

Conversation with Henry Gettinger, 17 April 2002, at 512 Herning Rd., Fairbanks, Alaska. Other voices are those of Al and Bruth George. Mileages are on Chena Hot Springs Rd. unless otherwise noted. At times, we are referring to a 1953 Fairbanks school district map showing property ownership.

B: The first thing I always ask is where you came from and why.

H: Well, I came from southern Indiana and when I was a teenager we were in the midst of the depression. We were farmers and about a mile and a half from a little town called Merom. It used to have a Christian college but it had gone bankrupt. The best of the poor people were on WPA and there just wasn't any money around.

Some people from Chicago University had this bright idea. They were going to try some experiments and see if they could improve the economy of some small town and they picked this town to do it. They had a fellow from Denmark named Hans Rutsebeck and they sent him over to this little town and he was going to show them how to start a cooperative for this community. This town was about 500 population. The University group used this old college building and Rutsebeck said the first thing the cooperative had to do was build this big round table so that everybody can sit around the table and everybody can look at everybody. "There won't be anybody sitting behind you." That's really not a bad theory. He thought of different things people could do to make some money, although nobody had any money.

There were a lot of farmers who had fencerows that had grown up over the years and he said, "Wouldn't you like to have your fence rows cleared out?" He did have some connections with Chicago Univ. and some of the richer people out in the northern part of Chicago. So he said, "We'll get some people to cut down some trees, then cut firewood and haul it to Chicago." It seemed like kind of a dumb thing but it worked. The cooperative got paid for the wood, then they bought different things that people needed. Nobody got any money but everybody worked for points--you got a certain number of points for doing this or that and some farmers had some spare land and he said, "Can't we use some of your land for a watermelon patch or a cantaloupe patch?" So they did that. They did many different things.

Our family was kind of interested in these things. Now, we weren't unemployed because we owned a farm. We were busy all the time but we did help out the community different ways. This fellow came out to our farm and he use to tell the most wonderful stories. He'd homesteaded in Alaska, he was down in Homer He told these stories about how exciting Alaska was. And I thought, boy, if I ever get a chance, I'm going to go to Alaska.

When I joined the Air Force, I went to airplane engine mechanics school, then to helicopter specialist school and when I graduated they said, "We have two openings, one down in the Panama Canal and one in Alaska." I said, "Well, I'd sure like Alaska." This was back in 1947 when I shipped up here. Came up on a troop ship and landed at Whittier, then came through the tunnel. Was in Anchorage a little while, then flew up to Fairbanks. I was stationed at Ladd Air Force Base.

B: You went to school out at the University, right?

H: When I got out of the service, then I went to the University. Graduated with a degree in agriculture, the last official one. Jim Lawler was ahead of me one year and we were both going to be college professors. We had it all worked out but we were on the wrong political team. Joe finally did work at a college down in California.

My wife was so tired of me studying by the time I graduated. "Please, take a year off." I had plenty of GI Bill left to get a Doctor's degree and I was going to go to Cornell and work in genetics. It was pretty exciting, but I took a year off, then Joe Lawler talked me into working for the little farmers' co-op that was kind of down on its uppers. I was working as a carpenter after school, I'd worked during college too in the summertime. He said it was just so important that I help out the co-op, so being young and impressionable, I really thought I might help. One of the first things I found out was that we were being sued because they hadn't paid for the building yet.

B: Who owned the building?

H: Slater had the mortgage. Paul Elbert had gotten the building built but somehow they'd never gotten around to finish paying for it. Joe Lawler had lined up a lawyer, Mike Stepovich, and their lawyer was—I don't remember—but he was really a great lawyer. Anyway, I went to see Mike about what we'd do about this situation. Of course, we had no money, but I thought I'd better try to figure out what to do. Mike called up the other lawyer who said, "Well, just tell him he should pay it." That was end of our lawyer business. Mike went on to be governor, but....

B: So what happened?

H: They did go ahead and pay for it. It took awhile but we got it paid off. I had to do a lot of carpenter work. That was one reason Joe wanted me to work there so I could build bins and if someone isn't there to give it tender, loving care, it doesn't get done, you know. I'd go to Chamber of Commerce meetings and give away free potatoes. Every once in awhile, some local farmer would take

advantage of some storeowner. I remember Lindy's grocery saying, "I'll never buy anymore local stuff, it's so terrible." So we really had to do some campaigning.

They had no delivery, no anything, so I used my car to deliver potatoes to the stores. I think Art Buswell was our first potato inspector. He was at the University, was one of my professors.

I stayed with the Co-op for a year or so and that's how I got involved in homesteading. I met all these nice people and they said, "You ought to get a homestead. Everybody ought to have a homestead." Little did I know what I was getting into. Some people lived on Badger Rd. and they said, "Boy, there's some nice land out here." There were other people with different places and finally we settled out here. We knew Bert Stimple.

B: Were Pat's folks already out here?

H: No, we homesteaded the same year. Pat had come to Alaska a year before I did. She came up in '46, over the highway. They brought most of their worldly possessions. They couldn't bring the piano or the horse, but they had a house trailer and a big stake-bed truck they put a lot of stuff on. They had a year's supply of food because back in those days, you weren't allowed on the highway unless you had a year's supply of stuff.

B: Where did they come from?

H: They came from California. They were in June Lake, on the eastern side of the mountains. They had a little resort business there. Pat had grown up in the Los Angeles area and they'd live in the San Francisco area and they loved to be out in the country. When they heard that they were going to put streetlights in that little town, they said, "It's time to get out. That's too much civilization." They'd read a book on Alaska and they were going to go to the Palmer-Wasilla area. They started out in the fall, which wasn't a real smart thing, but they didn't know how cold Alaska could be. They bought this little house trailer. Someone talked them into buying this six-foot wide trailer instead of an eight-foot one because the roads were narrow and, of course, they were. Then they had a station wagon and another trailer behind that. They did bring, I think it was, seven collie dogs, three cats and a parrot. They were equipped, you see.

They got as far as Whitehorse and they broke down. The people in Whitehorse let them park their trailer in the little park in the middle of town and then it took Pat's dad several weeks to get the parts because it wasn't easy to get parts back in 1946. You couldn't buy anything new, hardly. They were quite exciting for the kids, because they'd stop by the trailer on the way to school and on their

way back and they'd play with the cats and the dogs and they were really excited about the parrot because most of them had never seen a parrot before. Pat still had friends in Whitehorse that she'd made then.

They finally got fixed up and started on up the highway. Fall had come and it was getting near winter and they only had one set of tire chains. Then Pat's mother decided she wouldn't drive at night. She wanted to see what the road looked like. It wasn't much of a road. Every bridge had a right-angle turn at both ends. You couldn't go straight across anything. You'd come down a hill, make a right-angle turn, go across the bridge, make another right angle turn, to go up. The bridge speed was, I think, five miles an hour because they weren't that well made. When they started running into snow, the truck had to put chains on to pull the trailer up the hill.

They had some neighbors in June Lake that came with them and they also had a truck and a trailer, but didn't have the station wagon and another trailer. So they'd kind of travel together, but they'd only go about a hundred miles a day because they'd have to put on chains at the bottom of the hill, take them off at the top, because they didn't want to wear them out, then they'd go until they'd get to the bottom of another hill.

They finally got to the border about Christmas time. Then they had some more trouble. Pat's dad got his truck started, one day, then he went to pull his friend's truck to get it started and when he did, he tore the rear end out of his truck. Neither one of them knew anything about cold weather and cold and grease and that kind of stuff. Then while her dad came to Fairbanks to get some repairs, they were stuck down at the border in this little trailer. They did have a wood stove in it because they had to keep the trailer warm enough so the parrot and dogs and all wouldn't freeze. Somebody was very nice and gave them a caribou. The caribou just laid around in the yard, so when they needed some meat, Pat would go out with an axe and they'd take a chunk of meat in and pick off all the hairs off that they could. Then they could have caribou stew. They'd brought I don't know how many dozen eggs, in water glass.¹ but they still froze.

When they finally did get the truck fixed, they moved on to Tok. The people that were running the lodge down there had just about had it because it was the coldest winter they'd ever had and it was down around seventy below zero. The people said, we're going to get out of here, we never want to see Alaska again so they said, would you be interested in running the lodge? Well, Pat's dad said they might, so they checked with the owner, can't remember the name.

The lodge was made out of old barracks buildings that came up from Haines.

¹ A method of preserving eggs in brine.

That winter they used fifty-five gallons of oil everyday to keep the place going. They'd have to roll a barrel of oil in, keep it where it would thaw enough they could use it in their stoves. It did officially get down to 83 below in Snag and it probably was the same temperature in Tok.

They never did get to Palmer, because Pat's dad kept coming to Fairbanks to get parts. That was the closest way. That summer they went on to Delta. They were there for a while, then came on to Fairbanks. He worked in the powerhouse at the University.

Pat and I met at the Presbyterian Church.² Back in those days, Weeks Field was the big airport and there was no Airport Rd. Their house was out in the middle of where Airport Rd. is now, pretty close to where the Lutheran Church is. In order to get there you had to walk around Weeks Field. They'd walk to church, even at fifty below, so they could sing in the choir. Pat had long, golden hair. She just looked so pretty. I used to sit in the congregation and watch her. Then she went to young people's group and there were several of us GI's went there too, so we got together. We lived together for forty-six years. She was never sick, Pat was never sick. That was a wonderful thing, but they say that people who are never sick get cancer. How disgusting that is.³

B: So you all homesteaded at the same time?

H: We found two homesteads. Her folks homesteaded on the road and we homesteaded back of the road. We bought a little crawler tractor from the NC Co. Back in those days, you could buy anything you needed from the NC Co. You could buy stuff for mining, you could buy cars, you could buy groceries.

B: Lee Risse mentioned a little radish harvester.

H: My mother-in-law did buy a radish harvester. She supplied the military with radishes a couple years. We started out doing it by hand then got the little harvester. It did help quite a bit. I think we got it from somebody in Palmer. We didn't buy it new.

B: Was the gun site part of your homestead?

H: No, we were around it. That was one of the anti-aircraft batteries that surrounded Ladd Air Force Base. There were eight of them. One was where George Dornath was, on Fideler Rd., one here, one out in the Badger Rd. area and out in south Fairbanks. I'm not sure where they all were, but there were

² This is the church now at Pioneer Park

³ Pat died in 1995.

eight altogether. Next to our place, they had forty-five acres. Johnny Holm owned up to their north border and we homesteaded on the south side. Pat's folks were along the west side and our homesteads joined at the back.

B: Were you coming in on the Hot Springs Rd. at that time?

H: It had only been open for a few years. That valley there by Bennett Rd. was almost impassable. It was even for a few years after we homesteaded. The area got kind of opened up when the military decided to put in the anti-aircraft battery. As you know, all these roads started out when somebody homesteaded and they'd have guests and they'd say, "You know that piece next to you is not too bad, I think I'll homestead that." So they'd build a little trail to their place, then somebody else....

Guess they had a little bridge at Steele Creek, one time. I remember Brockmans had a chicken farm and they raised eggs. They'd drive their tractor with their eggs to the creek and leave the tractor on this side of the creek and cross and take their eggs in their car that they'd left on the other side. Of course, Tilly was a wonderful cook. She worked at the Model Café. Henry worked at Fairbanks Lumber. The Model Café—that's where the Chamber of Commerce met, that's where some of the most important things in town took place.

B: When did the road run from Steele Creek back toward your place?

H: Bert Stimple had gotten Dr. Fitz's son's place. Bert homesteaded first out on Grenac Rd. and he was down in a chunk of ice lenses and was failing every year, just like I did when I started. They went to the Nazarene Church and Dr. Fitz was preaching there. He talked Bert into coming out by him. The weather was so much better there than on Grenac Rd. When Dr. Fitz left, Bert bought that, too. Bert subdivided five lots down this line, Dr. Fitz had allowed John Holm to put a road down the property line, where that little road is now.⁴ After the Hot Springs Rd. became usable, John put the road on down to Chena Hot Sp. Rd. This was after the military graveled.

The military got permission from the landowners to upgrade and use Bennett Rd., so they hauled tailings from Fox to do that and then, sad to say, Farkas and Loud got in a big tiff so Farkas wouldn't let the road come by his house. It used to go by his house to Loud's. That's what it did in every case, it stopped at Bennett's, then on past to the next place and on down. It used to go right by Farkas' down to Loud's and I suppose they originally were friends but they were both fairly hot-tempered. They were both pretty smart guys. It's a shame that they didn't get along better. Anyway, that's why the south end of Bennett Rd. is

⁴ Spudberry Lane

straight. Every place else it just winds around between homesteads but once they got down to Farkas' place he said, "you gotta make that road straight."

When they got Bennett Rd. built down to Chena Hot Springs Rd, and they crossed the Columbia Creek valley to go to the military place, that made a usable road because the hilltops you could drive on pretty easily. Then they tied it into Steele Creek Rd. I can remember lots of times we couldn't get through and we had to go around by Steele Creek Rd. to get to town in the spring.

B: When did John Holm come out?

H: He must have been there probably two or three years ahead of me, around '50 or '51. When I was out at the University, we'd take field trips to visit the farms—there weren't really that many. I remember visiting Bert's farm and I think we even went to the egg farm, Brockman's. Then later on there was another big egg farm near Birch Hill. The house is still there I think. They did a pretty nice job.

Holms were fairly well established when we got there. He had about ten acres cleared there by the house and he had another maybe ten acres across the road and maybe twenty acres to the west. Some of the famous pictures are showing Edith out there hoeing cabbage. John had a bad back so Edith did most of the hard work and when she got polio then things kind of changed. They had to go to town.

After I worked for the farmer's co-op, I took over as inspector from Art Buswell. I was the produce inspector and also worked half time at the University with Kallio.⁵ When I inspected potatoes around the whole valley, and there were people like Paul Elbert who was a moose of a man, there was nobody in the Fairbanks area who ever stacked hundred pounds sacks more than five high. Edith would do it six high. She was the only person on my route who could stack hundred pound sacks six high. She was tough.

B: There was something special about their house, your house now.

H: It was one of those houses came in numbered pieces. Holms actually never lived in it, never built it. It was built by I think one of the Hernings, Bill maybe. Johnny lived right on the corner where the little road came off of Steele Creek Rd. His house was made of scraps. He worked at the carpenter shop out at Ladd Air Force Base and apparently he was allowed to haul scraps. The place was made out of birch logs and little pieces of wood he could get in his vehicle.

⁵ Dr.Arvid Kallio was the University's horticulturist.

Edith was wonderful at making cinnamon rolls. She was a fantastic cook and I remember we'd go on big sledding parties and in those days the hills weren't cut down and were a lot steeper and so we'd get Bert and Leah and Edith and Pat—there's was another couple that I can't remember. Sometimes we'd sled toward town from the top of this hill cause it was really steep. You could go maybe forty miles an hour but we really liked Herning hill. There was practically no traffic on it and we'd usually go sledding at night and then someone would drive the car down with lights on. We'd take turns, people driving.

B: Herning hill? You mean at five mile?

H: No, the hill down to Hopper Creek.⁶ We could go fifty miles an hour. We'd get two people on those little Flexible Flyers. We were couples and the guy always was on the bottom and the girl on top except you got to remember John had a bad back, so Edith was on the bottom and John was on top. One time, Bert, being the kind of guy he was, had a little piece of baling wire and tied it to one of John's runners and Bert and Leah went down and they beat John. Oh, John was mortified and he was madder than hops when Bert told him what he did. John had to be the best in everything. Then we'd go back to the Holm's house and have cocoa and cinnamon rolls.

B: Were Woods involved in all this?

H: They came later. Russ was in the service at Ladd. I think he had at least twelve years in. Julie worked at BLM. But Russ kind of liked to farm. I don't know how he bumped into Bert but anyway he used to come out and help grade potatoes at Bert's place. That's when Ruth Zozula worked for Bert. We called her Cuddles, Bert called her Cuddles. He had a name for everybody. Her husband was the "Mad Russian." Russ was really quite shy, he'd hardly talk about much of anything, a little about hunting and fishing, but finally that place that Woods have now came up for sale and Bert talked Russ into buying that place from Voris Patrick.

The Patricks used to raise radishes, did a nice job. I remember going over there for meetings and Mrs. Patrick would put a big bowl of radishes on the table. They were big enough you'd just eat them like apples. They were wonderful.

When Bert decided to sell out, he sold Russ a couple of parcels. Then I bought the forty acres above the road. Mary McGuire bought some, too. McGuire's original place was on Bert's land—I used to farm potatoes up there, and after McGuire's bought it, I still farmed it for quite a few years. I think they

⁶ About six mile.

homesteaded the hundred and sixty up above Bert's.

Here's Maranatha Children's Home (*on the map*). That was really a nice place.

B: What happened to that?

H: The state changed their ideas, did a study. They said, "we've got three generations of kids living in children's homes, so we're going to try a new policy and put kids in foster homes so maybe they can learn what a family is." It's hard to learn what a family is, in a children's home. The same thing happened to the Pentecostal home. There wasn't anything wrong with either one. It was just the state changed their ideas. I really liked Bob Johnson.⁷

B: Getting back to the house on Holm's place, who had that built?

H: Holm sold to Ray Gross and Ed Rusing. Ed was the banker and Ray had the supermarket. They both had farm backgrounds and they kind of made fun of homesteaders because most of us were so poor we really couldn't do anything right. We did the best we could with nothing, but they had access to money. The banks wouldn't loan you money if they knew you homesteaded. Once in a while I'd get a loan if I told them I had a job because sometimes I had to get a job to support the homestead. The banks just didn't trust homesteaders.

I guess Ed and Ray got together one day and said, "It would be good if we just showed them how real farmers do it." So they bought John Holm's homestead then they decided they'd lease Bert's with an option to buy and that gave them two homesteads together. They had plenty of land and they had the finances and I think they bought the first potato harvester in the area. They did everything right, except neither one of them could work because they had jobs so they hired—they were Mormons—so they hired good Mormon kids and they were good people, but they didn't have any experience. Farming and talking about farming are two different things. If you're hiring somebody, they might want to go to work at eight o'clock and quit at five, whereas a homesteader might go to work at eight and quit at eight or ten. Then, of course, they just had one trouble after another, so finally, Ed and Ray decided, "We could of showed them, but we just couldn't get the right help." They sold out and both went to Arizona.

B: Didn't they also start something out off the Elliot Highway?

H: I don't think it was them. I think it was some of the guys that worked there, a group of Mormons. They were going to raise carrots and stuff, but they just

⁷ Bob Johnson managed Maranatha Children's Home

couldn't make it. It's just not an easy thing to do.

I probably shouldn't even tell you this story, but Loud had a master's degree and was really a smart guy but his temper was not so good. Back when I was manager of the farmer's co-op, Loud tried to join. Holm was one of the members on the board, one of several, but Johnny spoke up pretty much, and he said, "Well, I've looked around and we've got enough farmers in the co-op to supply all the stuff they need in the Fairbanks area and if we let anybody else into the co-op, that means we're going to have to cut down. I don't think we ought to do it." Loud tried to join and they wouldn't let him in. But I was manager of the Co-op so I was the one blamed for it. I had nothing to do with it. In fact, I didn't think it was a good idea. So that made Loud mad at everyone in the Co-op, but especially me.

Several years later, after Ray and Ed had moved on to warmer pastures down in Arizona, they had Earl Cook handling the property and they were just renting out the house. I think maybe once or twice Loud did rent a field or two, but mostly it just sat empty. But I remember, I was down in my little potato cellar, grading potatoes, when Loud came storming in. I don't know what I did, but it must have been bad, whatever it was. Either I took some of his market, or he thought I did so he said, "Henry, I've just had it with you. If you don't do what tell you to do, I'm going to rent that place and put it in potatoes and I'm going to put you out of business." And I believed him, too, but I was so close to being out of business anyway it wasn't funny. I talked to Pat about it and told her that if he rented that land and planted it all to potatoes, it would sure be awful tough. So I went down and talked to Earl Cook.

Well, Dick Loud⁸ had tried to buy the Holm's property. He tried to get an FHA loan, I think, but they wouldn't loan him the money. So I talked to Earl and asked what it would cost me to rent the place, so I could just let it sit, just so he couldn't rent it. Earl said, "Henry, I think you ought to try to buy it." "There's just no way in the world I can afford to buy it." "You know, that's been on the market for years. They'd really like to sell it. If you can come up with five thousand dollars down, I'll see if I can't get them to let you make payments." So he wrote to Ray and Ed, and we made a deal and that's how we bought the place. I'd have no more bought than nothing, but it's the only thing that saved me because we were having trouble down here. When we first homesteaded, all this land was permafrost and it was really cold. We'd get frost in July sometimes and always in August. Johnny wouldn't get frost until maybe the middle of September. I'd worked just as hard or harder and get maybe half the crop they'd get. So I give Les Loud credit for making it possible for me to survive. It wasn't really his plan, but that's what happened.

⁸ son of Les Loud

B: I think we missed getting on tape the fact that Charles C. Kivehlen, the homestead south of Loud's, and next to you folks, was the son of the Charles Kivehlen, located north of the road.

H: I guess he (*Charles C.*) had a little trail and we put in a road back to our place, went to his corner, then across to us. It's the same road that's still there, but it's pretty washed out now. That land has really sunk. And there's a well down at the bottom of the hill that keeps the road washed out. I always had to redo the culverts. This was a well for the military site, turned artesian. After they left I said, "By golly, I'm gonna fix that. It has a big valve on it and I'll just turn that well off." You know what it did? It jacked the pipe up out the ground about six feet. I opened it back up again. It's still running but it's not good water.

Yeah, Charley Kivehlen had an artesian well and we had one. We had twelve pounds pressure because I had potato storage near and we could even wash potatoes without turning the pump on and you could irrigate the radish patch. We had radishes and lettuce and stuff. I tried carrots down by the creek. Oh the soil just looked fantastic. Really beautiful peat. It was interesting how you can overdo something. There was a little slope there down to the creek. Our carrots would grow little white roots on the sides because the moisture was too high. Then the farther down we got, the harder it was to raise anything so I had the soil tested, because it must be real acid, but it turned out it was way too high in fertilizer. Irrigating on the hillside, some fertilizer ran down and it was too much. I tell people I didn't make a success because of all the good things I did, but because of all my failures.

B: Did you know anyone on out here, Joe Kruger, for instance?

H: I knew Joe Kruger quite well. He was one of our best farmers and he had a greenhouse, but he never would fertilize. He raised potatoes but they'd never get big because he'd never fertilize. He was quite an outspoken fellow.

B: When did the Wards come?

H: I don't know. He used to drive the school bus. He was going to be a big time farmer... Of course, Bob McQuinn had rabbits by the hundreds. Bob was always a real likable kind of guy... I was in the military with Bob Straight. It was amazing what he got away with. He should have been in jail dozens of times but he could get away with most anything. He'd write himself three day passes and go to town. He had a whole passbook.

B: What did he do in the army?

H: Very little. He was a clerk or something. One time he formed his own outfit,

he was the commanding officer... He was a likable guy... I knew John Ackerman quite well. He was in the Co-op. He wanted to go into the dairy business; he was going to be a big dairy farmer.

B: How many years were you the produce inspector?

H: Probably four or five years, I guess. Back when I was the inspector I got about \$6000 a year. Now, they get fifty.We lived down in the flats there (*in College*) and the water was just terrible. We used real diapers and everybody's diapers were kind of a yellow brown, there was no way in the world you could get them any other color. You could tell if someone bought new diapers, cause they were white but they weren't white long.

B: You lived along College Rd., someplace?

H: Right on the corner of Hayes Ave. and College Rd. We bought that lot from Bunnell.⁹ Actually, we bought it from the church. The community church that was trying to get established had gone to Bunnell, I guess, and he'd given them that lot. It was a big, big lot. They tried to dig a basement and ran into permafrost. They decided they couldn't do that. Then Bert Bingle¹⁰ had given them three or four lots on the other side of the road, down where the church is now. Back in those days I think he'd paid two or three hundred a lot, but they were smaller lots, long but narrow. I helped build that little log church. We were living in that same little trailer Pat's folks brought up the highway. There was a slough ran through between the old church and where the new church is. We put that trailer there and didn't have bathroom facilities but Bingle¹⁰ had gotten modern and had added a bathroom on to their kitchen, so you could get into the bathroom without actually going into the house. Their water was so bad, you couldn't take a bath in that it was so terrible, but you could shower. That house (*Bingle's*) was a little bit toward the University from the log church, then they moved that house and we built the manse. Nick Eidem and I built the manse.

A: I remember Bingle was in the news because he'd been down the railroad, preaching or something. That was the first time I'd heard the name.

H: He had a ministry. He went down the railroad, built a church at Healy, stopped at Suntrana, he'd teach Sunday school. He also had a ministry down the highway. He built a church at Tok and at Delta. I think he went to Dot Lake, too. He had been in Palmer for a long time. You know the time when they had the settlers come in from the states to settle the (*Matanuska*) Valley, one of their

⁹ Charles Bunnell was the first president of the Univ. of Alaska

¹⁰ Rev. Bert Bingle

units of exchange was "bingles." I don't think they were named after him, but they were used as money. He'd been in Cordova and Palmer for quite a few years and he was the one that managed to build the camp, near Harding Lake because the kids used to go down to Palmer for church camp....

Yeah, I knew Carl Lindstrand. My daughter Kathy and her husband bought the ten acres from Everett Lindstrand.¹¹ There was that little house and it was a fantastic deal for thirty thousand dollars...

The army would take their big guns out to the range by way of what became Chena Hot Springs Rd. One time I was going to town, I was in a hurry, going about fifty, but the roads were nice and snowy, and I went over the hill where the school is and here was their big gun, crossways of the road. They'd gotten stuck. I said, "There's no way I can get around them," so I just picked out a snow bank to hit. I didn't get hurt, didn't hurt the car either. Then they just got a bunch of GIs and put my car back on the road for me. That used to be a bad hill. I can remember a few times we had to make a run for it. None of the hills were cut down at that time. You know where Holm's fields were, you could just walk across the road, only twenty or thirty feet, and there was the other field.

B: There was a story about John not allowing the state to build across his place at first...

H: This might have been they wanted a two hundred foot right-of-way and he didn't want to give it. The interesting thing about the Chena Hot Springs Rd. is there is a two hundred foot right-of-way except at Loud's and it's only sixty feet there....

You bought the Stubbings place? They were our next-door neighbors, they lived right across College Rd. from us. He was a good block man and mason. He showed me how to lay blocks and I built my first block basement after one easy lesson from Fred....

The homestead we had, two different people had filed on. One of them had tried to build a cabin on the hill back there but he had no access. He'd have had to come in from this Yoder line, Love Rd....

It was unusual to find someone with a new car. Bert Bingle had just come up the highway with a new car. He let Jimmy (Bingle)¹² bring it to the young people's group. I wanted to take Pat home but it was a heck of a big walk. Jimmy said, "You can borrow Dad's car but don't ever tell him." So, I'm taking Pat home and

¹¹ Brothers Carl and Everett Lindstrand lived on Carl's homestead at 5½ mile

¹² Jimmy Bingle is the son of Rev. Bert Bingle and was best man at Henry and Pat's wedding.

I might have been going twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. Heck, it was all country, no houses or anything. So, I'm taking Pat home across Week's Field to her house near the dump. This was close to the present Curling Club. I got stopped by the police for speeding. I was in no hurry to get home so I don't know why I would have been speeding. You know what the speed limit was, out there at the dump? Fifteen miles an hour.

I hurried down and paid the ticket because I didn't want Bert to find out I'd got a speeding ticket in his new car. Einar Tonseth was the city clerk and he went to the Presbyterian Church, too, the first one because the other church hadn't been started yet. He kind of kidded me but I don't know whether Bert ever found out or not....

I agree to share this material with fellow interviewees and others interested in local history.

name_____ date_____

Transcribed and edited by Bruth George