

CHARLES A. "CHUCK" MACKEY

ON

KODIAK DURING AND AFTER THE GOOD FRIDAY

TIDAL WAVE OF MARCH 27, 1964

AND

People, and Personalities in and around Kodiak

By

STEPHEN MATHIS

on March 31, 1995

At Chuck Mackey's Home

Completed April 14, 1995

Restrictions, None

KODIAK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The following autobiographical interview was held on March 31, 1995, with Mr. Charles A. "Chuck" Mackey, a Kodiak resident, and HAM radio operator. The interview was conducted in the home of Mr. Chuck Mackey. The interviewer is Stephen Mathis, Chief Warrant Officer in the U.S. Coast Guard, as a class project for the History of Alaska (HIST 341) course taken through the University of Alaska Anchorage, Kodiak College, for the Kodiak Oral History Project.

SM: First, I would like to ask you a couple of personal questions. When were you born and where, and where was your family from; what was your family background?

CM: Well, my family background was they came out of the midwest. One of the people down the line came out of Scotland. The other half of the family came out of Ireland. Wherever the two met, I don't know where that was, but I was born and raised in Yakima, Washington. My grandmother came across from Iowa and through that country out of Illinois and Iowa in a covered wagon to Wenatchee, Washington, then they dropped down and went into Yakima and opened up fruit ranches there. My sister and myself, I was definitely born on a fruit ranch, I don't know whether she was or not. I was born outside of Yakima, Washington, about 4 miles out of town. My birth registration; since I was born on a ranch, they took me to the nearest medical facility. And this does not indicated the age of my mother when I was born, and this was a nursing home, and they

registered me there. So, according to all records, I was born in a nursing home, but there is a certain amount of fallacy there. I went to school there, on up through high school.

SM: When were you born?

CM: I was born in '28, that's 1928; just thought I'd clarify that. That was a year before the stock market crash, so my birth must have had some effect. Anyway, I remember when I was a little kid, seeing people build furniture out of willows down along the creek bank, and even though there was hard times, I do not remember them, because we did live on a farm, we did have sufficient food, we were not hungry. We gathered a lot of asparagus and stuff like that, washed it and cleaned it with a brush, took it into town and sold it, and sold eggs and cream. Mom made homemade butter and sold that until things started getting better in the late thirties.

I was a young teenager when the war was on and I couldn't see go on out where a lot of the older friends of mine were fighting in combat. Then I started growing up and realized what went on. From there I was married and had a couple of children. I was married way too young and was divorced. Then I took off and went in the Army and went overseas to Germany and France, that was in 1954. When I was over there I toured much of Europe; as many places as I could get into, I toured eight

foreign nations over there. Then went back out of Rhein
Mein Airport in Germany and served in France and Germany
both. I flew out of there into Prestwick, Scotland,
crossed over England, and bailed out of there and took
of for the good old USA. We had engine trouble over the
Atlantic so we landed in Toulie, Greenland. It was an
eighteen hour hop and we had started out at 13,500 feet
and had 500 feet when we landed at Toulie. We got the
engines fixed there. In fact, they replaced one. We
took out of there and landed in New York. I got
discharged on the east coast at Fort Hamilton, NY,
because I wanted to see as much of the lower 48 as I
could. I had a certain wanderlust. My family ties were
not very strong at all, in fact I had taken off from
home when I was fourteen. I toured all around the U.S.
and then I finally hit Washington a couple of months
later. I went back to work as a parts man.
My folks came north to see my sister. She lived in
Anchorage at the time and her husband worked for the MK
Company, Morris-Knudsen, it used to be real big up
Alaska. They build the DEWS line which was a radar
early warning system. She lost her husband and stayed
up here, and the folks came up. I ran out of money my
third year of college and didn't have any place to go,
so I came north in 1960. I kicked around over there. I
took a job as a bulldozer operator and I bulldozed the
Tudor Lake housing project main roads. I've been to

Anchorage since and I can't even find the roads that I built, because that many houses that have moved in there.

I pulled out of there and cooked on a tramp freighter. That was when CUSS 1 was going in, oil wells in Cook Inlet, well I cooked on that freighter, it was an LCM which was a landing craft on which the front end drops down and you could run stuff ashore like cats and all sorts of mechanical devices. We supplied the offshore drilling rigs. I helped put the first equipment on West Forelanders. In fact the cat we put ashore had to hurry up and cut a path up to the upper bank which was about 25 feet high. It was all alluvial fan type float that had been moved in there by glaciers, sedimentary conglomerate is what it was. He cut a path up through there and put that cat up there and got that cat up on top. Then we pulled the landing craft in closer and he drug the drilling pipe and part of the platform and all kinds of stuff up that path that he'd cut. When the tide came in we back-hauled up there, and we about sank, we busted a hole in the hull so we had to go back ashore to get welded up. The skipper did the welding, but we had to have dry ground. Pulling out of there, we went down the inlet to other drilling rigs, then back over to Forelanders which is up the inlet from Kenai, and we about sank again. The next time we hit Anchorage, I figured the third time's a charm and I bailed off of

that thing and told them to find themselves another cook. There was a guy building houses over there and at that time there weren't any carpenters around because they were all off on the drilling rigs and all kinds of stuff. So the guy was building houses and he put me to work, and I wound up a finish carpenter for that construction company. So in late '61 or mid '62 came over to Kodiak to build houses here. So we built a couple or three houses over here, on what is now the Baranof Street. There is a house at the top of Baranof and Ole Johnson as you look up toward Mission road, it's up on the left, it's a white house now; I helped build that thing, and the person who originally bought that place was a guy by the name of Sargent, and he operated the press for the Kodiak Mirror here. It wasn't much of a news paper at that time, it was only about two or three sheets a week but they did all kinds of printing jobs.

After that we lived down on Potato Patch Lake and I met a guy named Bill Ross and his wife. He was a retired Navy man and he'd stayed up here. He had built a log cabin someplace and had hauled it over here to Potato Patch Lake and was slowly putting it back together when I met him.

I fished on several boats around here. A guy named Gallagher had a boat called the KING, and I fished on it then I fished on the PRINCESS but one of her power scows

caught fire and about burned us up. Then I fished on the LAURA, another boat. I wound up always as the engineer, I have a large mechanical background. On the LAURA we had gotten blown in; we were fishing king crab and getting ten cents a pound, and had to go on strike to get that. We originally got nine cents a pound for king crab. We were pulling crab in ten to fifteen and every once in a while a 25 pound king crab. We went into Viacoda Bay, and if you look on the charts, you'll see there are three rocks at the head of that bay, and we dropped a cable around one of those rocks and held on for dear life cause the Shelikof blew us in there and we were really worried because over there they have much higher tides than they do in town in Kodiak. Every tide we'd take a flashlight out and take a look off the stern of that boat because the wind was blowing straight up that bay and we couldn't leave it. If we wanted to get off that boat, we'd have to cut free and float ashore. That was the only way we were going to get out of there, if we could get out of there alive. We held on there for about a week. We didn't burn all the fuel we wrapped up as much as we could and waited. Finally the wind changed a little bit and we went ashore and got a deer and ate him, he wasn't a very big one. Finally the wind died down enough where we could get around Outlet Cape and make a run for Port Bailey. We let the tide carry us quite a bit cause we didn't have enough fuel to

make Port Bailey so we just let the tide drift us on down to Kupreanof and as we got close to Port Bailey we fired it up and went on in and tied up to the dock, and it was close. I couldn't get any diesel there and we drained the day tank from the stove back into the main tank so we'd have enough fuel to run on, that's how we got in to Port Bailey. Anyway, we pulled out of there and came back into town.

I fished on several different boats and I fished on a 129 foot boat called the FERN and on the MARGARITE. I decided I didn't want to fish that way anymore, I wasn't making too much money so I went to work for Kadiak canneries. Some of the people are still here that remember that, some of the deck hands. It was a Columbia Wards cannery, a black and red job set out in the Near Island Harbor and the crab shells were so deep that when a boat would tie up (that's where they dumped all the shells, they didn't grind them up or anything, and the crab legs would interlock). They'd build a pile so deep that it would stick way out of the water when the tide would go out and when a boat would come and unloading crab would have to keep the engine running in the opposite direction that the tide was going so that it would stir it up and all these crab legs would get away from the hull. So that when he got ready to leave he could pull out of there, otherwise he'd practically be high and dry on the crab legs.

I worked and saved as much as I could, I worked all winter on a skiff on Potato Patch Lake. I built that skiff and moved out of there because it was costing a lot of money to live there and I went to work at Kadiak and lived on a boat that I bought. It was kind of small and a guy wanted me to take care of a boat called the RIBBAGE and one called the QUADRA, a couple of good boats that never sailed and would never sail because of the condition. They were dry-rotted above the water line so that meant that you couldn't take any seas with them because the planks would break loose. I stored a bunch of stuff aboard those two boats and I lived aboard the QUADRA. That was better than that little fishing boat that I had. I had a jitney too, that was about 28 foot, that I used to round haul the net and then I was hand-tying a net, I took an old piece of rag and started rebuilding the whole net. I was going to go salmon fishing.

One of the humorous points is that on March 27, at about 3:00 in the afternoon, I went up and paid six months rent at the police station on a stall, and by oddity the stall number was 37. I don't know why I remember that, but I do. I paid six months rent on it and a kid by the name of Rick Ogden, I'd have him work for me once in a while, was a teenager and his dad owned the FERN the 129 foot boat I told you about. I had him skull or row that skiff from where we'd put it in the water with a pick

up, it was only about 150 or 200 feet over to that slip in the dock. So he took it over there, tied it up, and it was made out of wood and you've got to let them soak so it would soak and wouldn't take on water. That was my snag skiff with an old ten horse Johnson I had rebuilt and had it going so I was pretty well set for salmon season to come up.

Like they say I put the skiff in the water on the 27th at about 3:00 in the afternoon. I took Rick Ogden home and left my '55 Chevy pickup sitting up there high and dry in what's now the harbor master area. I went over and checked the QUADRA out and went aboard the RIBBAGE. I was sitting in there and had these red deck boots on and had a portable radio and had set it up on the ribs on that boat and was listening to it and a boat went by and rocked the boat I was in pretty good. I thought that guy was stupid for going through the harbor that fast because of the wake. About that time, AFRN, Armed Forces Radio Network, came on the air and said that everybody in Kodiak that could hear their voice better head for high ground and that we'd just had a major earthquake and had a tidal wave headed our way. Pilings and buildings and all that stuff around the harbor dropped about 5.8 feet, or something like that, I forget what it is now, but they dropped far enough that the walking ramps that led down to the docks fell away and you couldn't get up on that dock and get ashore.

The docks all had pilings on each side and above that piling was a cross bar and above that was where the main power supply ran down by three wire through insulators. When the tidal waves started coming in; there were five waves as near as they could figure out; the third wave was the worst and most devastating one of all. This was during the first one while the town was slowly filling up with water. I tried to get the RIBBAGE fired up and get it running to get away from the dock, but I couldn't so I jumped off the boat and took off running. I knew where a skiff was, and at that time you would leave your keys in your truck, boat, whatever because nobody would bother it. So I made a run for that skiff, and when I went by, I was straddle the power lines running down the dock and jumped the cross bars. I turned around to look to see where my buddy was and about that time the lines behind me twisted and shorted out and went BIZZWAP. I took off and went by Mary Anderson's boat, it was a Kadiak boat. I hollered down in the boat for her and the kid she had with her, a young girl. I didn't get any response so I thought she wasn't there. I went on my way and I got up by this skiff and there was this teenager standing there looking around, a tall gangly kid, I don't know who he was. I told him to get in that skiff. I thought that guy was going to go clear the bottom. He jumped from where he was clear out into the middle of that skiff, and that was quite a jump. I

picked up John Ancart who used to be a trout fisherman up here. There were five of us that went ashore about where Marine Way hits up there by base-town work where the only stop light that's never worked is. I reached up with that skiff and went up through town and went across the bridge and the cement rails on the bridge were barely sticking up out of the water. We'd started getting sucked up between the buildings. I was running the outboard and another guy was steering so I took an oar and kicked us away from the buildings so the flow of the water wouldn't suck us in there because there was no place to go in that one. The water at that point was about six feet up the side of that building.

When were coming up through town in the skiff I remembered where my pickup was and I looked back to see about six inches of the top sticking out of the water. It was a two-tone brown pick up and the top was light beige. I had a whole pile of tools in that and a box on the boat. That pick up had rolled up towards town during the wave and the buildings. We hit up there on the street by Cy's Sporting Goods and I took a piece of line and threw it over a telephone line and tied a bowline in it so the skiff could float up and down with the current or any cross current and I took off up the hill.

When I turned around to look, it looked like a pile of little kids toys in a bath tub and it looked like some

kid had taken his hands and swirled them all around in a big circle. About that time that's when the boat harbor went dry. There was no water in the boat harbor, I saw it go dry, I saw the channel go dry, and I don't know where, but there was a squirt of water that came up out of that channel. It must have gone forty feet up in the air, a big squirt of water that looked like a fan went up and the earth was still shaking at the time.

I stayed up at Sharen Ogden's house which is above the base-town road up the hill behind the Kodiak Inn, now the Westmark. We stayed up there and Sharon sent her kids out, two of them, Rick and Cindy Ogden. If they found any fishermen wandering around, not knowing where they were going or what to do, the kids brought them home. Those kids brought seventeen people to that house including me; I was heading there anyway. They turned the fires up in the house at night. The guys took their coats like you would on a boat and rolled them up in a ball and that was your pillow.

There weren't enough blankets to go around, it was just a two bedroom job at that time, now it's quite a bit bigger. That's how we spent our first day. That same day I took a G.I. duffel bag and the tide went out and one of the boats I had stuff stored in and grabbed some stuff out of it, mainly tool boxes so we could make a living was what I was after. We went ashore with those and ran back out of the harbor with those.

Later I found my pick up and some of the buildings that were swirling around I talked about earlier had landed right on top of it. One of them named Rodley's a supply store carrying line and buoys and stuff like that. The other one on the truck was a little makeshift Breakers Liquor store. One was sitting on the hood of my truck and the other one was sitting on the bet of it, and that didn't do that pick up any good, making it kind of hard to drive. Anyway they moved all that stuff off and I went back down the next day to see if I had any tools left and I found one wrench and it was under the seat. That's all I got from that truck. A week or two later they announced that anybody wanting to claim their vehicles must do so at once or they would tow them away to the landfill, and they did, and I didn't even go to claim mine.

The following day I took a big duffel bag. Now this town is the size that if you didn't hear a rumor by ten a.m. you'd start one. That kind of shows you the sensitivity of people when they are under stress. There were certain directions you could go. They pulled the National Guard in here and pulled the Marines off the base into town as guards. In order to get in to your boat you had to go to the police station to get a permit. They said you couldn't go down in there unless that was where your home was. Jack Rines was a police officer at the time and I knew him pretty well. I told

the gal that boat was my home and part of it was still laying down there and I was going. She said I couldn't do that and I looked at Jack and said put some sense in this gal's head so she just wrote a pass out and handed it to me. I went down in there and started backpacking stuff out. Now when the boats would take off to Seattle they would have cases of coffee, beans, corn, peas, and canned milk. That was the only you had fresh milk if you went into the Bering Sea to fish was to take the canned. We had a canned milk called Real Fresh, I think it's still on the market. We'd take that out with us on the fishing boat and we'd have loaves of bread that they'd make in the bakery, russian rye bread. That bread was made in a certain way, they've still got the recipe for it. You could cut off a real thin slice and the rest of the bread behind it was just as fresh as the day you bought it. I don't know how they did it, but that's the way it was, all the fishing boats had this russian rye.

I started backpacking this stuff, except for the bread that was kind of wet, up to the house I was staying at. There wasn't any market around, City Market used to be downtown in the main core area and Kraft's market was flooded about ten feet high around it so the food in there was no good. All the cans had lost their labels anyway. The ones I had were up in the wheelhouse and when the wave came in, that particular boat that I had

the stuff on did not roll. It floated up and then settled back in the boat harbor. Then when the third wave came in it took it out and stuck it around the corner. The wave took other boat I was taking care of and put it up town behind Bill Cuthrop's boat the MISS YUKON.

Sharon Ogden sent her kids out all over town and anyone that had a baby was told to come to the house so she could see the baby, in order to know that someone wasn't packing the same kid back and forth. They'd get a can of milk a day. That's how we rationed it out. I gave them all the milk, all the coffee, and all the fishermen knew Fred Ogden and they could go up to the house to get a cup of coffee. That place looked like Grand Central Station. That's where the guys met until the town got settled back.

After that I went down to where the ferry dock is now and went aboard the RIBBAGE to see if I had any clothes left. I only had a pair of boots but no coat or anything. I didn't have beans. It had rolled in the waves and the water had completed washed it clean of everything. I went back through town and went past Walter Kraft's, he owned the only clothing store in town at that time. It was also a hardware and grocery store. I wandered along there and saw a red woolite jacket lying there in the surf covered with bilge oil and full of sand and was really in terrible shape. I also got a

sleeping bag that was in terrible shape, covered with bilge oil and sand and sea weed. I cleaned them out as best I could and dried them out. Later on I took them to Anchorage and had them dry cleaned by Snow White dry cleaners. They marked everything and later on shipped everything back. In the mean time I borrowed some clothes.

Where the Breakers Bar is right now, is in the American Legion building. That building was there and it was called Kodiak Commercial and was sort of a five and ten cent store. It had some clothing in it. Across the street toward the hill was Wodlinger's Drug Store and it was sitting fairly high and the fire station was right along side that American Legion building. Behind that up on the hill was the old territorial jail sitting on the hill right in the middle of town, where the Elks Lodge sits right now.

I got that coat back and went and told Walter Kraft that I had to steal one of his coats because I had run out of clothes. He told me I didn't steal it. He said that all now belonged to the insurance company. His store had been a three story building and the roof of it was floating in the tide. It all crashed down and was floating in the tide. All the buildings in town down there slowly filled with water on the first two waves. The water pushed the doors in and filled them up. Well on the third wave it was like standing on the beach and

watching the seventh wave. There was a terrific back wash before the big wave really hit. When it hit it filled those buildings plumb full and then when the back wash pulled it back out again the buildings just collapsed from the inside out. The water pressure busted the walls out and down they went and stirred them up. There were good sized boats, 80-90 foot boats all up through town all over the place floating all over the place.

I was going to mention that as I was running up the hill I looked over my shoulder I saw a power scow about 85 to 90 feet long that belonged to Alaska Packers Association. It was orange and black. Now they draw around 9 feet of water. What is Dog Bay now used to have a solid piece of land across where they opened up a channel for boats. I saw that power scow go clear over the top of that thing. When he landed on the other side, the old boy figured out where he was and he dropped anchor immediately because he knew he was protected in that key slot. The wave was coming in off of Long Island and Marmot Island. Anyway, I saw that scow go over there and I also saw the SUNRISE role. It was a large steel boat that belonged to Bobby Jones. He was on the back of the SUNRISE and Olie Harder was taking that thing and heading out the channel when she rolled. When she popped back up Bobby was no more to be seen. We never saw since, and we didn't find his body

of anything. Mary Anderson, the woman I hollered at, and the kid that I hollered at, I still don't know the child's name; they found that boat off what is now King Crab Dock. Some divers found the boat. They went down in there and they went back into the lazarette and her body had been washed back in there. The lazarette is the place where the steering mechanism on most boats is found. Now, how she got back in there, I'll never know, but that's the only body they found in there.

A couple of other bodies were also found off the King Crab Dock that had become tangled up in the webbing of some crab pots.

The town was just really something, just all swirls. All that was left of the cannery row was just a bunch of pilings sticking up. All the jobs were gone; you couldn't beg, borrow or steal a job; there wasn't anything to be had. Later on I went into professional labor work because I'd been a carpenter.

Everybody ran around and would buy a hammer or borrow a hammer and claim they were a carpenter so I picked up a shovel and I worked just as hard and just as long as anybody else. But, until we all got jobs, I took an old skiff that was on the beach and went all over town trying to figure out who it belonged to and nobody claimed it. I took that thing and fixed it up and got another old outboard and rebuilt that. I got 7200 feet of old halibut line and tied new beackets on it. I tied

halibut hooks on it. At that time halibut season was open a long time. I bartered and begged and horse traded things off and came up with 26 dungeness pots. I loaded them in a truck I'd bought and hauled them over to Anton Larson Bay. The truck I bought ran, but the underneath side had been in the salt water and the only to get the clutch to work you had to tie a rope to the clutch pedal. You could push it in but it wouldn't come back unless you pulled on that rope, and it took a lot of strength and sometimes I had to use both hands to pull back on that rope to get the truck moving. Then I'd synchronize the gears and get it to shift that way. That was my first truck after the tidal wave. I used it to haul my skiff, which was about a 14 foot Opheim style wooden skiff, and outboard and all my gear over to Anton Larson and I'd set all those crab pots. I'd set the pots up and leave them there until I'd get a load of dungeness. I had a deal with the straw boss out there at King Crab and I'd put my crab in one section of the live tank out on the dock. He'd come in in the morning and look in there and if there was a bunch of crab in there he'd pull them out and weigh them and give me credit for them. So if someone put their crab in that particular pot, it was mine.

I couldn't pull the crab pots every day. I couldn't pull them up into the skiff, I'd pull them up and tie them along side the skiff then I'd take the skiff ashore

then I'd get out with my rubber boots and would role the crab pots up on the beach, get the crab out, and stack them. I'd tie pots all the way around that skiff and take them back out and set them. The only puller I had on that skiff was me and I'd stand up on the gunnels and get that boat to rocking and would pull that line up a little at a time using the motion of the boat to help bring the pots up.

When the weather was calm I'd put the skiff in at what is now the boat harbor and would go over to Long Island and would put out that 7200 feet of halibut line early in the morning, would rest a while, then pull in the halibut. I'd then deliver it to Icicle and sell it to them and to the restaurants around town. That's how I made my living.

After that I got a job laying water line out the Mission Road. We laid water line all the way out to the Coast Guard LORAN Station out on Spruce Cape. When we came across Mission property, we came across some logs that had been cut and built into the shape of a pentagon. You could see where a gun slot had been cut in them and we figured it was a Russian block house of some sort. We decided we didn't want to dig the whole road up to save the logs so we just chain-sawed down through them and left them there and went on through.

I helped what is now the Mecca, the Wodlinger building, Ship's Tavern, Solly's - now it's called Henry's.

Solly's opened on March 27th, two years after the tidal wave. Before we got the businesses built up like you see now we had what we called the plywood jungle. It was about four bars, the Ship's, Mecca, Solly's, and the Breakers. All they did was build up a frame and set a building up on a bunch of logs, throw a handful of sawdust on the floor and start making drinks.

At that time there was only one telephone in town that was a public phone and everyone would line up to try to make calls on that one.

SM: How long after the earthquake was this?

CM: This was a year after the quake.

City Market, where it is now, had just opened its doors up there and it was a market and the Navy was flying plane loads of food in here and giving the freight to the City Market. They told the owner, Mrs. Klimer, that if she raised her prices she'd have to pay the shipping on every pound. She did not raise them, but held them right where they were. The parking lot for the City Market wasn't as big as it is now. Then you'd just park in the street or wherever you could.

Bill Cuthrop's dad had the SELIEF and about the second or third day after the SELIEF went up through town and wound up where it did. That was about where the Kodiak Rental place is located today. They had about 4000 king crab aboard. Now, you could take the worst stinking mess you've ever run into and double the stench to get

an idea of this thing. Russ Wright and his partner brought a cat down in there and they opened up a trail into the SELIEF and they had guys in there with gas masks from the military unloading all the crab off this thing. They'd throw them in the dumptruck and went out and dumped them in the water someplace and let them float off.

Just after the tidal wave was over there was a gal up at ACS, Alaska Communications System, sitting on the hill. She had communications with the boats and had to handle a lot of calls coming in from folks looking for all sorts of boats. She was the apex of communications at that time. Bill Cuthrops dad called in and gave his call sign, she knows them all, and she asked him just exactly where he was and he told her that he was sitting down here right below the brown school. That school sat about 150 feet up on a hill. She knew he was aboard the boat so she asked him to repeat his location and he did. Well she got to giggling and he told her that he was just going to stay there because everything he had was right there. He had a power plant, and all his clothes, food and everything was right there on the boat with him so he did stay there with it.

Eventually, they jacked that power scow up with pressure controlled jacks, turned it around, put it on rollers, took it up where the stop light is now, behind AC's, turned it, went down the hill, over to the boat harbor,

ran it down the ramp and set it in the harbor.

The RUBY, lying up where the Elks undergrown bowling alley was, was raised up and put another engine in her. They then put large metal plates under her and dragged those plates with a cat down into the boat harbor. They went out on the jetty pulling on the plates until the RUBY was in the water. They skidded that thing back down in the harbor on those plates. They had sealed up all the hatches so when the tide came up she wouldn't fill up. She floated upright like nothing had ever happened. The RUBY was owned by Oscar Dyson and later it was renamed the PETTY JO.

The creek that used to flow through town behind Breakers liquor store goes up the alley through Kraft's parking lot, cuts off the nose of Kodiak Rental, and turns and goes up Lower Mill Bay past the Post Office, turns again and goes up toward Aleutian Homes. There used to be a lake about where Kraft's parking lot is now. The alley way that comes behind First National Bank and goes to Kraft's parking lot then up to base-town road used to be the main street in town. It went in front of the Breakers Bar, up past what we called the Bear Hotel, a log hotel that had siding on it to make it look decent. They had a concrete bear that a guy named Madsen had and has since been moved to where the Harbor Master's Office is now. That street was the only paved road in town. That street turned right, went down past what is now

KANA. The KANA building used to be the post office when I got here. There was no street delivery, no house delivery, there was only post office box or general delivery at that time. Everyone knew everyone else in town and if a stranger showed up and said his name three times, they knew who he was or what boat he was on. The post office workers would ask him if he was from so-and-so boat and if he was they'd give him all the mail for that boat, and he'd take it back to the boat. He'd better or they'd throw him overboard.

They found one guy pilfering boats and they took him and hung him upside down. There were only two policemen in town at the time, and they called them and told them they better cut that guy down before he got a nose bleed and bled to death. The police went in and lowered him down. They didn't take him to jail or even inquire as to why he was hung up there, but told him he'd better mind his own business and keep it clean and he just went on his way. That's the way the law was.

There used to be a really nice guy here with ADF&G, from the old territorial police, named McKinley. I saw him one time down by the Dog House, a hamburger joint, and a guy named Bear was here who opened up the First National Bank, a little room about 10-15 feet wide and maybe that deep. It had one safe in it built in the wall that you could walk in, but it wasn't a very good one. Anyway there was this pathway between the buildings. Two guys

had been thrown out of the Village Bar and they were fighting up a storm. McKinley just watched the battle until one knocked the other down and when he started to sit on the one that was down and beat him some more, McKinley walked up behind that guy, grabbed his hand, pulled him back and said "I wouldn't do that if I were you". The guy knew McKinley and stood up and said "Ok Mack" and that was the end of the fight. You just didn't fool with Mack.

There used to be a gambling hall here and one guy's name was Hawkins from Ketchikan, originally from Texas, and of course they called him Tex. He ran a gambling hall here with one-armed Fred and Squeaky. Squeaky was their swamper. He cleaned out the card game rooms. Even the police knew there was gambling but looked the other way. Tex Hawkins had a little squeaky voice and he was about as round as he was tall. I sold him a Dodge pickup one time that I'd bought off the Coast Guard base and had hauled it into town and sold it to him. He had a flat tire, nothing unusual there except that on those old Dodges the left hand wheels had left-thread lug nuts. He didn't know that and had broken two of them off with his wrench before I saw him and told him what was going on. He told me he used to be a professional gambler in Ketchikan and ran a house of ill repute down there. He had hollowed out a piling on the water front and put his money in there. Some big boys moved into town and

wanted to buy him out and he wouldn't sell. They threatened to get the law on him. Tex had left Texas on the run to keep from testifying from a friend. He came north up through Canada and caught a boat and ended up in Ketchikan. Those guys burned him out and he said that was the most expensive fire that people will ever realize.

I met Tex up here, and also met one-armed Fred who was also a gambler, Fred Adler. They were friends of mine, and knew pretty much what was going on in town. If you wanted a job, like being a deck hand on a boat, you had to pass their scrutiny first. So, you'd go talk to them and they'd size you up and figure out whether you were a drunk, or were lying to them, or what you were doing. Then if they heard of a job, they'd pass the word through mukluk telegraph that they were looking for you. Sure you'd get word the next time you hit town or if you were in town, you'd go look them up and you'd get a job somewhere along the line.

That was old Kodiak. They had a cafe here called the Belmont. It sat across the street from the post office, next to the B&B Bar, it's still in town, I helped lay the foundation where it's at now. The old Belmont was a greasy spoon cafe that had an old style bar with a large mirror behind it, had real narrow siding on it. You'd go there if you wanted a union job. So I'd go there between fishing runs. So I started long shoring and did

that off and on and I met Bill Ross down there long shoring too. We'd have ships come in sometimes that were full of cargo. One had a cargo of new international jeeps, and along with them had a shipment of dry wall and pallets of beer. That ship rolled so bad that all those pallets broke loose and all those jeeps were totaled. There was beer everywhere, glass all over the place. They'd put you on a pallet and swing you out over the hold and lower you down from a boom. There was one guy there, Gus Novino, who was scared to death of heights, but he would get on that pallet with five or six other guys. Everything was put into cribs, looked like pig pens, and you'd take a break for chow, but you couldn't eat on the ship, so they'd take you up out of there and swing you over to the dock and lower you down and set you on the dock. Now Gus was so afraid of heights that Whitey the wench operator put us within about six inches of the dock and everybody walked away and didn't tell Gus. He finally got the courage to open one eye and found out he'd been hanging there right over the dock. That's some of the old timers around Kodiak here.

SM: When did you meet Vicky.

CM: I went out into the bush and wound up as a power house operator and her cousin's husband was my hunting partner.

SM: What year was that?

CM: That was in 1968 or 69. We were married in 70.

I got tired of sitting on bars out at Chiniak so I'd go sit in the power house and play cribbage with the guys and help them pull a watch so they'd start teaching me how to operate power houses and stuff. Finally one of the guys quit and I got his job and that's how I wound up a power house operator. I spent about 12 years out there in the bush and build a house out there. We started out living in a little camper that slides in the back of a pick up. We had to haul water. It was so small that if one person stood up the other one had to sit down. We had an outhouse. She'd come out on weekends as she worked at a bank in town. So then I bought a trailer house and moved it out there. It didn't have a sewer system. Bought another one, didn't have a sewer system in that one either. Finally we bought a house and I had to put the sewer and water systems in all of those. I put in sewer lines, water lines, but we've been through it all, outhouses, hauling water, etc. We got caught in blizzards out on the road and so I put her up at my cousin's place because we couldn't get home. The reason was I had seen a tail light sticking out of a snow drift and couldn't tell if it was the left or right one. I didn't want to hit the drift with that taillight sticking out so I hit the ditch and that stuck us. I put her up in a trailer house about a block from there and I hiked up through

the storm and went on up to my place. I was going to fire up the snow machine and go to work. They had housing for the single guys, and I figured that if I could get there I'd go ahead and take care of it and report to work. So when I got up to my place I was greeted by her cousin's dog. She had gotten lost in the blizzard and had told her big white dog to lead her to Chuck and Vicky's place and the dog kept trying to turn up through the brush and finally she said ok and the dog led her right to our trailer door. That dog was smart. I told her to stay there and a guy showed up with a Dodge Power wagon and I went to work in that. It was a six-hour run to make 42 miles and we made it. That was some of the old road system.

"This is Chuck Mackey signing off."

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