

**Alaska Oral History
Project**

**Narrator: A.W. Schaeffer
Interviewer: Robin Schaeffer**

Topic:

**Experiences in Navy and
in Civilian Life in Kodiak
during 1960's and '70's**

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UA: Kodiak

Narrator: Art Schaeffer

Interviewer: Robin Schaeffer

Topic: Experiences in Navy while in Kodiak and life in the '60's and early '70's in Kodiak.

Art, will you share a little about where you were born and grew up?

O.K., I was born on a farm outside of Forest City, Missouri, August 29, 1920. When I was born we lived in a real narrow canyon with hills so steep, you could only see the sun at the noon hour.

What did your dad do?

He was a farmer, we'd get up at six o'clock in the morning, take care of all the chores by seven and be out in the field by eight. We grew corn and hay and wheat and oats and potatoes. Of course, we didn't sell all the potatoes, and stuff...we raised all of our own garden stuff for food.

How many kids were in your family?

Thirteen, seven boys and six girls. I was about the middle, the middle more or less.

How did it happen that you came to join the Navy?

Well, there was a couple of older boys, my brothers, who joined the Navy first. They came home and they had the best looking black shoes I ever seen in my life, and I had these old clodhoppers, you know, with the soles falling off and they had these nice uniforms.

I said, "Gee Whiz, that's for me." So right out of my junior year, I went down and seen the recruiter, I wanted to join up right then. He says, "Well, you have such an over-bite you'll never be able to eat our navy food. You better go to the dentist, get your teeth squared away and then see about getting in." So, I said, "O.K." and went and finished my senior year in High

School. Went back down to see him, he said, "Well, I see you got your teeth squared away, come on in." Never been to the dentist yet, but he just wanted me to go back and finish school. So I had to sign up for six years. I had been going with this girl, her folks thought a lot of me, wanted me to run the farm for them, marry her, and run the farm. When I went, he took me down to St. Joe to sign up he was about to cry all the way..."Just like loosing my son", real sad, see and oh my goodness!!!

So what was it like when you joined up? Where'd you go?

Well, signed up with the Navy, went to Great Lakes Training Station out of Chicago, nine weeks of boot camp.

What was boot camp like? Anything stick out in your mind about it?

We had a boat pulling crew, we'd get in there and run races. You know, rowing the whale boats, see who could row the fastest. We slept in hammocks, seabags to put our clothes in. Once a week we'd have a bag inspection. One time I had to go to the head and I come running back just about the time they got to my bag, I slid right through all my stuff...they gave me an O.K. though. We had to wash our own clothes, you know, out of buckets and stuff. Lots of exercise and stuff. Spent a lot of time in the gym so they let me teach wrestling and judo and stuff. I taught this guy all the judo I knew, I let him practice throwing me after awhile...he threw me and broke my leg...went to the hospital for nine weeks...it's a good thing it happened then though, see just about all the people who went to sea about the time I went into the hospital, they went out to the Asiatic fleet, they went out to Japan and around you see. When the war started, most of them were killed or captured. So, I made out pretty good. So in December, I went to the U.S.S. Yorktown in Pearl Harbor.

What was that like? What did you think the first time you got there?

Well, I rode a cruiser from Long Beach, California to Pearl Harbor. Had my hammock with my little mattress all tied up, had my seabag, and I had to climb this long, dang gangway to the flight deck. I thought I was never going to make it up there. They showed us where we were supposed to live you know, what compartment on the second deck down, gave us little metal lockers and buckets to wash our clothes in, water hours, couldn't take a shower until about 4:30 in the afternoon. Everybody go down there to take showers you know, crowd around there, try to get wet, get back out and soap up, get back in and rinse off...it was really a mess...in those days things were kind of primitive, you didn't have any privacy...where now you see, they've made it so you can go in a have a shower by yourself...I guess we didn't mind because we didn't know any better.

I'm trying to get a place in history for when you were doing this, what year was it?

It was 1940. The ship was based at Pearl Harbor...we'd go out and let the pilots practice landing on the ship, in early 1941 we went through the Panama Canal and were escorting ships over to England.

What was happening in the war then?

Germany had already declared war on everybody pretty much except us. So, we were escorting cruisers and destroyers with us and the planes would go out and if they saw a German submarine, we couldn't sink them ourselves but we would tell the English and they would...see we weren't in the war yet, so we would just tell the English...they'd go out and try to sink them.

What kind of ship was the Yorktown?

Oh! It was an aircraft carrier. For the first three months I was on the flight deck, I was the compartment cleaner. Just like house-keeping, make sure the deck was swabbed and waxed, all the lockers were polished, all the buckets were shined...that sort of thing. I scrubbed the paint and scrubbed all the paint off and then had to paint it again. I tell ya, I kept a clean compartment.

We were busy all the time...three times a day we would sweep the hangar deck, we'd all start at one end, we each had one of those big push brooms. Also one of my jobs before breakfast was to polish all the bright work, brass. Every now and then we had to chip all the paint off the flight deck...it was stainless steel you know.

What was it like to come from Missouri to Hawaii to live on an aircraft carrier?

I tell you, before I joined the navy, I'd never been more than 60 miles away from my home. When I went to Great Lakes, that was a big trip on the train and then, when I left on the troop train from Great Lakes to San Diego, I was a seaman second, they put me in charge of this whole carload of boots, I lost about six of them on the way. When the train would stop they'd want to get off to go buy something and sometimes they wouldn't make it back to train.

When we got to San Diego, they put us to work putting new degaussing cables on these old destroyers and chipping paint off them and everything.

So we were getting ready to join the war?

Well, we were trying to get ready because we kind of knew, I mean topside knew that we were going to get in to it sooner or later

with Germany, and we had suspicions about Japan too, I think.

What happens between 1940 and 1942?

Well, see in '41, we were over in the Atlantic escorting ships and I was training to be an aviation metalsmith. It was our job on the hangar deck to repair any damage to the planes, so I got a lot of good experience on that...We were in Norfolk, VA when war was declared...we went into the navy yard in Portsmouth. Tacked on some navy guns and we left Norfolk, VA and went through the Panama Canal...The welders finished up welding on the guns and catwalks on the flight deck and around, you know....also we had a whole hanger deck of soldiers we were picking up and all and I never did get to the mess hall....Bought a case of pork & beans and a case of candy bars and that's what I ate all the way there...because there were lines day and night it seemed like, from trying to get down to the mess hall. Long lines of people. The war was declared December 7, 1941. By the time we got to San Diego it was about '42. We loaded up a bunch of stuff and headed down, into the Pacific and we never did get back to San Diego with that ship. We kept running raids on the Japanese...they took over a whole bunch of islands down in the south Pacific. So, we were getting attacked and attacking...

One time, we spent 110 days on that ships without ever stopping or putting in at some port. That's a long time...but, we were down there in the Coral Sea battle...it was awful.

I was second class then, I had damage-control party, and our battle station was right on the big, square hatch where the stairs rose to the upper deck, and on the other side, down to the lower decks. This hatch was about six, seven foot square...big, heavy metal. I had just gotten up to see how the Lexington was making out...see, it was over to our port side, and it was really

getting hit...hit with torpedoes, bombs, everything. Just as I looked over there, the bomb came through about where I had been sitting. Went through three hangar decks and come back...It was about a 2,000 pound, armor-piercing bomb. It killed 30-some people three decks down and come up and killed all my troops. About seven of them...I would have been right there with them if I hadn't gotten up to look over the side there. And then, everybody who was around, had to start fighting fires. Cause we got too many more hits, you know. Before that it seems...every Friday they used to have what they called "Zone Inspection" in those days. We'd pull out all the firehoses, take sandstone and brushes and scrub them, so they'd be white and clean and they'd look pretty...but then, when we went to fight the fires, where they'd been flattened, they was all cracked and weakened...hardly any water could come out the ends. So, after that, we didn't scrub anymore fire hoses....oh, they looked pretty.

Did you get to see any of what was going on in Alaska with the war?

Well, see we were too busy anyway, see,...to think about Alaska...because after the Coral Sea Battle, we came back to Pearl Harbor and we had to get a lot of repair work done. But, before we could get it done...here comes the Battle of Midway. So we had to go out, with two other carriers, and fight that battle...We were supposed to be the rear guard because we weren't really battle-ready...but we were the only ones who got hit. So...we got sunk out there...had to abandon ship.

I think I understand the Aleutian campaign was to act as a diversion to the American Pacific Fleet...do I have that right? The Japanese planned on diversion...they thought they would go up and take the Aleutians and up in there, see, Alaska...while we

were down there...and that's what they did, but...they didn't really make a lot of headway out there.

What happened after the Yorktown was sunk?

Well, we were still fighting the war, see? After the Yorktown was sunk, we finally got back to Pearl Harbor, and then into the United States...I went into another squadron and trained with them. Then in the fall of '43 I went back to sea on an escort-carrier. We were still trying to run the Japanese out of the small, south pacific islands..Guam and the Mariannas Islands, Marshall islands. The Japanese took Guam away from us and we had to take it back. I remember when we were doing it, we were just offshore and we would send our fighters and torpedo planes and bombers over. After we took Guam back from them we went to Siapan and some of those other islands over there and just kept pushing them back.

(Deletion)

Are you mostly just interested in when I came to Alaska with the NAVY?

Not only in Alaska, I'm interested in the whole experience.

(There was about 30 minutes of interesting and informative narrative about the Navy in the Mediterranean, a world tour to show the US flag in foreign ports, and the Korean War which followed and that is recorded on the interview tape...I did not transcribe this section in the name of space in this document.)

What was the situation that brought you to Alaska as part of your naval career?

Well, you see...I got transferred to Alameda from my outfit in Jacksonville, and from Alameda, went down to Monteray, when the time came for a transfer again, I put in for Whidby Island...a

patrol squadron...I got transferred up there, patrol squadron two and this was in '56. So, in November 15, 1956, we deployed here to Kodiak for six months.

When use the term "deployed" does that mean the whole ship moved up here to work out of a different base?

No, see we weren't on a ship, it was a patrol squadron, we had these Lockheed Neptunes, two jets with two (?) engines. They'd fly patrols out and try to spot Russian submarines...check on their ships and stuff out there. Fly about 14 hours or more each flight.

What kind of work did you do?

I was in charge of the air frame shop. So, we had airplanes, and power plants and electronics, and all that sort of thing.

Was that all on the ground here on Kodiak?

On the ground, right...Hanger three.

What year was that?

1956...got up here in November, 1956...and it was about 5 degrees below zero and about six inches of snow...boy, it was coold!

But, I didn't mind it.

Definitely knew that was where you were going to retire as soon as you saw it?

Oh, heck no! I still had a ways to go yet...but we had a chief's club out here at Lake Louise and Army Officer's club...that was with Fort Greely, you know. They were still using a lot of the old buildings left over from WWII.

Right where the Lake Louise housing is now...right there?

Yep, that's the name of the Lake...Louise.

Was Fort Greely at the mouth of the Buskin then, I mean the remains...could you still tell there had been a fort there?

Well, it wasn't really a fort...there weren't any big fortifications around it or thing, see. It was just a big camp, warehouses, barracks and stuff like that.

Did the road pretty much end at the base then or what?

The road was not where it is now...it followed along side Lake Louise there, well, it followed along Boy Scout Lake...and then it went right through Nimitz Park...you see where the old Buskin Bridge is...and then went along where it is now for a ways...then it turned left, sort of around the end of the airfield for a ways and then went up over a hill and down...just about where Peterson School is...and made a 90 degree turn and went on up to the base. And at that time, one main gate was out just before you got to Deadman's curve. It was a big base...it took in a lot of territory. The other main gate was right out here where Samson's Tug and Barge is now.

Was that whole area restricted?

Oh, yeah....Civilians from downtown would have to get permission to pass through the gate. If they wanted to go to Chiniak, they'd have to get permission to go through both gates. The Navy was all the way out to that flat area where you drop down just before you get to American River. Then the other way was clear out to just before you drop down to Antone Larsen. All that area to the right, as you go towards town, where the natives are claiming it now, and also on the left there....it was all navy also.

That would be like the Boy Scout Lake area and then along on the other side of the road...the Buskin River drainage area...along in there?

Yes, that's right. All navy.

How did they use that land? I mean did they use it for security

or did they use it for maneuvers?

Oh, no...it was just left over from the war...the navy probably...and Old Women's Mountain also, see?

What about Bell's Flats? I remember when Spence and I moved out to the "flats" we used to find a lot of old navy stuff out here. There used to be a dairy there, there was this old guy, Bell, who used to have a dairy...just about where you bend around from the water-hole...where the Rodeo grounds are now.

And then of course, on further out here...this had all been an army camp. The army was here the same time the navy was...there were a lot more army personnel than navy. When the army left, the navy just took it over.

Like this building here (referring to his 110 foot long quonset), this building here had been a great, big, old cold-storage building. When I bought this property, the only thing was left was the foundation and the floor. So, Captain Acker and I went out and torn down old quonset huts and brought them here. I erected them up.

How come did the military use quonset huts so much?

They were one of the most practical buildings because they could withstand almost all types of weather. They heated them with old space heaters...used oil.

Spence and I found a bunch of records...like it was a communications station or something.

Yeah, just across the road down there had been a radio station...I used to go over there. Great big records laying all around.

What happened to the army here?

They all just withdrew and left.

(Deletion)

Do you remember the submarine dock in Women's Bay?

There was a sub dock, just at the foot of Marine Hill and then we had the repair facilities down on Nimond's Peninsula.

Did submarines come in here regularly?

At that time I guess they did...you know, when we had the earthquake back in '64 all that settled about 8 feet.

Were you here for the earthquake?

Yeah, my squadron BB2, was up here, we'd come back up on November 15, 1963 and we were here during the earthquake in Hangar 3.

That one day, me and a couple, three chiefs were celebrating one of them's birthday, we'd taken the day off you know, went downtown and were taking pictures and drinking a few beers, you know. We went to the B&B Bar down where it used to be down by the old Russian Church...in that area. We was setting in there and the bartender liked the chickens we had out there up at the Chief's Club...we had the big, old rotisserie. So he and I went out to the Chief's club...up on Aviation Hill then...it had been the Hillside Chapel, then they moved the Chapel and let the chiefs have it you see. So we was setting in there drinking a beer, we had about five in front of us and everything started coming apart...gee whiz, stuff started flying all over. We grabbed those beers and set down on the ground outside....it didn't bother us, we were half-plastered you know. After it was over, we jumped in the car and went back to town and picked up the troops...I borrowed a ~~K~~armen Ghia from someone and brought them back...They'd closed the club and made it an evacuation point for dependents. Gee whiz, we didn't like that so we headed back to town and had a flat and had to fix that. Went back to the B&B Bar and tried to get back to the base later but right down there by the City dock was about six feet of water, the tide

had started coming up, see?

So where were you when the tidal wave came?

Well, we were down town...hadn't been paying much attention to it till we started going back to the base and saw all that water there and couldn't get back in. So, we had to spend most of the night up on Cope Street by the WestMark, sitting in this car about to freeze and finally, somewhere around midnight, we thought we could get back to the base, we didn't have any heat, any power, nothing...boy...it was one of the coldest nights I ever spent in my life....Before, just as the first tidal wave was coming in, see, there was two waves, they moved all our planes up to the end of the runway...away from the water so they only got water part way up the wheels.

Was there much damage on the base from the tidal wave?

No, there wasn't a lot of damage. See, the tidal wave came in where Hanger One is and washed all the fill out from under the floor. Hanger One is right there by the Exchange area...by the runway...by the Commissary and the Exchange Buildings...our hangar, hangar three is right there by the mountain...as you go in to town. Hangar Two is right there between them.

Hangar Three was built on rock where Hangar Two was built on fill and when the tidal wave came in, we didn't have that kind of a big dam across there like there is now, see? It just washed all that stuff out.

Did the Navy have quite a bit to do in getting the town stabilized again too?

The navy did, yeah...within the first couple hours they brought a carrier in with a generator to give them power.

I understand your family, down in Oak Harbor was real distressed from the radio broadcast...Spencer told me they heard Kodiak

Island had sunk or something like that?

Yeah, that's what they heard, but see, Red had found out...she had a short-wave radio there...she picked up a broadcast from Germany telling her about the earthquake in Alaska.

What about the receiver site that's out a Chiniak, was that part of the navy installation?

You mean the one on the way to Chiniak?

Well, I was wondering about the big one out there at Chiniak. See, that was an air force tracking station. It was to track satellites and stuff you know. See, during the war, the navy had that field...that little runway and they had a navy village out there. All those old quonsets and all. That was an addition, used as a second field for the navy. I guess they used it in WWII there.

You retired up here out of the navy?

Yes, I left in 1964, went back to Whidby Island and got transferred to a shipboard-type squadron and in '65 I went out on the KittyHawk.

What was the KittyHawk? I remember hearing about it.

It was a big aircraft carrier. I spent seven or eight months on it. We were in the Viet Nam war...we had to go out and support that war. I had three twin jet bombers and we used them for refueling other planes. We'd go out and as the planes would take off, we'd have our planes up there and they would plug in and fill up their tanks...aerial tankers...then they'd go on their mission and then we'd be out there waiting for them when they'd come back if they needed refueling or something...we'd give them more fuel so they could make it back to the ship...you reading that book, Spence, Rules of Engagement....boy, reading that was just like I was back out there...just like it.

It was about planes flying off carriers...see, those planes were old, more than 20 years old when we went out there. These catapult shots on a ship is real hard on a plane...the planes are launched by catapults, big steam catapults...hook em up and when everybody is ready, they throw the switch and the planes go off right now, 100 miles an hour....they were so danged...it's real hard on the nose landing gear and we lost one air plane...not our ship, another ship, on a cat shot....killed the crew.

(Deletion)

Returning to Alaska, how did your tour of duty finish up? You retired in Kodiak, how did you get back here?

After I came back from Viet Nam off the KittyHawk, I got transferred to Kodiak. I come back up here in 1966. Spencer and I drove up the AlCan. Spence and I lived in the barracks quite awhile til Red came up. We all moved into Roach Haven over there...an old building on the base where families would live for times until they could get a house. Roaches running around everyplace...then Nimitz Park opened up and we had to haul our own furniture and everything in over there...they didn't move everything for us like they do now...I tell you, it was a mess. The housing was brand new though, we were one of the first families to move in there so, we really didn't mind. The furnace that heated the whole building, which was a six-plex, was right under our apartment and when it would turn on, it would go whooomp!!! The rugs would flip up around the edges off the floor...but we made it.

When you got your time off and weren't on duty, what did you do for entertainment?

Oh, we'd go to the club usually, sometimes we'd go down town to visit the bars. There used to be a lot of good bars in Kodiak.

MOEMARTES ?

There was the Moemartes, which became the Harvester, you remember the Harvester? They even had topless dancers and everything then. Then Tony's, before the earthquake, was a nice big place and the Mecca...let's see, Tony's and the Mecca and a whole bunch of these other places were demolished during the earthquake. A place called The Village was here then and it was up higher...about the same level as the where the Ford Garage is. Some day I'll show you some slides of what it was like before the earthquake...There's a bunch of slides out in the back there someplace...of course you can go up in the WestMark in the hall way there and see a lot of the same stuff. But it was a nice town before the earthquake. I don't think it's ever been the same since.

(Deletion)

The Beachcombers was a nice place to go before the earthquake. Out there and then when it washed away in the tidal wave, later they brought an old ship in. Then they finally took the old ship out and built the new Beachcombers and neither the ship or this new place was ever a real nice place to go, see? Then they rebuilt all the other ones like, Tony's and the Mecca and the Village Bar...that's all new stuff...right after the earthquake, they put up plywood palaces and everybody went there too. I wanted to ask you about Mother Goose because I've heard your Mother Goose stories over the years and always wondered how it ever got started.

Back in '69 before I retired, Captain Acker and a bunch of them, Commander Burnhardt, they decided that,...we'd been over there hunting before, you see...and stayed in an old log house. It had an old wood floor and didn't have a door and all that and we camped there.

It's over on the Alaskan Peninsula...I'd have to show you on a map so you could see where. You go from here, down towards Wide Bay cross Lake ^{BECHAGAK} Pecheroff and another lake and then you'd get to Mother Goose Lake. Mother Goose Lake is about seven miles long and about three miles wide in spots. They asked me to build a cabin...prefab it in the hanger. Spencer helped me a lot on that. So, we mocked it all up and got it all set and took it down and flew it over there on an HU-16...it was an amphibious plane, you know. I built a boat, a 16 foot long boat, four feet wide in two sections that folded together in the center. It had a lot of styrofoam for floatation. It was a pretty good boat. There was this one guy went over there with his son and a chief Coastie. They took it out one day and he didn't take any oars, didn't take any life preservers...just had the motor. Big storm come up and the engine quit and they started rolling, he had his hip boots on and wouldn't take em off...finally, he was trying to hang on to the boat...he just gave up and sank. The other two guys were finally able to get to the beach and walk around the lake to get back to the cabin. Some people tried to blame that on the way I build the boat. But, it was actually a good boat if you treated it right. Use your head, take your life preservers and oars so you could keep it into the wind and whatever in case the engine ever quit. But after that, I built outriggers...one on each side. They were eight feet long and a foot or more square filled with styrofoam and on big pipes and they were two foot out from the boat. They worked real good, it was an eight foot wide boat then. Made it real stable. You could go all the way down the river or across the lake or anything. Then one time, I was over there, across the lake and up in the woods and I found this jon boat, aluminum jon boat with 35 axe holes in it. The guy that

had it lost his camp so he drug his boat in there and took an axe and went from one end to the other...big holes, this wide where he took an axe and just chopped it up...so we brought it back here...I wanted to....this was after I retired...to get it fixed in the hanger there...the dang lieutenant in charge, he wouldn't let us...so we took it back over there and old Marv Black and I spent all day putting patches on it. I took the outriggers from the old boat and put them on that one. It was a nice boat. I got all kinds of pictures that shows what these things looked like. Now, they stole our boat and tore our cabin down so, we don't have anymore camp...this last time Captain Acker and all these guys were over there and it rained every night and blew and stormed and they were wet all the time. Wasn't any fun at all. Who found Mother Goose...who decided it would be a good place to hunt and camp?

I don't know, a couple, three years before I went over there...I went over there in '69 and a year or so before that they used to fly over there to hunt and camp. First, we used a navy plane to fly 'em over there, but when I went over in '69 we used one of the local services to go. Eventually, after that we used Kodiak Airways, they had a Grumman Goose...Hal Derrick used to fly us over there...he had his own plane later...we used to use him to fly us over there...he was a little reckless...I think it may have finally killed him...I don't know. Harold was a good guy, but he took a lot of chances.

So, when you did retire from the navy, you decided you wanted to stay in Kodiak?

Well, at that time, you couldn't stay in more than 30 years...and I had to get out at 30 so I retired in 1970 and Red and I camped out in that little old trailer out there up above Buskin. Saved

rent a while and decided we'd take a trip back to Missouri so, we left the trailer on the base and loaded up that old truck you guys finally got from me and Red and I grabbed a case of beer and put a bunch of clothes in some pillow cases and caught the ferry and headed south.

We had a real good trip down the AlCan...got the cat and the dog, camped every night all the way to Missouri and back. Got back up here and then we went to Saltery Cove.

We did the lodge over there...it was a cold place. One night, we had a small space heater...come up a big storm...started shaking and going on and the fire box fell out on the floor and started a fire. Another time, when I came in to do the laundry and get some more brandy and coffee, there was a big storm and all the stove pipes on top the roof blew out in the woods. Red was staying out there by herself. Another time the ice would freeze in the water right in the kitchen at night...I'd have to go out in the lake to get water...cut a hole in the lake and one time it snowed and the old dog it fell in the water and I had to pull him out by the ears. I thought that was real funny, about a week or so later I went there and it had snowed and I fell in. Didn't see the hole...didn't think that was so funny. I was able to get out.

Had another old dog we called Charlie was out there. One morning he was out there barking like everything and so we thought must be a bear out there. Opened the door a crack and peered out there and there was old Charlie up next to the door, barking, right in front of him, chewing on an old deer carcass was a big red fox. I told him, "Dang it, Charlie, you're supposed to chase him off." He made a jump at the fox and it run off across the lake, Charlie come back, tail was wagging, I turned around and

there was the fox chewing away on that carcass...I told him, "Charlie, go chase him away and he did that time and the old fox never did come back. We had a good winter though, after the stove fell apart I came in an Marv Black gave me a good space heater...I took it out there and put it up...we had a fireplace too, but all the heat would go up the chimney. I went to the base and got me a big piece of stainless steal and put it in the back as a reflector and it reflected heat back out to the room. It worked out real good.

You guys did the VFW for awhile too, didn't you?

Yeah, right after that winter, they needed somebody to run the VFW and so we went out there cause we didn't have any place else to live. So, for about two years we ran the VFW. Then, there used to be a purple house right there across the street from Island Plumbing. So she rented it us, we lived there for quite a while until...we moved out here.

So how did you get this land (Bell's Flats)?

Well, while we were still working at the VFW, this land came up for sale. Captain Acker and I came out here and we walked all over this area...trying to pick out what we wanted. I liked where O'Dounnahue lived but they bid that up so high...we didn't really have any money. We went through bidding on several of them like that...finally, I bid on this parcel...I kept waiting for somebody to bid against me but nobody did so I go four and a half acres for \$2700.00.

And Red had seen the acreage I wanted...Oh, she cried when she seen this...oh, she thought this was the most sad looking place...probably thinking of all the nails she was going to have to pull. We gave you two an acre when you got married and McWhithey wanted an acre and so we sold him one for a thousand

dollars and this other friend wanted one so we sold him one for \$1500.00, he turned around and sold his for \$18,000.00 and they went to the east coast. But, it was still a good bargain.

Then, the next land auction they had on the other side of the river, everything went up to \$30,000. This is the best side of the river because we get all the sun...we like this side.

Now, you have this nice quonset hut that you built and scavenged and put together and you're set.

Yep, I think it's comfortable...course it wouldn't look good on Rezanof.

No, but it looks just right here...how long is it again?

hundred feet...I took a picture of it one time looking this way from the other end with the fish-eye lens and it looked just like a run way at an air port.

For a long time after the flats was settled, wasn't it basically all military and retirees out here on this side of the river?

Yeah, it was all army right here.

I remember when Cassidys and Greers and Yorks and Geddes and you guys...you were all navy people.

Yeah, we were all navy...there were no army people left out here.

We were the first ones to live out here, Red and I were. Then, seems like I was going to be the mayor, and old Fred Greer, he had all the guns and everything, no, he was going to be the dog catcher, cause he had all the Beagles. Roddy York had all the guns and he was going to be the chief of police. Bud Cassidy moved in later after we got things squared away.

It was quite a while before you had power and telephones...about how long?

well, it was quite awhile. I bought that dang generator I hadn't used it, not even a month and they brought power out...but even

then we had a lot of outages and we needed to use the generator then.

But the phones took much longer, didn't they?

We had those CB radios...Red was Cherokee Red, I was Martini Art, Bob Hatcher was Rapid Robert, and every body would listen in the partylines everyday. Yep, we didn't mind...want to make a long distance call, we'd go down to the KI or somewhere.

Now, you've got all the modern conveniences...

Still have to go to town.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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