

**KATHLEEN CARLSON DRABEK,  
RECOLLECTION AND REFLECTION:  
GROWING UP AS A TEENAGER  
AND YOUNG ADULT IN KODIAK, ALASKA  
(1961-1975)**

**By**

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**HISTORY 341**

**HISTORY OF ALASKA**

**INSTRUCTOR: GARY STEVENS, Ed. D.**

Oral History Project, December 3rd, 1994,

Interview by: Thomas H. Goldston, student, Kodiak College.

with: KATHLEEN CARLSON DRABEK

The following notes have been transcribed from a taped interview conducted on December 3, 1994. The interview was conducted at Ms. Drabek's home in Kodiak, Alaska. Kathy is a Fine Art's Dealer and a member of the Kodiak Chapter of the Sons of Norway (former President) and Rotary International. She maintains a full time position, with the City of Kodiak, as Office Manager for the Harbor Office. In addition Ms. Drabek maintains part time positions with Kodiak College as a Microcomputer Lab Aide and Ardinger's Fine Furnishings as an Inventory Control Specialist.

Interviewer:

Kathy I have explained to you the oral history project and would like for you to begin with a brief introduction of yourself?

Kathy:

Well like you say my name is Kathleen Carlson Drabek, I was born in Seattle. My parents were Chester and Virginia Carlson and ugh, I've resided in Alaska since 1961 and that's basically who I am.

Interviewer: Could you talk a bit about the circumstances that brought you and your family to Alaska?

Kathy: Well yes, my father had made a business arrangement, he owned the major portion of two fishing vessels and he made this agreement with the owners of, I forget the name of the canneries now. It was a gentlemen's agreement. He was running into a little trouble. They agreed to have him fish for, Pan Alaska seems to strike me as the name of the cannery. I don't believe they exist anymore. They decided that he would have to come to Alaska to fish these boat rather than fish off Washington (state) so he decided to come to Alaska. he gave us the choice of either coming to Unalaska or Kodiak. It didn't take much description to decide that Kodiak was the better of the two choices in 1961. We came here January 8th, well my parents preceded us, my brother and i arrived in January.

Interviewer: Was this Pan Alaskan Cannery a Kodiak based cannery or was it in Seattle?

Kathy: Well they must have had operations in Seattle. My father had dealings with canneries up and down Alaska, Washington and the Oregon coast. His entire life was as a fisherman, he'd fished mostly in Alaska and that was another personal reason why he wanted us to move to Alaska. He would spend four or five months at a time away from us and he didn't like it. He never liked it and he decided to remedy that by all of us moving to Alaska.

Interviewer: For the purposes of the record would you like to give the names of your mother and father?

Kathy: My father's name was Chester Gerhardt Carlson and my mothers name was Virginia Viola Popperwell Carlson.

Interviewer: How old were you when your family moved up to Alaska?

Kathy: I was thirteen, I was in the eighth grade, my brother was six and we arrived on Pacific Northwest Airlines on a day much like today, glare ice and cold.

Interviewer: That must have been quite a shock for a teenager from Seattle suddenly finding themselves in Kodiak in 1961.

Kathy: It was catastrophic, that was putting it mildly. I didn't think I would ever get over it. I believe I cried for about six months I was so stunned I thought, how could you do this to me, I don't believe it.

My folks were trying to get settled here and I don't believe they even had a car yet. They had a small home, an aleutian home and I think we, yes we took the bus into town. As we rounded deadman's curve and came into town I thought, no, you guys have to be joking. It's embarrassing to admit now but I still remember that ride. I'm 47 years old and at 13 to be so narrow minded. All I had ever experienced was Seattle and then one summer in Seldovia. When we drove into town in that dirty little bus on the dirt roads I thought, what do you mean, there is no pavement, there are no buildings. It wasn't like a town and I was shocked, I was shocked.

Interviewer: As a teenager what were your first impressions of Kodiak?

Kathy: Well I thought it was a dusty little berg that was beneath me and I'm proud to say that I've overcome that narrow mindedness. and got to see that there is beauty in knowing people and there is beauty in nature. Just meeting people who had been born and raised here and sharing their enjoyment of this place helped. I got out and around the town with friends families. It started with drives to Chiniak and picnic at Pashagshek and things like that. People would tell stories about the villages and being raised in the villages and a whole different perspective on life. Then I quit being big city stubborn and learned to appreciate it, which I do quite a bit now.

Interviewer: Is there any particular story that come to mind that you were told during those early days that still sticks out in your mind.

Kathy: When my parent came here they brought the Virginia Vee up to Kodiak and when they crossed from the mainland across through the

Barren Islands over to Kodiak they experienced forty foot waves. My father said that in his entire life and he was in his, he was between 35 and 37, he had never experienced such a storm. Waves broke over the top of the boat. I have a vague recollection of the size of the boat. It was a sixty or seventy foot vessel. My mother wrote a story about it. They talked about it, they would get excited and fearful every time they talked about it. It was just the engineer, by father and my mom. She spent her time in the galley trying to prevent things from flying around. In order to do that, the drawers that had flown out and the water that was in the galley, the drawers were floating around in the galley. So she sat in one and put a foot in one and another foot in another one to try to keep things somewhat stable. She didn't know where else to go, she felt she would be the safest there. I do remember my dad said, "you stay here" and the engineer was in the engine room and my dad was in the wheelhouse. They made it through, they couldn't quite believe it but they made it through. It wasn't a forecasted storm or anything. They just were committed and crossed and experienced it. That was kind of horrendous.

Interviewer: That must have been some experience for you as a teenager, having your parents out at sea and your father a fisherman. Does anything come to mind in your recollection of being a teenager of a father who was a fisherman?

Kathy: Yes I remember when they left to go to Alaska, we were quite worried. My brother went to stay with my sister and her family. She was an adult and had children and lived in the Seattle area. I stayed with an aunt and uncle and we were worried the whole time. It took them two to three weeks to get up and until we heard the call that they were there and were fine were worried. My dad was away a lot as a fisherman and, yes, it always worried us. You weren't safe, you weren't comfortable, you didn't feel safe or comfortable until they were on land.

Interviewer: Do you think that had any impact on you as a teenager and if so what?

Kathy: It was sort of strange that daddy was gone a lot and then when he was there he was the most kindly disciplinarian there was. It seemed strange. My mother was a little more liberal and then here was daddy who was gone a lot but when on land he was quite exacting in what he wanted and expected. Things were pretty strict when he was home and then not strict at all when he was gone. Then you were worried so yes, I sure it did.

Interviewer: What are your recollections of the differences in the social scene of teenagers in Kodiak versus what had been your social scene in Seattle?

Kathy: Oh well, it was a lot more unstructured, countrified so to speak. I remember in Seattle I had reached the age where I could go

to a dance or two. Big city versus small town. In the sixties I thought of it as a large village. It was more innocent fun, more unstructured, informal spontaneous fun. You'd walk along the beaches you could do that. You'd go to Knudsen's store, just a walk down town. You'd wander down to Sportland to see who was playing the pinball machine. Then you'd walk to Knudsen's store, that was right on the water right next to Kraft's. It was big deal to go by some 45's. All the little pleasures were such a big deal here, whereas they hadn't been elsewhere. I not sure quite how to describe that, it was different.

Interviewer: Did the move to Kodiak in any way impact your immediate families relations with other extended family members?

Kathy: Oh yes, that's one thing that's most noteworthy about Kodiak, being an island in the middle of the gulf, your connection to family outside of here was difficult. It was then and it is now. I had grown up living in Washington state and if you wanted to visit someone they were either across town or a few hours drive down the coast. It wasn't a big deal there. It's a major thing to go to and from Kodiak. My family in Washington thought of us as extremely adventuresome to come here. It completely cut us off from them.

Interviewer: I notice that in your name you maiden name is Carlsen. That is a name that I here quite frequently here in Kodiak. Could you talk a bit about any connections your Carlsen family has to Kodiak Island and the history of Kodiak?

Kathy: Well, I'm Carlsen by birth. My father was all Norwegian and there is lots of scandinavian influences here. I am not related to any of the Carlsons that are here. A lot of the Carlsons here are from the Chignik area. I have no other Alaskan Carlsons, I'm not related to any of the local Carlsons. I do have family that comes up in the summers to fish in the Bristol Bay Area. It not unusual the name because the scandinavians, fishing is not an unusual thing for them. Fishing is just a natural course of event. I just don't happen to be related to any of the other scandinavians here.

Interviewer: What were some of the popular teen activities that you can recall from when you were growing up in Kodiak?

Kathy: Well, the big deal for thirteen to sixteen year old girls here was, well there were two things and both of them were dances. The Teen Club on base and Rainbow Girls dances in town. You would die if you could not go to a friday night dance. The entire week was spent negotiating, who would take what group where, with parents. There were lots of promises of housecleaning and many thing that you would do in order to get someone's mother to take you. So I had a small group of friends where we cajoled our mother's to do just that. Well when my father was alive it was absolutely not to be a boy that would take you or bring you back.

This was something for parents to do. There was no other way about it.

Interviewer: What comparisons is any have you made about your experiences as a teenager in Kodiak versus the experiences of teenagers today in Kodiak?

Kathy: As far as sophistication, I think being a teenager in Kodiak in the sixties was nothing like being a teenager anywhere else in the nation in the sixties. We were at least one or two decades behind anything that I ever heard or read about teen life in a big city. We were veritably country bumpkins in comparison. I can't think of anything specific. When my peer group now looks back on our experiences we are almost embarrassed at how different it was than the rest of America.

Interviewer: Do you have any specific recollections of your years in High School in Kodiak?

Kathy: Well the most noteworthy was the day that President Kennedy died. It was a day like any other school day and the first or second period of the day was in the library. A homeroom class where you had an opportunity to catch up on your homework. Some people actually did that instead of passing notes. I think I was just coming out of homeroom class when ----- told me that President Kennedy had been shot. I thought she was kidding. She had always been a practical joker, an outrageous practical joker. My first thought was, that's not even funny ----- . I may have even said that to her and she repeated it enough times that I finally believed it was true. That was the ultimate thing.

The positive side of teen years here, 1962 through 1965 were basketball games. That was what you did. You either went to a basketball game, a dance or spent the night at a friends house or you ice skated. Those were the kind of activities you did.

I remember one time my father allowed me to have a party and invite boys and girls over. It was my first party real party. We were freshman in high school and the big thing here was boys owning mopeds. My folks had food in the house and so there was food and records. He hated my 45's, but for the party he allowed me to play what ever music I wanted. The boys took turns riding the girls around the block on their mopeds but I couldn't go, it was out of the question. If the parents wanted the other girls to do such a thing then fine, but like I said he was pretty strict, he did not want me to have anything to do with motorcycles.

Interviewer: I will now ask you a series of questions. I will give a name or event. Would you give me your recollection or your reaction as a teenager to same?

Kathy: Okay

Interviewer: Cuban Missile Crisis?

Kathy: Well, the news we received on AFRN which was the military station was pitifully summarized. Between being a teenager and not caring much about national events and the poor news coverage that AFRN had. I don't think it had very much affect on me.

Interviewer: Television debates between Nixon and Kennedy?

Kathy: Again I have to complain a little about the military television service we had here. They sometimes put on broadcasts that had the wrong President pictured on the wall. I paid attention to the Eisenhower/Stevenson debates when I was a child in Seattle, big time. It was available to us. We had a narrow window of events, current events coming to us across the television. So I don't recall them at all.

Interviewer: The assigation of President Kennedy?

Kathy: That was big time for everyone in the nation and we were off school for a week or at least two or three days. I can remember the entire city was stunned as was the rest of the nation.

Interviewer: The assigation of Bobby Kennedy?

Kathy: I was in Seattle at the time waiting for an airplane to flying back (to Kodiak.) I believe I must have been 18 or 19 then. I was waiting for an airplane in the SEATAC airport with my mother and father-in-law.

Interviewer: Do you recall any change in the atmosphere of your friend in Kodiak once you got back?

Kathy: No, no I don't. The thing that's unique about this island and being raised as a youth. It's not so much anymore but back then, the isolation had a real affect. It's so easy for your world to be here and just here only.

Interviewer: The assigation of Malcolm X?

Kathy: I don't even remember it.

Interviewer: The Civil Rights Movement and the March on Birmingham?

Kathy: Yes I do. I was then old enough to be become aware of events across the nation. I started to have strong feelings about peoples rights of others and to see beyond the walls of Kodiak.

Interviewer: Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream Speech"?

Kathy: I think that like anyone that speech is, . . . it's got a pretty strong effect no matter what your political views are. Just, if you

are human it affects you.

Interviewer: I'm thing more in terms of the impact it had on you at the time as a teenager in Kodiak. Do you have any recollections of hearing the speech or discussing it at school?

Kathy: Yes I did discuss it with friends, I did. Discussed it, I do remember feeling hopeful, positive, and proud that such a movement was going on. I wished that it would make a difference and I remember discussing it with friends.

Interviewer: Along that same vein, did you have a sense that the speech was applicable to the Alaska Natives here in Kodiak? Did you see it having an impact on how they as an ethnic group were treated?

Kathy: I,..., always had strong,..., yes I do, I did then, when I was in high school here, when I started high school,..., native children were not vocal about how much native they were. The recording of who was how much native was done under the table. I remember being in wonderment about that and when I ever would think about it in any depth at all. I would be appalled that people would have to be ashamed. It came to the forefront when I was a junior, sophomore, somewhere in high school. An english teacher decided on his own to ask the question in class in his english class before he got started with the subject of the day. "Would all those who are full native please raise their hand and would all those who half and a quarter and this and that. This was something that the school always logged throughout the year. No one had ever done it that way and the children were incapable of answering. They weren't comfortable answering because they were ashamed of being native. They hide it. I can remember friends that knew, you knew were native but they would refer to themselves as "white russians," rather than native. There was embarrassment at being native.

Interviewer: Would you say that or in your view did the events and circumstances and happening of the civil rights movement, the "I have A Dream Speech", have a positive impact on how native alaskans viewed themselves?

Kathy: No,..., no,..., there was such a, keep it quiet, it's not something you discuss outside of your home attitude and societal procedure that although I may have personally thought how wonderful for a person to be a leader and attempt to guide people out of darkness but it didn't translate to Alaska.

Interviewer: The assigation of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

Kathy: My, I can remember, I was, I believe I was a young adult then, I remember crying. I don't remember how I communicated it with friends. Most of my friends were at college and away.

Interviewer: Woodstock?

Kathy: Again, being raised in Kodiak you are out of the mainstream. It was yet another lower 48 experience that Kodiak kids couldn't relate to terribly. There was a time lapse, what happened in the lower 48 and what happened here anywhere from a 2 to 7 year lapse before it hit here, be it fashion, political thinking, any kind of trend.

Interviewer: The Beatles?

Kathy: They were a major group during my high school years, the early 60's. All those friday night teen club dances, they had many a Beatles tune, they were a favorite of all of us kids.

Interviewer: Janis Joplin?

Kathy: Crazy mad for her, a free spirit.

Interviewer: The Kent State Massacres?

Kathy: Saddened horribly, appalled. Living in a small community like this, getting used to the interaction here, the idea of violence. Attempting to make a stand for something was something unusual here and then to have that counteracted with violence it's incomprehensible, can't relate to it.

Interviewer: The 1968 Democratic National Convention?

Kathy: I was started to be quite interested in politics at that time. I believe that was the time that Nick Begich was quite big in Alaska. I went to the local democratic meetings and again I could associate at a state or local level but not at the national level. You're isolated here, you think in terms of small. I did anyway.

Interviewer: The Vietnam War?

Kathy: It was very confusing. many of my high school friends went. and some died. It was, it was something that we watched on TV with like the rest of the nation. There we could relate with the rest of the nation because we sent people too. We sent them and we worried about them the whole time they were there. We were entirely in tune with the rest of the nation there. Living in fear, wanting it to be over, confused as to why it was even existing. Along in that time I lived in Seattle for a while and they had organized demonstrations down there. I worked in a hospital in the downtown area. I'd catch a bus and go downtown. A lot of the times you would have to check if a protest was going on, cause the buses couldn't get through. I didn't feel any different than they did.

Interviewer: The Drug Scene in Kodiak?

Kathy: There wasn't much of a drug scene in Kodiak in the 60's as I knew the 60's. Again, the wave of what's going on in the lower 48 did not strike here to later. I think it was, it was the very late 60's before I heard of what marijuana was. Some people talked about "LSD" and "Speed" but I didn't know too many who had tried any of it.

Interviewer: Family Values?

Kathy: Well family values, what's the question?

Interviewer: What comes to mind about family values when you think of your teenage years in Kodiak, your interaction with family, other families? What were there dominating mores?

Kathy: Well, I moved here in 61 and my father died in 1963 and I moved out of my mother's home in 64. I saw a variety of family lifestyles. To finish school I lived with 4 or 5 different families. Family meant a lot to me. At that point, for me, it happened to be not jelling. I did experience close relationships with all sorts of other families that I stayed with until I got out of school. Family means a lot to me. I eventually righted things with the rest of my family. I think I can say that family is as important to me as anyone else.

Interviewer: Birth Control?

Kathy: Yes, you mean what comes to mind?

Interviewer: Yea, teenager, 60's , Kodiak?

Kathy: Well I remember, let me see. I hadn't had sex until I was married. I had some friends that had gone away to college. I remember that it was quite a big deal. They came back in the summers and a couple of them decided that wanted to experience sex.

We went to elaborate means of getting them birth control so they would be safe. That's not as easy to accomplish in a small town as it might be in a larger city. It was quite a soap operish thing. I believe I was drawn into it because I was, I was married at 19 and I forget how and what we structured but my single friends needed me to help them out to get,...I forget how was. We were behind the times. We didn't know they was a 60's sexual revolution going on very much.

Interviewer: The Alaska Earthquake?

Kathy: Well that was as of noteworthy in my memory as the Kennedy assassination. I was living on Tagura Road at the time with my sister, her husband, and three children. They were preparing, it was a friday, they were preparing for a party that night. We were living across the street from Larry's Uncle, Benny Benson. If it

hadn't been for Benny, we might have still be sitting there. There was the earthquake and we were frightened. Each one of us grabbed a child and then when the shaking stopped, I remember crying because a ceramic mirror my brother gave me had broken. After we calmed the children down, we were sort of flustered, not knowing what to do and starting to ask each other questions. Geri, my sister, said, well do you think people will come to the party? None of us knew that a tidal wave would follow. We didn't know that. Benny came a and said go, "you better get out of here, pack up, get out of here, we're on the water, there's going to be a tidal wave." That was the first we knew. So we did, but when we did, there was no, everyone was heading up Pillar mountain and by the time we slowly got ourselves together, there was no room on the mountain. So we had to climb, well at the time I thought it was climbing the face, but actually it was one of the highest houses up on, well I think they even call it Carlsen street. The one that goes up by Hope House, there was a house up there, it's there no longer. There was a lot up there, it was an abandoned house, and Larry's brother and his wife and children and Bertha and Les Martin and their children. There were about three or four families. We went to this abandoned house. It was near Easter time so Lorraine had brought many, many calich, Russian Easter Bread. Somebody brought a radio, a powerful radio and there we were. I later heard that in between the two big waves my mother, who did live in town, drove down to my sister's house in between the waves in her volkswagen, worried about us, wanting to know that we were okay. We spent all night up on the mountain listening to the radio reports of, the radio reports going out to the rest of the world. The reports were saying that Kodiak was completely destroyed, it was underwater. Devastating exaggerated reports. The men kept going downtown and down to the boats and down to check on homes and boats and things like that. I wanted to go with them but I was, I was young and a girl and you know, no one was going to take me. I remember climbing a tree and I couldn't believe it. There was a moon out, and that's what made be climb the tree, I could see that if I could just get up a little bit higher I could see what was going on. So I did climb the tree and I couldn't believe what I saw. I can still see those broken pieces of float with boats still tied to them laying on their side. Just kind of floating around. There was too much water. It was like everything had stopped but the water was covering parts of town and I couldn't see town. I mean, there were no lights down there like street lights or anything. All you could see was the moon shining off the water that would slightly illuminate this mess. Eventually we went to the High School, which is now the Junior High, to the library. Hundreds of people were there because it was too cold and it, we seemed safe so we came off the mountain and went to the school.

Many, many people watched the sun come up and that was the second most devastating thing of the experience. Watching the sun come up and look down over the channel between Kodiak and Near Island. It was shore to shore debris. It was houses and boats and crates and

just solid debris. Everything from the stores. Not too many homes but, lumber and I did see a roof float by. I don't remember people even talking, I just remember them just staring. The town was disrupted for some time.

Interviewer: How did the earthquake and the aftermath change life for you and your friends and family in Kodiak? Compare and contrast before and after the earthquake.

Kathy: Well, the things you would normally do were no longer done. You didn't go to school for a while until things got restructured. Until people got placed in homes work and school could not go on about their usual business. There was martial law. I had a boyfriend at the time and he lived in the downtown area. He and his mother were ousted from there place. He stayed at my sister's place for a couple of nights until his mom could find a place where they could stay. We had no heat. I remember blankets over the door ceils to keep what heat you did have in the room. Everybody slept on sleeping bags in one room. We lost our home, it was a rental, do on Tagura. The people that owned it wanted it back, so we lost that and ended up in a very tiny, tiny place quite crowded. The three kids, Geri, Larry and I. Things, you refocussed on life and what it meant. It was a little more serious after that. I was shortly, no, I was already working, I was working as a candystriper at the hospital. Or that's about the time, no, I was working at the hospital at the time of the earthquake. I think life just became more serious. You could see how fragile it was. That mainly how it changed. A lot of people lost homes or businesses. It kinda whipped the smiles off our faces, that's what it did. We were more serious.

Interviewer: Are there any other flashes, thoughts or memories, about growing up as a teenager in Alaska; that have come up since we have been talking, that you want to get on record.

Kathy: Well, a teenager, a teenager. No I can't think of anything specific.

Interviewer: What about going beyond the teenage years, you are now twenty, the earthquake has happened, you are now going into adulthood, living in Kodiak?

Kathy: Yes, yes, that why I couldn't think of anything about being a teenager. I'm thinking early seventies. I was married and Alisha was born in 72 and my association...

Interviewer: Pardon, Alisha is your daughter?

Kathy: Yes, yes, my only child, Alisha Drabek, had been born and I had spent a couple of years getting to know the family. I had heard stories from my mother-in-law and her sister about being raised in Afognak. I had already become firmly rooted as a Kodiakan. I had read a lot of history, being facinated with Kodiak so to hear

stories about Afognak were wonderful I guess you'd say. Both Magnel and Laura were very good story tellers and they told about their youth, being raised in Afognak.

Interviewer: Could you, Magnel and Laura who?

Kathy: Magnel Drabek and Laura Freeman. They were, they had, their maiden names were Larsen. They were Olga Larsen's daughters. Two of her sixteen children. They were an Afognak family. In their stories, to me, of what it was like being raised in Afognak, they were good story tellers and I didn't even really think about that. Just in the course of visiting family these stories came to me. When Alisha was about six months old, we had the opportunity to go with friends. One weekend Marya and Andre Nault, and Tony, and Alisha, and I went to Afognak. Actually we camped on Rasberry, Rasberry Island but we skiffed over in the day to Afognak village.

Interviewer: This was before or after the earthquake?

Kathy: After, it was 72, 1972. When we went from one end of the village to the other, it took us all day long. I could not get over the impact of having known Olga Larsen. I'd briefly lived in Port Lions which is where after the earthquake, Afognak was destroyed during the earthquake, everyone from Afognak resettled. The majority resettled in Port Lions. The village built for them, by major input from the Lion's Club, hence the name Port Lions. Their water was fouled in Afognak and several other things had gone wrong so they had to depart Afognak and move elsewhere. They were saddened by having to leave their structured village. It was the largest village on these Islands. I had no idea the impact, that the stories those ladies had told me. When we spent the day walking from one end of the village to the other and knowing so many of the people. We would walk by the Nelson's house, we would walk by the Chichenoffs house, we went in to Chichenoffs house and the out buildings. We were unable to go into Olga Larsen's house because the lake had extended. No we did go in. There was a couple of feet of water, but we had on cannery boots so we did go in there. All of the stories, it was like people were in the buildings, because,,, Tony would say, "this was the Nelson's house", he had spent several summers there, so he knew whose house was whose.

Interviewer: And Tony was your husband?

Kathy: He was my husband and his mother and aunt's stories made that whole place more than just an interesting large and abandoned village. It was like it was alive and it was beautiful.

Interviewer: Can you recall any particular story that sticks out in your mind that you would like to have recorded as a part of this oral history project?

Kathy: Well I know that there was apath. The houses were, there was

the ocean and the beach, the houses were fairly close to the beach. The forest was behind that. Just beyond the house and slightly into the forest there was kind of a pathway. Kind of a protective pathway, well worn pathway. There wasn't any one specific story but, apparently when the kids would go from school to church to home or vice versa the main means of travel was to go back towards the woods and over that path. It just struck me as, every story that related to traveling to and from school, or to and from church, you could just see Laura and Magnel walking along with firm instructions from their mother in their minds, heading for church. They would rather have been sleeping in their beds, it was like they were all there. It was like all the experiences they had came alive to me, while I was there looking at this abandoned village.

I do remember a specific story. Magnel told me that the Larsen's and Chichenoffs, lived right next to each other in Afognak. They are like family, to this day they are family. Just from having the close proximity. One of the Chichenoff girls, there was a ship that came into the bay. I don't know whether it was military or what but it was a rather large ship. They had come in in a skiff and they were going to share some food supplies. They wanted some specific things and they had an abundance of things and they wanted to do a transfer of stuff. All the young girls were sort of titillated by , here's a whole ship of fellows. They wanted to help take the stuff out there. Well apparently one of the Chichenoff girls was in the skiff and the skiff sank and the rest of the people on the shore were unable to do anything. Sonny lost one of his sisters that day. All they were doing was taking foodstuffs out to the boat. That's the kind of realities they had to deal with living at the edge of the ocean.

Interviewer: I gather from your earlier comment that you lost your father. Was this also a tragedy at sea?

Kathy: Well sort of kind of! My father died when he was forty years old. He wasn't living in Kodiak. He taken a few months job. East Point Cannery here was run and owned by Mr. Bendixsen, I forget his first name. My dad had worked with him in conjunction with fishing out of Seattle and here. Bendixsen had a boat that he wanted worked on. My dad lived on the boat in Lake Union in the Seattle area. One weekend he was going to fly up here and about two days before he was due to be here my mother received a call. Apparently he, . . . , he was due to come up that Friday but, we never knew the particulars of it but he drown in Lake Union, right beside the boat. The boat was tied to a little short dock and when they found him he had a bump on his head. He had drown four days earlier. We didn't quite know whether it was malicious or an accident. Various family members were firmly rooted in both ideas. A fairly moot point, he drown.

Interviewer: Not desiring to labor a morbid point, however, this strikes me as something that kids people growing up in Kodiak have

to learn to deal with, relate to, talk about.

Kathy: I remember the family stories, everyone knew about the Skonberg family. A variety of the men had lost there legs in a skiffing accident. They were sisters and brothers in a boat and apparently a storm came up. The sister's went under the tarp and the men did what they could do to secure the safety of their ship. In the course of the storm at least two of the men lost one or both of their legs. I don't know if it was hypothermia or what but, it's just something that. I can't remember having any specific conversations with people, as a teenager, about fishing deaths. It is a reality, every year, like at the end of every year, 'how many people have you lost?' That goes on today, that's one of the reasons why I like the IFQ's. Because it means that you will not have these 24 hour halibut openings that are unsafe and unwise from a human standpoint and you don't put people in jeopardy over trying to make a buck. You get a quota and you get to fish for it in a reasonable amount of time and in a reasonable prepared fashion. Anything you can do to make the fishing industry safer is a logical move. People aren't expendable in my view, yet it is a reality that people in the fishing industry have to face all the time.

Interviewer: As a teenager you were living here in the heyday of the King Crab Fishery and that whole aura of big time fishing big time money. What was that like?

Kathy: It was like the Gold Rush times. Exactly like the gold rush times. That's the kind of, it was boom time. People were very, very wealthy. I think that's when gold nugget watches became popular. You could plaster gold nugget rings and watches on yourself if you really made it big. It was a way of showing you were a Highliner. It was , it was like I would imagine the Skagway gold rush days were. People didn't not always spend very wisely either. It was like a feast and famine thing. You make a big season, so you buy all new furniture or you go on an grandiose vacation or build a a new home and then its all gone. Then you go fishing again, until there were no more King Crab. This is not a terribly good example for people to go behind you but it was interesting to observe.

Interviewer: We have talked, (off tape), about a sense of belonging and being a part of community and relating this oral history to your personal experiences. You had some comments on that?

Kathy: Oh, well, I mentioned that I was slightly reluctant to speak of specific personal experiences because some of them were negative. Perhaps they are noteworthy whether they are negative or not. I hadn't been here too long maybe six months when we had the eighth grade graduation here in Kodiak. That was 1962 I guess. I remember, it was an unusual thing, it was a huge ceremony. I wasn't prepared for such a huge ceremony for eighth grade graduation. Apparently, many people, it was probably one of the last big deal ceremonies for eighth grade. Apparently a lot of kids didn't go

beyond that, up until the sixties. That was it, so they made the ceremony really whiz bang. There was an on stage thing just like a high school graduation. I felt like I didn't belong and at the end of the whole ceremony we all stood to sing the state song. "Eight stars of gold on a field of blue, Alaska's flag may it mean to you," and here are all these kids that had gone to school, for all these years together. Born and raised together, the majority of them, probably 50% to 75% had all gone to school together and I didn't even know the song. I couldn't by myself even get through the Alaska Flag song. After that ceremony everyone was to go to the cafeteria for refreshments and chit chat with parents and friends. I remember, I don't even remember seeing my folks, I just remember that the stage was empty and I was standing there crying because, I was feeling, "I'm not a part of this, I'm not part of this at all," and it just felt strange to not be part and partial of what was happening, yet be involved with it.

Interviewer: What time or age was it before you started really feeling that you belonged in Kodiak, were a part of the community?

Kathy: Oh, probably a little bit by the end of high school. By then I had gone through school with those same kids from the eighth grade. I kind of got use to watching the Navy kids that were here for two maybe three years come and go. I saw the sense that other people get kind of whipped lashed around and get along just fine. We, here all the locals stayed on. To me that is one of the things I enjoy most about this community, that today, there are still twenty some of us are still here.

Interviewer: When you say twentysome of you?

Kathy: I mean class, that's members of my high school class. High school graduating class. I believe somewhere between twenty and twentytwo out of a class of 60 some of us that graduated together are still here. I wouldn't say that we chum around with each other but we still get together on a regular basis, about four times a year.

Interviewer: When you get together, what kind of stories come up, the stories that come up that you laugh about, about high school?

Kathy: Stupid stuff that we did in high school you know how intrigued we were by, oh you know, I guess, well I didn't see it but..., apparently one of the big laughs from the early 60's was high school pranks was to put..., some kids somehow took out the double doors of one of the buildings and put one of the teachers volkswagons in the hallway. Somehow we all felt bonded together that something wonderful had happended. We all thought we were one up on the authoritarians or something. We all thought that was pretty cool, we laugh about it to this day. We all share stories about our children and vacations and our day to day life. We are quite often taken back to high school life and basketball games.

You, know, "do you remember this one screwing up or that", we laugh about stuff, dumb stupid stuff, senior picnics and crazy stuff that happens, freshman initiation and you know who. Like Nancy Waller initiated me when I was a freshman and she runs Highliner now and she had me eating peanut butter at command and trying to talk and sing while eating peanut butter. Dumb stuff like that.

Interviewer: Jumping around once again, moving back to young adulthood, I have heard you reference times that you, your husband and child tendered a bit. Anything you want on the record about those experiences?

Kathy: Well that was the most fun I've had in my life, actually. Getting to know all those people. We had a tendering run Uyak bay that, we did it for three summers in a row.

Interviewer: From when to when?

Kathy: 79 to 81 on a huge World War II power scouler, that has since sunk. It was a derelict of a thing, but it was huge and comfortable. In the protection of Uyak Bay that was fine, it didn't have to be any safer than it was. It would always worry me when we would go down the Shelikof and around back to Kodiak, but when in Uyak it did not bother me at all. We picked up fish from setnetters on an average of about 12 sites a day. So as you can see picking up 12 sites a day, having them pitch all of their fish from their skiff into a bailer bag and then put it on deck and cover it with ice and burlap and such. It took round the clock. It was three adults and Alisha. My daughter Alisha was, she was six to eight during those times. A lot of setnetters are families, its a family operation. Alisha would quite frequently stay with those people that had children. They wanted a little, you know, fresh entertainment for their children, so she met a lots of people during that time. Almost to a man the people I met then are still some of my best friends. Really great people and that's the kind of thing that made me love this island. To see, to have the opportunity to go round that island from Kodiak to all the way around to there. One time we even went up into Larsen Bay and walked up to the head of the Karluk river. It's so different down on that end of the island than it is up here. It just a beautiful, beautiful area. To me, those experiences are precious, experiences much like that tendering experience. Also had an opportunity to trap otter and fox in the Uganik bay, which is the next bay up from Uyak bay. Spent three months down there and saw the beauty of Uganik bay and when Alisha was an infant, 10 months old, had an opportunity to winter watch Moser bay cannery, which is almost at the south end of island. Having the chance to see the variety of beautiful spots in nature on this island has made me just appreciate the beauty of this place and made me feel ashamed that I ever thought of it as "a dusty old berg."

Interviewer: You have also mentioned that you spent some time working in canneries here. Any reflections on those experiences?

Kathy: That's an odd bit of work to do. I probably as a teenager, just after high school and as a young adult a couple of times to fill in work, I probably worked in three or four canneries. It's a odd sense of hard, hard work and comrodery that takes hold of you, particularly when you are working on the line that is the conveyor belt and you are shoulder to shoulder with people. You get to know people in a way that you would never have the opportunity to know them in any other work experience and that's real interesting too. I worked to on that ship, we called it the scar of Kodiak, does it actually now say the Star of Kodiak. It looks a lot more ship shape than it did when they brought it here and I worked over in Port Lions in the Wakefield Cannery, picking shell out of crab and I worked a time at Urshin Seafoods down on Shelikoff avenue when I was twenty years old, to get money for christmas. That's a different form of work, I admire people who do it year end and year out. That's not a cinch, that's hard work. Most of the youth here have had a spell doing that, it is not a particularly odd thing for late teens, early twenties, for everybody here to have worked in a cannery.

Interviewer: What was the impact of media and the television and that advancing technology on you growing up in Kodiak?

Kathy: I think I made mention of it earlier, the military, single station was on late in the morning and late in the day and then be off by 11:00 at night. I remember Johnny Carson or a sitcom or two. A lot of the kids that were born and raised here never experienced television. Elsewhere you would talk about television experiences but up here they would not know what you were talking about. Now we are current with the rest of the world, it was not that way. It was a very minimal entertainment. The application of TV to Kodiak life was not very much.

Interviewer: You have some thoughts to share about the impact being raised in Kodiak has had on your life?

Kathy: I talked about the influence of the people that i knew here as a teenager. One of the greatest influences I had being here was being friends with Marya Springhill Nault. Spending time with her mainly, which also meant spending time with her mother, Betty Springhill. Betty treated us well almost equally. We'd do stuff together, the three of us. One of the things that she would do quite regularly was read to us. Here we were teenage girls. Like I was saying earlier the activities that you had here were movies and a dance and you certainly couldn't do that very often. A lot of evenings were spent just visiting and playing cards and having Betty read to us and or just talking and laughing. I can remember one time we were seniors or maybe just the year after high school, still teenagers, Betty read something to us, she used to read

magazines to us and sometimes whole novels. She was telling stories and laughing and laughing. We, all three of us were laughing, and Marya said, "you know, you'd be great fun if you weren't my mother." It bothered her that it was her mother that we were having such a wonderful time with. That was a strong family influence that I will carry with me forever. It makes me know the value of what I have found now, to be the most important relationship you can have in your whole life and that's between yourself as a woman and your child. There's no words that can describe the bond that that is. In over the thirty years that I have known Betty, she and I have spent many hours talking about what its like to be a women, what its like to be a mother and what its like to be in Kodiak. I think of her as a friend, mentor, she has had a great influence on my life.

Interviewer: What's it like living in Kodiak?

Kathy: It's special, it's special. Some people talk about the isolation being a burden. You here people that come here that aren't quite comfortable being here, much like I was when I came here in 61. Like you had just donned a dirty straight jacket and can't go anywhere and the variety of things available to you here are limited. There's the positive side to that which I see and that is, you don't give a damn about what's happening in New York or Washington D.C., or Paris or Los Angelos. You are just here. There is a coccoon like security. I realize that it is a false security. Sealand could be late and you could miss thanksgiving. There is a certain comfort to it none the less, like a quilt.

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