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2 P.M.

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL H. "SMOKEY" STOVER
AT HIS HOME
IN KODIAK, ALASKA

GS: There were two things I thought we might talk about, Smokey. One would be World War II. I know you were involved in the invasion at Attu and secondly, I know you were here in Kodiak after World War II with the road commission, is that right.

SS: It was the Alaska Road Commission. We called it the ARC, which means Awful Rough Conditions. We were a territory then. The state took over and by that time we were run by three different government agencies, you know. Not only the U. S. Government but the State, and the Territory and also the Borough wanted to get into the act, and so I just give up. You can't work under three or four different government agencies. I didn't mind it when we were just under the Territory, which wasn't bad. That's one government agency. I had charge of Kodiak, McKinley Park and another little area in the Takatna-Ophra area which is out in the interior. As a matter of fact, that's where I go gold mining, in that area. So, I just kind of got tired of government. You know everybody does.

GS: Let me try to get some biographical information. Where were you born? Who were you parents?

SS: Oh, I was born in Kirkland, Washington. You used to have to take a ferry there. Now you can ride. It's a nice area - Washington. Oh, it reminds me a lot of Kodiak, really. There isn't too much difference. My mother was from Maine and my dad was from Iowa. The Stover name is pretty well known because "Ike" Eisenhower married Mamie Stover who was my aunt. A lot of people don't know this, but it's not an unknown name in this country. And being in the war myself, at one time I mentioned to my 1st Sergeant after I went out to Attu, after being drafted and put on a ship, you know we went across the ocean to Attu on the invasion. My Sergeant didn't like me too well because I never did anything the way the Army did it. I told him, I said, "well I hate to say it, but my uncle is a General in the Army and your just a First Sergeant. I've been a PFC (Private First Class)

three times, a Corporal twice and you're just a Sergeant." He said, "I'll check up on that." Which he did. Finally he came to me and said, "Smokey Stover, I just found out that your uncle is Eisenhower." I said, "well, that's great. Go right ahead and put that down, in your records." He said, "well, we were thinking of making you a Sergeant. You're the only one that knows how to run equipment here and we're building another air field and we still have to build some more roads on the island of Attu." I said, "well, I'll help with it." Which I did, and so from then on I got on good with Sergeant Crenshaw.

GS: How did you get to Alaska from Kirkland, Washington?

SS: Well, I put in for a job with the AJ Mine, the Alaska-Juneau Gold Mining Company. As a matter of fact, I wasn't 18 yet and I had to get a letter from my parents. I asked my dad if he would give me a note saying I was 18. In those days you didn't carry around identification, birth certificates and what not. They didn't even have credit cards. And so, I asked my dad and he said, "No, I'm not going to lie for you, son, you're only 17."

GS: What year was that?

SS: About 1939, I think. So, I went to my mother and I said, "Mom, I want to go to Alaska. They got jobs open up there." And so, Mom said, "Well you're really nine months older than you think you are so I'll give you a note saying that you're 18." So, she wrote me a note and I took it down to the employment office on Second Avenue in Seattle and I got an O.K. to go to work for the AJ Mine in Juneau. And that's where I more or less grew up. And that's where they drafted me when I got to be 19.

GS: So, you ran heavy equipment there in Juneau.

SS: No, I worked in the AJ mine itself. I didn't work on equipment until I got drafted. And the Army Engineers was stationed outside of Juneau, out near Auk Bay and I lived there. I owned a home there even. I even bought a home when I was working there in the mine.

GS: There weren't many people drafted in Juneau, were there?

SS: No, you had to be a certain age. They dropped the draft age down to 19 and they got me. That's how they got me in the Army.

GS: What year were you drafted?

SS: Well in would have been '41 or the first part of '42.

GS: That was after the Japanese had attacked Dutch Harbor and occupied Attu and Kiska?

SS: Oh, yeah. They had started the war.

GS: So, right after you were drafted, you went into the Army there in Juneau?

SS: Yeah. There was a military base just outside of Juneau at Duck Creek.

GS: How did you get from Juneau out to the invasion of Attu?

SS: Well, a military boat came through and they took me out of the induction center there. We had an induction center at Montana Creek. I remember I went in with a bunch of other inductees that were from the Pribiloff Islands. They were natives, little guys, they were less than 5 feet tall, most of them and we went in the service together. It was a funny thing, but I can remember because they issued us military clothing and the boots they issued us were Blucher boots, they called them, and these little natives, we were in the middle of the winter, this was in January of 1942. And it had snowed and it was a cold winter and we were out doing military exercises. When they said "about face" why these little native kids, they'd turn around but their boots didn't. I can remember this because they were so little and their feet so small. They were issued number 12 boots. I was about the only one that went to Attu on the invasion that wore civilian clothes. I still wore my hat and my good shoes and I had very little trouble out at Attu whereas the others, they had to sleep in tents you know with their shoes from the U.S. issue. They were all leather. You know, a lot of them got trench foot and well they just couldn't live in a cold and wet country like it was out there.

GS: Most of the troops trained in California. They came to Alaska on a troop ship and you joined that troop ship, is that right?

SS: Yeah, that's right. I was put in with that bunch of engineers. These were combat engineers. Yeah, the 42nd. and 50th. Engineers. We went by here, by Kodiak, but they wouldn't let us off the ship. I

never seen Kodiak until after the war, but we went right by here. We knew we were headed for Kiska or Attu because that's where the Japanese were. When we finally got there the Navy had already shelled the island, with big shells. But all they did was make a bunch of foxholes for the Japanese to sit in. See, they didn't kill any Japs. We did. I think we shot something like 2,200. I know we lost 800 of our own, you know our own American citizens. You know, it was one of those things, you know I think we might have lost a third of what they lost. But, that's because that's all there was there. We saved 18 Japs. That's all. I know that for a fact, because we counted them, and that was left. They killed about a hundred or two hundred of themselves, like hari-kari. They formed a circle and killed themselves. I remember this, up on Engineer Hill they killed themselves with hand grenades. They formed a circle and killed themselves with these hand grenades.

GS: Engineer Hill, that was one of the major battles.

SS: That's where we stopped them. They went through the Army. Killed a bunch of Army personnel. We stopped them at Engineer Hill. That was the last of it. They seen they couldn't get by us. We all had submachine guns. As a matter of fact, I carried a Thompson sub myself. Didn't even know how to shoot it hardly.

GS: You were supposed to be an engineer but you wound up as a combat soldier.

SS: Oh, yeah. We were combat engineers. We built two airfields out there and 64 miles of road on a eleven mile long island.

GS: The Japanese started to build a runway by hand out there?

SS: Yeah, they had. We could still see where they were digging by hand in the ground out there to build an airfield out at Crostie Island from where we landed.

GS: Which beach did you land on?

SS: We landed in West Massacre Bay. Gee, that's a long time ago, I almost forgot it. That's where we landed by landing barge.

GS: Did you bring equipment with you then?

SS: Yeah, I run a bull dozer with an AT trailer, towing ammunition. As a matter of fact, I wanted to go to the South Pacific. Most of my outfit moved then from there to the South Pacific. I wanted to go with them but they wouldn't let me go because I was from Alaska. They wouldn't let me go because they said, "you're an Alaskan and we can't let you go to the South Pacific. Besides that you're married."

GS: Oh, you were married at the time?

SS: No, I wasn't. They thought I was. As a matter of fact that's what kept me from going to the South Pacific. That's one of those things where it sure pays to be married.

GS: So, did you spend all of the rest of your military time right there on Attu.

SS: Yeah, 29 months. As a matter of fact, I was so glad to get away from Attu. I was really glad to leave. No trees there. Attu is probably the worst place that a person could possibly want to live. I used to develop pictures there. I had a photography developing outfit for the other soldiers. I think probably about the most desolate place in Alaska is Attu. I might say that's it's an island with all this and Attu.

GS: So, when you mustered out of the Army you left Attu and went back to Juneau?

SS: No, they shipped me back to Seattle. I visited with my parents. A very, very short visit and came back to Juneau. But there was no work in Juneau then. The AJ mine had closed down. And there wasn't any work there. I think it was Tom Stiles that came through Juneau looking for help at Kodiak. He was with the Navy up here, Public Works, and he was looking for equipment operators. So, I went and asked him. I said, "Say, I'd like to get a job running equipment because I know how to run a grader, and a bull dozer, a shovel, a drag line." "Oh, that's just what we want, somebody like you." I said, "fine." He said, "O.K., just sign this application for a job and we'll see that you get to Kodiak." So, I did. At that time you had to come here by boat. They didn't have airplanes like they got now. I think it could have been Alaska Steam (Alaska Steamship Company). I think it was, the Baranof. It took me from Juneau, stopped in Seward and then Kodiak.

GS: So, from then until now, you've pretty much lived in Kodiak.

SS: Oh, yeah. I worked on the Naval Base as an equipment operator. Finished through the winter and the next spring a friend of my put my name in for the job of City Superintendent, and believe it or not, they accepted it and I didn't even know about it. As a matter of fact, the job only paid \$400 a month and I was making over that working for the Navy.

GS: Would that be like the Public Works Department now?

SS: Yeah, same thing.

GS: What was Kodiak like?

SS: Oh, dirt streets, beer bottles and cans on both sides of the street. I almost got stuck one time in the middle of the road, evidently it still turned to mud. Rain, you know.

GS: So, by the time you saw Kodiak, there was a pretty good sized population here?

SS: Well, it was almost all military. There was very little other population other than the military that came in here every night. It was all Navy and a little Army because Fort Greely was still made up of a lot of Army. I built the Little League Ball Field here back in the 40s. At that time we had a lot of interest in baseball.

GS: Is that Coon Field?

SS: Yeah, Coon Field. The reason we called it that is Mayor Coon, he was the Mayor here, and his little boy . . . he had taken him out to where Fort Abercrombie is now and the little kid fell off the bluff out there and was killed. So, we named the field after him. I was Scout Master. He was in my Boy Scout troop. That was kind of unfortunate. I've always had a soft spot in my heart for the Boy Scouts. I never did get to be an Eagle Scout but I made two Eagle Scouts here, two of my troop. Thorshiem was one of them. They became Eagle Scouts and that's why we have the Boy Scout area at Island Lake. I had that set aside, 15 acres there for the Boy Scouts. I had it set aside when I was Scout Master with the Elks Club. I'm a Charter Member of the local Elks. As a matter of fact, I knew Bob Bartlett who was our Representative in Congress, in Juneau. I'd

known him in Juneau. He's the one that got the Executive Order from the Army set aside. That's the reason we have all this area that was withdrawn by the Army during the war on Kodiak. He had it withdrawn and given back to the Territory. And in that Executive Order was the Boy Scout area. As a matter of fact the Borough was going to take that away from us at one time and put into lots and sold. I told them they couldn't do that, which they couldn't because we got it at the same time in the Executive Order and they can't. There's no way that you can take that property away from the youth activity. So, I hate to say it, but they found out I was right. I told them, "well you better check with the government because when they withdraw a piece of land for a certain purpose, well that's it. But, I'll say one thing for our Representative in Congress at the time, he was a hell of a nice person. He'd do anything you'd ask him for youth activity. Which, there's nothing wrong with that.

GS: Do you still get over to Onion Bay where you have property?

SS: Oh, yeah. I had the first gill-net sight that was there. The one I bought it from, or bought out his broken down cabin there was Pete Dumas. He was a gill-netter out there and I think I still have some of his old-fashioned gear. I don't remember now who told me about it . . . I knew him. He and Stuart Nuckels were good friends and I knew Stuart Nuckles here in town. He said that Pete Dumas had maybe died or something . . . he hadn't heard from him. And he lived at Onion Bay. So, I went out. At that time you had to go by boat. I went out and sure enough he was dead. He had been dead for at least a week. So, we brought his body in and Walt Muller was the undertaker here then and Walt put him in a casket, you know. I think this was in January or February. Anyway, Stan Nelson and I got together and contacted his sister, lived up at Mount Vernon in Washington, I think or somewhere in there. And, so I told his sister by telephone that I would bury Pete and that's when I found out that his name wasn't Pete Dumas. It was Egbert Enfelt. They called him Pete Dumas because he had the Dumas, a boat called the Dumas. Everybody called him Pete Dumas.

GS: What year was that?

SS: Oh, '48 or '49. Anyway, I told her I would take him out and bury him there at Onion Bay. That's how come I got to know Onion Bay so well. I contacted a friend of mine who had the Cape Douglas here . . . Darlow Dayton. He had a landing barge here. So, I asked him if he

would take me and Pete Dumas out to Onion Bay and I'd bury him. I'd need a backhoe. So we did. We took a backhoe out there and dug a nice grave for him . . . dug up a big rock at the same time. It's still there. He's still buried right there in Onion Bay . . . overlooking the bay. Yeah, I get a kick out of it because since then I spend a lot of time out there. As a matter of fact, I got the state to open up the land there so I could buy it. I bought two 5 acre tracts from the state at a very high price. I think it was \$1,500 for a tract of land there. It's about like I did up in the interior a few years ago. I bought a three acre tract of land. That cost me \$1,400. You stop to think about prices, but if a person pays too much for a piece of land like you have to do in Kodiak now, you can't afford to build . . . you've done spent all your money, so you have to borrow it.

GS: How did you get your nickname Smokey? That was your nickname in the Army too, wasn't it?

SS: Yeah, it was. Well, I got my nick name by the name of Stover. The cartoon. That was an old cartoon, way back in the 30's. I used to get in a fight with the kids in school, my own age, because they'd call me Smokey. And I'd beat them up. You can't imagine how many kids I beat up because they called me Smokey. Yeah, as a matter of fact, it came from that old cartoon, Smokey Stover the Fireman. He'd run around on a two-wheel cart.

GS: It sort of looked like the fire cart they used to have here in Kodiak.

SS: Yeah, I remember that. I was the one that was in charge of that in '46. I was the City Superintendent and I was in charge of the fire department.

GS: The fire department was under you?

SS: Yeah, so was the police department, and everything else. I hired a chief of police one time from Nome and the Chief of Police there, I didn't know it, he put in for a job in Kodiak, this guy. That was kind of funny because I didn't know it but Nome wanted to get rid of him and he was really in jail there. And he put in for the Chief of Police's job here and they done it as a kind of a joke I guess, or something. But I didn't know it. So, I hired him. He was in jail, I didn't know that. I hired him and sent him transportation money to Kodiak and he come down here.

GS: There was a city council at the time? You were probably hired by the city council?

SS: Yeah, it was just a city council and a mayor. I was at that time City Superintendent. You can't imagine the things that transpired in government in those days. I can't imagine now how easy it was to run this city of Kodiak. It was very easy, very simple. Everybody trusted you. They didn't need any ordinances or regulations. They got by very nicely without them. Now we got so many ordinances and regulations that you've got to have somebody to run it.

GS: Do you remember who was mayor at the time?

SS: I think Bettinger.

GS: Was Mrs. Kraft on the city council then?

SS: Yeah. Jimmy Marks, was another one. Stan Nelson. He always will be a good friend of mine. He's dead, of course, you know. I don't remember them all.

GS: For the record, what is your birthday, Smokey?

SS: February 19, 1922.