

Dora Aga
on
Memories of Growing up
in Uyak Bay, Kodiak Island
1920's - 1950's
and
Commercial Fishing
Fox Farming
Family

by
Jane Petrich
On October 8, 1993
at Dora Aga's home in Larsen Bay, Alaska
Kodiak College
Oral History Project

Dora Aga Interview

by Jane Petrich

Alaska History

Fall 1993

The following autobiographical interview was held on October 8, 1993 with Dora Aga, a lifelong Alaskan. The interview was conducted in Dora's home in the village of Larsen Bay on the west side of Kodiak Island.

Dora was born in Ouzinkie on November 13, 1916. She grew up on Alf Island, a small island off the southern tip of Amook Island in Uyak Bay, Kodiak Island. Dora's family had a fox farm on Alf Island and her mother traveled back to her home village of Ouzinkie to have her children. Her mother's name was Mary Shishurinkin (we are not sure of the spelling), and her father, Alf Pakkannen from Finland.

Dora who is now 77 years old, spent her entire life in Uyak Bay, commercial fishing during the summer months and living very much a subsistence life style. Although she rarely goes out in the skiff these days, she still holds a limited entry fishing permit to set gill net for salmon. In recent summers she has had her grandchildren do the fish picking while she manages the operation and provides support by cooking and babysitting for her crew. She fishes the same sites she has fished since the 1930's when she fished with her husband Bill Jager, and their two children, Billy Jr, and Margaret.

JP: My main interest is when you were first fishing, some of your early memories of growing up in Uyak Bay. You were born here, right, on Alf Island?

DA: No, I was born in Ouzinkie. That's where my mother was from, Ouzinkie.

My father is from Finland, and I was brought up on a fox farm up Uyak Bay on Alf's Island. We had foxes and we had chickens and pigs and cows and what have you. Then I was about eight years old when I first started taking care of fish because my dad was drying fish for the fox farms. We used to go out there and get all that fish and cut them up and dry them, then he would sell them to the fox farmers. And then from then in 1928 is when we started commercial fishing. In them days there were half a cent for the humpies and six cents for the sockeyes or red salmon. And from then on I learned how to mend nets, taking care of nets, so -- and watch the prices of the fish going up and down, up and down. Fish for salmon, red salmon up to 12 cents, that's a salmon not a pound. The humpies they were only five cents then or two and one-half cents, whatever.

JP: When were yo born?

DA: 1916.

JP: 1916. And in 1928 -- so you did not fished commercially before 1928?

DA: No, that's when my dad started fishing. There was some people gillnetting. Not very many. They had traps in them days, so there wasn't very many. What they started out really doing first was beach seining before we started gillnetting. And in them days we had to pew the fish. A pew is a stick with a point on the end of it. We had to throw them about five or six feet up to the scow.

JP: You mean when you were unloading them?

DA: Unloading them, throwing them up there. Take and throw great big dog salmon up there. Boy, they are heavy. So, that's where I learned how to take care of seine fish.

JP: Who did you sell the fish to, this cannery here?

DA: Yeah, Alaska Packers. Yeah, it was Alaska Packers then.

JP: And, were you rowing or what did you use to power your skiff?

DA: Yes. We had no kickers, no kind of motorized -- and it was all by oars.

JP: I've seen some pictures of sails, sailboats. Did you use wind, did you use sails?

DA: No, we had motor, we had a boat with a motor in it. Not no outboards but a regular inboard motor.

JP: Even when you first started?

DA: Yeah.

JP: So, it wasn't just rowing?

DA: No, we rowed the skiff from the boat. We had a boat. Oh, the boat was about 30-32 feet long or something. It had an inboard motor in it.

JP: And did you use that for fishing or that was just for ...?

DA: Towing the skiffs around. We used skiffs to row out the seine.

JP: I remember Pete Peterson telling me about the web itself, it was linen.

DA: Linen. Yeah. The gill nets were all linen and the floats were all sewed on to the tops, you know, instead of clusters now.

And, boy, you have to be out there picking all the kelp out. Twenty-four hours a day we were out there picking the kelp.

JP: Because the net is right on top of the water?

DA: Yeah. And then we used to row -- dad had a, what do you call it, contract for keeping lights on the traps. So we'd have to row all the way from the island out to Greenbanks. And that's a long ways. It used to take us about anywhere's from 10 to 12 hours from the time we left the island to the time we were back. We would start out about four o'clock in the morning to go and put kerosene in the lamps.

JP: Every day?

DA: No, no, no. Twice. I think it was twice a month as I remember. They had great big lamps on them. Lanterns. We filled them up and that'd last a long time. It was so boats would see the traps and not run into them.

JP: Who owned those traps then?

DA: Alaska Packers and I don't remember what the other company down old Uyak. There were two outfits that had traps but Alaska Packers was the biggest one. That is the one Poppa was taking care of.

DA: And they had six, seven traps along the line, Greenbanks and Chief Point.

JP: So, it was after that when you guys started beach seining and then gill netting or was it all at the same time?

DA: No, after the time of the traps.
And there wasn't very many people that were, you know, salmon fishing just with the traps.

JP: And then did you have to get it in to the cannery yourself or did they ...?

DA: They had to take it. That's what I said, they had big scows. Monkey boat they called them, the boat that towed the scow. And then they would -- we throwed that fish up to that scow.

DA: Yeah. It was a pew. They called it a pew. Pitched them fish up. No wonder I got muscles. (Laughter)

JP: So, you were what, like 10, 11, how old were you?

DA: I was, what I was, well, I started in when I was about 10, 12 years old throwing fish up.

JP: And did you beach seine all around Uyak or did you just have a couple beaches that you ...?

DA: Oh, no, no no. See we had a boat that would tow the skiff and seines and stuff. Go from one place to another. And, I've seen it when there was no fish. Poppa used to leave us on some beach. There were no bears in them days to speak of. And there some times we'd stay over night in a little tent while they went to Speridon Bay or wherever, Zachar Bay looking for fish.

JP: Who, your mom and dad?

DA: Yeah, just mom and dad.

JP: And how old were you?

DA: Oh, we were anywheres from the time we were eight, eight, nine years old. I was the oldest.

JP: So you were sort of in charge?

DA: Yeah. Yeah, I was in the good ole days.

JP: So, beach seining is hard work, isn't it?

DA: Well, no, not really. See, just pulling the seine to the beach and get your fish.

JP: When did you start gill netting?

DA: 1928.

JP: That's when the gill netting. Then before that it was beach seining?

DA: Um hmm.

JP: So where did you fish the first time?

DA: Same places. Beatrice _____

JP: On Beatrice, or the sets you're on now?

DA: No, Beatrice. 1928. That's when it started. There was a trap right where our set is now. There was a fish trap there. 1928 was when we first started gillnetting.

JP: Who else was in the bay fishing then?

DA: Pete Gundersen, number one, and Harry Carlson.

JP: Where were they fishing?

DA: Pete Gundersen was right next to where Pete Peterson's is. That was Pete Gundersen's. Then Harry Carlson down where Haugh's are. Then what. See, Pete Gunderson. Then Nekferoff's. Down the line.

JP: Were Field's here yet? When did Field's move out here?

DA: Oh, they moved out in the '40s, is when they moved out. Oh, there was Jack Wick also gill net down at Bear Island. I suppose that's where he drowned.

JP: Was it mostly family operations?

DA: Harry Carlson and Gundersen's were the two that had families and us. That's the only ones that I can remember that had --

all the rest of them were bachelors or brothers, you know.

JP: What was the season like?

DA: First of June until the 14th of August. From Monday morning six o'clock til Saturday evening six o'clock.

JP: So it was just, every week it was the same?

DA: Same thing.

JP: And then on Sunday, you just ...?

DA: Saturday and Sunday was off.

DA: Who established that? Did Fish and Game establish that? Or was there a Department of Fish and Game then?

DA: I don't know. That was just how the law was set, I guess. Must be through Fish and Game, I don't know.

There was no Fish and Game that I can remember.

JP: Right, because there was no State.

DA: No, uh uh. There was no laws that I can think of.

JP: Well, may be it was just what the company decided then?

DA: No, it was some sort of a law because they had fish markers. You couldn't go beyond them. So, but that's how it was as far back as I can remember.

So, like I say. First of June, if June fell on a Monday, you know. The first of June.

But if it fell on a weekend then we would have to wait maybe to the 3rd or whatever, you know.

But, that's how it went. And there used to be a closure if there was no fish, they'd close it for a couple weeks. But, you know, I can't remember. Along about in July, about the middle of July when it slacked off til the pinks started coming, then they'd reopen again.

JP: Did anybody fish late, into the Fall?

DA: Sometimes they fished right into October if there was fish.

DA: But that is Fall when it breaks. So, all the way from June to October as long as the company stayed. And in them days they came in March to make camps and what not. They brought their Chinamen. The ships would come in, bring all them people. And they were here for the summer until September or October

or whatever, whenever the season closed.

JP: What ships were they -- they came up from San Francisco just to work here?

DA: Um hmm. Yeah.

JP: Was that exciting when they came in?

DA: Hard to say. You know, I guess we were used to it. It never bothered us.

DA: It was year in and year out the same thing. They were big boats. I can't even remember half their names. Yeah, it used to be a lot of people. There was four or five hundred people come in at once.

JP: And they were mostly Chinese workers?

DA: Chinese and Filipinos. Yeah. Mostly Chinamen. They made cans. I was 12 years old when I first started making cans, at the time they called it _____ up there.

DA: Yeah, they made their own cans, cut the tin, soldered 'em.

JP: Huh. They had a lot of work to do then. No wonder they got started in March.

DA: Yeah, they started the last part of March. The whole month of April they were making cans. That was neat though to watch 'em.

JP: So they just shipped all that stuff up from San Francisco every year, right?

DA: Yeah.

JP: And then they -- did all their groceries and stuff, too?

DA: Everything, uh huh.

JP: Who tended the traps?

DA: The canneries. They had -- yeah, they had them big scows and tenders to tow the scow out. They emptied them.

JP: And were those Chinese workers, too, also out there?

DA: No, no, those were different. They were, oh, Norwegians and Swedes tended the traps.

JP: But they still came up on the boats from San Francisco when they came up?

DA: Yeah.

JP: Did you catch a lot of fish in those days?

DA: Oh, yeah.

JP: A lot more than now?

DA: Oh, yes, much more than now. Yeah, there is nothing now in comparison to what there used to be in them days. Especially reds.

JP: Is it just because there's so many more people fishing?

DA: I don't -- I can't really say. I think there's too many airplanes and kickers in where the fish is coming in up the lake and on the lagoon in Karluk.

JP: Too much noise then?

DA: Too much noise, too much disturbance. In them days there were no kickers. The people when they went hunting in them lakes and where not, they used oars. There was no motors even could be running around disturbing the fish.

Like now there is airplanes and kickers in the lakes and in the rivers and all over the place.

JP: Must have been exciting.

DA: Oh yeah. When I look back at all these things now and then all this modern junk where everything is being disturbed. It seemed like that's what is killing off everything.

JP: I hope not. Where did you get all your supplies, like your nets and lines and all that?

DA: They were brought in in the spring of the year. You made your orders out. Well, they always brought a supply of that stuff in and I used to mend nets for them.

JP: For the traps?

DA: No, no, gill nets for people. If they wanted one hung. People that didn't know how to hang them so they had a place where you hang nets. So I was 14 when I first started hanging nets. That was fun.

JP: Was it? You went down to the cannery and mended nets?

DA: They had a warehouse where you hang nets. People put in the orders in with the company. They'd hire several people to do that. And I started hanging nets and mending nets when I was

nine years old 'cause Poppa showed me how. So they called me and I'd go. Lotta fun.

JP: Were the nets like we fish now, in 75 fathoms lengths?

DA: Yeah. Uh huh. Same thing. Unless you wanted to put out a hundred but 75 seemed like it was always an average piece of equipment. Some people did a hundred.

JP: But was that a law that you had to fish a certain amount of gear or amount of equipment.

DA: I can't remember if there was anything to the amount of gear you could fish cause we only had that one net all the time out there, hundred, 100-fathom net is what we had.

JP: And you just had one site?

DA: Just one site, yeah. And, of course, that was enough to take care of.

JP: Because you had a lot more fish then.

DA: A lot more fish, yeah. Then, you see, there was another thing then, we used the beach seines at the same time. If there was a lot of fish we had a winch and everything on the beach down there. We would put the seine out and when you think there is enough fish in there, pull it in by winch. So we had a net out and we were also seining. There was no law about two mobile gears out at once, you know. So that was a lotta fun, a lot of work, but it was fun to us kids.

JP: Yeah. It sounds pretty exciting. The nets were linen. Were they heavy?

DA: Well, no, not really. But you had to do a lot of mending after, you know, they were a couple, two, three years old and then you have to keep mending. And then you have to take care of them. They had this Blue Stone that you took and wash them in Blue Stone every couple weeks, you know. They put big vats -- they had to put them in Blue Stone to clean all the slime and what-not off of them.

JP: So that was like a detergent or something that dissolved all that stuff?

DA: Yeah, that's bad. They couldn't use it.

JP: Oh, because it's probably toxic?

DA: Yeah. It's very toxic. And then they tan them at the tanning part. Big boiling water and you take and dip your nets in that.

JP: For the color?

DA: Yeah. They brown. They were all brown. Real, real dark brown. It was a lotta fun.

JP: It was? It just sounds like a lotta work to me.

DA: You know in a sense I look at it, it was maybe but we were used to work, you know. It was something had to be done. You do it and get it over with. Picking kelp was what I didn't like. Put them up on the beach and the rack would be, oh, hold a whole net with kelp.

JP: Did you change nets then like when they got full of kelp?

DA: Yeah. You had to pick it up and put another one out.

JP: So, you had extra nets.

DA: Oh, yeah. Always had extra nets. The same thing if a sea lion went through it. Like they are protecting the poor little sea lion nowadays. Don't they realize how many thousand fish them things are eating? Sea lions and the sea otters. The bears, poor bears.

JP: You said there was a lot more bears now than there were.

DA: Oh, my goodness. There were no bears to speak of. No bears to speak of. Everybody ate 'em like they do deer nowadays.

JP: They ate bear?

DA: Oh, you bet. Oh, yes. They took 'em cubs and all. Yeah, they would have a nice big bear roast on the beach when they got a couple two or three cubs over the fire like they do a luau for the pig. Same thing.

JP: Were they tasty?

DA: Oh, you bet. They are like pork when they are small. Mm hmm.

JP: And then you stopped doing that because it became illegal or what?

DA: Yeah, they wouldn't let the people shoot 'em any more because

there were no bear around. But look at it now, they gotta start doing something with 'em. We just had eight of 'em here last week right by the house.

JP: Eight of them all at one time?

DA: Eight; 4:30 in the morning were five of them, 7:30 there were three more. Yeah. No, and they are not bashful. They will break in anywheres they want to. So ... Yeah, times has changed.

JP: Did the cannery bring up groceries for you, too.

DA: No, we bought them from the store. They brought a lot. They had a big store.

JP: Was it the same way it is now, that at the end of the year you settled your account?

DA: Uh huh. We paid for it at the end of the season. In them days everything was in bulk. Butter came in brine and the salt beef and salt pork, and everything, pickles, and you name it come in the big barrels. Yeah. Now look at it.

JP: There are no stores.

DA: Now no store.

JP: I know. There is no store in Port Lions either.

DA: No?

JP: They pulled out of Port Lions, too. So you fished with your dad and your family.

DA: Oh, year, uh huh.

JP: And when did you start fishing on your own?

DA: On my own? Let's see, we got married in '35, '38, '37, 1937 I went on my -- on our own.

JP: And you fished the same spot?

DA: That same spot there by the spit.

JP: So that's where you guys started. Did your husband fish before he got here? What kind of work -- how did he get here?

DA: Bill?

JP: Yeah.

DA: He was a Native -- Native born in Red River. His mother and father were goldminers. Yeah, he went to school in Eklutna,

Anchorage. Yeah, he was Native. Yeah, he fished on some of the boats I guess before that. When they first started in purse seining there were a few of 'em. Well, they called it siwash fishing at that time, not purse seining. It was siwash.

DA: In 1935 is when we got married and 1937 is when we started. Before that he worked for the Fish and Game up the river counting fish.

JP: At the weir in Karluk?

DA: At the weir up here. I remember they had the weir up there.

JP: What river, Karluk River?

DA: Right -- Karluk River, yeah. No, that weir they had -- that weir down at the mouth of the, I mean, at the head of the lagoon in Karluk. Then they moved it up here in the 40's. Then they had it up there below the lake. So they been moving that weir around. Yeah, so, that's the way it goes.

JP: When you were fishing did you get up early or did you use the tides or did you just set a schedule?

DA: Well, it was like we took turns. Poppa would be up. He was an early bird. Okay. He'd be out there picking fish and picking kelp. When Poppa came ashore about four, five o'clock, maybe six, however long it took him. He'd wake me up and then it was my turn.

JP: In the morning?

DA: In the morning. Then it was my turn to go out. So we took turns like that.

JP: So just one person would go out at a time?

DA: Yeah. Well, me and my brother for instance. Poppa would be alone out there. Yeah, that was fun. Fun, fun, fun.

Oh, when we had 10,000 fish?

Yeah. That was -- I can't remember the year. I was trying to -- we were talking about that the other day and I can't remember the year it was. And Bill came home in the morning about three o'clock. He used to go out real early.

And he come back and I was wondering how come. I said did the

net bust again? We had them linen nets then. That net bust again and he says no, but he says we're gonna get the kids ready. We had a tent across there. Get the kids ready and we'll take the kids to the tent and let them go back to sleep again. He says the net is sunk. I said, what do you mean sunk? He says it's sunk with fish. Oh, how _____. Well, anyway, we went out there and we picked fish from about four o'clock. All day we were picking fish. We picked 10,000 fish out of that net. Part of them was humps and part of them were reds. I think we had 7,000 pinks and the rest were reds.

JP: Did everybody have a good hit that day?

DA: Um hmm. Everybody. All the way, whoever was fishing down the line. All their nets were full of fish. And as we were picking them there was other fish you know tight in behind. But to lift up a net that's way down loaded with fish from the shore to the hook. And luckily we only had one net out.

JP: How did you do that? Did you get the skiff under the net then and go down to the corks and lift?

DA: No, just picking it up as you're going along. And that was heavy. That's really heavy stuff picking up fish like that. That must have been in the 40's.

JP: Because you guys got married in 1935.

DA: 35, yeah, yeah, it was some place in the 40's. I'm trying to think of was it after the war or was it before the war. Can't quite put 'em together there.

JP: Did they still have the traps then or was it all independent fishing.

DA: No. They still had a few traps. I think it was in the 50's when the traps went out. What year was it statehood became?

JP: 1959

DA: I know it's in the 50's. So, it was before it became statehood when the traps were still in, when we had all that fish.

JP: And then the traps came out when Alaska became a state.

DA: Became state, yeah. They became state that's when they

started taking the traps out. Well, anyway. There's times when those traps were so loaded with fish. The cannery was going 24 hours a day. Two, three hundred thousand fish at the dock. Get that now. They had no refrigeration. And there is those scows loaded with fish.

JP: How long did they sit?

DA: Sometimes day, day and a half. That's why I can't understand now everything's got to be frozen, refrigerated.

JP: Well, I remember even when I started fishing nobody had refrigeration.

DA: And we used to -- we didn't poke the fish, you know.

JP: No, but you pitched them by hand.

I remember one time it wasn't two days but it was a day and a half and those humpies were rotten.

DA: They were soft. The ribs -- the rib bones sticking out.

JP: I know when I worked in the cannery, too, they were terrible, but nowadays they wouldn't even taken 'em.

DA: And then there's nothing wrong with them. They passed. Yeah, so many things has changed I tell you. It's hard to even believe. Yeah, then they got to where we couldn't use the pew no more. Well, first was you could not pew the fish and I never liked that anyway, pewing live fish on the body because it makes a big blood stain in 'em, blood clot inside. And then they said, well, only place you could pew your fish would be on the head and so people were -- I never did like that anyway, using that stick on the fish unless they were dead. After they're dead then they won't have that blood, big blood clot in 'em. And then after, you couldn't even use that. You had to throw 'em by hand. And don't pick up your fish when it's alive by the tail. I guess you've gone through that, too.

JP: Were they talking about that then, even in the 30's and the 40's?

DA: No, no, no. This is lately. Started in the 60's that wasn't able to.

JP: Remember that time last year when Spencer's net got hit by those birds. Has that ever happened before?

DA: Yes, lady. That's another -- I'm glad you reminded me of somethings that is not in mind with these kids now. We had 3,500 to the number in our net.

JP: Those birds, those ...

DA: Those gooney birds.

JP: Gooney birds. They dove down and they came up under your net?

DA: They just dove right into the net. Because that krill was out there. Eddie's, mine, Nick Laktonen, and I don't remember who down the line had them.

JP: Would Nick fish where Judy's fishing now?

DA: Yeah. In that area. I tell you. Them things were biting and scratching and what have you. Two days we were picking. People that come by stop and help you take 'em off. And we were counting 'em, 3,500 to the number. Yeah, that was a lot of birds. And they rode the lead line to the cork line. We were lucky last summer, we didn't get any of them.

JP: I know. Spencer's the only one that got hit.

DA: Yeah. They dove right down on to his.

JP: When did you start using outboards?

DA: Oh, it was in the 40's when we first started buying outboards. They were the 9 and 8/10 outboards.

JP: Were they Evinrude or Johnson?

DA: Johnson, I think. I guess they were both Evinrude and Johnson. I can't remember which -- we had a Johnson I think was the first one we had.

Yeah, it was way in the 40's when we started using outboards.

JP: Were they reliable when you first started?

DA: Oh yeah. They were really good little kicker. You wrap the rope around and then pull 'em.

JP: Sounds pretty simple compared to what they are now.

DA: Yeah, uh huh. Just a spark plug and a carburetor. Nothing else to bother with. If it started missing or if your gas was dirty, you cleaned it out and there she goes again. Not like

these things nowadays. I have to be a mechanic or something to work on 'em.

JP: Or you have to be a muscle man to lift them.

DA: That's another thing, yes.

JP: They're so heavy. I hate that.

DA: Oh, yeah. I wouldn't have anything outside of 30 horse or 35. No way. They're too heavy.

JP: When you first started fishing -- I'll take you back to what you were talking about -- Now, you were born in Ouzinkie?

DA: Uh huh.

JP: And then your family moved here?

DA: Well, I was born in Ouzinkie but Poppa was up on the island. He had that fox farm out there. And then of course he went to Ouzinkie. I guess it was different them days. Say if you -- there was a lady that would be ready to get married why then they took 'em. And I think she was 16 years old when Poppa asked my grandparents if he could have her. So, that's how.

JP: She was 16.

DA: She was 16 when Poppa, Poppa was what? I was born when he was 55. So he must have been anywhere in his 50s, 50-something when they got married, I guess, when he was 50 years old when they got married.

JP: How did he know that she was there in Ouzinkie if he was here?

DA: Well, in them days they went around, these fishermen, you know. And they were beach seiners, him and old man Von Scheele. They all came up to scow away some ships, you know. Then Poppa he had the fox farm. He got leased that island up there. He had a big fox farm up there. Both silvers and blue fox. Then they had those little power boats, you know. And then they went to Kodiak for groceries and selling the dry fish and what-not to the other farmers. So he would stop in Ouzinkie and there was another fox farmer there on Dry Island. Uh, I can't think of his name now. Well, anyway, they would stop over there, that's Dry Island below Port Bailey. And that's how he met Momma when they stopped in Ouzinkie. And

they got married, took her up to the island and that's where she -- then when she got pregnant then she went back to Ouzinkie to have me. Well, all the kids were born in Ouzinkie. Two brothers and a sister. Yeah, that's my folks.

JP: And then he fished first just to get food for the foxes?

DA: Yeah, fox farm. That's why they sold all that dry fish. And then, of course, furs, too. There was big money in furs in them days.

JP: How -- who would he sell them to? Would he send them down South?

DA: No, Alaska. Brown & Hawkins in Seward was the biggest buyer. And then he'd, you know, sell it to different fox farms. And they had a mail boat in them days. You know, they rowed them out to the mail boat and the mail boat took 'em to Seward.

JP: And you tanned them and everything, or what? No?

DA: Dried. We dried fish. Yeah, we had a big racks, thousands of fish at a time.

JP: Okay, the fish, but what about the foxes? Then how would you sell the foxes.

DA: Fur buyers buy 'em. Traders would come around.

JP: They would come around to the islands.

DA: Oh, all around. Go to Karluk, every place. That's how they made their big money.

JP: So, you really had two businesses, the fish.

DA: The fish and the furs. Well, the pelts were selling as high as two hundred dollars a pelt.

JP: Back then, huh?

DA: Back then, and that was big money. Yeah. That was big money in them days. Wish it were -- there were a lot of fox farmers.

JP: How long did you do that for or did your dad do that for?

DA: Up into the, let's see, 1928 he started. It must have been about 37 when he stopped drying fish. (Conversation with child) It was about 36, 37 when he quit drying fish.

JP: And that's when he quit fox farming, too?

DA: The fox -- well, we still had foxes, just a few of 'em then. And that's when the price of the furs were going down so the fox farmers were stopping. Amook Island, that was another big fox farm then. Oh, Pete Petroski had his foxes in corrals. And Harry Carlson at Carlson Point he had foxes in the corrals. There were lots of fox farmers. Harvester Island for blues and silvers also in the corrals.

JP: Now what did you have on Alf Island? What did your dad have?

DA: He had silvers and blues also. Blues on the loose and the silvers in the corral.

JP: Two hundred dollars per pelt. What did they do with all their money?

DA: Well, I guess they banked em. In them days they still had bank -- I think that Seward is where he was doing bank business. And then they had to go around from one place to, a fox farm to a fox farm, buying to mix their breed up, you know. So they wouldn't have the same strain all the time. So, I guess they made a good thing out of it. I don't know. They made big money anyway. That's how come he bought nets and what-not, you know, and then after he quit, anchors and nets, skiffs and what have you.

JP: And that all came up out of Seattle or San Francisco on the boat? No?

DA: No. Ouzinkie. They were building skiffs, but the gear, yes, came out from Seattle. The nets and the anchors and what have you.

JP: Was that Opheim who was building them in Ouzinkie?

DA: No, no. There was Nelson's at Afognak and I can't remember who in the 60's. There was -- oh, a lot of builders in them day. Lot of them making skiffs, selling them. My grandpa was one of them. He was also selling skiffs.

JP: Is this your mom's dad?

DA: Yeah.

JP: In Ouzinkie?

DA: Yeah.

JP: What was her maiden name?

DA: Shushurinkin, something to twist your tongue. (Laughter)
Shushurinkin, Olga and Nick Shushurinkin. Olga was my
grandma's niece.

JP: Do you still have family there? Is there anybody left from
your mom's family?

DA: Well, most of 'em are, you know, in Kodiak. Paris Muller,
she's in that extended care facility over there in Kodiak.
That's my cousin, my first cousin. Well, anyway. There isn't
too many more -- I can't remember who is in Ouzinkie now.
Pete Squartsoff and Donnie, Donnie Muller. The Paris Muller
kids that's in Ouzinkie. And the Squartsoff's. I can't
remember who else -- I can't remember. But, they had 16 kids
(Dora's grandparents).

JP: (Chuckle) So, there's bound to be a few of them running
around.

DA: Yeah. Almost all of Ouzinkie was -- we were related in one
way or another and quite a few in Kodiak. So, what else?
Some days I can think of alot of things, and then, you know
how that goes.....

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