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Margaret and Olaus Murie Interview, No Date, Location Unknown, Harrie Hughes Interviewing

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Mrs. Margaret Thomas Murie came to Alaska in 1911. Her husband is Dr. Olaus Murie of Moose, Wyoming. He came to Alaska in 1920 and he worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mrs. Murie begins to speak. She says they came to Alaska in the fall of 1911. She was a small girl. She realizes a small girl can see and hear quite a bit. They went to Dawson and caught the last boat down river from Dawson to the Tanana. The whole trip took 2 weeks from Dawson to Fairbanks. That fall was a beautiful one. They went on a horse and buggy trip with the McCauley's out to the Tanana. A whole group of women went for a picnic on the 29th September. They lived in a little four room log cabin on 8th and Bonnefield. It was the last cabin, on the last street in Fairbanks at that time. The street ended in an oat field that belonged to Mr. Tinkerton. She remembers that winter going to school at 8:30 in the morning and coming back in darkness at 3 o'clock. It was never pitch black though because of the snow, moon, and stars. She remembers how straight the smoke stood up when it was really cold. She remembers how crunchy the footsteps sounded on the wooden sidewalks. The woman who came to Fairbanks made a special effort to create a little world like the little world they had left in the States and perhaps made an extra effort to make a little more formality. She was interested in seeing the four names of the ladies who came to call on her mother that afternoon. The Arctic Brotherhood had very formal house parties. The next date in the Fairbanks News Miner had descriptions of all the gowns that all the ladies wore. Her stepfather Mr. Gillette used to read the descriptions out loud and laugh at all the ladies who wore Crepe de Chine dresses.

The first outstanding event was the news of the Alaskan Railroad bill that passed Congress. Mother and Margaret were alone in the little house and they heard the 6 o'clock and the fire whistle and the Alaska laundry whistle. The telephone rang and it was dad saying that the railroad bill had passed. There was a parade. Someone found a coal scuttle and was the feature of the parade because it meant there was going to be an opening of the coal mine. People thought that would be a great deal to Alaska. She remembers even then being isolated and far away from everyone else. They were more independent and more relationships.

Another wonderful thing for the school children was the arrival once a week, Bobby Sheldon knows more about this she said, of the six horse mail sleigh from Valdez. This was the only communication from the outside world. There was mail, eggs, and oranges on the sleigh. There was one driver (Harrie Martin), he was a very dashing character. The day that he was driving they'd rush to the corner of Eighth and Cushman and they'd hear the sleigh bells.

Spring came and where they lived on Eighth Avenue and Bonnefield her father built a picket fence. The two by four behind the picket was a good day to stand and watch to see who would see the first of the steamers. They had bulletins posted on the office saying steamer down from Dawson at 8 am and they would watch the progress of the steamer and that's how they knew when it'd be here. The child to first see the steamer was a hero/heroine. The whole town was down there to see the first boat. Everyone was happy except the people who saw Waterfront Brown standing there. Waterfront Brown was a bill collector and he was always on the waterfront to greet the returning boats. Sometimes you'd see people getting escorted by Waterfront Brown. Later on when there were the first few tourists, the Pioneer Women or Women's Civic Club used to gather bouquets from their gardens because there were bouquets put into the hotel rooms for all the visitors. One of the first buildings that they stayed was the old Shaw House. Mrs. Shaw served wonderful meals and it was custom for leading families to go to the Shaw house for Sunday Dinner. Later on there were tennis built at First Avenue and Wickersham. That was some of the occupations of summer evenings. As spring advanced there were picnics at River Bar because that was the only place you'd have relief from the mosquitos. There was a lot of just plain visiting that doesn't go on anymore because people are all on wheels.

It was a custom to spend the day at a neighbor's house. Berry picking was very important. In the spring of 1918, May 4th at midnight she left home to go away on her first adventure. That was the last trip of the old NC stage line over the trail. The breakup was coming and the NC Company was going out of business because the government railroad was going to be built. That trip was a long story. They had to travel at night and pass five rivers before they had to stop. It took 9 days to get to Chitina. This evening in the News Miner she heard about a Yukon marathon where they are going to circle from Yukon to the Tanana, down to the Chena in 24 hours. She wants to mention she likes to think of the simple elements that made up our lives in those days. In a way people were proud to be far away and making their own lives. And to learn with their land and the gifts it had to give of freedom, sun, air, wildlife, and the mighty forces of nature. The cold and the dark of the winter and the bugs in the summer and dangerous rivers. It was all Alaska and anyone who ever knows Alaska never quite gets Alaska out of their system.

Dr. Olaus Murie will now speak. He says after all of that to this reminiscing society. History is a very important thing. If we look at history intelligently we have an opportunity to improve mistakes we've made and also hang on to the good things of the old days. When he was in the hospital a while ago he read a book called "The Uses of the Past" (Herbert J. Muller) and he often follows that. The first time he came to Alaska was in 1920. The old biological surveyor EW Nelson who had been in Alaska was chief. He'd been in Alaska from 1877-81. He'd been down to the Bering Sea area and he was chief. He wanted someone to come up to Alaska to study the caribou. He was just out of college and he just wanted to go around the country. In the years that followed 1920 in the winter time they'd travel with dog team. In the summer you'd just walk. He walked in the summer between here and Circle. He packed the dogs. In the winter dog he used a dog team. All of his territory was all interior and northern Alaska. He covered a great deal of that with dog team. Olaus and his brother (Adolph) had 50-60-70 below 0 for a short time. There was no traveling. They stayed in a tent. He said they didn't think too much of it. There were good days too. 20 degrees below 0 was good hiking weather. They had a rule that if we could hear our breath, they knew it was 50 or below because they heard the old tales of being out in the

cold weather. If they didn't hear the hissing they traveled. He came off of one trip during the spring and he had young dogs. The dogs were young who liked to play. He had them tied up in the yard. One evening he took them out for a little run for exercise. The little child was just toddling along she saw the dogs and got scared and started to run. The dogs went after her and they were still playful but they put their paws up on her and she fell down. They chewed on her head (just to play, according to Dr. Murie) and tore her scalp and he got down there as fast as he could. He went down and paid the doctor bill. The people in Fairbanks were all sured up after that. The people in the community here were on two sides of that. The dog people thought they were alright. Waterfront Brown came down and he had a pistol and he said I'll take care of those dogs. Dr. Murie said he'll take care of them himself. The dog that had done the damage to the girl, Jesse Rust took him down to that river and he got rid of that black dog.

Olaus arrived in 1920 and that fall he remembers he went up the Nenana River to the one fork in the Nenana and he wanted some mountain sheep. He didn't know much about the country but there was a man from the Department of the Interior. The man from the Department of the Interior used the 14 laws of some kind. He and some former jailbird, a fella who committed murder who was loose, and those two chose two decided to go up to Mount sheep and he decided to go along. He was so excited for the first Alaska mountain sheep he'd seen. They both claimed they had to break camp because they had a cold. They were scared of each other because they both had guns. He was disappointed because he had to go back and he was just getting interested in the country. Down at Nenana at Healy coal mines he met a fella they named Hobo Bill (many people seem aware of Hobo Bill). He was on his way back to Fairbanks and Hobo Bill told him that he found some Grizzly Bear hibernation spots. Hobo Bill picked up some dogs and they went up there. They met a man at Morris Creek and he was hunting mountain sheep and selling those sheep to Redwood camps. He had the sheep hidden but he was selling them to government camps. He went out with Hobo Bill and there was a conical hill and he saw a sheep and he took a long shot and hit that sheep. The sheep man wondered if he would go out there and shoot sheep for him. He was fur warden because they didn't have anyone up there. He got a colt .45 and he didn't know how to use it. He left it in this cache here and Hobo Bill stole it. Those are some of the things that Dr. Murie was up against.

He remembers when the park was first established [Mt. McKinley] and they still had the hands of steel the camps were approaching each other. The chief wanted to capture some caribou to cross with some reindeer. Dr. Murie recommended Stoney Creek. The chief listened to Eric Carton that recommended the pass between Savage River. There was a trail that migrated there and the chief made him go up there and Dr. Murie made a corral out of wire netting up at Savage River. The Kennedy was the man who had the forces and way up Savage River he hauled up logs and things to build up the fence with. The man was very fond of his horses. In mosquito country when there were horses they would mix Buhach with lard and smear the horses with it to keep the mosquitos off. The man took care of his horses. Later on he spent a lot of his money on the horses. Dr. Murie's brother was with him in 1922. They built the corral up there and part of the crew was Jule and Ted Loftus and several locals were helping with the camp up there. During the summer they caught several caribou but the female they turned loose and they only caught one male caribou. They had the caribou tethered out to that moss

area for the rest of the season. He learned how to make one of the holders that the Latt landers use for reindeer down on the Bering Sea coast. He had a long rope and tied it to a log. Later he put him toward Jiminy Creek and went into Fairbanks and he went out there to get him and there were a bunch of Caribou and they ran when they saw him and so did the reindeer.

Dr. Murie remembers Harrie Karstens told him a bunch of stories about early days especially when he and Hudson Stuck climbed Mt. McKinley and 300 feet lower was the pole that the old pioneers had carried up to the top of that mountain. He remembers the first visitor of Mt. McKinley Park. Bobby Sheldon had the horses and she came up on the horse and had the guide with her and Harrie Karstens didn't know what to do because there was a visit to the National Park. He didn't know what to do. Dr. Murie went with her to talk about the birds and flowers. She was a botanist and a talented person.

When Dr. Murie and his brother were up there and President Harding was in here at the time and Karstens had the orders to get mountain sheep to ship into Fairbanks for dinner. Karstens didn't know where they were at this time of the year. Dr. Murie and his brother got word to try and find sheep.

One thing Dr. Murie will never forget is the dog team trips he made in the hills from Kosuquin, up in the Brooks Range and all through the country. He ran across cabins where pioneers lived. He found that those people were well read. They had time to read and think. He was amazed at some of the things and thoughts that he ran across among those old timers. Here and there he ran across people who could discuss things and he was impressed with what he saw. What he saw among the Indians and Eskimos, they had a culture that he thinks we should pay some attention to. They had some elements in their way of thinking and attitude toward life and the way to do things. That was one of the things that impressed Dr. Murie, what he found among the people. There's some things in history that he thinks we should try to hang on to. The Pioneers of Alaska gave him an honorary membership.

The Yemit Brothers on the Yukon River on what they called Purgatory. They could discuss Shakespeare, they carved, and they painted. Frank Desuda who was living in the Yukon at the trailer there. A man in the crowd starts mentioning names "Burrows, Knight, Deshae, Ramonov, Andrew Dragic (the rest is inaudible)" "Perkins, Billy Mcfowell" "Ted Kennedy used to run a pack train to the creek" "The Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper, they used to go around and dedicate parks all over the country. They came in the year 1922 the came to mark McKinley Park and dedicated Mt. McKinley National Park. There were about 40 people." Many people were mentioning names in the crowd.

Harrie Karstens was the first Mt. Mckinley superintendent. Then later Mr. Harold Leak was the superintendent. He was moved away from there by official order and moved up to the Brooks Range, and at the Tanana River now known as Tanana Cross, He went all over Circle, Fort Yukon. He went all over with a dog team. Then in later years in 1925 he went out to the Alaska Peninsula now known as Izabec Bay and he spent a season there and he got several big brown bears for the natural museum and he got some photographs of the bear. Then in 1936 and 1937 he went those two summers they gave him a ship The Big Brown Bear (The fish and Wildlife service Boat) and he had a crew and he went through the whole Aleutian chain to study the bird and animal life. He was to recommend for bird and which for fox farming. The natives were turning the foxing loose on the island and then they'd go there

and take the fox skins. His survey of Alaska Island, Aleutia Island, and Kodiak Island has been published in the North America Farmer #61. He got away from McKinley Park very well and began to see other parts of the country. That's as far back as he can go, 1920.

There is discussion and a man begins to speak into the microphone. This is Dr. Olaus Murie and Mrs. Murie, the story of their life around Alaska from 1920 to today. This is (inaudible) May 25th, 1961.

This is a written report of the Tanana Yukon Historical Society monthly meeting held at the recreational hall of Birch Park with about 30 people present. The meeting was conducted by President Audrey Loftus who had been installed at the last meeting. Several minor changes to the bylaws were discussed regarding dues; meeting dates and so forth and will be acted upon at the June Meeting. Olaus Murie was of Moose, Wyoming. She was the former Margaret Thomas. She went from 1911 to 1918 to get her college in the United States. She returned to attend the Alaska Agriculture College and School of Mines and was the first woman to graduate from the College of Alaska. During the Doctors time in Alaska he spent a good amount of time at McKinley Park, the Endicott Range and the great river areas. From 1936-1939 he did a complete survey of the animals of the Alaska Peninsula, the Kodiak Islands and the Alutian Chain. They touched on almost every island in the area. They walked and traveled by dog teams on the mainland. Two other visitors at the meeting were Lauren Stevens and Abbot Finn from Philadelphia and Vermont respectively. They are making preparations to bring a group of boys on an 8 week tour of the state. The list of committees appointed, membership committee is Francis T. Baker (Chairman), Ludwig Vrinsky, James Hanlan, Theodore Loftus, and Dr. Jame Linqvist. The Program Committee was Florence Manville Chairman, Andrew Wicken, and Paul Greimann. Tape Recording is William Cashman Chairman, Iver Skarland, and Forbes Baker. Publicity is Harrie Hughes and Mrs. Hertha Baker. Museum Committee catering and storing materials is Bruce Kelly, John Neeler, George Schmidt and Otto Geist. Magazine Committee is Charles Crime Chairman, Forbes Baker, Francis Baker, William Cashin, Andrianna Coyle, Frederick Kite West, Annabelle Pennelin, Audrey Loftus, Iver Skarland, Florence Mansville, Earl Piggrim, Ludwig J. Ruinski, Victor J. Riachardson, Frank P. Young, Andrew Wicken, and Rapper Shelden. The Historical Names Committee is HC Torgenson Chairman, Esther Zimmerman, Hazel B. Thomas, James S. Couch, and Dennis Coil. Picture identification would be Edrana Coil, Chairman, Frank B Young, Ed B.Davis, and Robert Shelden. Refreshment Committee members are Alma Matlock Chairman, Annabelle Davis, Dolly Young, and Shirley M. Johnson. New committee appointed by Audrey M. Loftus. Harrie Hughes reporting.