

Interview with Beatrice Herning (Mrs. Harold) 2 November 2000. Bruth George, interviewer. Beatrice now lives at 10th and Barnette in Fairbanks, AK.

BG: I think I remember you saying once that Harold located your property from down below on the flats? That's how he saw it looked good and chose it?

BH: Well, how it all started was Carl Herning took out a homestead and his mother and sisters moved to Fairbanks and eventually Carl moved his mom out to the homestead. But it was it... it just seemed like a wonderful opportunity when Carl went on ahead and filed on his that Harold thought well this is beautiful land out here why don't we do the same thing so that's the reason he did that.

BG: Do you know when Carl filed?

BH: Oh boy, I don't know. We moved out on our homestead in 1951, in February, I believe it was. We filed on it before that. We had to live on it after a certain period of time. Carl was already living on his.

BG: So Carl was the first one?

BH: He was a bachelor, of course, and now that I think about it I don't think he moved his mother out there. I'm trying to think because I know she passed away when they lived in town. They had built her a little house there on 9th and Cowles and the sisters lived there, of course, with her. It just seemed like such beautiful land out there that I've always been thankful we did file. Earl Herning also filed on a piece.

BG: Do you remember where?

BH: Risse's Rd.

BG: Was that about the same time?

BH: Oh, I think it was a little bit later, not much. So there were..... and then I don't know how Walter and Dorothy¹ came to get their piece of ground, either. Eventually, it just seemed that the whole family was out there.

BG: Well, I assume they did that after they married? Would that have been right? Or was Walter out there before?

BH: Must have been after they were married. I'm trying to think where they lived when they first got married, Walter and Dorothy.

BG: Well, I can find that out. I bet if I call Walter up---

¹ Walter and Dorothy Eberhardt. Dorothy was a daughter of the Herning clan.

BH: Oh, yeah, he'll tell you.

BG: What was the state of the road then? I remember hearing at one time that it stopped at the top of four mile hill. Was the Hot Springs Rd. in when you first moved out?

BH: I know it was in terrible shape. It wasn't exactly a road as we'd call it nowadays. I know it didn't go beyond Ackerman's place out on CHS Rd but that's way beyond---

BG: Tilly Brockman, there was something about Tilly when they first moved out. Were they already out there?

BH: They were already out there when we moved out because we got our water from Henry (Brockman).

BG: He had a well?

BH: He was very nice about that. He let those of us who didn't have a well yet come out there and get water at his place.

BG: I remember hearing in relation to the Brockmans, probably when they first moved out, as I understood it, Steele Creek Rd. was the way you got out there and it pretty much ended up there at the top of the hill and from there on it was just a tractor road. If you can remember anything about what the road was like I think that's of interest.

BH: I can sure remember what it was like during breakup. We had to be pulled---

BG: Well, that happened again in what? '66? When they built the new road.

BH: I don't remember not having a road to where we turned in. Course, we used to go in by Eberhardt's.... You know it's a funny thing. I guess the condition of the road evidently didn't make much of an impression on me.

BG: We just expected the roads to be bad.

BH: I don't know, it was just part of homesteading. We sure went through some rough times homesteading out there.

BG: But everybody else was in the same boat. So you didn't think that much about it.

BH: Everybody was trying to help each other that way and.....

BG: When did Fred Anderson show up and how? Do you remember?

BH: Well, he showed up pretty much in the early '50s. We had moved out there in '51 and it seemed like shortly after that he showed up. He needed a place to live and I don't remember how he and Harold ever got acquainted. The only thing I can remember is that possibly Fred worked for the airlines in someway, like he might have done maintenance work, I don't know,

or something like that. But then we had this cabin..... Whose cabin was that at the edge of our field? I'm trying to remember.

BG: I remember the cabin well and I've wondered since then precisely where it was located. I think I can almost figure it out. You can still see a little bit of the old road that went down there.

BH: I think if the cabin was still there now you could just about see it from Nancy Kuhn's house, looking over at the edge of the field. You know that old-timer named Frank something--

BG: Fessler?

BH: Fessler. It sort of sticks in my mind that that cabin might have belonged to him. Didn't he have ground over there, too?

BG: He was up on Amanita as far as I know.

BH: Yes, but before that. It seems to me he had ground there.

BG: I've never heard that but it's very possible. Do you think he was going to prove up on it and didn't?

BH: That part I don't remember.

BG: We've often wondered whose cabin that was. Somebody thought it had been a woodcutter's cabin, maybe, going way back when they were still cutting wood for the FE Co and all that.

BH: I don't remember but Fred, he was.... of course, he had no car or anything so whenever I went to town for groceries and he needed anything sometimes he'd ride with me and one thing he had me always go do for him when he didn't go with me, was go in and buy his cigarettes (laughs) and that was always kind of embarrassing for me because I didn't smoke.

BG: And you didn't want people to think you did, either.

BH: Fred originally came from the Nenana area and--- I'm sorry, I just can't help you much on that about Fred.

BG: This lady at Foodland's name is----?

BH: Gloria. (*Gloria Dunham*) She works at Fred Meyers-- no, Alaska Marketplace. Now, I don't know if she still works there or not.

BG: Well, they'll know who she is and where she is.

BH: She's not a checker, she just works stocking shelves and pricing things. She was very close to Fred Anderson, she thought an awful lot of him.... What do you think about them closing?

BG: *Well, I'm sorry to see it going....*

BH: I am, too. We're really going to miss it in this area.

BG: *It's the closest in this area, isn't it?*

BH: Right now, I'm driving out to Fred Meyer's West and I swore I was never going to do that but I just eventually had to give into it. You don't want to know anything about Carl Lindstrand?

BG: *Oh, sure, I want to know something about everybody.*

BH: *(the thought of Carl Lindstrand brings a hearty laugh)* Well, Carl was quite a character. In those days we didn't keep our doors locked and he'd just--- I used to swear he could smell my cooking down the road because whenever I had something cooking or baking, he'd always show up....

BG: *And that was only about a mile, right?*

BH: Yeah. I used to think that..... and you know, like if Harold on a Sunday morning or Saturday morning, if Harold didn't have to work and we were still laying in bed, he would open up the front door, walk in with his flashlight, stand at the foot of our bed and shine it in our faces, and say "Hey, it's time to get up." And then he'd go over and shake down our coal and wood stove to get things going so we could have coffee and breakfast. *(laughing again)* He was quite a character. Oh, dear. Another..... I really enjoyed Henry Brockman, too, of course, he didn't live on our property or anything, but he always liked to come over and visit. I think a lot of these guys got really lonely. They liked their solitude but there's times when they liked company, too.

BG: *When they wanted it? He wasn't married to Tilly at that time, early on?*

BH: No, I think he was married to Tilly. I think she already had the..... I'm trying to think if she already had the coffee shop, the Peerless.

BG: *I know she was involved with that but I don't know when.*

BH: Did you ever go at the Peerless?

BG: *I'm not sure whether it was even there when we came here.*

BH: When I think of the homesteading days, I think my memories of Carl Lindstrand really make me smile. And Fred Anderson. We were all characters, I guess, out there.

BG: *Well, it helped.*

BH: It helped. And then I must tell you about the forest fire. You know how Harold was always burning brush. Well, he'd burn like in the late fall or something like that. Well, the fire

was supposed to be out, but by spring of course everything in that moss would hold.... When spring came, the spring winds would whip it up. I'll never forget the last time I think Harold had a big fire out there.... the flames were just shooting out of the tops of the hills, the trees rather, here comes Carl Herning, he's driving the school bus, and he comes up to my house and he says "Hey, Beatrice, do you know you've -- Harold's got a fire going?" I went out and here it was just ablazing and then he says, "--but I can't stay to help you. I've got the bus, I gotta go." I don't remember what I did about that.

BG: Harold wasn't home, of course.

BH: Of course not. He was never home when I needed him.

BG: How close to the house was that?

BH: It was on the road going down to our lower field. He'd been clearing down in the bottom field. I often look back on the days when Harold used to burn brush piles. We were sure lucky.

BG: We well remember your house fire that time. That involved moss, too, as I remember.

BH: We were so broke when we built that place we didn't have money for insulation so Harold had the kids and me and other people out gathering this nice clean dry moss out in the forest. And it worked great until one day when we had a leak in one of our pipes, heating pipes, and so Harold got out the blowtorch to solder it and it made the moss too hot, I guess. It took off. Dorothy, Don's Dorothy, got in the car and drove over to tell Don we had a fire going in our house, our roof was on fire, and Dorothy, right up to the time she died, she said she never will forget how I drove up there and I was just as cool and calm as a cucumber, told them our roof was on fire. She never could get over that. She thought I was so calm about it, you know. (Laughs at length) Oh dear. I couldn't do it now. I'm older, I'd probably just.... (laughs)

BG: So you lived in town at first? What brought you up here?

BH: Oh, what brought me originally was my dad was with the fire control service in Anchorage. Originally, how I met Harold was in McKinley Park. My dad had the CCC camps there for a couple of summers and he had the same group just about every summer, at least the same area group—kids from Chicago, the big city of Chicago. He really enjoyed working with them because they were so thrilled to be out in the wilderness like that. So mother and I came up to spend the summer with him that one summer with my father and, of course, here was Harold. He was a ranger there at McKinley Park. That's how we met. And then, I wasn't through high school yet so we had to go back to Seattle, mother and I, and then my dad in the meantime is through with the CCC's so he gets a job with Alaska fire control, so that's where he worked. And then Mother and I, of course, moved up when he got a permanent job in Anchorage.

BG: That was year-round, then?

BH: Yes. But he died fighting fire out near Eklutna. They had a little brush fire going, or something. My dad had a heart attack while he was out on that. So that's _____. And then, of course, Harold and I.... In the meantime Harold had quit the Park Service. He wasn't cut out to be an officer of the law. And he didn't.... he was with the game commission

too. That came later though, in Fairbanks, he went to work for the game commission there again. He didn't like filling out reports, he didn't like wearing a uniform so he didn't enjoy that so that's how Harold got into construction then. But we got married in Anchorage and then, of course, he had this job with the Fish and Game up here, so that's how we moved to Fairbanks, because of his job.

BG: So you lived in town for a few years?

BH: Yeah. Let's see, we lived there until Kathleen was about five, I guess, I think she was about five years old when we moved. She was born in 1946. Yeah, we moved out there when she was five. Harold built a brand new house facing 9th Ave. That was really something, leaving this beautiful home I had, moving out to the homestead, without water and no electricity, didn't even have electricity. So anyway, it took a lot of courage to do that. Like I said, I was much younger then--- Anyway, it was a good life. I feel we were very fortunate to, at the time, to have the opportunities we had. _____---such beautiful ground and be able to file on so much.

BG: You had such an ideal site with your view.

BH: Oh, yeah, that was really pretty and--- I wonder if anyone's going to do anything with that lot that had our raspberry patch on and our garden.

BG: Isn't that part of what David bought?

BH: No, he doesn't own on the other side of the road where the greenhouse is.

BG: Has it been sold?

BH: Yes, they were friends..... he's a fireman.... he's friend of..... (*Alan Dick*).

BG: Oh, I know (who was meant). He bought that one lot, but I didn't realize it extended all the way over.

BH: I've never experienced that before, to sell anybody a piece of ground like that and get our price and then to get a letter from the buyer thanking us for selling it to them. I was so thrilled with that. I can't think of their names. (*Scott and Donna Michael*)It's been a blessing for me 'cause I wouldn't be able to live _____ at all if we hadn't had that land. What little social security I have I would never be able to exist around here. I just feel that Harold and I were so blessed to be able to live like that, raise our children out there.... Norman never griped about it but Kathleen did, being a girl she thought she should be in the middle of all the social life and all, but she was awful good about it too. And the gardens we grew. Harold was..... I have this memory of him coming in with a big smile on his face with these great big huge buckets of peas he'd just picked and he was always so happy (laughs). Here were all these peas I had to shell and freeze. Same way with string beans, you know.

BG: What was he able to build for you to live in at first? I assume it was the start of your basement that you lived in all those years.

BH: Well, that's what we moved into, a basement.

BG: That was a block basement?

BH: A block basement. And a flat roof which is the biggest mistake anybody in this country can make. To put on a flat roof.....

BG: Did Stubbings build that for you, by any chance, or did they come around later?

BH: He worked on it. Well, Mary, she was quite a character. Mary and Fred--- And their kids, Art and _____. Mary loved to visit and of course she didn't get around a whole lot. She was way overweight and everything, but she was such a dear, sweet person.

BG: Then the Severns moved in about the same time we did. Maybe they were there the summer before we moved in, in the fall. And they lived in town some winters because the road was so bad.

BH: We never did have much relationship with them, except arguing with them a few times about the road through the woods. Harold didn't want them going that way. He'd go out and block the road and they'd end up driving over it. (Laughs) It takes all kinds to make the world go round. When I look back, the young people in the fifties, the early fifties and forties, they had so many more opportunities than now as far as acquiring land. We just were so fortunate and....

BG: Well, you were fortunate, but you worked for everything you got.

BH: They worked hard, they were all hard workers, everyone of them. There wasn't a lazy Herning and the sisters were the same way. Ann and Dorothy worked like---_____ hard workers.

BG: So tell me about the Ackermans. I only have a little recollection. I think she came to Homemakers early on.

BH: Were you out there when we had the Homemakers club? I don't remember you coming.

BG: Sure, I was pretty active. I was remembering that she came early. I don't have much of a picture of her. They were on beyond Domke's?

BH: They were at the end of the road. It didn't go beyond that, hardly. To go to the Springs you'd just had to follow a trail at that time. I didn't know them very well. I think she was much younger than him and they had a boy, they had a little boy. She was a red head, I remember that, very tiny.

BG: Which side of the road was their place on?

BH: As you drive out they were on the left hand side. The log cabin is still there, looks just the same.

BG: Would that be close to Day's place, Jim Day's house, where Phyllis is now, Phyllis Herning?

BH: Beyond that.

BG: Bob Straight's?

BH: I think even beyond that, wasn't it? We'll have to drive out and see. You know I don't even remember what Mr. Ackerman did. He was a little man, too. And very quiet. I don't think he was very outgoing as far as_____

BG: I wonder who would remember them. Who's been out here longer than you and I have?

BH: If we could just revive Tilly and Henry you'd get a lot of information.

BG: Well, what about the Wards, Charley Ward. When did they come out?

BH: I'm trying to think where he lived. Mattie would give you a lot of information.