

Oral History Project

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Alaska History

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Here we are at Tom Simpler's house in Kodiak and my name is Tom Cox and Tom is going to tell us a little about his life when he was born and so forth and we're just going to let him talk. By the way the date is November 17, 1994. It's a Thursday night. All is well here in Kodiak except it's a little bit windy. We're sitting here in his living room and we got us a couple of cool ones. Kind get into the spirit here. Tom, We'll start off by talking a little bit about your parents and working our way up through to bring us up to the time you got to Kodiak.

OK let's see, if I start with my Father whose name is Charles Simpler, in fact both of my parents are originally from Delaware. We kind of hasten through it I think my dad kind of conjured his way into the merchant marine at the age of 16, he had to lie about his age to get into merchant marine. This would have been about the mid 20's when he went into the merchant marine he went in as a cabin boy and by the time he decided to get out was about the time he decided to get married and I think he worked his way up to chief mate, then he was in the position where he could have taken his captain's license but being that he wanted to get married he didn't want that kind of life where he would be going to sea all the time.

So how old was he when he got out?

That would have been about 1939 and he was born in about 1911, so we're talking about 28 years old.

And so he married and settled in.. ..

He married a gal from Delaware as well. She... in fact that went to the same high school but their age difference was pretty significant in fact. I think he's about 7 or 8 years older than her. And they had known each other as kids but I guess on some opportunity when he went back when he wasn't at sea he met her again and she'd been working in Philadelphia doing office work up there and I don't know what kind of courtship they had.. .they really haven't explained it very much. Anyway he had met some guys, some longshoremen in Oregon when he was in there with the ship and they talk him into buying into a small clam cannery in Cordova, Alaska. He decided to do that because he wanted out of the Merchant Marines so he went back and got

married to her and sometime in 1940, or maybe in 1939, they moved to Cordova. Back in those days the only way you got up here was by Alaska steamship. There was no airline service or anything like that, you had to ride a steamship up from Seattle. And I know my mom has told me many times from being in Philadelphia and working in Philadelphia for 7 years that dropping her off in Cordova, Alaska, was really a culture shock. She didn't have any friends didn't know anybody just really a small town not many conveniences.

So she got here by going through Oregon and then coming up...

Well from Seattle, Washington. I think they go cross country by train and then took a ship. Actually, the good friends that they did have were the people they met on the ship coming up. It was about a 2 week trip or something like that. They made a lot of friends on the ship coming up, people who were heading to Cordova same reasons they were you know.....Those people they met ended up being some of their very best friends for life in Cordova.

So you said you had some real problems adjusting at first...

He was gone a lot fishing and she didn't have a lot of friends and it was just very lonesome. She was away from her family with really no way to contact them. In fact I think if she got up there in '39 then her first trip back was about 1944 or something like that. So she was up there about 5 years before she ever... but she got use to. Let's see..I was born in '41. My brother Bob was born in '44. And that was about the first time we made our first trip back to Delaware. Then we came back and let's see... I had a sister who born in '46 and then my dad was kind of getting fed up with things and thought he would go back to Delaware and see if he could make a living there carpentering. So we went back there in '49 and he tried that and it just wasn't in the cards. So we came back to Cordova in '49 and then I had a...

Do you remember the trip going back?

I don't remember any of those trips. I don't remember either of the two trips. The one in '44 I don't remember anything about. We went down on steam ship and then in cross

country in train and then in the '49 trip we did fly outside. In 49 there was an airline by then. But we went cross country on train. I have vague recollections but that's about it. In the meantime the year he was trying to make a living there in Delaware my youngest sister was born, her name is Cathy. But that didn't work so we move back to Cordova in '49 and we've been there ever since up until the time I graduated from high school. It was tough to make a living in those days you know. He fished commercially and that was salmon, dug clams commercially, fished halibut commercially. Cordova was a town with not much opportunity in the winter time so he just really had to grub for every job he could get in the winter. Anything he could get he would take. But he usually managed to stay busy enough to feed the family. But we didn't have any excess cash floating around.

OK, back to fishing. What was the name of the boat?

During that period of time he didn't have his own boat. We never had our own boat until 1960. So he usually fished with other people all that time. I think in the mid 40's he did buy in with another guy and had a boat for a few years and it was called the "Jo". It was named after the other guy he was partners with. Then that guy started living in the fast lane and doing a lot of drinking and wasn't real responsible and then he had to get out from underneath that deal so I think he just sold the boat to the guy and started out fishing with other people.

So they fished halibut and salmon?

Yes, they fished halibut, salmon, crab, dug clams, fished dungeness crab over in that area. But there just wasn't any price for the product then you know and there were bum years then, too. And it was tough to make a living.

Did you ever go out with your dad on a boat?

I started going out with him in I think in 1954 was the first year and that was just salmon fishing.

So you would have been...

I was about 5th grade... about 13 or 14 years old or something like that. That was drift gill netting on the Copper river and I haven't missed a season since then. Well that's well over 40 years. So I fished with him from 54 up to 60 and then we kind of pooled our resources and built our own boat in 1960. My dad and I and another guy built it. He was kind of a master carpenter and he supervised the job. His name was Martin Anderson. He was a native. Alaska native and the man was just a fantastic wood worker, just a gifted carpenter. And we started that boat I can remember it was an all wood boat and we started about the middle of July and launched it in the middle of May. That was May of 1960 the year I graduated from high school.

Oh that must have been something to launch a boat the same year you were graduating.

Oh yeah, we were pretty busy. It was a beautiful boat..... And we fished that kind of as a family operation with my brother and myself and my dad and my mom. We seined that boat from 60 to about.....we sold the boat in 81, but my mom didn't fish with us for about the last 5 years my brother and and my dad stuck together on that boat till about.. we sold it 81.

What was the name of it?

The Vecci. My dad made up the name. It stood for Violet my mother, "e" was for Edward was my brother's middle name, "c" for Charles, Charlotte and Cathy and the "i". And the "i" was just to fill it out.

And your name is Charles Tom Simpler. Did we get your birth date?

I was born in 1941 in December 15th, 8 days after Pearl Harbor was bombed. That's and easy way to remember it. I was the first in the family..... Yes I'm the oldest of the 4 children in the family. I've got a brother Bob who let's see he's 2 years younger than I am. And a sister Charlotte, and Bob is a retired teacher now and he still fishes commercially and he moved down to Whidby Island down in Washington. I have a sister Charlotte who is 4 years younger than I am. Her and her family are still in

Cordova. Her husband is a fisherman and she's a nurse. And my younger sister Cathy is a nurse and she lives in Anchorage with her family. And both my parents are still living. They come to spend their Summers in Cordova and spend their winters in Florida. For as both as old as they are they are in pretty good health.

Let's go back a little bit. You brought us all the way up to the present and the time you graduated from high school. Maybe we can go back when you were a child, even before adolescence can you remember any trips locally around Cordova any trip that may stand out in your mind that you went by train or boat , you already talked about going down south....

I was real active in boy scouts and we did a lot of unique things there because we had some real good leadership and I know one of the trips that I really remember.. well I made 2 trips that were impressionable and one is where we went up into the interior in Alaska our scout troop and our scout masters spent a week and a half on our own on a lake up in the interior. We built our own igloos and we had nobody else with other than that they flew us up there and we stayed a week and a half it was just a great experience there was about 20 of us.

Was it outside of Fairbanks?

No. It was outside of Glenallen. I think the place was called Willow Lake. I've tried to find the exact location in later years where we camped and I've never been able to do it. I thought we could find.. we've gone back in there and I thought we could find signs of the leeeen tooools that there just wasn't enough memory there to take me back to the place. I think I was in the approximate location and then I remember another scouting trip I went on is where we went we spent about a week at Ellison Air Force Base. You know when you're born and raised in Cordova those are really eye-opening experiences. Being at an Air Force Base not ever seeing anything like that before that's also when Fairbanks was really knee-deep in gold mining and we got to out and visit an Ester areas where the gold mining was still really hot and heavy, and by the time I got up to college that was all almost defunct, gold mining was. So those were 2 real memorable trips that I can recollect. We never got out of town that much. We never had a lot of money and we never traveled very much. The only other real

travel opportunity I had is when I played basketball in high school we get to Wasilla and to Valdez and to Glenallen. We never even did a lot of traveling there.

So when you were going to these basketball trips was it in regular wheeled planes?

Yeah. A lot of times going over to Valdez in the winter time we got stuck there a week at a time. We would go over to play ball on a weekend and end up spending a whole week there because we would be weathered out. That was real interesting because about after the weekend, about Sunday you were out of cash and you had to go through the rest of the week trying to scrape what you could and ...

That must have been tough on your grade and missing out on your classes.

You know I don't remember that part of it being so much a problem we would shovel snow there, take any jobs we could get to make a few bucks.

In Valdez.

Yeah, I can remember being stuck there two different times for about week at a time. Now the kids ride the ferry that's more dependable.... So as far as trips when I was young that was pretty much it.

Do you remember any particular fishing trips that might stand out bad weather or a storm or ..?

Over the some 40 years we've been fishing we've been in some real jams before things, I don't care to go through again as long as I live I know that.

Emergency situations you mean?

Well when things were really hairy, where it was nip and tuck, it was real bad weather and bad predicaments but my dad always said that a cool head will usually carry you through you know you don't want to panic when you get in jams like that. I'm convinced that he's right as long as you keep a clear head and don't do stupid things

you'll probably make it. One of them is just staying with your boat, trust your boat to the very end. A lot of people will panic and will abandon ship or whatever and that is a major mistake. I can remember lots of incidences, well not lots of them, but many a incident, that I would never care to repeat again. I've gotten a lot more conservative in the fishing but then we have better equipment now. There's no reason why you should get into a jam with the equipment that we have anymore. They're more seaworthy, the boats we have, they're faster. You got better weather forecasting predicting, better navigational aids, both on the boat and what's available on the sea. Golly, when I first started fishing you were lucky to have a compass and if you had a depth finder that worked then you were lucky, but that was about it.

Let's go back a little bit and eventually work our way to Kodiak. We talked a little bit about your high school. Can you talk a little about what your high school was like anything which may stand out in your mind...

I loved growing up in Cordova. I decided it was the greatest place in the world. It was small. I graduated with a class of 18 so you can imagine there were less than a 100 kids in the high school. I don't remember a lot about it but we were a close knit group of kids. Everybody knew everybody really well.

Typical subjects for any high school?

Yeah, pretty much, even for a small school. Surprisingly, wood shop and pretty good science and math curriculum.

Any boat building?

Not really boat building, but we built a lot of implements for boats. I only took the shop for one year and we built things like Thompson bailers and clubs and you name it just different things you might use in the fishing operation gear rollers and different things like that but we never took on a boat, We didn't have a shop that was equipped for it. And one thing that I can remember is that we use to have a one hour long lunch period so we use to..I always went home for lunch most of the kids went home for lunch. Because there was an hour long lunch they just cleared the school out. It interesting to

compare it to now days. I imagine there's just a handful that would go home for lunch. And we had study halls which we don't have anymore but it was a small close knit group and I still see a lot of the people I graduated with when I go back home. When you have a class of 18 and 3 of them already died then it's down to 15 and I'm one of them, so there's about 14 left. Some of them I haven't seen for years.

Do you have class reunions?

No, we've never had class reunions.

So you graduated from high school and you fished..

I graduated in 1960. And then went up to the University of Alaska in Fairbanks the following fall and spent 5 yeas there.

And that's where you got your teaching degree...

I got my bachelor of science and also my teaching credential. Two years before I graduated I met my wife to be and courted her for a year up there and, no courted her three years before I graduated. And then the last the last two years we were married and living in married students dorm on campus. As I remember I had to go a fifth year or a semester of the fifth year to get student teaching in. And there weren't really many job opportunities for teaching so I just got into a post graduate program and did another semester up there and worked on some post graduate work and then started applying for different schools around the state. I had my heart set on some place in southeastern. Don't ask me why..I don't remember both Arlene and I were looking at Petersburg or Sitka or some place like that.

Maybe for proximity to the lower 48 or something like that?

I'm not really sure. We just heard a lot of good things about them I guess. It was one part of Alaska we hadn't spent much time in. But you know as we waited out the different job opportunities in the southeast the Kodiak job came open and Arlene was a Kodiak graduate. She had graduated a few years from Kodiak High School before

that ..

What's her maiden name?

Roscoe, Arlene Roscoe. And her dad was in the FAA. So that's why they happened to be in Kodiak. They had been in all kinds of different places. I think she had been in a place called Tionig which is kind of across Cook Inlet from Anchorage. I know she had been in the village of Uniliklit for a while and then they came to Cordova for a while but this was when she was fairly young and I knew who she was when they came to Cordova but she left there when she was in 7th grade and then they came over to Woody Island. I don't know if you're familiar with Woody Island but it's just off the shore out here and that's where the FAA station was until about 15 years ago and then they moved it out to the base.

FAA stands for Federal....

Federal Aviation Agency. And then her father moved to Anchorage and that's where he finished his career there and retired from the FAA. Well anyway one summer after Arlene graduated she came to Cordova and that's where ~~kind of~~ we kind of hooked up together again. And then she decided to go to Fairbanks and after a year of courtship we got married and spent the last 2 years up there married and Carrie was born in '63 so she was up there our last year up there the last year I graduated. Which was the spring of '65. And like I say we job hunted I'd say I had a half a dozen maybe more than that, maybe a dozen applications in. I applied to Fairbanks, Wasila, Anchorage, the Kenai, Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangel, all of them everywhere every place I could get an application in I put one in we didn't hear and we didn't hear and finally one came from Kodiak and offered me what I wanted and it was a high school job. Of course Arlene was really ready to come back she had a lot of friends there.

Who was the principal who hired you?

Well the Superintendent was [?] Ira Shot. And he was the one who offered me the job. So we packed up things and in fact I had an old Chevy pickup and packed that thing up full

TUSTIMENA

of everything it would carry pulled up everything it would carry and pulled it down to the Homer and got on the Tustimena and made our first trip over here. That would be the fall of '65. The Tustimena was almost a new ship then. I think it had been in service about a year. And back then it was real short and stubby and since then they have really modified it and lengthened it out I think they added 50 feet to it or something like that, they made all kinds of modifications but it wasn't the most seaworthy thing in the world. I shouldn't say seaworthy, but it was not pleasant to ride on back in those days. It sat high in the water and it would roll a lot. But anyway we made the trip over here to Kodiak and been here ever since.

So you started here teaching math?

Yep. Teaching math in Kodiak High and I started in the fall of '65. And back then as I remember the school was back in the general area where the middle school is now. The whole town was torn up on this urban renewal deal. You know that the downtown area was really torn up with the '64 earthquake that downtown area was really devastated.

So you could still see a lot of that the destruction of the earthquake?

Oh yeah. They cleaned most of the building out but there were a lot of empty holes where they were no buildings. So the school was still trying to accommodate those changes. They had a place they called Old Main School and we still had some of our classes in that. Not the high school but the elementary did because I remember Betty Springfield was principal down there. When I came here I think we had about 25 teachers in the high school in that year close to a dozen of them were brand new. 25. Then that was a pretty small school.

So your talking about 300 to 350 student population?

Yeah. Around that. And like I say that out of 25 of those teachers a dozen of them were new teachers. We really had a crop of new people. All about my same age with no experience like I had either. So it was an interesting year.

So there was a major turnover.

A major turnover.

So you say the high school was where the Junior High, well it's called the Middle School now. Where was the Middle School?

The Middle School was all self contained. There was no such thing as a middle school then. All the K through 8 were self contained classrooms. So you had sixth grade classes and eighth grade teacher taught all the subjects to eight grade. There wasn't what you call compartmentalized like it is now.

So they were some where else.

Well they were in the same building but they were up kind of in the area where the sixth grade is now in the middle school.

Maybe you could explain to us now about the student population as far as the number of Caucasians and also the village schools....

Back then, I'm not sure when I first came here if the BIA schools had control of some of the village schools or not.

B I A?

The Bureau of Indian Affairs. You see at one time they had, if memory serves me correct, they ran all of the village schools. It seems to me that when I first came here that some of the school were still under the control of the BIA. And some of them had made the transition where the local school district had taken over the responsibility for taken care of them. I do know that the base school was what they called a state operated school. It was operated by the state of Alaska...

It was Coast Guard..?

Well it was Navy back then it wasn't Coast Guard. So they called it a state operated school. Those teachers didn't work for our system at all. They worked for the state. And I'm sure there were still a few of the village schools who were part of the BIA, but not all of them. And let's see..Jar my memory of what we were trying to talk about.

Well, I know that someone was telling me that when a student would get up to the high school level that they would move into town and they would finish their high school in Kodiak.

Right. There were no high schools out in the villages at all that I remember. A lot of those kids if they were fairly good students they use to take them down to Mount Edgecomb out of Sitka. That was a high school just for natives. So a lot of the kids who were reasonably good students that's where they went to high school at Mount Edgecomb. And then if they had an overflow from there then I think there was a place in Oregon called Chemawa, or something like that. Have you ever heard of that?

I've heard of Chemawa, yeah.

Well I think any overflow use to go down there.

If I'm not mistaken I think that's between Portland and Salem right off I 5.

It might be. I just remember the name. And then of course there were others who had relatives they could live with town I'm sure they would come in from the villages an go to school in town..... But anyway looking back over the annuals it seemed like we had a high percentage of Caucasian and of course the navy base students were going to high school here then. Prior to that, prior to my coming here, I can't remember how many years it was, The navy base had their own high school out there on the base. And it was called that, Kodiak Naval School or something like that. But by the time I got here and several years before they closed that down and the navy kids were all coming into town. And then of course we had a percentage of local native kids that attended too, but not a large percent it didn't seem to me. So the ethnic mix of our school system has changed markedly from that time to the present considerably. It has been in the process of transition, Let's see we went from about 1971 to 1972 when this

regional high school complex was built by the state. They built the current building we're in right now with the exception with the wing that has the gym and library in it. And they built where the school district central office is now that was a dormitory. And where the payroll office is that was a cafeteria. And what they were doing is not only bringing in kids from our villages but from the Aleutian and up on the arctic slope and all that area. We were really servicing a large group, a large area.

Those kids were going to a separate high school?

No. They were coming in and they were in our high school but they were living in the dorm and eating in the cafeteria.

So they were actually separated from their families all that time?

Yeah. It was an ill-fated concept. It simply just did not work. Your talking about kids who are really insecure to begin with and then to bring them in to this environment without their parents without any security without any base at all. It just flopped big time. They had major major social problems in the dormitories. It was just a nightmare anyway you turn it.

This was happening between 1970 and....?

You know without looking at an annual I couldn't be real...probably for a 5 year period or a little longer than that. I don't even know who was responsible for the regional high school concept. It was implemented big time here in this particular area. In the Nome area they had what they called the Nome Belt Area. That was an attempt at regionalization too, but they we're just major flops. Conceptually the kids were just not successful, just couldn't deal with it. We reached a peak of about 750 students that year, the largest the high school has ever been.

What kind of subjects .. I imagine the same kind of subjects were being taught.. Is there any kind of subject that's not being taught today or something that's maybe unique..?

Well as I remember it there hasn't been a lot of changes in the area of math but I can

remember back about the time we had that regional high school concept the English programs and the Social studies programs were involved in this, I think they used the term "phase elective" or something like that. They just had a bundle of classes in each of those. In English you had things like sports literature. I remember a social studies class called, "Identity". A lot of courses that we would consider non traditional.

OK, so that was happening during the 70's.

Yeah. They called it the phase elective program. Probably there were 20 English classes being offered, and maybe 15 different social studies classes being offered.

Was there anything in particular being offered due to the increased population of Native Americans?

I think what we talking about earlier tonight, that Illiwani program. It seems like that was one of the programs made specifically to involve those students. When you look at it now, no, they were pretty much expected to survive in a traditional curriculum. I don't think we made a lot of adjustments for those kids in the curriculum, if you want to be truthful about it. You know a few things, but like I said, I don't think there was much you could do, there were so many social problems ... they just came to school ill prepared to do anything..

There were no classes offered let's say Native Claims Act or nothing like Kayak building....?

Well not classes ^{JE} per say. Now during that same period we had something called the mini semester where we took the month of January and offered special types of classes and some of those things were done in that mini semester.

Can you tell us a little about that?

Well I think this started about 1971 if I remember right. It was an outgrowth because of the situation because a lot of these kids were Russian Orthodox as I remember and were not only spending their regular traditional Christmas Holidays down there but

they were staying through Russian Christmas. So we weren't getting them back here until late January every year and they were missing all those classes up to that point so.. they would go home and stay all that time and I think that the mini semester originally was kind of devised to say that if you're going to spend all that time at home we're not going to hold it against you. We'll end the semester before Christmas break and then you can come back after that and then we'll start the second semester. That was one of the big motivations for it. And then it would originally start as trying to promote leisure type of activities. You know to create interests in students for leisure type activities. There were just a whole host of leisure time things, wood working, wood carving. I taught cross country skiing that whole time.

Did you take people out?

Yeah. Wilderness survival was a major program, really popular one. The skiing one was really popular. And then what they kind of do is divide the.. the day was divided into 4 segments. Like cross country skiing was all day long so you took it all 4 segments, and then some classes were just a half of day each, and then they would have some which were a quarter of day each, like some of the physical education activities. I thought it was a real successful program from the standpoint of teaching and appreciation of lifetime leisure activities and in dealing with kids on a totally different basis than an academic relationship. It was a lot of fun. We really enjoyed it. But in came under a lot of political pressure and I think we ran it for about 3 years and then it just couldn't survive the political pressure.

But the whole point of starting it was the increased Native American Indian population and not getting back here because of the Russian Orthodox celebrations.

If I remember right that would probably be the number one reason. And then the number two was just exposing kids to... trying to create some interests in lifetime leisure activities.

Let's change the subject here a little bit. Was there any kind of work release program where a student could go just a half day..?

I would say that we've always had that in one form or another. At one time I think it was called cooperative Ed or something like that, it has taken on various forms. Now it kind of it's kind of transcended where it's now the EOP program. They farm kids out on job sites and so on. I would say that we all had that in some form or another.

Yeah I think it was called distributive Ed when I....

Distributive Ed? Yeah, it might be. I don't know where I get the word cooperative Ed but they may be a tag that was on it at one time.

I was just trying to see if there was any community involvement.....

We had a lot of community involvement during the mini semester. I mean those people actually came up and taught the classes and the existing teaching staff just supported them. Well I can remember Ken Forester who use to run a pizza place here, he came up and taught cooking. And that's just one I remember. I can remember several community people teaching classes during the mini semester. I'm talking about something that was 20 years ago now. It's hard to remember all the little intrinsiquities ties about it. It was an interesting program. Of course during that time education was going through a real liberal state. We had low graduation requirements. I think we were down to a 18 credit graduation requirement. Of that 18 credits you had a just a very minimal actual required courses and things were awfully flexible. It's tightened up considerably as far a the number of required courses and courses required for graduation tightened up considerably since that time.

I think I remember I read somewhere that they opened up some of the classrooms. The whole concept was to tear down the walls to the classroom and integrate between several classes. Anything like that going on?

Well not so much in the high school, but I know when East Elementary School was first built out here it was built as an open concept classroom. They didn't have the partitions then. I had a daughter in school out there then and it was just a wide open.. Well I don't know too much about it but several classes would be in wide open areas and teachers would be cooperating with one another and ... And then I remember one

time we never had this but I remember going to Ketchikan..I was on a the accrediting team. We accredited them for the Northwest accrediting. They had their English and social studies programs, you could either have the traditional or the open concept they had both. And the open concept was just an open room almost as big as a gymnasium with just clustered areas here and there. Probably 6 classrooms all in the same open area.

This was high school now?

Yes this was high school. But Kodiak never had anything like that. That must have been pretty progressive at the time. What tickled me was that they had one old guy there, he was a teacher and they didn't want him teaching any classes so he was the projectionist for the open classroom. All he did was show movies all day long. He had a little corner with probably about seating capacity of about 20 and they just sent different groups over there and he would show different movies all day long.

I just don't see how that could work.

It was pretty noisy.

I think I have maybe just mentioned this to you in the faculty room as far as.... I'm not sure we want to talk about this, strikes and teacher negotiations....

Well, this is one area where I spent a lot of my career involved in teaching negotiations. I don't know how much detail you want in it. I could give you a lot of detail or very little. We've really only had one really near strike and and that was back in 1976. In fact we did a last ditch negotiation effort one night. We had the entire association waiting here at St. Mary's School while we were up in the central office trying to negotiate a settlement. And had we not settled that night there would have been a strike the next day. This was back in 1976. But we managed to convince them of the error of their ways and and got a settlement and were able to come out and tell the people and avoided it and was able to avoid it thank goodness. Back in those days it wasn't legal or at least the law was unclear about what your status would be concerning the strike. And not that we haven't had negotiations that have been pretty

hairy, because we had many years, but we always managed to get in the final analysis to get things settled and straightened out, and for the most part end up with a good contract.

So just one near strike back in '76.

That was the closest we ever came.

Other than that now real strikes..

A few years ago we.. probably about 4 years ago, maybe longer than that, we were unable to get a settlement through all the different steps you go through. We made some contacts with the labor relations agency about conducting a strike vote but again we finally had a meeting with the board and avoided it, even having a strike vote. So it didn't get as far as it did in '76. And then the last round of negotiations they had here they were able to settle pretty easily. Actually probably one of the easiest settlements we ever had. So it just depends. It just depends a lot on money and it depends a lot on.....

Change the subject here just a little bit. Were there any incidences that happened at the school as far as something that would change the landscape of the school such as a fire flood or something..maybe I'm sort of searching a little on the dark side here....

Golly, the only incident that I could remember of that particular type I think it was the second year I taught here. I had my door open and heard this tremendous bang and I took off to see what was going on and I could tell the general area it was from and I headed down where the shop was and ran into the shop and here is this shop teacher holding this 30^{odd} six that this kid had handed him, this kid had handed the shop teacher the 30^{odd} six straight over like this to the shop teacher had kind of grabbed it and the kid pulled the teacher at the same time and the bullet went up and hit the top of the shop. And they were still frozen there. That was a scary one there. I don't remember any floods, any fires.

No tsunamis, no earthquakes.

We've had earthquake and tsunami warnings but nothing since before I got here in '64.

Any... I think I may have already mention these to you..as far as special visitors..was there ever a governor....

Well I remember in particular growing up in Cordova. Gosh I can remember Ernest Gruening... he was a territorial representative, they didn't have senators, they had territorial representatives. And ole Ernest Gruening. He was a great guy. He use to come through Cordova about once a year and promise us a swimming pool. I can remember the time I was in grade school he said I'll be back here next year to swim with you in the swimming pool.

Did you ever get a swimming pool?

Never in my day. You know we've had politicians come through here I'm just trying to think who they are...Governor Egen has come to Kodiak and talked here well I think he did. Maybe it wasn't Governor Egen..I don't remember Hickel coming here. I don't know about J. Hammond. You know we haven't had a flood of political personalities that have come through here.

Celebrities?

Celebrities? No.

They don't make it to this part of the world.

No. They really don't. We had an astronaut last year. That's as close as we've gotten to a celebrity. And the only reason he was here was that he was promoting that new launch facility out at narrow cape.

Well let's go back to Cordova for a little bit. I think I wanted to talk to you a little about Cordova... the earthquake you were in Cordova..

No. I was in Fairbanks going to school..

So you missed that. So is there anything that you can tell us...I suppose your family was still there.

Oh yeah. We had people down here in Kodiak, we had people in Cordova, and people in Anchorage. There were a couple of days where we didn't hear from them. There was no phone service. We really didn't know what was going on because you saw all the horror stories. You just saw the major downtown area of Anchorage that was destroyed. You saw what was happening in Seward, you heard what was happening in Valdez. As I remember it was a couple of days before we really heard from anybody. We were on pins and needles. We felt we would have heard if there had been any problem, but still you just didn't really know. That was a pretty hairy time. And of course you just wondered about the damage and the lasting damage to those areas. You know you didn't have the television service that you have now, you know there wasn't live TV. If they got anything they made tapes of it and showed them over TV. The only thing you had was radio and at best that was very poor.

Well how did they fair in Cordova?

Well in Cordova my parents faired fine. It was kind of a funny thing because that whole area was uplifted. It just raised the level of..And my dad had told me that during the time that tidal wave went out there, of course they couldn't see it at night, they just know because boats went dry, the entire bay in Cordova just dried up. There wasn't any water in it at all when that tidal wave sucked it out of there. And when it came back in it came back in slowly so it didn't create a tsunami when it came back in.

So boats were just laying around in the.....

Yeah. Well I remember that they said the Coast Guard ship which was the Sedge then it had pulled away from the dock and was headed out of town to give assistance to Valdez I believe, and they went stuck right in the channel. And I'm talking about a channel that has 150 foot of water in it.

And they were just sitting there?

Yeah just stuck out there. But no one could take any pictures because it was dark. It happened during the night time and the water came back before morning and by the time it was daylight it was all stabilized. But there was no real damage in Cordova. Nobody lost houses, no docks were washed out, no lives were lost. It was out on the Sound in the little village of Chinik that I remember for years when I use to go purse seining we use go in there and anchor up for the night and that village per capita lost more people than any other place in Alaska. If I remember right I think 60 people lost their lives there. The tidal wave came up and they were just trying to crawl to high ground and couldn't get there. And I know that about the only thing left standing in Chinik village was the BIA School and the was only because it was way up high. The village houses themselves were wiped out along the water.

When you got to Kodiak it was about a year after the quake so you saw a lot of damage here. Did you feel a different mood... people disaster stricken...

I think they pretty much had gotten over that, they were optimistic about rebuilding they, still had a sound economy and of course they were getting all that urban renewal money so most of these business were able to get urban renewal money and build back and then they just kind of completely redesigned the downtown area. I had only been in Kodiak once prior to that but the downtown area was kind of winding streets. So there is not a whole lot down there that was there prior to the earthquake. The Baranof Museum is in the same place. The KANA building that's right across the ferry terminal use to be the post office when I first got here and I think that was originally there during the earthquake. And that's about it. Other than that the downtown area has been totally rebuilt and redesigned. Just about every single building other than that. You see I wasn't real familiar with Kodiak prior to the earthquake. I had only been over here once and driven through town and gone to out Woody Island and drove back and went to the airport, so I just don't remember that much about it.

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