

PARASCOVIA MULLER
ON
LIVING IN OUZINKIE
AND
1964 Earthquake

By
TRACY POWELL

On November 26 and December 3, 1994
At Kodiak Island Hospital ICF

KODIAK COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Tracy Powell
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The following autogiographical interview was held on November 26 and December 3, 1994, with Mrs. Parascovia Muller, a long-time Ouzinkie resident. The interview was conducted at the Kodiak Island Hospital ICF. The interviewers are Tracy Powell and Merle Powell.

PM: It's . . . scrubbing the floors for dollar and a half an hour all day

TP: All day long?

PM: Yeah, dollar and a half.

TP: And how old were you then when you were working scrubbing floors?

PM: Oh, I was twenty-five, I think

TP: And this was in Ouzinkie?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: Were you born in Ouzinkie?

PM: Yes, I was born 1917, July 21.

MP: How many brothers and sisters did you have? Was it a large family?

PM: There were seven of us altogether.

TP: So, did you go to school in Ouzinkie all the way through?

PM: Yes, up to sixth grade. Mother got sick; I had to quit and take over of everything. Boy, I'll tell you, that was hard. Momma was sick and then I had to take care of everything. And those boys, they were lazy. I would tell to get water, you know, or we had wood stoves and pack wood. They chop wood but they wouldn't pack it. They were lazy, good-for-nothing.

MP: Were you the oldest one?

PM: No, I had the brothers and then a sister. My oldest sister is dead. She was two years older than I was. She would be--seventy-eight, seventy-nine--she would have been 80 years old. And then we had a big chore I did anyway was to milk the cows--three every morning. There's lots of work; it was tiresome. And cleaned the barns. Then how we saved all that water to wash the floors in the barns. It used to come handy.

TP: So, how many cows did you have?

PM: Oh, we had fifty heads of cattle

TP: So, your dad was a farmer or a rancher?

PM: No, we just kept those for ourselves and our cows or we used to sell it to anybody who wants to buy. We'd tell them that from Kodiak. Kraft's used to buy meat from us and they'd trade for groceries.

TP: So that helped you get all the things that you needed out there?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: Did they have a store out there then?

PM: Where, in Ouzinkie?

TP: In Ouzinkie.

- PM: Yeah, a small one it just had just everyday thing like vegetables, flour, sugar, tea, and coffee. Something like that.
- TP: How has Ouzinkie changed from when you remember it as a little girl?
- PM: Now they got lot of roads, cars and trucks now. You never had them there before. And all those three-wheelers, four-wheelers, they have there. And they building roads all over. Lots of dust flying. I like Ouzinkie the old way--cow trails. We used to have cow trails, no roads. I used to like that; then you walk under the trees when the sun is shining. Smells good with the spruce, you know. Then we'd go on a picnic. Smells good with the spruce. And the sun used to be so hot. And we had lot of gardens and we'd go and water them and that was some chore too, packing water. Big gardens.
- MP: Where did you get the water? Was it from a lake or . . .?
- PM: No, cr@ck. There is one cr@ck, I think, that was spring water. It never dried up. It stayed warm just like a well: deep, cold water
- MP: Do they still use it?
- PM: Uh-huh. Whoever goes there on a picnic when they make the coffee, tea or whatever. The water is nice and clear. And we used to clear the wash that the . . . it be just like a well
- TP: You said that you grew gardens. What kind of things did you grow in your gardens?
- PM: Potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, cabbage, lettuce, celery--anyone of those. Radishes.
- TP: So everyone had their own garden?
- PM: Un-huh. Everybody had their cows, too. Momma used to make butter. Gee, it used to be the fresh butter tasted good. We had lot a milk; boy, we gave lots of milk away to the people in Ouzinkie. Why didn't I, I never thought. Must have come and milked the cow and take that. But I'd be struggling away milking.
- MP: Did you have to do all the milking or did somebody help you?
- PM: I did it. I did. Maybe once in a while my mother would take for a while, but Mother used to be busy in there, like cooking in the house . . .
- MP: It would have taken you a long time to milk that many cows, wouldn't it?
- PM: Yeah. Sometimes I would cheated, you know, I milked that one and then another one and that's enough.
- MP: The cows didn't mind that? The cows didn't mind that you skipped them?
- PM: No, they howled once in a while when their big bags are getting full. . . . Giving them a calf and eat, the calf would get so full.
- TP: What were your parents names?
- PM: Irene and Nikolai Katelnikoff.

- TP: Growing up there, how did you get news about what was going on?
- PM: Where?
- TP: In Ouzinkie?
- PM: Radio. Shortwave radio and longwave radio. The short wave used to go around the island. If anything was going around, you know, like it did while tidal wave or something, they would let them know, but regular news on that radio.
- MP: How did World War II affect life in Ouzinkie?
- PM: Well, lots of boys went to the war, just lot of them. .
- TP: What do you remember people thinking when the Japanese came to Attu and Kiska?
- PM: Thought they were going to get bombed. Put the tents up inside the trees. . . . But they didn't come in. They couldn't find it. It got so thick with the fog.
- MP: So that was how you would have hidden. You put tents in trees?
- PM: Underneath the trees.
- MP: So that you would all go there in case the Japanese came?
- PM: So we could see them though the white tents. But they didn't come, thank God. They couldn't find it under the fog. I guess, Father Herman helped us. Didn't let them come. They prayed to him for help.
- TP: Was that a concern for a long time?
- PM: Uh-huh.
- TP: Did your family go into Kodiak very often?
- PM: For shopping, but otherwise, no. Just for shopping or doctors.
- MP: What kind of stores were in Kodiak back then when you were a little girl?
- PM: Kraft's store. Urskine's store, Knudsen's, and there was one woman's store there and one furniture store and--oh I forgot. They had all the stores. There wasn't very many people, except there was a lot of service guys. There were Marines, Army, Navy and Coast Guard and Seabees. Kodiak used to be loaded with the guys.
- MP: When did the bases first start here? When did the service men first come?
- PM: I don't know; I don't remember. During the war, I guess. I don't know that. I don't know how to answer.
- TP: You mentioned that one of the things you used the radios for was during the time of the tidal wave you would hear what was going on. What do you remember about when the earthquake and the tidal wave came? What was it like in Ouzinkie then?
- PM: It was such a beautiful evening. Not a ripple on the sea. The whole sea was like a mirror. It was so flat calm. It was beautiful and it was so deadly quiet, no, nothing making noise, no dogs, no birds or nothing. It was odd and we were just about to leave. My sister stayed across the river in that house and my children--two of them--just came back from Anchorage; one was in the hospital, one

was going to school, and they were all home. We were going to sit down and eat, have our dinner, and then two of them went to see their Auntie Martha and crossed the river. Just while they were there, all of a sudden, earth quake started. Slow motion. I said they were running across the bridge. The bridge was going just like that (motioned back and forth, up and down with hand) and the hills that was just like waves during the earth quake. It was real low water, but when I looked out during that shaking, the water was way up. Big swells was washing on the beach. My husband was home that time. They were home from crab fishing. I told him, "What happened, is this a tidal wave or what?" I don't know. We didn't know a whit yet. So that was the tidal wave and earthquake. After that I baked kuliches and pies and dyed eggs. I filled about two boxes full of some to take along. Then we went on the Albert's boat, Marine Greer. All of us, we were going to go into our boat. They told us to come into the bigger boat he had and his family, too. Seventeen of us were on the boat--his family and ours. So we stayed there one week. Everything was drifting on the beach: oil. Ohhh, gas and oil. It was rotten. The doors in the house were just rotten. Took a long time to disappear that smell. So we stayed aboard one week. We used to sleep with our clothes on in case of another one come again. That's all I can remember.

- TP: So when the tidal wave came it covered everything on Ouzinkie?
- PM: Not everything. It was so far. It covered up the beaches. . . . and when we went outside they said to go out in deep water. We were outside of Wood Island, of Long Island. Gosh, there was lots of boats there. That night it looked like a city: too many of the boat lights. Everybody went out there in the deep water. Then that big swell would come. It wouldn't feel it much--slow motion--it just goes from big, you know. Oh, I don't want there to be another earthquake or tidal wave! No, that's too scarey!
- TP: How did you find out it was coming? Did you hear that over the radio?
- PM: Uh-huh. But we seen it was already splashing on the beaches, start taking some of the things drifting out.
- TP: Wasn't that when the village on Afognak moved to Port Lions?
- PM: Yeah, right after that. They got the houses for them from Afognak.
- MP: I remember one of your favorite berries was the little blackberry, crowberry or whatever. Did you pick those when you were a girl?
- PM: Uh-huh.
- MP: And they grew there on Ouzinkie? Or did you go somewhere else to pick your berries?
- PM: Mountains. I used to make some jelly out of them too. Boy, I used to make some jelly sometimes. Those little

- berries and those other red berries, melon berries or something, salmonberries, blueberries: any berries I pick then I make it. It was good all that mixture.
- TP: Oh, you put them all together?
- PM: Uh-huh. Sometimes I add the juice from that cherry, that pink one that tastes good. How do you call it?
- MP: Maraschino cherry?
- PM: Yes. I take that juice to mix it up. It would really make a nice taste.
- TP: And you made jelly and jams out of that?
- PM: Jams I never used to make any. My family didn't like it because too much seeds, and I didn't like it either. Jelly I used to make all the time, all the berries: highbush cranberries, lowbush cranberries, blueberries, salmonberries, and all those little black berries, and moss berries. I haven't make jelly since I got sick, 15-16 years.
- TP: What were some of the other traditional foods that you remember preparing that everybody enjoyed eating?
- PM: Smoke salmon, dried salmon, and pickled salmon or pickled herring. Oh, they taste good.
- TP: When you were little or your children were little, were there some special traditional stories that you told or that you remember hearing when you were little?
- PM: I told them the true story about the tidal wave and earthquake. Used to have fun going out on picnics. Berry picnics.
- TP: Was that something you did as a family or did the community do that as a whole sometimes?
- PM: As a family. We just made some for the winter or to somebody who don't have any. We used to give them like to my grandmothers and some friends who are getting old.
- TP: What do you remember when Alaska became a state?
- PM: Wasn't it 1950 or '49?
- TP: I think in '58. In the 50's.
- PM: I know when it was the 49th state. T'wasn't a state yet--49th. And after that it turned to 50. I don't remember what.
- MP: Was there a big celebration locally when that happened?
- PM: Well, whoever liked to celebrate it, was celebrating. Some liked it some didn't like it--being a state. Said we'd be taxed all the time. I didn't know nothing about it.
- TP: And those who liked it, what good did they see in Alaska becoming a state?
- PM: I don't know.
- TP: Was that something people voted on?
- PM: I guess so. I think they did vote. Too far back. It's hard to remember. . . .
- TP: So with your chickens you had roosters too?
- PM: Uh-huh.
- TP: Did they wake you up in the morning?

PM: No, I used to like that, to hear them singing. . . .

TP: Now, your husband fished for crab?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: The fishing must have been better then?

PM: Oh, yeah, that's when the king crab were here. T'was good, but this other crab is not so very good. You've got to catch lots. I don't like those tanners. Oh, I like king crab!

TP: . . .did you have a priest in Ouzinkie when you were growing up?

PM: No, the priest used to come from Afognak. Father Gerasim. Then after we got that priest Father John is our priest and Father Peter and Father Joseph Kreta. And we always have that Bishop Gregory. It's him most of the time. .

TP: When you were growing up how often did Father Gerasim come? They used to go and get him for our Lent, you know, and we going to have Communion, Lent time. And then when he comes, he'll serve us some certain Lent, he'll come or some certain holidays, like big holidays. Not all the time though.

TP: So was Afognak quite a bit bigger?

PM: Uh-huh. . . .

TP: You told me yesterday you went to Seattle.

PM: Yeah. We stayed four years. We went for a world's fair--1962. Came back '66 or '67. Oh, we had nice time during the world's fair.

TP: What do you remember they had at the world's fair that year?

PM: Oh, everything. All the different countries had their own places like their houses or something. Even I seen Alaska--Port Wakefield. Those guys there were shaking crabs, working in the crab. It was during the crab season. I saw somebody. I seen the Shanigan boys there. They were shaking the crab and there were some more others. There's lots of other places like there's Russia and there's, oh, different countries. All kinds of them.

TP: So they had like a model of their homes, the different countries?

PM: Yeah.

TP: Did they have any new inventions displayed?

PM: I don't know; I don't remember. So many things to see, you know. And then they have all the games. You want to go there, you want to go there. By the time there's something showing and then you sit there. Big place.

TP: Lot's of people too, I imagine?

PM: Yeah, there were lots.

TP: When you went down there did you fly down?

PM: No, we went on our boat, Judea, and we come back on Judea too.

TP: So all the way to Seattle on your boat?

PM: Yeah, and on the way back. Was good.

TP: The weather was good then on your trip?

- PM: Uh-huh. We went in last part of August. T'was fine. Sunshiny all the way.
- TP: How long did that take you?
- PM: Almost a month, but we were traveling during the daytime only. We would anchor up every night in different places.
- TP: So you traveled along the shore?
- PM: Yeah, quite a ways out. Lots of different places--some a small little villages. We should've had a movie camera. We had one; we dropped it overboard.
- TP: What kind of movie camera did they have then?
- PM: Same kind what they have now, smaller ones.
- TP: Do you remember any times you were out on the boat when it was stormy?
- PM: Oh, many of times. When we're fishing, sometimes I used to get scared, and my husband would just say, "Well, let's go in and anchor up; we don't want to scare mom." "Boy, she should go home. It's not that bad." "Never mind, we'll anchor up." The boys say, "No, shouldn't be there to be scared. How are we going to catch fish?" "We'll get it when the storm settles down." But we had fun.
- TP: So you went out with them often?
- PM: Yeah. Twenty years around Afognak Island and on Kodiak Island, around Spruce Island. Sometimes you can see no fish. Oh, that's disappointing. Couldn't even see a finner or a jumper. Disappointing when you don't see them. .
- TP: Do you remember the story you told us about the cows when you threw the snowball? I was wondering if you'd tell me that story again. That was a good story.
- PM: They were eating in the cow yard there, barnyard. And I took a snowball--I was in the toilet and I took a snowball and I throw it towards them and they ran, oh my God, they ran all the way down. They jump over the fence. They broke how many in that fence. They ran all the way down . . . towards the Katmai side. They wouldn't stop 'till they got way past the pool hall and the other beach. And my father asked, he said, "What's the matter with them?" And I said, "I don't know." "What happened to them? Was it something scared them? I say, "I don't know." Crows and magpies there, I said. I didn't want to tell him. I was scared. Three pieces of fence they broke jumping over. I say, "They just stampeded." . . . I never told him. . . . They had a hard time to bring them back. They were scared. Just that little snowball scared them. I guess they did not expect anything. They had been eating. Must be real good eating what they did.
- TP: You had fifty cattle; how many of those were cows?
- PM: Oh, I don't know. There were lot of milk cows. Oh, I used to milk lots. We would give away the milk to the people because they didn't have any cows. They tried to come and buy. We wouldn't give them any beef. We'd give it

to them because we had lots of milk.

TP: So you just gave the milk away, you didn't charge them?

PM: No.

TP: Were those people in Ouzinkie?

PM: Yeah, they were our neighbors some of them . . . we used to make the sour milk and they used to come and get that, too.

TP: Now what would you used sour milk for, for cooking?

PM: To make things.

TP: Was that like sour cream?

PM: Yeah, it has the cream, the whole thing . . . sour milk. My mom used to make a butter. Oh, geez, it used to taste so fresh. We had lots of work. We'd clean the whole yard--the cow barn and cow yard. That was heavy work.

TP: Last time I was here you were telling me about the store there in Ouzinkie. Who ran the store?

PM: Grimes.

TP: That was a Ouzinkie family?

PM: He was from Ouzinkie, but he wasn't born there. . . . He was married to a German woman. She was a real red-headed girl. Then he had a cannery.

TP: The cannery, was it there in Ouzinkie?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: And what sort of things did they can there?

PM: Fish. And crab. Then the tidalwave took it out.

TP: So the tidalwave took away the cannery?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: Did the tidalwave come up to the houses in Ouzinkie?

PM: Some of them. They were very low on the edge towards the water line.

TP: You told me before that you and your family went on a boat called the Marine Greer?

PM: Uh-huh, Albert's boat.

TP: How big was that boat?

PM: Eighty-footer, I think.

TP: How big was the boat your husband had?

PM: He had a thirty-eight footer, a purse-seiner.

TP: You went to school until sixth grade. What do you remember about school?

PM: Not too much. We had one school with about 60 to 70 children, one room.

TP: How many teachers?

PM: One . . .

TP: An older lady, you say?

PM: Yeah.

TP: How did she manage 60 or 70 children?

PM: She managed them very well, starting from the primary with the kindergarten up to the eighth grade.

TP: What do you remember studying in school? Did you have a favorite subject?

PM: I hate arithmetic. I didn't like arithmetic. My favorite subject was history and spelling.

TP: What part of history did you like the best?

PM: Oh, I can't remember. . . .

TP: What did the students do when they finished with eighth grade?

PM: They would start going to high school at Mt. Edgecombe.

TP: So they went all the way down to Sitka?

PM: Yeah, Wrangell, at first, then to Mt Edgecombe.

TP: Did they all go down there or did some choose to stay?

PM: The ones that graduated and the rest wouldn't go there.

TP: What kind of games do you remember playing as a child?

PM: Ball. We used to play baseball. And we used to play hopscotch. God, a whole bunch of them, and a bunch of them would play leapfrog. It used to be funny to watch them.

TP: When you were young, do you remember, what were some of your goals for your life? What did you want to accomplish?

PM: I wanted to be a nurse, but I didn't go to the high school.

TP: And that was because your mom got sick?

PM: Yeah. . . .

TP: How old were you when you got married?

PM: I was going on twenty-two.

TP: And who was your husband?

PM: Julian Muller . . . He was fourteen years older than I.

TP: And he lived there in Ouzinkie?

PM: We both lived there. We lived together 38 years before he died and then that would make up 57 years. He was nice.

TP: What did the men do in Ouzinkie when they were courting someone?

PM: Nothing much. They'd go dancing or for a walk. Not too much to do.

TP: Where would you go dancing?

PM: Down at the nice, big dance hall there, but it's gone now.

TP: Did that go out in the tidal wave, too?

PM: No. It got old. The cows used to go in there and dance. They used to stay inside, and the cows running around looked like they dancing.

TP: How many children did you have, Paris?

PM: Three boys and four girls; seven.

TP: Were they all born in Ouzinkie?

PM: Uh-huh.

TP: You said you would go into Kodiak to see the doctor. There must have been midwives (in Ouzinkie).

PM: There was midwives, yes, two of them.

TP: What were people's houses like in Ouzinkie?

PM: Same as other houses here. Some were log houses. We had one real log house. The other one wasn't. But they were nice warm houses.

TP: How did people heat them?

PM: Woodstoves, heaters.

TP: Were they oil heaters?

PM: Huh-uh. There was no oil stoves, no oil heaters earlier days.

TP: There were a couple questions I had about during the war times. You said that a lot of the boys went to war. Did they volunteer to go or . . . ?

PM: No, they got called.

TP: When everyone was afraid of the Japanese, and you took your tents out under the trees . . .

PM: They said they were coming to Kodiak.

TP: Who told you they were coming?

PM: Radio. Everybody went up on the roof to put the tents.

TP: Now the tents were white?

PM: Uh-huh. As if the Japs wouldn't see. If they had the green tents it wouldn't be so bad, but they didn't have no green tents. They only had white. . . .

TP: So did you stay in tents for a while?

PM: Huh-uh.

TP: You stayed at your house?

PM: Yeah.

TP: Where did they get their white tents?

PM: From the store.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

For an index of other recordings in this collection see the index:

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