

**DANIEL SKONBERG  
ON  
CHIGNIK AND KODIAK, ALASKA**

**INTERVIEWED BY  
MARGARET COMMINS**

**ON NOVEMBER 20, 1994  
AT MR. SKONBERG'S APARTMENT  
COMPLETED, NOVEMBER 27, 1994**

**KODIAK COLLEGE  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**MC:** We'll start with the basics. Why don't you tell me your name and where and when you were born?

**DS:** Daniel Skonberg. Chignik, Alaska. First of October, 1922.

**MC:** And you lived in Chignik all your life?

**DS:** Up until 1944, that's when I left there. That's the first time I left Chignik.

**MC:** How big is Chignik, or how big was it when you were growing up there?

**DS:** We had a population of about a hundred.

**MC:** A hundred? That's a pretty small place.

**DS:** It is small. Good people up there, though. I spent my twenty-second birthday coming across the Gulf of Alaska, coming up from Seattle. I left Chignik in September, taking a tender, I was a crew member of the boat. We were taking the old Ivy Nell down. Ivy Nell, that's the name of the boat. We took it to Blaine. And then the skipper, we stopped in Kodiak, that was our first time. That was the first time I seen a tree, was in 1944.

**MC:** There's no trees in Chignik?

**DS:** No. Now they got a few. Transplanted. They planted a few over there.

**MC:** That must have been quite a difference for you.

**DS:** Oh, it was a heck of a ...I 'd never seen a tree in my life before. We were coming down the pass, but we couldn't get into town that night. We had to drop anchor, wait 'til daylight. The Navy had patrol boats out. That was during the war, you see, and they wouldn't allow a boat into town. It was a company tender we were taking down. She was going down there for repairs.

**MC:** So you were working in Chignik then? For a cannery?

**DS:** Yeah, Alaska Packers. APA they called it.

**MC:** How long did you work for them?

**DS:** I worked for APA, 1939 to 1944. I went back in '46 again, after I got out of the Army. Then I worked up there until '48. Then I salmon fished again after that. That was different, I was a trap fisherman. I worked that two years. I was a salmon trap fisherman.

**MC:** Do you want to talk about what that was like, using the fishing traps?

**DS:** Yeah, we had to drive them in, used pilings. In Southeastern Alaska, before I was born, I guess, in the early days, they used the floating traps. But after, they put the stationary trap in, you know. You had to pull the piling and drive them in the spring and pull your pilings in the fall.

**MC:** Could you use them again the next year or did you have to make new ones?

**DS:** Yeah. They could just drag it. One year they couldn't pull one trap, they called it Sands trap. But the barnacles, they thought they could use that trap again, but it washed out during the summer. Got one of them storms and a whale got in there and there was no more trap. That was my first year on the tender and I says, my last year.

**MC:** You only lasted one year?

**DS:** No, I had three years. I get up 4:00 in the morning, skipper come get me out of bed. Just a little monkey boat too, about a 40 footer, 45 footer, something like that. That boat was built in 1902, in San Francisco. And when we came up to do a driver, you never even feel the bump, but it took three planks. You talk about a scared boy, we had to go out that night, too. Put a piece of coal tar, painted it in coal tar and cut out the tarpaulin. We had a canvas patch we nailed on the deck. I says, when I get home, I'm quitting. I'm not coming... I was serious. Get home that night, my old man says, "What time you guys leaving in the morning?" I quit. He says, "You can't quit." I says the heck I can't, I've done it. At 4:00 in the morning there was a bang on the door. Damn skipper, he was a Black Swede, Al Johannsen was his name. He says "We're going." I forgot about that rough night we had coming in. And I know that patch was still on that boat. Pa says, "Get out of bed, God darn you, Tippy. Get up, you've got a job now. Stick with it. " That's all that you could do, was stick with it.

**MC:** So you didn't end up quitting?

**DS:** No, I stuck with it for six and a half months. It was a rough job, you know. I didn't make, just in overtime alone it was 500 dollars I made when I was paid off. That was my overtime wages. It was just the overtime. \$1100, that was a big piece of money that year.

**MC:** Was that your first job?

**DS:** No, my first job was working in the cannery.

**MC:** In Chignik. Was that a year round job?

**DS:** No, summer. It was just summer work.

**MC:** Did you enjoy that?

**DS:** I enjoyed going to school better than I did going to work. I'd get lazy, thinking about

the kids playing and I'd have to be in working. That wasn't fun.

**MC:** How long did you stay there?

**DS:** In '39, that was my first job I had working, to make my own living. One year. And the next year, I'm in the beach gang. That's a crew that cleaned up beaches, and roustabout, around the cannery.

**MC:** So when you left Chignik, did you go back to live, after the Army?

**DS:** Yeah. I went back there, I got back, let's see, fall of '46. Then I left in '47, that's when I got in this accident. I went back in '48. Seattle, I was in Seattle in '49. I went back there and I didn't come back to Kodiak until '81. Just travelling through. I didn't come back here until '81.

**MC:** Do you want to talk about your accident? Mindy said it was a good story.

**DS:** I'll tell ya, my sister was getting married. And they come on the boat, they called the Spencer. Home port was Decatur. The Spencer of Decatur. My sister was getting married and we left Chignik on the 27th of December, I guess it was. They wanted to get married on the New Year's. But we didn't make it New Year's, we hit the rocks on New Year's Eve, 1948.

**MC:** Where were you headed? Where was your sister getting married?

**DS:** Kodiak. We were anchored up, we left that night, it was midnight. Axel Carlson was the skipper. My oldest brother says if our engineer don't show up, I'll go. I was wishing he wouldn't, but Jack showed up. Jack Yastrikov, the chief engineer on the boat.

**MC:** What kind of boat were you taking?

**DS:** A 72 footer. Used to be an old cannery tender or a trade boat down in Southeastern. The Navy had her during the war. It was on air patrol moves. It was the YP72, I think, something like that, what her number was, when the Navy had her. Then after the war was over, some company bought the boat and Rudolph Parson got to buy it. Then it was the Spencer. It was an old boat, but a good solid boat. It only had 4 inch plankings in it. It was built out of a 4-by-4, like you could see the plankings on some of that boat. On this trip, I said, Ah, I've got nothing else to do. My brother says, "You want to come along with us?" Nothing else to do. We headed out and thought, "Boy, what a time we're going to have when we get over there." We had our ice skates with us, we never got to use them. But it was hard that time. The weather stations wasn't like they are now. They come down and says there's supposed to be a northeaster coming up, but instead of a northeaster, it was a heck of a big northwester come up. Oh we got out and we start spraying. Skipper says, "Hey, we going back to Kanatak Bay." That's just outside of Cape Kanatak. That's why I'm superstitious now. I've always been since I been on the boat that time. Never whistle behind the wheel.

**MC:** That's a superstition? I've never heard that one.

**DS:** Yeah, never whistle behind the wheel when you're steering. And I was teasing my brother Andrew. I started whistling Yankee Doodle. Well, he punched me. We were on wheel watch together, see. I was just teasing him. Trying to whistle, I can't whistle much. He punched me in the arm. I'd keep teasing him, you know. The skipper was out on the bridge and there come a snow so you couldn't see nothing. You couldn't see the bow of the boat. We were doing fine and the next thing, we were on the rocks. But it was luck should have it, the good Lord was with us, we hit at high tide. The propeller looked like a god darn four leaf clover, the way the blades were turned over. That was a 75 horse Atlas that they had for power. Can you imagine what that was when they hit the rocks? It stopped, killed the engine. We were trying to back down, but there was no way. The skipper actually called the Coast Guard. The Navy was in town. The Ketchikan Coast Guard picked up the message, the SOS, the mayday that he give out. So we knew we were going to be safe, but we had to get off that boat before the next tide. There was nothing but a 50 foot bluff. And there was a waterfall, we had to climb that, on the side, in amongst that ice. Jack Yastrikov, the chief engineer, he got the job to climb up. And he made it and he tied, he says, "Ahh, we got a big boulder up here." Climbed around that, tied his lines on, that's what we used to get up. But actually, he had Momma and a little nephew of mine was Calvin. He climbed up that damn waterfall, we all had to go. But Jack was the smart one. He had his dry boots and socks with him. We left everything behind, we got off the boat. Take what groceries we could.

**MC:** Did you have to hurry to get off the boat?

**DS:** Well the hurriest part was to get to the god damn place to climb, where we could get up to safety, above high water mark. We had to pack our groceries and everything was frozen. We laid out there for 5 days, it was 5 below zero. We had nothing to sleep on but blankets. There was only the waterfall trickling by there. It was about a four foot drop where we laid underneath. And the wind blew over us, but you had that snow drift coming back. It was no picnic.

**MC:** If the Ketchikan Coast Guard had heard your SOS, why did it take so long to get to you? Could they not find you?

**DS:** The weather was so bad. The 90 foot Navy tug, the Matacaw, a sea going tug, she was over here, and the Coast Guard, they had to turn around because they were icing up so bad they couldn't make it through Shelikof.

**MC:** They knew you were there, but they just couldn't get to you? It's amazing that you survived.

**DS:** No lives lost.

**MC:** How many people were on the boat?

**DS:** I think there was ten of us. My four brothers, that's four, My sister and Mom, that's 10, my cousin'd be eleven, there was 12 of us on the boat.

**MC:** And everyone survived for five days in freezing weather? That's pretty amazing.

**DS:** Three of my brothers lost both feet. My cousin, he lost two of his. The chief engineer, no, the skipper, he lost half of his left foot . I lost my right foot and half of my left. The engineer, he made out, and my little nephew. They made out. Momma and Alma, my sister, they didn't have a frozen mark on them.

**MC:** Why was that?

**DS:** We surrounded them. We laid, our only shelter was to break the canvas, the hatch cover, the tarpaulin, we used that for a shelter. We laid it down and covered us, to hold the wind, to keep warm. We hid them in the middle.

**MC:** Did you think you would never be rescued? Five days is a long time.

**DS:** No, My mother's an Orthodox. One night I know she went out of her head. She started singing these old Orthodox church songs. Her hair froze to the tarp--that scared the heck out of her.

**MC:** What an experience.

**DS:** Too much of an experience. Well, I'll tell you myself, I wouldn't want to do it again.

**MC:** It's nothing I'd ever want to experience first hand. When they finally rescued you, where did they take you, to Anchorage?

**DS:** No, we come to Kodiak here. We had to walk a mile, from where the boat landed from where we were. It busted the veins in my foots. We had to walk frozen, they were frozen. I didn't feel it. They dropped down some brandy. My brother Bill, there was only two of us in the crew that drank. It was about knee-deep in snow.

**MC:** So where was this that you had landed? Where was it that you were waiting? That was in that bay?

**DS:** Cape Kanatak.

**MC:** Have you ever gone back there?

**DS:** Oh, yeah. We never seen nothing of the boat. It was the last thing we seen of her, was the day the sun was shining and all you could see when the tide was out was just the engine laying there. There was nothing left of the hull. Kind of rugged... no time of the year, but we were fortunate, we didn't lose no lives. All to the cool-headed skipper we had. Axel

Carlson.

MC: So the first time you spent in Kodiak, was that here in the hospital then?

DS: Yeah, we were there nine weeks, down in the old Griffin Memorial building. One doctor. One good sister, that was his right arm. Sister Mary, they called her. And the Navy doctors come in. He says he could do it. They take two a day. Old Doctor Holmes Johnson. Then he started two a day. My brother, Bill, and Andrew I guess it was, took one in the morning and one in the afternoon. And that's hard for one doctor, two surgeries like that. Then Art and me, we had to go back twice, cuz he was going to do one a day, but that was too much for him, he had to get it over with. But he didn't need Navy assistance. 'Fraid he was loose in one ear, or something. But, there was about 7,000 people living in Kodiak then, you know, besides the babies he had to be delivering.

MC: He was the only doctor?

DS: The only doctor in town, yeah.

MC: That's a lot of people for one person to take care of.

DS: Too much. Operation and amputation, that's a heck of a lot for one man to do. He was a good doctor. He was a medical, he was a surgeon-- anything, he could do it. His son, Dr. Bob Johnson, he come in, that was the only help he had, after Bob come in. Now look at all the doctors they got in town.

MC: Yeah, and there's not that many more people here now.

DS: Unh-unh. The Navy, there was a woman while we were in there, she had trouble in childbirth. And they wouldn't fly her to Anchorage, it was too late. Into Dr. Johnson. There was people there in cots they had put up in the hallway. You've been in there. I'll tell you now, cuz the wards were all full. That's really something, it's a shame they didn't name that hospital out there. Instead of Kodiak, it should've been Doctor Johnson.

MC: Well, at least he got the library. So what did you do when you got out of the hospital?

DS: Then I went salmon fishing.

MC: Where was that?

DS: Chignik.

MC: Was that on a boat or with the traps again?

DS: It was on the boat.

**MC:** You were able to salmon fish minus your ...

**DS:** On a 26 foot boat. It was small. It was just a big skiff with a cabin on it. I went one year on the boat. I went salmon fishing after it, on different boats. I fished four years with Axel Carlson, the skipper from the boat.

**MC:** The same skipper that was in the accident? You fished with him after the accident?

**DS:** Yeah. It was four years, could've been longer. Then I fished with my other brother-in-law, Iver Malutin. I've been fishing ever since. The last year I worked, drew wages, I was a cook.

**MC:** Where was that? On a boat?

**DS:** A power barge. I couldn't get a job. My old legs bothering me so god damn much. My younger brother, Roy, he got me a job as a cook on a power barge.

**MC:** On a power barge? What is that?

**DS:** It's a big scow. You've seen the Rosemary, you've seen all them others. You don't hang around the water front much, now do you?

**MC:** Not that much. The Rosemary's a boat? It's a power barge? What is the purpose of a power barge?

**DS:** It was one of these old Army freighters, built, you know. Put them on the beach. They only had about eight inch planks in them. They could take a pounding. Now they bought them up for tenders. Bought them after the war was over. Some used them for freighters afterwards, some were used for tenders, leased them out to the canneries. It was everything. It was better than... one family made a home on it. They went to Bristol Bay every year, then back to Seattle.

**MC:** So the Army used them, then sold them off to people?

**DS:** Yeah, they sold them cheap. I was the cook. I was going to go back the second year and then the boat was sold. I thought what the heck. I got on a smaller boat again, I didn't like myself. I says I'm going to retire. Well it wasn't my own idea. It was my younger brother that got me a cook's job, on the Beluga. My other brother, he says, "You better quit work. What the heck. You can't get a job salmon fishing no more." I tell him no, I'm not old enough to retire. He says, "You keep working you'll be too old to retire. Get that money while you got it coming to you. The first thing, you'll be dead. Social Security will..." Kind of scared me, so I says, I'm retiring.

**MC:** He scared you into retiring.

**DS:** I come over here in '88. I done my share of working. I come over here to spend a summer. And my kid sister says, "You're not going back home." And she come down and got me this apartment I got now. I've been staying here now since '88.

**MC:** It's quite a bit different from Chignik.

**DS:** Oh yeah, I don't have to worry anymore.

**MC:** Where were you during the war?

**DS:** Fort Richardson.

**MC:** In Anchorage? What did you do there?

**DS:** Broom pusher for the generals. I worked for the generals, all the big brass. Headquarters. I was in Chignik when they bombed Dutch Harbor.

**MC:** Do you remember that?

**DS:** We had to run our boats blackout. Couldn't use the lights.

**MC:** Were you fishing then?

**DS:** I was tendering.

**MC:** You couldn't have lights at all? You had to have all the lights off, do everything in the dark?

**DS:** Yeah, it was hard work, you know. Because if you had lights, it could be a spot for the Japs. We almost beached the boat one night.

**MC:** Because you didn't have lights?

**DS:** No, a guy spotted a light on us. We were coming out with a load of fish from Chignik Lagoon. They spotted a spotlight on us, a flashlight. Well, the skipper, he turned that son of a .. off right and the god damn boat followed us, just the way we were going. " That's got to be them," he says. We were trying to get out of their range of fire.

**MC:** So, he thought it was the Japanese?

**DS:** Yes, he thought it was the Japanese, and we thought it was too. I was scared. Lucky I didn't have a heart attack. One guy says, "How much fish?" Oh, man did that old Swede bust out. He cussed out the man. I don't think we were as far as that building there, off what we called Jim Albert's reef when we turned and headed out to deep water. Nobody's supposed to use the lights, you know. And when that spotlight come on you, that's how you

know it was the Japanese.

**MC:** Who was it that was shining the light?

**DS:** One of Jack Yastrikov's tech men. He turned the light on. That was no fun. He was drawing about three feet, we were drawing seven feet on the boat I was on. That's no fun.

**MC:** That'll put a scare in you. Why was your father living in Chignik?

**DS:** He got tired of deep sea life. He was a deep sea fisherman, came from Sweden. When he was 15 years old, his old man kicked him out. And the first thing he figured he had to do was go to sea. That's the only thing he had to do. He went to sea, he was 6 years. It was two trips to Australia, he made a trip around the world, then back to New York, Brooklyn. Then he had to make a trip again, there was never yet the canal. They sailed all around Cape Horn. Then they come on the west coast. He liked it on the west coast. Then it was Hawaii. They were taking lumber back and forth. Well, he missed his ship. They were leaving. He was broke. He was living with a family in San Francisco. They passed the god damn golden gate bridge. They were going out and the ship he was supposed to be on was coming in. They were heading up to Alaska, for cod fishing. He's traveled all over the country and he says there's nothing that would ever take him out of here.

**MC:** Your mother was living in Chignik, or how did he meet her?

**DS:** She was a tot at the time. She was only about 8 years old then. He come up here in 1908 and my mother wasn't born until 1909. Then he went back to Shumagin Islands. That was going to be his home. He went back there and I guess he got in a little trouble, fooling around with another man's wife. When the boat got to Chignik, he said, "God damn, there's no marshals there." That's the way he went and made his home.

**MC:** I wanted to ask you, how do you think Alaska's changed in your life?

**DS:** I'll tell you one thing, I didn't like to see the traps go out.

**MC:** You didn't like them to be illegal, you mean? The salmon traps?

**DS:** I was a trap fisherman and that was a big change when they took them out, because I always had a job every summer. I didn't have to worry. That was a straight...we had a wage. A monthly wage. You knew the exact, what you could spend during the summer, and what it was going to cost you in winter. You were stable. And now with the salmon fishing, you don't know what you're going to make. That was one thing I didn't like, when they took the salmon traps out.

**MC:** And that was state wide.

**DS:** There's only one village in Alaska that holds salmon traps and that's Metlakatla.

**MC:** You mean after they were illegal? How did that happen?

**DS:** Well, that's something I'd like to know. They're on the reservation. I think it's the only reservation in Alaska. And the only place in Alaska where they can have the salmon traps.

**MC:** And they still do that now? Is that because they're Natives, is it subsistence?

**DS:** Indians. What do they call them, not a Tlingit... Athabaskan? No.

**MC:** I should know all these... what part of Alaska is that in?

**DS:** Southeastern.

**MC :** There's Tsimshian...

**DS:** Yeah! That's it.

**MC:** How do you feel about Natives? Are there Natives in Chignik?

**DS:** Chignik is a salad. You'll find everything now. You'll find Filipinos... It's kind of a mixed breed. But the Native people, they moved to what they called Chignik Lake. And they got Chignik Lagoon. Like my tribe, it's a mixed one. Chignik lays in 3 parts.

**MC:** Segregated you mean? Three different groups of people?

**DS:** That's the way they mixed. The people from the bay, they get along good. You go from the bay, you go to the lagoon, they see you, you're not one of theirs. But you take the bay and go to the lake, they'll say, "Oh, we're like you." They take the lake and they go down to the bay, we're a group. That middle group in the lagoon, just by themselves. It's a funny way.

**MC:** So you grew up in an area with a lot of different kinds of people? That's pretty interesting because it's so small. There were so few people there, but there were so many different kinds.

**DS:** Well, in the summertime, Chignik's a big place. They got a couple thousand people and there were two canneries working. But in the wintertime, it's about maybe 50, 60.

**MC:** What do people do there in the winter?

**DS:** Teach school, boat.

**MC:** What was your school like, when you went to school?

**DS:** I went to school in the summer.

**MC:** Why did you go in the summer, isn't that when you'd be working, or was that when you were too little to work?

**DS:** I was too small to work, and to keep mischiefs out of the canneries

**MC:** So what did you do in the winter?

**DS:** Trap. We lived out in the country. All we needed to live was spuds, beans, macaroni, ammunition, you know.

**MC:** What was school like in the summer? How many kids were in the school?

**DS:** Well, we had to have two schools. One school was factory. That's why it got so big in the summer time, because there was nothing to do in the winter time for the older people, lay home and make babies.

**MC:** Did you have just one teacher?

**DS:** No, we had two teachers.

**MC:** Did you have kids of different ages together?

**DS:** We had from the 1st to the 4th grade, then from the 5th to the 8th grade, two different classes. When they pushed me from the 4th grade, 'oh, you talk about a teacher, she was a pretty woman. I didn't want to get out of that god damn grade.

**MC:** Did she have a family there, or did she just come out to teach?

**DS:** She came out in the summers to teach. The old one, I never liked her. The first thing I went to school, she give me a spanking.

**MC:** What did you do?

**DS:** Peed on the floor. Yeah, I did. I wanted to go. "You sit down, " she says. If I'd wet myself, Momma would've spanked me when I got home, so ... The damn clown , I peed right up there. She give me a spanking. It didn't bother me. Last year I went to school was for the same damn teacher. What the hell made me do it.? But she would't let me go, so I peed on the floor. Cuz I'd get a spanking anyway when I got home.

**MC:** So that was your first day of school? You were a trouble maker in school, huh?

**DS:** She didn't like me. I went to school, let's see, since I was 7 years old. I went to three different teachers, but the last two years in school, she was back there again, but she never

treated me just--not nice. I liked that young one. That's how I got to move classes, because I worked for her. And the others, they just gave me no credit for nothing. That's funny how it is. She was a good teacher, I learned, I was interested. But that old teacher, Richardson, my first teacher was my last teacher. She used to slap the hell out of me. Oh, she'd slap me across the face and make my ears look like Mickey Mouse. Six hours at the blackboard.

**MC:** For punishment? What kind of things did you do that would get you in trouble?

**DS:** She got mad and she called me a pig, so I called her a cow. I'll never forget that. It was a thousand times I had to write her, "I'll never call you a cow again." Up on the greenboard, it was a blackboard then, now they got those greenboards. "I'll never call you a cow. I'm sorry" Wipe it off and write again. That was tiresome. That'll get anybody--repeat and repeat.

**MC:** I bet you never called her a cow again, did you?

**DS:** Unh-unh! I never called no girl a cow again.

**MC:** So you learned your lesson.

**DS:** Yeah, but I don't know why it had to be me. I didn't mind when she called me a pig, that didn't bother me. I called her a cow. She tried to make fun of the way I talk. I talk the way I talk.

**MC:** What year was that? What grade were you in then?

**DS:** That was 1938. 6th grade. I never passed the 8th grade. I should've been smart and gone to high school.

**MC:** Did they have high school? Could you have gone to high school?

**DS:** In Chignik? Not when I went to school. It was only 8th grade.

**MC:** Did the teachers live there in the winters, too, or did they just come there for the summers?

**DS:** Just for the summer. They was summer teachers. But it must've been a miserable time. They went to teach somewhere else for the winters, you know. The wages was down then. They were only getting about 120, 200 dollars a month. They'd spend all that time with miserable clowns.

**MC:** Teachers are supposed to get the summers off.

**DS:** At that time, the canneries, the companies paid, in the territory, to keep the kids out of the canneries, from getting hurt.

**MC:** Were people required to go to school?

**DS:** It was compulsory. I got behind in my grades. We were living in Chignik Lagoon. And we were over eight miles from the god damn school district. Four miles across the lagoon. And they couldn't get there every day. The best they could do was go to the bay.

**MC:** To a different school?

**DS:** Yeah, two different areas. Now the lakes, they got their own school out there. And you got 2 schools down in the bay.

**MC:** Do they still go to school in the summer there?

**DS:** No. All the teachers want to go fishing in the summer time. The kids...if you don't belong to a family, it's hard to get a job back there now. If you're a family, your family owns the boat, well it's a family affair. It's hard to get in on some of them.

**MC:** So, a lot of the families that were there when you were there are still living there and passing the boats on to their children?

**DS:** Just about all of them.

**MC:** What was there in Chignik when you were growing up? Did they have stores?

**DS:** Oh, yeah. When I was growing up in Chignik, we never had a theater. Now they don't need one. They took it out. TV took over. You got telephones. I'll tell ya I'm... I can remember hearing my first radio. I thought I was being crazy. Looking at something and a god damn voice coming out of it. I come to Kodiak in '48. We didn't have a TV set. You didn't have telephones where you could call anybody you wanted. If they wanted to talk to you, they had to come up the hill. It's been a lot of changes in the last 30,40 years.

**MC:** So Chignik now has all the conveniences of any other place.

**DS:** Yeah, they got everything. Which we didn't have before.

**MC:** That's good in a way, but it's kind of too bad in one way. All places end up the same.

**DS:** It made me cry, the last time I was home. It hurt. Where I was raised, it was no business for that house to fall down. That guy cut that roof off. The snow fell on the walls. That's a cryer.

**MC:** Why did that happen?

**DS:** That's when this Native thing-- they wanted that land, see. The house is gone, it's

demolished now. I don't got nothing to say about it. That land they wanted, you know? And I was raised on that land. I had an old tobacco cutter, not my own, my dad's. I went out there, I says, give me your flashlight. He says, "What you want a flashlight for?" I says, I'm going to go look for the old man's tobacco cutter.

**MC:** This was when you went back?

**DS:** Yeah. No tobacco cutter, no roof. I didn't need a flashlight. The whole god damn thing was cut off. You know it wasn't blown off, because the wind ain't going to cut 2-by-6, or 2-by-4's. I wouldn't mind, but they didn't tell me. It was a cryer.

**MC:** It's like your childhood had been erased.

**DS:** Something like that. But people do that. They want it.

**MC:** When was it that you went back there?

**DS:** This is '94 now, so it was '92.

**MC:** That was the last time you were back there?

**DS:** On the shore, yeah. I was back there last summer, I didn't get out, though. It hurt too much. I was supposed to get some pictures, you know. I never did get one.

**MC:** That's kind of sad, how you try to go back to where you grew up and it's so different.

**DS:** It is, you know. My mom was always superstitious. She was scared. We lived in an old haunted house. I don't know how old that house was. It was nice in the day time, but at nighttime, you could hear the pie pans rattling in the kitchen, or the pantry.

**MC:** Were you the first family to live there?

**DS:** There was a few families before.

**MC:** So it was a ghost from the other families?

**DS:** It must've been. That's why I say I'm superstitious. It was a creepy place. When they say don't believe a place is haunted, you know damn well it is. That's why I never liked living in an old house. Our haunted house in Chignik was not an old one, but it was built out of old material. Once the spook gets in it he stays there. Three weeks before I moved in this place, the guy that lived here died. I'm an Orthodox. Father John come up, Father Innocent, they blessed the room. They blessed the place.

**MC:** Before you moved in. So you haven't had any problems. Did you have a church in Chignik?

**DS:** It fell down. It blew down. The chapel there was not an Orthodox church.

**MC:** When you were growing up was there a church there? A lot of people that live there, are they Orthodox?

**DS:** That's what Chignik was, was Orthodox. That's what my dad, my mom, they were all Orthodox. We had an Orthodox church. I was baptized. I'm an Orthodox.

**MC:** You said you had a mission in Chignik?

**DS:** Yeah we used to have a, what do you call it, a non-denominational. At that time, our Orthodox, we had no priest to come in. We didn't have no Orthodox priest. My old man, he would come over and spend every Sunday afternoon, about two hours, at the non-denominational. He didn't have nothing against religion, he was a religious man. I think he was a Lutheran. I don't know what church he really belonged to. It's hard to say. Himself, I don't think he had a church.

**MC:** Did you go to church every weekend, every Saturday or Sunday?

**DS:** Every Sunday was a ... at the Sunday mission. But the Orthodox, it was but once or twice a year.

**MC:** Did some priest come by then?

**DS:** That was about the only time he'd come by, was once or twice a year. We would take our communion.

**MC:** What kind of things did you do for fun when you were growing up?

**DS:** We had so much fun in the house, I can never explain. We'd do this and that, you know. I learned to play cribbage when I was a small boy. Joined the party of my three older brothers, we played cribbage, we played pinochle, whist. I was too old to play with the little ones. I tell you, that was fun. You'd be surprised, you didn't know anything else but to play cards. If we had no minks, no foxes to clean, dad'd come home, mom would have a meal laid out for us. We'd always be eating. 8:00, the little guys, I could never understand that, put 'em to bed and get up at five, six o'clock in the morning. The lamps had to be lit. What you going to do all day but go out and play? We'd get out of bed and play. Momma gets up, sourdough hotcakes, that was our breakfast. And we always had baked beans. You could go 7,8 hours walking. Leave, then come back. It'd be dark. And they always had a pot roast, a duck or a ptarmigan, or a caribou steak. And our baked beans. That was the main diet in Chignik, baked beans. You eat a good breakfast when you're out in that country. You can go the whole god damn day. We'd have a change sometimes, from caribou steak for breakfast and sourdough hotcakes, but beans was always...

**MC:** Would you get a big supply of beans to take you through the winter?

**DS:** 200 pounds of beans. Brown beans or lima beans. 100 pounds of limas. 100 pounds of peas, yellow. You've seen them little packages, we got them in big gunny sacks, 100 lbs.

**MC:** And you would store that for the winter and use it all up by the springtime?

**DS:** It'd be all gone by springtime. And the family, we'd take ten sacks of spuds, that's a hundred pounds. In January we'd be short of spuds. Onions was nothing. You'd end up surviving with beans.

**MC:** Did you feel the depression in Chignik?

**DS:** At that time, we didn't. But now, I guess you can feel the prices, the way they're up.

**MC:** But when the rest of the country was going through the depression you didn't notice it much up there?

**DS:** Unh-unh. We had our own supply. I think we had a hundred... 10 to 15 sacks of flour, 100 pounds of flour, that was for breadmaking. It would carry us through that time you see, so when the price was raised, we didn't notice too much.

**MC:** Did you grow things in Chignik or did you have to import them?

**DS:** They all had to be shipped in.

**MC:** The prices didn't go up?

**DS:** It was all stored. We had no time. When we should've been planting gardens, we were going to school.

**MC:** Did you have news about what the rest of the country was going through, about food shortages and people out of work?

**DS:** No, no radio. That was the good life, you know? You never know from day to day.

**MC:** So you didn't feel anything at all? People continued working, fishing?

**DS:** Yeah. Nothing bothered you, nothing worried, because there was no outside news. We were just a lost country.

**MC:** Was there ever any time when you didn't have enough supplies?

**DS:** We always survived through the winter. The only thing I missed was medical. That's how I lost one of my little sisters. She died of pneumonia and there was nothing we could do.

Now, the doctors could come in, or you flew to a medical center, like in Anchorage, or Kodiak. There's been a lot of changes. I sure liked it the way it was then.

MC: I guess some good changes and some not so good changes have happened.

DS: I think the biggest part, if they'd had the medical, there'd be a lot of lives saved.

MC: Do you think that Kodiak has changed a lot since you've known it?

DS: Yeah, since I first come here. You know them trailer courts, back on Mill Bay? That was all timber then. The beachcomber, that was a nice big lodge they had out there, log cabin.

MC: Was that considered out of town?

DS: That WAS out of town.

MC: So where did the city limits end?

DS: The Momart--remember the old Momart, where the Little Bar is now, that was city limits. That was a tavern and a lodge.

MC: And that was city limits? Was that as far as the road went?

DS: It was a narrow road, a horse path.

MC: Were there always a lot of bars in town?

DS: Well I'll tell you, I didn't move here 'til 1988. But when I come here in 1964, there was a lot of bars then. But some of them are gone now. The Mecca's gone, the Ships, the Unique Bar. There's about 6 or 7 bars that closed, to what there was when I first come to Kodiak.

MC: I think a lot of the liquor licenses are being bought by liquor stores. Maybe people are drinking at home more.

DS: I think that's what it is. It's cheaper to drink at home. Before, when I first come, you could go and you could get a hundred dollars from a bar tender. He'd dig in his pocket, or you could borrow a hundred dollars off the bar. Now they won't give you a dollar. They won't buy you a drink. But, you can't blame them. Too many people coming and going, and the more they can get, the more they'll want.

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