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INTERVIEW WITH CHARLIE JOHNSON AT KODIAK, ALASKA

- JR: Could we talk about when you first got to Kodiak and some of the things you remember about the earlier times of Kodiak. If you have a special remembrance let's talk about that.
- CJ: As a narrative of the person you are interviewing, maybe I should give you my name, where I'm originally from, and how I got here.
- JR: A little of your background.
- CJ: OK, I left Virginia in 1949 to come to Kodiak. I left Seattle the end of August 1949 on the Steamship Denali. It was an Alaskan Steamship, it was one of the last trips to Kodiak. At that time they made about one trip a month. It carried passengers and freight and for \$90.00 I came up stewage and there were 9 or 11 or us in stewage. Stewage was at the stern of the ship, right by the engine room.
- JR: Super economy type.
- CJ: Ya, and the galley was right above, so all the good fumes came down into the stewage area and it was all a bunk area with about 4 or 5 bunks high. What it was used for was in the Spring it would bring up all the cannery workers and in the fall it would take them all back (to Seattle). I was right in between John Morton of Kodiak who was a guide and a bush pilot up here at the time so I kept him cornered all the time on bear stories and hunting stories. He is still in town. I think he is in poor health now. Bell Dairy's older boy was one of the group. I remember him well because he was one of the few of us that didn't get sea sick and he says the reason he didn't was because he always had a beer in his hand. Anyway to save money I came up (to Kodiak) that way and it took 11 days to get here. It got so boring that by the time we got to Seward... no, the first place was, ya Seward. By the time we got to Seward we were just looking for something to do and they (the steamship) were short of people to load salmon aboard, cases of salmon, so they came down and recruited most of us and we worked all night in Seward. We worked 2 hours then had coffee and donuts, every four hours we were fed, we were fed a big meal. When we were finished at Seward the ship whet to Homer. We had to rest between Seward and Homer which was a short rest. We worked over there (Homer) for about 8 or 9 hours then the ship turned around and went back to Seward and we worked there for about 8 or 9 hours and then we came to Kodiak.

JR: Did you get wages while you were working?

CJ: Yea, we got wages, overtime wages too after the first eight hours. So I more than, much more then paid my passage up by that little workout. Anyway I arrived in Kodiak, I think about the 11th of September. My brother worked on base. He came up during the war, around January 1945. He is the one who got me up here. Shortly after I arrived I went to work in the pipe shop on the base as a plumber's helper. Kodiak was really different then. The highway to town was up above the existing slide, a little narrow road, you know down by Sea-Land dock, there where that slide is now. The highway was up there at about the top were the slide begins.

JR: Well, is that the road where you start out on Pillar? The one you can take all the way to Bells Flats.

CJ: No, this was on the front, on the Bay side. Let's see, you know, where the gravel pit is. That is right above Gibson Cove, right in there. Instead of dropping down into Sea-Land Dock you stay at that level and went on into town. You dropped down just before you got to that big apartment up on the hill, just as you come into town now.

JR: Is that Cope Street?

CJ: Before you get there. Before you get into the final turn which takes you right on into town. There is a six plex apartment building up on top of the hill. Up there, somewhere in that area there is where the road dropped on in to town. They had so many slides in that area, big rock slides over the years, that's why they went down into the road down below.

JR: It forced them to move it down.

CJ: Yea, and we were used to coming to work in the LCM at times. People lived in town on account of rock slides. After I went to work on the base I lived in the civilian barracks C-13. There were 3 civilian barracks existing at that time. The fourth had burnt down. C-13 was packed with civilians, two to a room. They were "H" shaped buildings and I don't know how many people it held, but...

JR: Was the base called the 17th Naval District?

CJ: Yes. Later on I went to work out of Public Works Engineering over to Comms 17 in 1967 as assistant to the District Civil Engineer. The Admiral over there then was the Commandant 17th Naval District/ Commander Air Alaska/ Commander Alaska Sea Frontier. They closed it down in 1971. That's when I went back over to work at Public Works

Engineering again. They shut the rest of the Naval Base down in 1972 when the Coast Guard took over.

JR: Was the Coast Guard Air Station here before 1972?

CJ: There was a Coast Guard Air Station but it was just a small detachment and not like it is today. They did search and rescue with the old Albatross Aircraft and I believe they had the old C-123 twin engine which looks like a C-130. Anyway, when I got here in 1949 I just couldn't believe that that afternoon my brother took me out to Anton Larsen Bay and the dog and humpee salmon had the creeks out there clogged. You could walk across the creeks on the backs of the salmon and I just couldn't believe that was possible. All I could do was think about hunting and fishing at that time. But anyway, when I got here in 1949 I just couldn't believe that afternoon, the day I got here, my brother took me out to Anton Larsen Bay and the Humpies and Dogs had the creeks out there clogged. You could almost walk across the backs of the salmon and just couldn't believe that, that was possible. And all I could think about was hunting and fishing at that time.

JR: Before you came up, was that what enticed you to come up, the hunting and fishing.

CJ: Yes, Aw Yes.

JR: It still hold true then.

CJ: Yes it does. There was game all over the place at that time. No deer season so you got to see deer everywhere. First of all there were hardly any vehicles here, private vehicles. And on a Friday night out there on the base, which was payday, there would be 17 or 18 cabs and they would all be lined up there by the civilian club, waiting for people to run in and have that double shot. They always had a double shot at night after quitting time for two hours, or, something like that. They would cash their checks on Friday evenings and bachelors would grab a cab and head for town.

JR: It hasn't changed.

CJ: Like I said there was hardly any vehicles here. Any private vehicles. I was real lucky. I had been here about 6 months and a good friend of my brother's had a 1941 Dodge Command car for sale and it was in real good shape. It had a canvas top on it. I'll never forget. He worked over at Army diesel, the bachelor crew lived there (at Army Diesel). They ran that diesel 24 hours a day. I remember going over and paying for it and getting it titled, I think it was in February. It had been raining but it was about 31 degrees out and it was cold. I got in it and cranked it up and started down that hill coming out of Army diesel and I hit a

bump and unbeknownst to me that canvas top was all sagged down with water. When I hit the bump it split and dumped all that water right down my neck.

JR: You needed to turn around and put a new canvas top on it.

CJ: No, it didn't take long to get a plywood top built on it. But anyway, at that time that was the ideal vehicle for here. It was a better vehicle than the later model of the command car which was a 3/4 ton weapons carrier. The command car. All it was, was a weapons car with a passenger body on it that the officers used in the battle field. But you needed that to go out here (Middle Bay) in the summer time. There was no road maintenance at all and the main gate was at the foot of marine hill on this side (towards Middle Bay) of the base and it was out there where the road narrows just before you get to Deadman's Curve, right at the top of the hill.

JR: Just past where Army Diesel is.

CJ: Ya, you turn off.

JR: In between Army Diesel and where the "S" turns are before Deadman's?

CJ: Ya. Where the last turn is that you can take to the left to Army Diesel going to town. The gate was about 50 yards further than that. The road was pretty narrow there and there was a big warehouse along side of it. So that had it narrowed down where you couldn't get through or around it. It was manned by Marines and you couldn't get on base unless you had a pass for no reason. Or you had permission ahead of time from the Security Office. And the area alongside the base was more or less controlled by the military too. Chiniak was owned and controlled by the military but there was nothing there.

JR: Now was that Air Force or something?

CJ: No, the Air Force took it over... The Army originally had it in World War II. The Army had a coastal defense and later on the Navy put in a security group there overlooking the other side of the lake, the other side of the air field. That point out there was the Navy Security Group and that was active in the 60's I guess.

JR: It stayed active through the 60's?

CJ: Yea, even active after they built the tracking station. The Air Force built a tracking station out there. But in the 50's there wasn't anything out there except some quonsut huts and abandoned quonsut huts. You'd come out hunting and

you'd maybe see on a Saturday or Sunday another vehicle all weekend. You'd probably see Tom Feldon, he has a rancher here in Middle Bay which we bought the ranch from him in 1972. And there was Tom Nelson out at Kalsan Bay, who was a rancher. Sid Olds was out in that area too. He had some property at Kalsan Bay and he had a ranch at Narrows Cape that the Burton's have now.

JR: The Burton Ranch, okay.

CJ: You could come out and get your limit of duck, and all the rabbit you wanted. I don't think there is any limit on them. We were right near the peak of the cycle. I think 48/49 was the peak of the rabbit cycle and they were so thick you could sometimes walk into the trees and stand without stepping out of your footprints and shoot a half a dozen rabbits with a 22 caliber. They were so thick. Anyway there was no problem at all coming out here and getting your limit of ducks right here at Middle Bay. Mallards and Pin Tail Ducks. Just take your time, go into the brush wherever you thought was a good spot and pick up all the rabbits you wanted. Fox was all over the place and deer all over the place, which like I said before, wasn't in season until...I think the first season was about 1952 on them. Anyway, we went out to Narrows Cape and if everyone hadn't loaded up on ducks we'd hunt for ducks for a while more. Then drive along the road at Narrows Cape, past Pasagshak, and the Tomagin would flop beside the road. Big flocks of them.

JR: Start getting them to.

CJ: All you'd do is watch them. They'd fly a couple of yards and sit down. Everybody got out of the car, you'd usually have about 4 or 5 people with you because if you owned a vehicle you were a popular person.

JR: I imagine.

CJ: And we'd go out and approach the Tomagin and they'd jump and we'd do our shooting and we'd go over and pick up our birds. I think the limit was 20 a piece or 40 in possession. And before the birds would fly another 100 yards we'd sit down again, you'd pick up what you shot the first time and go over and jump them again. Maybe there would be 200 in a flock. Sometimes it would be 7 or 8 all the way up to 200. And that why there aren't many Tomagin today because they were so dumb, you'd jump them and they would just fly and set down and give you time to pick up the dead and reload and go after them again. And these were flat land Tomagin, there wasn't any work to it. I guess they were the willow tomagin. But anyway you'd come back in after about a 14 hour hunt and you had all the Tomagin, ducks, rabbits you could handle. And silver Salmon, like I said this was the

fall for example and the rivers were just absolutely stuffed with silver salmon.

JR: Was there a limit on them too? The Silver.

CJ: No. And there wasn't any laws on how you could take them either. You could snag them, you could spear them, you could gaff them...

JR: Reach over and pick them up?

CJ: Just about, Yes. So you really loaded up. And like I said the fox were all over the place but at that time of the year the hides weren't any good. And also you might take the boat out and launch it. We always launched it at Brookens Lagoon at the other side of Kalsan's Bay there. In the Spring of the year, this was, seal hunt. There was a bounty on seal. You just scalped 'em and sent the scalps to Juneau.

JR: Was there a reason for having a bounty on them?

CJ: Competing against fisherman for salmon. And they were thick here in those days. Rookers Lagoon must have had a couple of hundred in it and it was one of the small rookers and they were almost tame. The first time I went out there seal hunting I had never been close to a seal in my life and we just drove up onto the reef right where they were, if we'd had a bannet we could have loaded the boat. We didn't know were to shoot because their heads were all around the boat. So we didn't get any out on the initial trip. The way we did it was 2 or 3 people got out of the boat and laid on the reef, then one guy would take the skiff which was about a 13 foot skiff with a 10 h.p. kicker on it. He'd go around and get behind another reef out of the way and all of these heads would be popping up all over the place. The seals would start coming back in to see what was going on and so you'd just pop them and the boat would run around and pick them up and them bring them to shore and scalp them and that's all we'd take.

JR: Just take the scalp and leave the carcass?

CJ: We'd take the liver of the young ones. That liver was excellent eating. Besides the others things you had a way of hunting, chances are you could run into a bear. At that time they were paying \$2.00 a piece for eagle bounty and I'd say that was early 50's. Eagles were thick. We use to pick up a lot of money. Guys were buying 220 Swift rifles with them.

JR: Just go out and get spending money with the bounty on the eagle, seals and stuff.

- CJ: Bought all the ammunition for the rest of the hunting. Now, you don't dare get caught with a feather. I have always thought the eagles were a glorified buzzard. Especially when we had the ranch here and occasionally they would get a calf, especially if the cow was down or something. If the cow happened to get pregnant the wrong time and had a calf in the early spring when there was ice and stuff on the ground she might get down with the calf and maybe she couldn't get back up again, we had several that the eagles got that way. They were protected then so we couldn't do any shooting.
- JR: Do you recall when they became protected, the eagles.
- CJ: I'm not sure, about '54 somewhere in there I think. Early 50's I think it was. I must have had 10 pair of feet that I didn't bother to send in and it was changed so I never did get paid for them. But I just kept them anyway, then pretty soon it got to the point where it was even illegal to have them so I destroyed them. Threw them in the garbage. Another thing in the 50's, there wasn't too much Alder here.
- JR: I thought that stuff grew wild everywhere up here.
- CJ: Ya, there was quite a bit on the hill sides, but nothing, not even close to what it is now. You could drive from town to Chiniak and you could see the water, about 90% of the way, unless the hill or something was obstructing you. There was no bush obstructing your view of the ocean at all. You may have some willows or salmon berry bushes, stuff like that but nothing any higher than that. It seemed like every time you disturbed the soil it would turn into an Alder patch after that. And they particularly like areas that had been graveled over, like an old road bed. Just loved to take over those. The grass would take over before the Alder did. The Alder would get a head start on the grass. Right there behind COMSTA there's the transmitter area. The old roads all over that, they were the first to go. I noticed that it got so bad that in later year, the 70's, if you hunted in that area you couldn't follow the old road bed because you couldn't get through the Alder. You had to go to either side of it. I JR: Exactly
- CJ: We could retire the National Debt.
- JR: Just off of Kodiak's Alders.
- CJ: Wasn't as many Spruce trees by a long way either, as there is now. wish the Japanese would find some use for that. JR: So they picked up pretty good too then.
- CJ: Ya, I don't know what caused it. Particularly the Alder.

JR: Was the climate about the same then? As far as the weather.

CJ: In the 50's it was worse. Worse than it is now by a long shot.

CJ: 50-51 we had roofs blow off some of the housing on Aviation Hill. We had these old military barracks buildings converted to 4-plexes and something down on Nymens Peninsula, I remember one right near the existing cargo dock. It blew, I don't know how it managed to do it, but it blew the house apart. The ends and front were in one piece and the whole back wall of the full length of the house, probably 120 ft. long, you could go back there and shake it, completely separated from the rest of the building and there was a tall rock bank behind it. It could fall over, that wall just opened up. And it was occupied by four families.

JR: That was down by where they had the old auto hobby? (By the cargo dock)

CJ: Ya, before you get to there.

JR: Where they got that area cut out in the rock then.

CJ: Ya, the print shop and this house used to be right in the area by where they got the cargo dock now. At that time the cargo dock was over there where Brookens got his latch dock across the bay. On the west side of Women's Bay.

JR: During the War that's where they had, if I remember right during the early 80's working up there, the ones where the latch dock is, wasn't that what they called, where they tied up the destroyers.

CJ: No that was the main cargo dock.

JR: Oh it was?

CJ: Yea, that's where they had a transit shed there about the size of the transit shed down there at the city dock no. 2. Which is the old city dock. Not the Sea-Land dock, the other one. Probably bigger, it was all wood frame building. All the cargo team in there, of course that was all the entire base was in that area.

JR: That area is still part of the base proper type thing.

CJ: Ya, and Marginal Pier is where they tied up the destroyers. And they had a floating dry dock when I got here I think ARD-22 was here. It was a fairly large boat. I don't think it would handle a destroyer.

JR: Who was it, Joe Donahue, I think was the one telling me that where the old Marginal Pier is now that used to be...when they kind of classified all of Nyman Peninsula as the sub base area and that is where the subs used to tie up. They come in for supplies and stuff...

CJ: ...during the war...After I got here it was a repair area, the name just left my tongue, ship repair facility. There hadn't been many civilians working down there. There was three shops on the dock. The old hobby shop that burnt down, that was a huge shop building. TS-37 right next door to it was a big shop building and they could overhaul propeller shafts, they could do all sorts of work. And they were in support of the floating dry dock there. They handled the repairs on smaller, they'd take in a big tug, and those kind of boats.

JR: And basically rebuild them.

CJ: Ya, they could just about do anything. Ship repair facility is what was SRU, Ship Repair Unit I guess it was. Then they had the old torpedo shops down there. They had been converted to ship repair usage.

JR: After the war.

CJ: Yea, after the war. In fact the building that Special Services has now (boat shop), that was a torpedo shop/repair shop. That's one of the few still left.

JR: See I had heard that years ago when I was here in the early 80's that that's what that was. Was a torpedo shop. Because I could figure out well why in a hobby shop would they have the overhead crane track and everything. And that's what people use to tell me, that that was a torpedo repair and everything.

CJ: Building 25 was an aircraft storehouse. That's right next to the old supply building. The next building over north of that was a supply building and the cold storage was the next one over.

JR: Things have changed a little then.

CJ: C-1, all C buildings were contractor buildings. They more or less stayed on the west side of the base. They had dozens of big buildings that they used when constructing the base.

JR: That made it simpler then, didn't it? Recognizing what was military and what was contractors by the numbering of them. If it had a "C" then you know that it was contractors.

CJ: And "S" stood for sub-base area, "A" stood for Army. At one time there were a bunch of buildings, particularly in the Bell Flats area, Russian Creek were numbered with NOB numbers (Naval Operating Base). The Navy couldn't make up their mind what Kodiak was going to be. So one time it would be a Naval Operating Base, another time it would be an Air Station, next time it would be a Naval Station and then go do it all over again.

JR: Typical military operation. You had mentioned about bear hunting.

CJ: I guess it was the Spring of 50, first part of May of 50. My brother and I and two other friends who had been here before me for quite a while had decided to go bear hunting. So we chartered a fishing boat from Pete Workoff from *ouy-1015* Newzinki. His brother lived in town and he set it up for us with his brother in Newzinki and it came time to go to Uyak Bay to go bear hunt. We had the use of an old cabin there that belonged to some guide my brother knew that we could use for the 2 weeks that we had planned for the hunt. When it came time to load up and leave, a storm had been blowing for about two days, a Northeaster. So we were delayed about a day I believe. Finally, Pete said we would give it a try, so we loaded up his boat and headed out. His wife and 2 or 3 children, I've forgotten, were going to ride back from Kodiak. He was going to drop them off at their home in Newzinki after we went through the Newzinki area. We got up to Spruce Cape and the waves up there were about 30 foot high swells, and they were fairly close together too. That old boat was really going bad so they always went through the rocks, those fishermen always went through the rocks. That's the rocks between that little island with the light on it out there. Right off of Spruce Cape. You go between there and Spruce Cape that's the short cut to Newzinki. We got about in the middle of it and his engine quit. The waves were pounding us toward shore fast. They discovered that it was water in the gas. The water had gotten shook up in the tank real good and he was getting water out of his gas tank. This was about a 40 foot fishing boat I think, or thereabouts, we were getting pretty scared about that time. Finally, we got the line (fuel) put back together and some of the water drained out. Cranked her up and we pulled back out to where we had started to get back in the channel through the rocks and just as soon as we started making headway to Newzinki it quit again. That happened three times going through those rocks before the thing started running smooth.

JR: Got all the water out.

CJ: And what tickled me was that I had never been on a boat that size, a fishing boat. I almost got sick on the Denali and I figured for sure I was going to get sick there. I figured

the rest of us would two, the four of us. We did fine but here Pete Walcoff's family, his wife and kids got sea sick, and they were born here. Their transportation was the fishing boat, I couldn't believe it. Anyway we finally got out of the rocks and by the time we got to Newzinki we were in calm water again. We dropped them off in Newzinki and we went on through Whale Pass and Shelekof Straights. We got started into the Uyak Bay, it must have been 11:00 in the evening. It was getting pitch black and it was getting pretty cloudy too. So Pete decided that we were going to pull up to some old cannery there on the right hand side of Uyak Bay going in. We pulled into there and there was the old rickity cannery. We slept overnight there and then at daybreak we went on in to _____ Island, I guess you call it southeast end of _____ Island was that cabin and we unloaded our gear on the beach. We had a couple hundred feet to haul it up to the cabin. We went up to the cabin, look it over, cleaned it out and everything and then came back to start packing it up to the cabin. We were watching Pete go on to Uyak Bay. He was going to go around to the southeast end of Amuk Island and go on over to Larsen Bay and visit over there before he went home. He hadn't even got down to the end of Amuk Island, we were hauling the gear up. We look here and see the boat coming back. We couldn't understand. We thought we must have left something on the boat.

He said he was going to have to have a talk with Pete because that's illegal. We asked him what's illegal about it? I thought the natives were allowed to kill bear for food. He said sure, but he shot it with a 22 rifle. In the water and that was illegal. From a moving fishing vessel. Anyway he said he'd chew him out a bit, scare him a little bit. That's the way things were run in those days. The powers to be were most of the time were smart enough to hire people with some brains. Justice was served in the field instead of going to court.

JR: They need to back to some of that.

CJ: He took us over to Zackhar Bay. Going into Zackhar you can see bear. Bear all over the mountain side. Most of them just below the snow line or at the edge of the snow line. We hadn't intended to do any mountain climbing. There was a lot of alder on the mountain side in those days and that makes it real tough to go bear hunting. Especially if your as scared of bear as we were. It's tough going through a alder patch with a pack board and rifle with a scope on it in bear country. That's scary. Especially in those days when the bear were so thick. Anyway, we went over to the hill of Zachhar Bay and tied our boat up there in that area. Zackhar Bay went about 1/3 empty on low tide with high flats there. On the right hand side as you go into the flats there's a high rock formation that is almost like an island. It's probably a couple hundred feet across in diameter and almost round as I recall and totally covered with alder. On the front side it had a rock face about 8 to 10 feet high and you couldn't hardly climb it in that direction. Anyway that's what the land was, the rest of it was flat and trees, spruce and alder, on both sides of the bay and flats. So two of us went to the right of the bay looking into the bay and another guy and I went to the left side of this rock and we were going to kind of make a sweep into the back and look for the bear because that was a prime place for them at that time of year.

JR: That was in the spring, right?

CJ: Yeah, the snow was up at about the top 25%, top quarter of the mountain. The bear were coming out real good then. Anyway, my buddy and I started out on the left side and my brother and the other guy started on the right side then we lost sight of each other. We then heard one of them yell and they may have been yelling at us, I don't know, we never did decide that. Anyway, we assumed that they saw a bear so we took off running to get around on the back side of this big rock formation. While going back there, there were several fox laying there in the grass. We went by them within three feet. They just laid there and watched us go by. We could have almost petted them. So my buddy and I went clear around to the back side. We didn't see anybody, we didn't see any

bear and you could smell bear in the air. So we thought we heard a noise up on top of this big mound, which I said was a 150 feet or so in diameter and 8 to 10 ft alder trees on it. It was easier to climb it from the back so we started to climbing that rock to get on top of it. And you have to climb through alder and everything, and your gun is falling off your shoulder and your pack is too. We finally get on top of it and we can hear a noise on the other side. So we got our guns loaded and our guns on our safety, and we start weeding our way through the alder getting ready to shoot. The closer we got to the other side the more noise we could hear. We knew we were going to walk into a bear there with about 8 or 10 feet between us before we could see him through a whole bunch of alders. But we didn't know what to do then, it was too late to turn around and go back. So kept on approaching and the more we stalked the louder the cracking went coming toward us. The sound was definitely coming toward us. About in the middle of the island on a big rock pile we come face to face with my brother and his buddy. They're stalking us. It's a wonder that we didn't shoot each other. That's why I say this is a bear hunt I'll never forget as long as I live. I guess we were all shaken and pale because we knew we had a bear there about 6 feet apart. Then we chew each other out for being so dumb. It's starting to get dark so we go back down and we get off the rock. As we are getting off the rock there is a bear on the north side of Zackhar Bay, nosing around on the beach. So our rules were that the first one who saw it had the first shot if possible. So my brother's hunting partner saw it first, so he and my brother starting stalking it and they went over there and they ended up getting it. It was a real nice, about an eight foot bear. We skinned it out and hauled it over to where we had the boat tied up, it was almost dark, and we were almost starved. When we left camp we used the old sea bags to haul our groceries in so we had packed a sea bag with groceries to last a couple of days in Zackhar Bay and left the rest of the cabin in Uyak Bay in the Umack Island. So we got there somebody gathered some wood, we built a fire, we were going to cook up a quick meal. We pulled the sea bag out reached in there saw potatoes. We packed a sea bag alright but we picked up the wrong one and through it into the boat. All we had was potatoes.

JR: You will get a little tired of potatoes after a while..

CJ: We ate potatoes and then we decided to go the cannery. It had a watchman, a man and a women. We decided to go over there to see if we could sleep in one of the sheds or something. But they wouldn't have no part of that. They invited us in and she cooked us some supper, we slept in beds. It was really nice.

JR: Now that's the kind of bear hunting you need to go on. Where you can sleep in a cabin.

CJ: Yeh, they were supper people. They didn't have many visitors so they were really glad to have the company. We left Zackhar Bay the next morning went into a westerly wind. Our poor little boat was taking water over the bow. Two of us stood by with a bucket to keep bailing. It was a long way out of Zackhar Bay over to Amuk Island. We finally made it around there. We saw a lot of bear up on the hillsides. We turned to point up going back into Umak Bay and we got over near Amuk Island and had a good cruise then. We went back to our cabin and got things squared away there. Late that afternoon we decided to go over to Brown Lagoon which is just a short distance north of where our camp was. About a 15 minute run by the boat at the most, very close. It is a beautiful lagoon. It has a real narrow entrance then it opens up into a nice beautiful lagoon with a stream coming into it. It's almost hidden, if you didn't know it was there you would never dream it was there. I'm trying to visualize it now 40 years later. On the right hand side going in there was a nice hill with bear paths in it that brought you up about 50 feet high. You can overlook the bowery over there plus see a lot of the stream. That path had been used by bear so much that path up there was about a foot deep where they had wore it down.

JR: That's more of a freeway, not a path.

CJ: Yeah, and it smells. It smelt so strong of bear that we knew that they had to be up there sunning themselves. So the lead guy was ready to shoot forward, the second guy was ready shoot left, the third guy was ready to shoot right and the rear guy was covering the rear. So kind of eased our way up to the top of the hill. Turned out wasn't any bear up there, beds all over the place up there. We sat up there and glanced all around the rest of the afternoon and didn't see a thing. An hour before dark we figured we better ease on back to camp. So we went down and got into the boat. We cranked it up and started out to the entrance of the lagoon and somebody whispered. We looked over there to the other side of the lagoon about 75 yards away and there sits a bear like a dog sit down with his front paws up and his rear on the ground. Just sitting there. I don't know if he could see us or not but his head was following us, probably the sound. We went on past him and cut into this little point and pulled anchor and pulled on shore and headed up trying to get around him a little bit so we could get to his side. He heard us I guess and when we got to him, before we got a chance to shoot he headed into the brush. I think there were cottonwood trees and lots of alders in that area. So my brother with his hunting partner went straight into the brush and my partner and I went more towards the bear, were we thought the bear went in. We were all going up the hillside were we had assumed the bear went. So... something we had decided we were going to do was stay cool, calm, and collected after the incident at Zackhar bay. We were walking real fast

through the brush and we heard a branch break up in front of us...so pretty soon they (my brother & his partner) were running over there, so we weren't going to let them get to the bear before we did so we started running after the bear. We went into the brush a couple of hundred feet and it wasn't to bad going in, you could go pretty much in a straight line through the alder. We came into a little clearing that was about 30 feet wide but it was a couple of hundred yards long. All of a sudden I stopped and looked right across this tiny little stream about 15 feet away stood that bear kind of broadside but about a quarter turn to me. He just stood there looking at me. Right between the bear and I were a bunch of little alders about an inch in size, and about six to eight feet high, something like that. There was no way for a clear shot at him. I sized it up instantly that if I shoot and the bullet just wounded that bear he was going to eat me before I could get another shot off. My partner was 10 or 15 feet behind me so I didn't even raise my gun at that bear. I really didn't want to make him mad, I kept waving at my partner to come up. My partner finally got up behind me, he wears real thick glasses. I kept saying "there he is, there he is", and my partner would say "where, where". He couldn't see the son-of-a-gun. My partner was just a little behind me and maybe their was a bit more brush blocking his view. That bear just stood there looking at us and we were just 15 feet apart. I still hadn't raised my gun yet, I figured if he was going to eat me I'd let him have me because I'm not going to have time to shot him. Right about that time "crack" right past us my brother and those other guys saw the bear so they started to shooting. I think they must have hit the alder too because they never hit that bear. The first thing I could think of was , I'm going to kill those guys. If they were to have hit that bear he was going to eat me! Anyway when they shot, the bear headed out in the brush as fast as he could go, that's when my partner finally saw him. The bear was hard to see because he was standing still and he blinded in with the bank, it wasn't hard for me to see But anyway when my brother and the other guy came up, I started to chew them out for shooting at that bear with us so close to him. I really don't think they saw us there. I believe they were on the other side of the clearing shooting back at him and we were at the edge of the brush. We sat their, how dumb can we get, I thought we had learned our lesson over at Zackhar bay. You don't go chasing after a bear in the brush. I will never do that again, about that time we heard a loud crack some 200 feet ahead of us. The bear must have stopped the whole time we were arguing he must have been listening to us. When he moved he must have broken a branch or something, off all four of us went into the brush after that bear as fast as we could run. Evidently that bear heard us coming because we never did see him again. To make it real good I was in the lead and when I saw we had no chance of getting that bear we had decided to turn around and get out of their before dark. It was getting dark fast.

Anyway we went around through the trail, an old bear trail, it was probably the same one he was on and the guys were behind me all spread out. I went along a cottonwood tree and I just stepped off the trail behind that cottonwood tree. When the next guy behind me came up by the tree I jumped out and let out a loud grille, thank goodness he didn't have heart trouble. After that I thought I was going to get killed by him. At least it ended up funny. We didn't get that bear, so we went straight back to camp that night. The next day we decided to go down into Uyak Bay so we loaded up and headed out and it was a cold rainy day, we had our rain gear on, our hands were cold and everything. We got about a mile to a mile and a half from our camp, and we came around this bend and out stood this big, well not big maybe an eight to eight and half foot bear routing around in this kelp and seaweed. We pulled the boat over as fast as we could and he still hadn't seen us or heard us yet. We were only 50 feet from him. I spotted him first so I got to shoot first. I through the rifle up, but we went back on the shore were the bear couldn't see us right around a point, a rocky point there. When we came back around just as soon as I got around that point I spotted the bear and he spotted me and my hunting partner and I were side by side and I through my rifle up to fire and my safety, it was an old model 71 Winchester, my safety was hard it was an old wing nut type safety, I pushed that son-of-a-gun and with my cold hands because I had to take my gloves off my finger pulled the trigger all in one motion and the bullet got the bear, I was aiming right square in his chest because he was facing us dead on and by flipping the safety I jerked the gun down, so I shoot him right were a wrist would be on a person. It turned out when we skinned him out the only thing holding his foot on was skin on both sides of thee bone, 90 percent of the bone and meat had been taken out by that bullet. Anyway he turned and ran back towards the brush broadside to us like a strike of lightning. My partner was one heck of a shoot and he nailed him and the bear did a flip-flop head over heels. He turned out to be almost like a panda, he had a blonde head, blonde from the shoulders down to his paws were blonde on all four legs and his hump was blonde and the rest of him was dark. He was just absolutely beautiful I've got some good slides of him. Anyway we got that bear. We skinned him out that day, that took a long time. Then we went on down to look for a place to set up camp because it was around 7 or 8 o'clock. One of the other guys spotted a bear up just off the beach, kind of a back water, So we cut the engine off and eased on down to a good spot to go ashore. We started to stalk him in this back water which went in and parallel the beach. So we went on past the entry to this back water and went up over the beach and was over looking this back water were he was. In the mean time we had lost sight of were he was. It was this one guys shot so the rest of us went along as back ups. The bear was gone when we got up to the back water. Well there was this bear trial going

up the steep hillside right behind him which lead up through a bunch of cottonwoods. There wasn't to much brush except for some big alders but it was thin and didn't have any leaves on it. We didn't know were in the world that bear went too. Finally one of the other guys spotted him, he was laying up behind a fallen alder, no not an alder but a cottonwood dead fall. The only thing you could see was from his neck to top of his head he was leaning against that log looking at us, or watching us, or listening to us, or what ever. The trail went right up past that log so I don't know if he was sitting a trap or if he decided to just check out his back. That was the trial we were going to go up and we were just lucky that we spotted him laying there. This, what's coming is some more of our great organized cool hunters action. The guy that was supposed to shoot fired, and the bear just jumped and took off. Well in a case like that his partner shoots, so the other guy shot. The bear hit the ground and started rolling down the hill. He was breaking alders 2 inches in dia. And every time he would do a complete roll he would try to get up on his feet and would start rolling down the hill. In the mean time we thought he was going to get away from us so all four of us were shooting as fast as we could go. That bear had to roll about 100 feet down that hill. He made it all the way to the bottom of that hill, rolled out onto the beach and tried to get up and clasped. Mean time I guess each one of us shot at least 3 or 4 times at the bear.

JR: Their were four of you shooting at the bear.

CJ: Yea, when we skinned him out we had found only one bullet that had gone in at the base of his neck and broke his spine, one 270 rifle bullet was all their was in that bear. He was moving down that hill real fast.

JR: You guys ended up with three bears on that trip then.

CJ: Yea, I gave my bear, and we could have gotten a fourth one, and my bear went to my hunting partner because he was going to be leaving that fall going back to college. I figured was going go be here forever and thought I could get a bear anytime I wanted one, by the way the last bear we shot turned out to be about a ten and a half footer. He was a big bear.

JR: Did they have the lottery drawing for bear at that time?

CJ: No, they didn't.

JR: Did they have the spring and fall season?

CJ: Oh yea, they were long. I think the spring season went from about the 15th of April to the 20th of May or something like that or maybe it was until the end of May. The fall season

was, I think, 2 or 3 months too. We were planning on a 14 day hunt and we had all the bear we wanted in three days. So then we seal hunted and fooled around for a day or two. Then we decided to take the skiff around to Larson Bay and radio Pete to come get us. We saved some meat which I'll never have bear for dinner after skinning one.

JR: Do people still eat brown bear?

CJ: I guess so. They claim they (bear) are pretty good in the spring before they eat all that salmon during the summer.

JR: I've read that it isn't the best meat to be eating.

CJ: Well I've eaten it at the old CIV club at the base. They used to put on a wild game feed to get money to run the club. I've eaten both black and brown bear and it was good. I didn't eat a lot all I would do was just take small samples. Anyway that turned out to be one real fun hunt for a bunch of beginners.

JR: It sounds like you did ok to me.

CJ: Yea, we could have gotten another half dozen, we saw 33 in all that time. We would have had to do some climbing for most of them. But we saw quite a few on the beach too. Most of them were too small to even think about taking though. Some of the bigger we could have taken. Eagles were all over the place then. I don't know where this come from but I can remember counting on Sat. and Sun. mornings of getting 3 or 4 each morning and out of the same trees, I don't know where they all came from.

JR: I can't picture having a bounty on eagles.

CJ: Yea, they had a two dollar bounty for each pair of feet you turned into the state.

JR: Back in the mid 50's were they having very many bears out on the base or in town like we've had this year.

CJ: Yea, one or two a year would get shot. You know they (fish and game) wouldn't fiddle around like they are right know where they are going to get someone killed. If a bear showed itself in the area of housing he was hunted down and shot. There wasn't none of this bear running around in people's yards and stuff like that. I was just reading an article in the Kodiak paper about Juneau, they have had some 30 bears they've had trouble with and they just shot one last week which had charged some people. It had been around town for months and they had a collar on him and that was the reason they hadn't shot him before. They had moved some 22 bears, shot 15 and these were all black bears, cars had hit six. Some kid is going to get hurt by a bear out here (Middle Bay)

were I know their are fresh bear tracks I don't go outside if it's dark because I don't want to walk into a bear. He could be standing there and you could walk right up on him and he might not hear you and he's going to come around and flatten you. These people along with the base commander, Fish and Game said well they will be going in to hibernate soon, what, what's that got to do with anything next spring they are going to be right back out again hungry as ever and they know were the food is so were do they think the bears are going to go. Back in the 50's I used to work the night shift a lot so I would be out during the day time duck hunting and I was up the valley here by the American River about a mile and a half up there, just past were that house trailer is located know and on the left is a nice little stream in there that doesn't freeze in the winter. This was in November and it was raining like a son-of-a gun too, I was about a 100 yards off the road so I checked the little pond because ducks usually sit in there. I sneaked up to the pond and there weren't any ducks there and the grass was about 3 to 3½ feet high in there so I decided to a seat and wait awhile for some ducks. I had on a hunting jacket and had two pockets with my shot gun shells. I didn't know that my pockets were full of water because I had left the flap open. Most of my shells were swollen and one was jambed in the barrel half way in and I couldn't push it in or pull it out. So I started walking back to the car while I was trying to get this jambed shell out of my gun. As I got about 150 feet from the car I looked up, I don't know what made me look up I guess it was to see if I was going in the right direction and about 10 feet in front of my car stands a nice big bear rotten around in the gravel inside the road. Well my 30-60 rifle was in the car and I'm setting there with a gun that I couldn't shoot. So I immediately hit the ground and every once in awhile I would raise up and peak over the weeds and see how that bear was doing because he was going on up the Saltry Cove Road slowly. I figured when I got to a point where I could beat him to run to the car and get my rifle. He got about 75 yards away so I figured he couldn't catch me before I got to the car so I raced to the and throw my shot gun in and got my rifle and I got behind the car and jacked a round into the chamber. I was going to use the finder to rest my rifle on and was going to wait until he turned my way again and nail him. Well he wasn't no where in sight then so I knew he went over to the stream looking for some old salmon. I drove up the road and got out of the car figuring I had passed the bear. As I was walking down the middle of the stream I was ready to shoot in any direction. I never did see that bear again. The next day a friend was going up to the same pond for some ducks and he walked right up on that bear jumped up my friend shot him with his duck load and killed him.

CJ: Since I've retired my hunting is limited to the camera on the deer, or bear, or any of it. But I still love to fish. And the eagle and I are even getting along better. They set

out here in our yard and _____ the trees and it's enjoyable watching them and talking to each other. They don't bother the cattle anymore so we don't have any quarrel anymore.

JR: Thank you very much, Charlie.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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