, I am not sure where. She and her family decided that she should be able

to go to high school in her village rather than go to a boarding school somewhere else. They brought this case before the legislature, and it was decided that the villages in Alaska should provide high schools for their students, and that is what is known as a Molly Hootch case; so that is why they began building high schools in the villages. At this particular time in '71, they didn't have high schools, so Gwen would have had to move into town, and we wouldn't have done that. We probably would have moved back to Oregon if we couldn't have found positions in town. We asked the superintendent if there would be teaching positions in town and he said yes there were; in fact, the counselor at the junior high was leaving that year. I am not sure if she was going back to school or if she was leaving permanently. I think she left permanently, because I don't think she came back. Doyle wanted to get back onto counseling because that is what he was doing before in Oregon, and there was a job at the Base Elementary school in second grade for me.

VR: So, you really felt you wanted to stay in Alaska?

CH: Yes, we liked it. The kids loved the village. In fact we would have stayed there longer if there had been a high school because they really enjoyed being out in the wilderness. They really enjoyed it.

VR: So in 1971 you moved to Kodiak?

CH: Yes, into Kodiak.

VR: Would you tell me about that trip.

CH: We left the village around the middle of May and we



came into town and thought well are we going to rent or are we going to buy a house or what? We talked to the teachers here in town and they said Bill and Ann Barker had their house for sale and so <sup>we</sup> went out and looked at it on Thursday. We went and looked at another house on the same day and we decided that the price of the Barker house was right for us. It was \$27,500. That sounded like a good price. The other one was like \$55,000, and we thought wow! that's too much money.

VR: What size houses were both of these?

CH: Now, Bill and Ann Barker's was a two bedroom. It was on a large lot on Mill Bay. The other house that we looked at did have an apartment downstairs, so it was an income property, but it was on Rezanov, and we thought that it would be noisy. It's right there on Potato Patch on Rezanov and of course it was \$55,000 and it seemed like a terrible amount of money. We looked at the house [Barker's] on Thursday, bought it on Friday, and we left town on Saturday. We went back to Oregon for the summer.

VR: So immediately you came back you started school, and where was that?

CH: When we came into town, I knew I would be at Base Elementary school at the second grade. We checked out where we would be teaching, and so that's what we did when we came back. I taught at the base in the second grade for two years, and Doyle went back into counseling. Then we asked for a leave of absence to go back to school. I wanted to

get my Master's Degree in library so that I could do the library out at the Base Elementary school, because I knew that the librarian there was retiring.

VR: The Navy was here during that time?

CH: That's correct, yes. The first, at least the first year that we were there I had the Navy and Coast Guard kids and I think some the second year too, but I think the year we were gone in '73, '74, the Navy pulled out. [Records indicate that the Navy pulled out on July 1, 1972]

VR: Do you recall how many children were in the classroom at that time.?

CH: Um, there were lots. Let's see. I think the first year I was out there I had twenty eight, and the second year I had twenty nine in the second grade class.

VR: That far certainly exceeded the numbers in Larsen Bay.

CH: Yes, right, yes.

VR: How long did you stay in the house that you purchased from the Barkers?

CH: Let's see. We were in that house until we built the one that we are living in now on Larch Street. We built that one about sixteen years ago.

VR: What can you tell me about Kodiak during that time, the stores and the roads?

CH: What were the stores like? The stores, well there was only Krafts downtown. That and City Market, of course. I can't remember when they built Waldos, but I think it was in the 80's, and of course Safeway is just recent. The

roads seemed to be better then than they are now, and of course the Rezanov extension wasn't there. Rezanov only went as far as where East is, East Elementary. The main thoroughfare through town I think was Mill Bay Road. We always drove Mill Bay Road, because we lived on Mill Bay.

VR: And the biggest source of entertainment in Kodiak, what was that?

CH: Well, the theatre was there. For us though, it was our kid's activities in school, basketball, wrestling, and things like that. In fact, my husband, for many years, was a referee in basketball.

VR: I have always found the people in Kodiak to be very, very friendly. Did you find that to be equally so while you were here?

CH: Oh, yes. I think Kodiak has a special flavor for friendliness, unlike a lot of places in the lower 48 and unlike a lot of places in Alaska too. I think there is a special bond with people here that you don't find other places.

VR: Traffic wise?

CH: Oh, it was a lot less then. There weren't nearly as many cars on the island as there are now.

VR: Did the children fit in very well here in Kodiak?

CH: Oh, yes. They loved it here. After '73 I took a leave of absence and took all the kids and went down below and I worked on my Master's Degree in '73 and '74. Then we came back and I expected to be full time librarian at the Base

Elementary school because the position had been there when I left. In the meantime, due to budget crunches or whatever, they decreased the librarian's job to half time. In '74, '75, I was half time librarian at Base Elementary in the morning. In the afternoon I had kindergarten kids at Main Elementary school because Elizabeth Santoro, the other kindergarten teacher, had such huge classes that they took off eight from each of her morning and afternoon class. I had sixteen kids in the afternoon class. That was a precious time. Those kids were good.

VR: Can you recall who were on the faculty at Peterson [Base] school at that time?

CH: No, other than the principal was Don Peterson. The school was named Base Elementary then, but now is named Peterson Elementary, named after him after he died in an unfortunate hunting accident at Thanksgiving time.

VR: What happened after you left Peterson?

CH: That year that I was half time librarian at Base Elementary and half time kindergarten teacher, my friend Carol Hagel said "I think the librarian at the college wants to get back into teaching English and so I think you should go see Carolyn Floyd about maybe you could be the librarian at the college." I said "Oh, I don't know about that," but I did go out and talk to Carolyn, and she said that yes, Frances did want to get back into teaching English full time and so I made application, and I was hired in the fall of '75 for the librarian's job here at the college.

VR: I am sure you have seen many changes over the years. Could you tell me about those changes?

CH: Well, yes. When I hired on the library was one big open room about this size. At the end of the hall where the present business offices are and adjacent to the patio there, those big windows were in the library. There was no door on the library. It was open. There were about 4,000 volumes when I came to work. There were five or six faculty members. There was Frances, she was Frances Rutledge then, she is now Frances Cater, Mark White, Gary Stevens, Ron Lind, Munroe Gonzales was our media faculty person, and myself. Now we have nine faculty members, so we have grown a little bit over the time.

VR: And how many members that you have mentioned are still here.?

CH: Still here? Just Gary and myself.

VR: Oh! you are old timers then?

CH: Yes, we are the old timers.

VR: Who has seniority?

CH: Oh, he does and he holds it over my head by about a week.

VR: So, tell me about the changes now. How many books do you have here now?

CH: Now we have about 24,000 books roughly, titles about 22,000, I would say, encyclopedias have more than one volume in them so there are more volumes than there are titles so . . . but I would say we have about 22,000 titles.

VR: And you also have Gnosis here?

CH: Oh yes, Gnosis is the university's automated system for keeping track. It is a data base. It has all the records of what the university own, whether its Fairbanks, Nome, Juneau, Kodiak, or wherever. That was a big job. We had to get all our records on to Gnosis which was a linking project. We began in 1985 and it took us about, well we have just finished up with the reference collection last fall, so it took us a good long time, about five or six years to get everything on there.

VR: When you refer to us who would that be?

CH: My helpers in the library. I have three people who work for me Mignon Brown is my library aide; Janet Bane is the media technician, and Steve Kreber is a media technician also. He has the TV station.

VR: I know we talked about automating the library, but I didn't ask you about the preparation as far as the Benny Benson building was concerned. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

CH: OK. In September of 1979, they began clearing the land here and getting ready to make an addition to the Benny Benson building of what would be the library addition and what would be these three classrooms, one of which we are sitting in. They made a big hole out here to put in the foundation for the building. It filled up with water in the wintertime, and we had a big swimming pool out here. They began in '79, and I believe the building was finished in '81. I think it was the summer of '81, and we moved in

right at the beginning of the school year of '81. In the meantime, because of the construction that they had started here, we had to move out of where we were at the end of the building and move into two classrooms into what used to be room two, I believe its 107 now. That was the main circulating collection. Then, we moved the reference books into what is now the book store, so that the library was in two different places for that one year that reconstruction was going on. Then, in the fall of '81, we moved all the books from there into where they are now, thank goodness. It was a big chore.

VR: What other changes can you recall in connection with the library?

CH: OK, in 1989 I believe that was when Carolyn Floyd retired. The council, the College Council, decided that the library should have a name. We decided that we would call the library "The Carolyn Floyd Library."

VR: Why Carolyn Floyd?

CH: Because of all her work, she was the first director, sometimes called a president and sometimes a director, and I think there were other terms too over the years. The terms changed, but she was always our leader here at the college, which was originally the community college. I believe it was started and they held their first classes at the high school in '68 and then the Benny Benson building was built. I believe they moved out here in the fall of '72. As I said the library was at the end of the hall in an open room, and

when they built the new kind of enclosed library, it has a door now that you can lock, it was felt it would be nice to name the library after somebody who had worked for so many years, and all these buildings were built under her direction and the student body had increased many times over with her direction.

VR: I noticed that there is a photograph of her in the hall.

CH: That's right we had this large photograph with a plaque underneath for dedication when we dedicated the library. We named it "The Carolyn Floyd Library," and that was in August of 1989.

VR: I know she's very deserving of that recognition.

Finally, I feel I must ask a question which was asked on a recent midterm exam in Dr. Steven's "Alaskan History" class, and that is do you feel that Alaska is unique, and if so, please tell me about it.

CH: I feel it is very unique in that it has been really an opportunity for my husband and me to grow in education here. When we came it was a lot different than what it is today. At that time it was a very great opportunity and of that we are pleased we were asked to come help and be here at this place and at this time. My husband is retired. He has been retired for two years. He retired from the counseling job at the junior high. I am not sure when I am going to retire because I am having so much fun here at the college.

VR: Are your children still here?



CH: Yes, our children are still here. Our daughter is here, and she has three children. They love Kodiak. Our son is the Manager of the warehouse part at Krafts downtown. Our youngest son is in Oregon going to school hoping to enter education and get a degree. We don't know where he will end up. He will probably stay down there because he is going to marry a girl from there. All of them have loved Alaska, Kodiak in particular. I have been to many other places in Alaska. I have visited Nome, Fairbanks, Juneau, Sitka, Haines, Valdez, Cordova, and Anchorage, of course; you have to go to Anchorage to get to anywhere else in this state; but, no place in Alaska is quite like Kodiak.

VR: That's truly a very nice thing to say about the community that you live in. Well, I must thank you very much for being so cooperative and very open. Thank you very much Charlotte; I appreciate it.

CH: You're welcome.