

KODIAK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DECEMBER 5, 1994

CLARENCE SELIG

INTERVIEW WITH

TOMMY FROST

HISTORY 341/641

HISTORY OF ALASKA

DR. GARY STEVENS

MY NAME IS CLARENCE SELIG AND TODAY IS DECEMBER 5, 1994.  
MY INTERVIEW WILL BE WITH TOMMY FROST. THIS INTERVIEW WAS  
CONDUCTED AT THE RESIDENCE OF MR. FROST, APT #410 AT BAY VIEW  
TERRACE, KODIAK, ALASKA.

C.S. GOOD AFTERNOON TOMMY.

T.F. GOOD AFTERNOON CLARENCE.

C.S. THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME INTERVIEW YOU. COULD YOU START BY  
GIVING ME A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT YOURSELF, WHEN YOU WERE BORN,  
WHERE AT AND HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE KODIAK AREA?

T.F. I WAS BORN ON JULY 24, 1920 ON AFOGNAK ISLAND, THAT'S  
AFOGNAK, ALASKA AND MOVED OVER HERE TO KODIAK IN SEPTEMBER OF  
1937 AND I HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE.

C.S. I USED TO WORK WITH YOU AT O. KRAFT AND SON AND I KNOW THAT  
YOU HAVE HAD QUITE AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER HERE IN KODIAK AND ARE  
WELL KNOWN. WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO TOMMY, IS GO BACK AND  
TALK ABOUT YOUR MILITARY SERVICE. I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE SOME  
PRETTY INTERESTING STORIES AND KODIAK WAS STILL PRETTY SMALL  
AT THAT TIME. MAYBE YOU COULD START BY SAYING WHEN YOU  
JOINED THE SERVICE, AND YOU CAN TAKE FROM THERE O.K.

T.F. I WAS DRAFTED INTO THE ARMY ON AUGUST 1, 1943 AND SERVED  
RIGHT HERE IN KODIAK IN THE U. S. ARMY WITH THE HARBOR  
CRAFT DETACHMENT STATIONED AT THE OLD CITY DOCK AND WHICH  
WAS KNOWN THEN AS THE ARMY DOCK, THE ARMY TRANSPORT  
SERVICE. NATURALLY, WE WERE ON BOATS WHICH THE ARMY HAD  
TAKEN OVER FROM THE DIFFERENT CANNERIES, PROCESSING PLANTS  
AND WE SERVED THE OUTPOSTS AROUND THE ISLAND.

C.S. DID YOU TRAVEL TO ANY OTHER PLACES OTHER THAN KODIAK?

T.F. ON JUNE 1, 1945 I WAS FINALLY TRANSFERED TO NOME, ALASKA. WE LEFT KODIAK AND HEADED DOWN TO UNALASKA AND WE WERE THERE FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS AND THEN WE HEADED FOR NOME, ALASKA. WE ENDED UP IN TELLER, ALASKA, WHERE THEY HAD BUILT AN AIRFIELD FOR THE ARMY PLANES AT CAPE SPENCER. I REMAINED THERE THE WHOLE SUMMER RUNNING A 65 FOOT TUGBOAT. I REMAINED THERE UNTIL AUGUST 5TH AND THEN I RETURNED TO UNALASKA. AFTER A MONTH IN UNALASKA, WE HEADED FOR ADAK. ONCE WE GOT TO ADAK WE WERE RUNNING BETWEEN ADAK AND ATKA HAULING FREIGHT AND BUILDING MATERIALS. THE CONTRACTORS WERE REBUILDING THE VILLAGE OF ATKA AT THAT TIME. IT WAS AFTER THANKSGIVING IN 1945 WE HEADED TO ATTU. WE WERE THEN HAULING FREIGHT FROM ATTU TO SHEMYA. THAT YEAR WE SPENT CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS AT ATTU. FINALLY, ABOUT THE 10TH OF MARCH WE HEADED BACK TO ADAK. IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT WERE BEING READIED FOR DISCHARGE. WE HAD TO MAKE ONE MORE TRIP TO ATKA WITH SOME OF THE BUILDING MATERIALS. IN ABOUT A FEW MONTHS TIME, THEY HAD 10 OR 15 OF THE NEW HOMES BUILT, WHICH WERE MODERN. THEY HAD ELECTRIC LIGHTS, AND ALL THE NEEDED FACILITIES, BATHROOM FACILITIES, THEY WERE MODERN AND BUILT VERY STURDY. WE THEN WENT BACK TO ADAK AND FROM THERE WE HEADED FOR DUTCH HARBOR. WE WERE IN DUTCH HARBOR FOR ABOUT A WEEK. WHILE I WAS IN DUTCH HARBOR I MET MY GOOD FRIEND, MY COMPANY COMMANDER, WHEN I WAS STATIONED IN KODIAK. HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO UNALASKA AND WAS PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN. HIS NAME WAS CAPTAIN HENDERSON. HE

WAS A FINE GENTLEMAN FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA. HE SHOWED ME A WIRE THAT HE HAD RECEIVED FROM HEADQUARTERS AT FT. RICHARDSON OR EILSON THAT WE WERE TO BE STATIONED, WHERE HE COULD HOLD THE FIRST BOAT, THAT ARRIVED IN DUTCH HARBOR, UNALASKA FOR TWO MONTHS. BUT HE SAID, "I KNOW THAT YOU WANT TO GET HOME, SO I'LL NAIL THE NEXT BOAT THAT HITS THIS PORT." SO HE RELEASED US AND LET US GO TO KODIAK. WE WERE HERE IN KODIAK FOR THREE NIGHTS. THE FIRST NIGHT THAT WE WERE HERE WAS APRIL FOOLS DAY IN 1946 AND THEY WERE EXPECTING A TIDAL WAVE. SO WE COULDN'T COME TO TOWN THAT NIGHT AND WE HAD TO ANCHOR OUT IN WOMANS BAY AND ALL THE SMALL CRAFT TIED UP ALONG SIDE TO THE BOAT THAT I WAS ON WHICH WAS A 150 FOOT FS BOAT. AS IT TURNED OUT, THE TIDE ONLY CAME UP ONE FOOT, NO TIDAL WAVE. BUT, IT DID DAMAGE CAPE SARACHEF AND SEVERAL OF THE COASTGUARDSMAN THAT WERE STATIONED THERE LOST THEIR LIVES. WE WERE ALLOWED TO COME TO TOWN THE NEXT DAY, AND WE SPENT A COUPLE OF NIGHTS IN TOWN. MY FRIEND, CHARLIE CHRISTOFFERSON WAS ALONG WITH US AND AFTER TWO NIGHTS IN TOWN WE WENT BACK ABOARD THE SHIP AND THEN WE HEADED FOR SEWARD. WELL, LOW AND BEHOLD, WE WERE HELD IN SEWARD BECAUSE THEY HAD A SNOW SLIDE AND THE TRAINS WEREN'T RUNNING. SO, THEY CLEARED THE SNOW SLIDE AND AFTER BEING THERE TWO WEEKS WE TOOK OFF ON THE TRAIN TO ANCHORAGE AND I WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE ARMY AT FT. RICHARDSON ON APRIL 18, 1946. AND OF COURSE THEY ONLY HAD ONE FLIGHT A WEEK FROM ANCHORAGE TO KODIAK ON PNA. WE HAD TO STAY IN ANCHORAGE FOR THREE DAYS WAITING FOR THE FLIGHT.

SO, WE HEADED HOME AND I HAVE BEEN HERE EVER SINCE.

C.S. SO, WHEN YOU WERE DISCHARGED FROM THE ARMY, WHAT WAS YOUR RANK.

T.F. I WAS A MASTER SERGEANT.

C.S. THERE WERE ALSO SOME WELL KNOW NAMES, PEOPLE, HERE IN KODIAK, I THINK THERE WAS BUCKNER, I THINK THERE WAS ERICKSON, THE ONE THAT THEY NAMED THE AIRBASE AFTER AT SHEMA. ALSO, THERE WAS A GUY NAMED "SQUEAKY" ANDERSON, THAT YOU MENTIONED. DID YOU EVER MEET "SQUEAKY" AND IF YOU DID COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT IT.

T.F. GENERAL BUCKNER WAS THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF ALL THE FORCES IN ALASKA AND HERE IN KODIAK WE HAD GENERAL CORLETT WHO WAS THE COMMANDING OFFICER HERE AT FORT GREELEY AND OF COURSE WE HAD THE NAVY BASE AND THE SUBMARINE BASE. I KNEW "SQUEAKY" ANDERSON, I FISHED FOR HIS COMPANY.

C.S. OH! THIS WAS BEFORE THE WAR..

T. F. YES, THIS WAS BEFORE THE WAR. I FISHED FOR HIS CANNERY. THIS WAS IN 1938 AND 1939 AND I WORKED FOR HIM IN THE CANNERY BEFORE THE FISHING SEASON STARTED. I GOT TO KNOW THE GENTLEMAN VERY WELL. HE WAS OF NORWEGIAN DECENT AND HE WAS A GOOD MAN TO WORK FOR. IF YOU PERFORMED YOUR DUTY AND WORKED WELL HE WOULD BACK YOU 100 PERCENT. OUR GOOD FRIEND TOMMY GALLAGER WAS OUR COOK AT THE CANNERY AND HE PUT OUT VERY GOOD FOOD AND OF COURSE THE COOK THEM DAYS HAD TO BE THE BAKER ALSO. I FISHED WITH ALBERT REFT WHO IS NO LONGER HERE, BLESS HIS SOUL, HE GOT LOST DURING THE 1964 TIDAL WAVE HERE. WE FISHED AT RED RIVER, KARLUK AND ALITAK AND

LIKE I SAID I GOT TO KNOW "SQUEAKY" FAIRLY WELL.  
LATER WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT "SQUEAKY" MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF IN THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND WAS ADVANCED TO THE RANK OF COMMADORE WHICH I THINK IS ONLY A WARTIME COMMISION. HE RAN THE YT FLEET DOWN THE ALEUTIAN CHAIN AND HE WAS LATER TRANSFERED TO THE PACIFIC, THE PACIFIC ISLANDS, I DON'T REMEMBER WHERE. I REMEMBER THIS BOOK, "THE THOUSAND MILE WAR" AND THE ONLY SECTION THAT I READ WAS ON "SQUEAKY" ANDERSON AND HIS SAYING WAS, "HELL'S BELL'S WE'S GOTTA GET GOING" - "HELL'S BELL'S WE'S GOTTA GET GOING". AND HE USED THAT SAME VERSE AT THE CANNERY. WHEN THE FISH WOULD COME IN - HEAVY - HE WOULD SAY, "HELL'S BELL'S WE'S GOTTA GET GOING". HE SAID THAT SAME THING DURING THE WAR AND HE MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF. FEW PEOPLE KNOW THAT "SQUEAKY" HAD A CANNEY HERE ON KODIAK ISLAND OVER AT CARMEL.

C.S. AT THE TIME THAT YOU WERE IN THE SERVICE, THERE WERE SOME OF THE OTHER LOCAL GUYS THAT WERE IN THE SERVICE, DID THEY SERVE WITH YOU OR WERE THEY IN THE SAME PLACE YOU WERE?

T.F. TO NAME A FEW THAT WERE DRAFTED BEFORE MYSELF, A FEW, MOSES MALUTIN, JACOB AGA, BILLY HUBLEY, JACOB LAKTONEN SR. FROM KARLUK. IT'S KINDA HARD TO THINK RIGHT OFF, BUT THERE WAS MY GOOD FRIEND THAT WAS DRAFTED WITH ME, WHO LIVES IN ANCHORAGE - HENRY SANGUINETTI.

C.S. REFLECTING BACK NOW TO THESE TIMES AS WE HAVE, WHAT INSIGHT DID THAT GIVE YOU AS TO PREPARE YOU FOR THE OTHER THINGS IN LIFE THAT YOU DID. I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN MAYOR OF KODIAK,

AND YOU WORKED FOR MANY (32) YEARS AT O KRAFT AND SON.

T.F. WELL, I'LL TELL YOU, THE MILITARY WAS A - WELL IT DEPENDED ON THE INDIVIDUAL - I REMEMBER BEFORE I WAS EVER DRAFTED, PARENTS WOULD SAY "WELL NOW THAT MY SON ENLISTED - OR WAS DRAFTED, HE WILL COME OUT A BUM". BUT THAT IS NOT SO, CLARENCE, IT'S UP TO EACH INDIVIDUAL WHETHER YOU ARE IN THE MILITARY SERVICE, WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT AS A CIVILIAN, OR NO MATTER WHERE YOU WORK. IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE OR BREAK YOURSELF. YOU HAVE TO JUST GET IN THERE AND WORK AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR POSITION AND A LOT OF TIMES WE FLUBBED OUR DUB - MADE THE WRONG DECISIONS - BUT WE ONLY DID THAT ONCE AND WE LEARNED FROM OUR MISTAKES AND OUR ERRORS AND THIS IS THE WAY LIFE IS SUPPOSED TO BE. I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER MY GOD FATHER, GOD MOTHER, UNCLES AND AUNTS IN AFOGNAK. THEY WOULD SAY, "ALWAYS USE COMMON SENSE AND DO NOT BE AFRAID TO WORK".

C.S. LET'S GO BACK A COUPLE YEARS BEFORE THE ARMY AND TOUCH ON - YOU SEE MY MOTHER WAS BORN IN AFOGNAK - MAYBE YOU COULD TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT AFOGNAK BEFORE YOU CAME TO KODIAK. IF YOU COULD TELL ME A FEW THINGS ABOUT AFOGNAK, WAY BACK THEN. WHAT KIND OF A LIFE WAS IT.

T.F. WELL, LIVING IN AFOGNAK WAS SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULD NEVER FORGET, IT WAS WONDERFUL. WE HAD TO CARRY WATER, NO ELECTRIC LIGHTS, NO OIL STOVES, YOU HAD TO CHOP WOOD, YOUR KINDLING WOOD, DO YOUR CHORES EVERY DAY BEFORE WE COULD GO OUT AND PLAY. THERE WAS A SCHOOL IN AFOGNAK WHEN I STARTED SCHOOL, WHICH WAS IN 1926. WE HAD A HIGH SCHOOL IN AFOGNAK

AND IN 1932 THEY BUILT A NEW SCHOOL AND THEY DID AWAY WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL. TO REMEMBER SOME OF THE NAMES OF AFOGNAK THAT WERE OUR LEADERS OVER THERE WERE THE SHERATINES. NICOLI SHEATINE WAS MY GRAND UNCLE, ANDREI SHERATINE WHO WAS ALSO MY GRAND UNCLE AND TECHON SHERATINE, WHO WAS MY GRANDFATHER WHO WAS THE CHURCH READER OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. WE ONLY HAD THE ONE CHURCH THERE THEN. IT WAS A NICE VILLAGE, WE HAD THE TWO VILLAGES, THERE WAS THE AFOGNAK AND ALEUT TOWN. WE ALL GOT ALONG FINE. WE HAD THREE GROCERY STORES THERE - KODIAK ONLY HAD TWO ! THE THREE STORES WERE THE VON SCHEELES, THE PETELINS AND PIJOMAN - CARL PIJOMAN.

C.S. WELL TOMMY, YOU KNOW - -

T.F. OH ! CLARENCE, I ALMOST FORGOT, ONE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING PERSONS ON AFOGNAK WAS THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST, FATHER GERASIM. HE WAS A MARVELOUS MAN. HE CAME TO AFOGNAK WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG MAN AND I REMEMBER HIM FROM THE TIME WHEN I WAS ONLY THREE YEARS OLD. HE BAPTISED ALL OF US - WATCHED OVER US. AT THAT TIME ALL THE SERVICES WERE IN RUSSIAN - NO ENGLISH. HE WAS AN OUTSTANDING MAN. HE MARRIED MY MOTHER AND FATHER. HE TOLD ME THAT WHEN I GOT MARRIED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO PERFORM THE CEREMONY. WELL, I GOT MARRIED IN KODIAK WHILE I WAS IN THE ARMY, I WAS A TECH SGT. AT THAT TIME. I WAS MARRIED IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KODIAK ON OCTOBER 29, 1944 TO A WONDERFUL LOCAL GIRL NAMED MARY IRENE MEYER. FATHER GERASIM PERFORMED THE CEREMONY AND I REMEMBER THAT THE PRIEST IN KODIAK AT THAT TIME WAS



FATHER GLEBOFF.

C.S. WELL, TOMMY, YOU KNOW, I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR GIVING ME THIS INFORMATION. I KNOW THAT THIS IS ONLY A PART OF THE MANY THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE IN YOUR LIFE, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER YOU HAVE BEEN MAYOR OF KODIAK, WORKED MANY YEARS FOR O KRAFT AND SON AND YOU ARE SO WELL KNOWN IN KODIAK AND SO WELL RESPECTED. I WOULD REALLY LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THIS INTERVIEW.

T.F. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, CLARENCE, FOR EVEN CONSIDERING ME, THANKS VERY MUCH.

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