

Interview with George Lyle, October 25, 2001. We are meeting at the home of Al and Bruth George, 512 Herning Rd., Fairbanks, AK. Mileages given are for Chena Hot Springs Rd. unless stated otherwise.

BR: When you first came out, how did you get to your homestead?

G: At Curry's Corner there was a road that just went in to the Hagaman homestead and a couple other places there (*the start of the present Hot Springs Rd.*) but you came on past Curry's Corner and the road went up over the hill, right up on top of the hill.

BR: Weller Hill, Rainbow Valley hill?

George: No, the hill beyond Curry's on the Steese Highway.

BR: Oh, Steele Creek Rd.

G: Yeah, Steele Creek branched off there and went up over the top of the hill. Right on top of the hill was the old North Pole townsite. Somebody tried to start a town named North Pole there. It sort of flattened out on top. You made a right turn and came down the hill over there by Bert Stimple's and Doc Fitz's place. That was the original way and it came out where those igloos are now. That was the end of the road when I came out here. There was a trail from there on over.

Al: The trail crossed the creek down there at the foot of the hill about where the road does now?

George: Then it kind of wandered over through Carl Herning's place and up that little draw where the top of the hill is. Later they put Chena Hot Springs Rd. straight on that section line or whatever it is.

BR: Do you know what year that was?

George: It was in the fifties, I think, when PK¹ got the first contract and cut part of the top of the hill down, then they moved Eberhardt Rd. down at an angle instead of coming right in at the top of the hill. Then in this last road building process, they put in that extra deep cut and moved the approach to it down a little farther yet.

¹ Peter Kiewit Construction Co.

Al: The people who weren't around at that time find it difficult to envision what the top of that hill really was. We used to drive right out of the top of that hill and turn and go down the grade.

BR: So what brought you to Alaska in the first place?

G: Well, after WW2, I came back from Europe and was working in Yosemite Park and then one day, we went over to eat and came back and our camp had all burned up. Burned up all our belongings for the whole crew and everybody was talking about opportunity in Alaska. And I said, "Well, that's a good time to go up and see what's going on up there."

BR: So this would have been what, '46, '47?

G: 1946. Summer of '46. So I said I'll go down and re-enlist in the army and go up there. So I went into the recruiter's office and told them I wanted to go to Alaska, wanted to sign up for eighteen months. He says to get a station of your choice, you've got to go for three years. I said, "Well good, that'll give me a chance to see what it's like up there." So that's how I originally got up here, came up on a troop ship, arrived in Whittier, Alaska, November of '46, got on a train and the train froze up, everything in the train was frozen. We got into Ladd field, early in the morning of the first of December at 45 below zero and it stayed that way until almost February before it went above 40 below. So I got introduced to one of the coldest winters up here, the same winter they set the record in Snag, 83 below that winter.

BR: You were in the army, here, for three years, so until '49.

G: Yes, and while I was in the service I looked at homestead lands and was just about ready to file on that piece of property alongside of Weeks Field where the hospital and all those other buildings are right now and that spring it was all under water. You could take a rowboat up to the postoffice, downtown, and I says, "I'm going out on the hills someplace," so I walked out here and looked at this property and filed on it.

BR: Someone mentioned you walking across from the base.

G: Yeah, after I filed on it, when I'd spend my weekends out here I'd put on snowshoes and come from the end of the runway across an old

winter trail that was down there, an old trail going to Chena Hot Springs at that time.

BR: When did you file?

G: It was in the spring of '47, actually the summer of '47. I didn't do any building until the spring of '48.

A: So you didn't know the Hernings at that point in time?

G: I met them when I came out here looking at the ground, and talked to them, showed them the map I had and they told me about where the place was. Carl had homesteaded over on that side and Don was just building a house across the road. About that same time Walter² was marrying Dorothy and they started building a cabin on the next place over, next to mine and behind Carl's. They started cutting the road there through on top of the hill, and we brushed a line out coming in this way and we decided that was too swampy and asked Carl Lindstrand about coming across (*his property*) on the top of the hill and he said, yeah, there's an old wood road part way up there now, just continue on with it.

BR: So, Carl Lindstrand was here. Who else was in the neighborhood at that time?

G: Henry and Tilly Brockman. They had a chicken ranch. Had about three hundred laying hens at that time. Then across Hopper Creek from them was Adolph Sherrer and on out farther was a wood cutting camp, O'Leary's.

BR: Was there anyone up on Amanita?

G: Carl (Lindstrand) had the property on both sides of the road and Brockman had property where Tillie's house was. Then down at the foot of the hill was Kruger, Joe Kruger. He was one of the first people I met when I came out here and he wanted to show me his greenhouse. I said, "What are all these pipes up in the air you're bumping your head on?" "Oh that's the heat," he said. "All these people think you've got to have heat down at the bottom," he said. "Take a look at nature," he says, "the sun's up in the air and the plants grow up to get to the heat, so we put the heat up here. The plants will grow up to it." He didn't have too much luck in his

² Walter Eberhardt married Dorothy Herning, sister to Carl and Don

greenhouse. That was the first place I ever had bear meat. He had a bear roast one day and wanted to invite us all in for dinner.

Carl Lindstrand filed on his place in 1938, then he went in the army and was in the army up at Nome or somewhere. He stayed in Alaska.

BR: Somebody said Carl Lindstrand helped survey this area.

G: I never heard him say anything about actually working a survey.

A: That would have helped because the corner up here on the highway is a two-way corner on the township so there would have been a survey post there he could use to locate his property.

BR: He was located in both townships, wasn't he? (1N 1E and 1N 2E)

G: Yeah. And then over on the other hill where Brice's place is, that was Lynn Funk's homestead. He was running a little dairy when I came here in the forties.

BR: I guess Mrs. Funk had a sort of a bakery there at one time.

G: Yeah, she used to bake quite a bit of bread for the neighbors and Adolph Sherrer used to bake bread and pastries for the whole neighborhood. He was a baker for the Kaiser's army in WWI. We used to get a lot of his recipes and cut them down. Some of his stuff was for fifty pounds of flour.

BR: What about the old fellow that lived at the end of what is now Severn's Rd.?

G: Yeah, he was quite a horticulturist and he experimented with a lot of different things and then the Experimental Farm came out and dug up a lot of his stuff after he died. Frank Betchart. We used to go down and visit him quite a bit then.

A: Was this the fellow who suicided?

BR: No, no. He lived on Hopper Creek. Was a woodcutter and had a partner.

G: Yeah, he had a little cabin in between where Lee Risse is and where Frank Fessler was (*on present Amanita*). There was a little knoll up there you can see from Hopper Creek if it isn't too grown up

now. I'm trying to think of the guy that homesteaded where Lee is. I worked with him at Alaska Coachways. He was a mechanic. He had an old Ford truck he drove to work.

BR: He drove through Earl's³ property, right?

G: Yeah, they had a different road at first. Then they moved it down on a property line, I guess. I'd have to look at a map.

BR: Maybe this is a good time to do it. I just happen to have here a 1953 school district map.

G: Yeah, Birkey, Merle Birkey, that's the one that had Risse's place. Ed Davis, he homesteaded over here (4 m.). Oh, here's Harry Denton (on Steel Creek). He was quite a character. He'd had a place further out and he was the one dynamited holes in the road and put tree stumps in to keep people from crossing, going on up to Chena Hot Springs. Nels Jackson (near 7 m.) had a wood camp.

A: Now, when they were out there as a wood camp, were they cutting on land they had filed on?

G: Evidently. They might have had a woodcutting permit. Some of those guys didn't get the land, they just got a permit to go out and cut wood. In the early days, this area right here (around Herning Rd.) was cut off for firewood for the N. C. power plant in town and they sledged it in, in the winter. These on the map are all the ones who actually filed. Where's Smallwood Creek? It doesn't show anybody up here and there were several woodcutter cabins and trapping cabins along the creek up in there. There were guys living up there part of the year.

A: What did they use for transportation? Trucks, tractors, horses?

G: Back in those days it was either pack horses or on foot. Or dog teams in the wintertime. There were no roads in there a vehicle could go on. Then of course, coming from the top of Gilmour Trail was a trail passable down to those first mines there.

A: The people that hauled hay, harvested in the summertime, then stacked it enough they could load and haul it in the wintertime, where did they cut? Down toward Loud's place then toward the river?

³ Earl Herning, another brother. He homesteaded north of 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ m.

G: Even farther on out. When you get out to Colorado Creek, they had a roadhouse there with a change station for horses for the sleds going up to the Hot Springs. Those meadows up there they harvested for hay and kept it right there. There were two roadhouses on the way up there.

BR: Colorado Creek and where would the other one be?.

G: I'm trying to remember the name of it. When they first started putting that road through, there was a fellow that bought it and he had a cabin and a lot of doghouses. He'd run up there in the wintertime with dogs and I can't remember the name of that one. It was on another creek there.

A: They could get a permit to use the Hot Springs but they couldn't file on it, is that how it worked?

G: No, the Hot Springs was a Lincoln land grant. Somebody actually owned it. I don't remember who the original owner was. And then a group of businessmen got together and bought it and Carl Wilson and his wife were managers, more or less in on the partnership. I know when we had that Herning Equipment, we sold them a little Oliver dozer and we took it in across country from Twelvemile Summit on the Steese. Came down an old trail and brought it there for them to clear the runway and brush it out again so they could start getting aircraft in and to start to open it up again.

And then he would come out in the wintertime with a 6x6 truck and let us know when he was going back and we'd follow him with our jeeps and go up and spend a day swimming and stay overnight and come back the next day, when it was still just a trail, before there was ever a road opened up.

BR: You say, "a Lincoln land grant." What do you mean by that? Was this a particular kind of land grant?

G: No, that was the name on certain land grants. Evidently, Pres. Lincoln instigated it or wrote it up originally, and that was the way they were transferring property. There was a copy of it on the wall for quite awhile when Carl Wilson was up there. I don't think I ever had a copy of it, because they had that one framed on the wall. I can remember reading it but I can't remember who-all signed it.

BR: You don't suppose it's still there in some form or another?

G: It's possible. When he died, Mrs. Wilson couldn't hold onto the property. The taxes were so outrageous that she couldn't afford it. For some reason, the property was in his name and she had to prove she had an interest in it, even though she was his wife. I don't remember all the particulars, but there was quite a write-up about it at the time. She would have had to come up with somewhere around \$500,000 to pay the taxes to keep the property. But each one of the kids had homesteaded a piece of ground all around there so the kids had different parcels that adjoined the Hot Springs.

BR: You notice that his name is on a piece of property on top of the hill above Rainbow Valley.

G: That would be where the school is now.

BR: Someone said maybe Hagaman bought that later.

G: Hagaman is over here. That's where the (early CHS Rd.) road came to, then Steele Creek went on up here. Up here where Gilmour Trail takes off is where the North Pole town site was. They had a post office. When I got here in '46, I think there was only one or two buildings left. And there was a six-inch well pipe sticking up where the government, Geophysical or somebody, had drilled a well up there and capped it. It was a test deal, like down there at the Permafrost area. They had a 6" well there and they had to cap it because water kept flowing out of it. I went down there one time when they had the cap off and there were little-bitty seashells coming out of it with the water.

BR: We always heard that Kivelehns, across the way, there, had an artesian well.

G: But the water wasn't very good to drink. It was kind of like swamp water. Here's Maranatha Children's Home, that was Funk's homestead. They left the country for a long time, then came back.

BR: Oh, I wanted to ask about your old tractor.

G: It's still sitting up there in the woods. We took the blade off of it years ago because it kept breaking the track frames. It was too much of a load for it. It was an old Caterpillar 22 and then the NC Company in town made up this blade during WW2 to put on it. Pan American had it to clear the runway. It was a locally made blade.....

BR: I remember it struggling to pull the old grader.

G: Oh, yeah. That grader was too much of a load for it.

A: How many families were in on that (buying the grader)?

G: Let's see. Us, Walter, Harold and you and Severns.

A: We each put in a twenty-dollar bill to make \$100?

G: It was a little more than that. Think it was \$50. I was going through some papers not too long ago and I think I saw the receipt from the FE company for that.

BR: That reminds me of the FE pipes that were the original culverts down here on the township road. Did you use your tractor to plant those things?

G: I think that was before I had that tractor. Think we dug that by hand, back then.

BR: I remember Al and somebody—were you in on hauling them home on the rack on top of our station wagon and the bows on top of our trailer? Every time you turned a corner, everything creaked and the dust fell out. An exciting trip.

A: It was Frank Griffin. He was on talking terms with anybody who worked with FE and that's how you worked your way up to the management where you might be able to buy a piece of pipe.

G: We got the township road going the year that PK had the contract to build up and gravel the Hot Springs road. They dumped gravel on the township road (*present Herning Rd.*) with their big scrapers (*in the process of hauling gravel from near the Little Chena*). We let them go through our field to the gravel pit down there.

BR: I ran across a picture of the Hot Springs Rd. in 1963 from the top of hill out here (5m).

A: I've still got the bumper that they pulled off the front end of my car. They were supposed to have only a half-mile or so of road open at any one time and instead they had three or four miles. And then

that heavy rain hit. So they had only one cat working on the job and all the others were pulling vehicles through the mud holes.

BR: You were driving Jeeps then....

G: Well, I had a car, too, but I used the Jeep for everything. I remember when they were starting to cut that hill down they had the cut only part way so I just put that Jeep in four-wheel drive and went up over the edge. When I came back through there, the guy says, "I think if you saw a tree that was leaning just a little bit you'd drive up with that thing."

When they opened the road up all the way to Chena Hot Springs that was the year we had the big flood. They just barely got it finished and then in '67, all that rain took it out. And they never rebuilt it for two or three years.

BR: The phone system was pretty new when the flood hit, too.

G: That was the only time Eberhardt Rd., on the hill there, washed out. They had just gone through, putting that underground phone line in and didn't pack the pole and the water got in there. Along this road here, too.

A: You could see the cable hanging where it had eroded out underneath it.

BR: When did you and Harold have the Oliver agency?

G: Let's see. Must have been '51, '52, somewhere along in there.

BR: How long did you have it?

G: Let's see. Harold and Carl started it. I was working at the M & O, at the time.

BR: Well, you sold several around the neighborhood. _We had one, and Fessler had one, I think.

G: Did he have the OC3 or OC6? And then the one up at Chena Hot Springs and one to Celia Hunter, when they started that lodge outside of McKinley Park. We took one down to them. The Experimental Farm got a dozer. Yeah, there were quite a few of them. People down at

Delta and down at Valdez. Sold quite a few of those little ones. They were a pretty popular little machine.

BR: That isn't what Carl Lindstrand had.

G: No, he had a Farmall M. He called it Emma, all the time. It was a rubber-tired one, had a bucket loader on it, one of those skip-loaders, I guess you'd call it because it had a hydraulic lift on it, but when you went to dump it you just tripped a lever and the bucket flipped over.

BR: I just remember the buzz saw on the back.

G: Yeah, he had buzz saw attachment he could put on the back of it. He'd put first one then, then another, depending on what he wanted to use.

BR: When did Everett come into the country?

G: Carl's brother? It was in the late '50's. He'd been up here once before, I guess, then Carl gave him that forty acres across the road. Or sold it to him or something. I don't see Adolph Sherrer on this map.

BR: There's just this little piece. Apparently he'd sold off the rest of it.

G: He had a large piece. He had a D2 cat that he used to farm with. He used to run a sled back and forth to haul stuff. When he got to Steele Creek Rd., vehicles could make it that far so he'd park his cat over here. Henry Brockman used to have a little Allis-Chalmers wheel tractor and he'd haul his chicken feed and stuff over from there. They'd get somebody to bring it out (from town). They had an old car and lots of times they left it out there and they'd run back and forth to town. A lot of people left their vehicles there. When I first came out, you couldn't get a wheeled vehicle across the creek in the summer-time.

BR: It must have been a regular swamp even if Harry Denton wasn't blowing holes in it.

G: He didn't do any right there. Well, he did try to stop people there at one time. The troopers came out. One time the road grader came out, plowing snow and plowed a berm across his driveway. He was out there jumping up and down and yelling at the grader operator.

The grader operator picked him up and stuck him headfirst in the snow bank and drove off. He wasn't too big a guy. They called him a banty rooster. I think Ackerman got that piece from him, out here (*near 8 m.*). That's where he used to dynamite the holes in the road and block it off.

BR: When did Charlie May end up out there?

G: He got out of the army after I did. Charles May or George May? One of them was in the army and homesteaded out there, must have been in the late '40's, maybe the summer of '49. They had a little saw mill there. That's how he got killed, one of the Mays. I think it was George. He was working the mill and a piece got caught by the saw and it threw it and hit him in the head.

BR: I understand that Frank Fessler owned a sawmill that Ackerman ran on his place because that was where the timber was.

G: Well, Ackerman had a little sawmill there but I don't remember Frank Fessler..... Well, he did work out there. I don't know whether he had an interest in the mill or not.

BR: You had to live on a homestead claim for how long if you were a veteran?

G: Six months. You could prove up in one year. But somebody said, "Why do you want to do it in one year? You'll start paying taxes on it." The regular Homestead Act is three years, then you have to clear so much land and have twenty acres under cultivation at the end of three years, live in your cabin seven months out of every year, then you don't pay taxes until afterward. So I went ahead and took the three years on mine. That's when I was raising oats mostly and then one or two years I raised potatoes. One year I had sixty ton. Quite a batch of potatoes to handle.

BR: What did you do with your hay?

G: There was just a few people had horses and a few had cows, just to have milk.

BR: There was a little dairying going on, wasn't there?

G: Yeah, Funks had a dairy over there, at that time, then when they came back in the country again they started a dairy down here (*on the*

present Funk Rd.)). Of course, Creamers was still in business. Bentley had shut down. Bentley's dairy was still in operation when I came in the '40's.

BR: We had barley and it had to be dried.

G: It took longer to mature than the oats did. The oats came on quicker and were ready to cut earlier, so you had better weather for drying it. Dornath, or somebody, did get a grain dryer in, one year. I tried barley one or two years, but I ended up binding it in bundles and sold it that way.

BR: That reminds me of Charlie Ward, since he was the one who did our little bit of farming. When did the Wards show up?

G: It would have to be in the early '50's. I'm trying to remember when that fire was over there (7 m.) '57? That's what started it. They were clearing land and burning brush piles. Let's see, whose cat was it we had out on that fire? The fellow from out on Farmers' Loop, had a D9. Paul Elbert. He brought it out there and asked me if I knew anything about the country there and I said yeah, I'd been all over it. "Well," he said, "Get on the cat with this guy and tell him what to look out for." So we got on that thing and started making fire line and when we got over on top of the ridge and down on the north side (*toward Smallwood Creek*), I said "We gotta watch out for old mining shafts over here, there's quite a few of them along that north side."

There was just scrub brush, mostly, and stunted tamarack and small spruce and I says, "There's a mine shaft over there, gotta stay clear of that. You just gotta keep your eyes open in the brush here and look for those spots." So we dropped the blade and started down the hill and all the sudden we could see stuff twenty, thirty feet on either side of us going downhill. We were on solid ice. There was about six or eight inches of moss and stuff and everything under was ice. We started down that hill and cleared a spot must have been 100 feet wide down to the bottom of the hill. No way you could get back up. We had to go around the draw to get back up on top again. But we made a firebreak.

A: What was the year Paul Elbert dropped his D9 in the lake?

G: He had some kid from California running that and he was going back, I forget where he'd been clearing.

BR: *What lake?*

G: It was a pond. We came down Yoder's road (*Love Rd. now*) to get down to it. Well, he was coming back over here and says, "Well, this is a nice open spot," so he just cut across, thought it was an open field. It was a pond that wasn't frozen too good. They had quite a time getting that out of there.

Then Ward brought a used dozer—he was working as a salesman at the N. C. Co.—and they brought an Allis-Chalmers tractor out and he says, "Get on it and start making fire line," so I spent a day or so on that one, making fire line and pushing burning stuff back in. One spot I almost got doused by a borate bomber that dumped right alongside of me.

BR: *Here's a freebie we found. (photos of Fairbanks in 1949 and 1999).....*

G: That was our tank farm here and the ski run, and they used to have another tank farm in here.... (*The Haines and other pipelines supplied the tank farms.*)

A: *Every time I think of those pipelines, I remember the restaurant I stopped at on the way to Haines. Some guy says, What does lake trout taste like in Canada? Somebody in the back of the room pipes up, "Diesel fuel." because of all the leaky pipes along that string of lakes down in Canada.*

BR: *How long were you down in that part of the world?*

G: Tok? I was down there in '53-'54 or was it '54-'55. Came back in '56. At that time our headquarters were in Whitehorse, the old Canol line. We had the four-inch line from Skagway to Whitehorse, two-inch line from Whitehorse back to Watson Lake for the airfield there, and a three-inch line to Fairbanks. Then a six-inch line to Norman Wells which they took out about that time, closed down the refinery. We worked that line until '55 when the Haines line was put in and we closed out the old Canol line then and just operated the Haines-Fairbanks line.

I retired from it in '79, about the time they closed that down and just had the portion between Fairbanks and Eielson and tied into the refinery at North Pole. Now I understand they've closed that down and do pretty near everything by railcar or truck, because the amount

of fuel is cut way down to what they used to do. During the height of the Cold War we were putting a thousand barrels an hour into Fairbanks and they were burning the fuel that fast proving they could keep so many aircraft in the air twenty-four hours a day.

BR: Sounds like a lot of pipeline.

G: Six hundred and twenty-three from Haines to Fairbanks and the old Canol system was quite a bit more than that. Of course, that was a three-inch line.

BR: A name I've run into you might know something about—have you ever heard of Zehnder Camp? It was mentioned in a book about the FE Company. I assume it was someplace along the railroad north of College Rd. Over where the busses are now, maybe. Then it's mentioned again in Neil Davis' book about his dad who was a cook there during the war.⁴

G: Yeah, that's where our office was. What was the name of that camp?

A: The Signal Corps had a building or two in there for a while.

G: Can't think of the name of it now. Burch, Lytle and Green was a construction company that had shops in there. North Camp, yeah.

A: Why would it have been called Zehnders?

G: It might have been their homestead originally. (*On the school district map*) they show that as Bentley's homestead. But in '53 that camp was still in there. There was a trucking company using the shop buildings in the back part, but the houses had either been torn down or moved away. And all the barracks—and family housing up in the front. Let's see, there was our station foreman, Howard Shore, Ray Skelton, Alan Smith, most of those guys are all dead now. They were working as operators on the pipeline. Before they built that shop down at the foot of Birch Hill, in the fifties.

Alan Smith and his wife died just a couple years ago, Howard Shore's been gone for quite awhile.

⁴ According to Neil Davis, Zehnder Camp was in the general area of OK Lumber and vicinity. He says the camp provided housing and offices for military contractors. I'm not sure that these camps are one and the same.

Ray Skelton, he was chief of police at one time. There were a lot of funny incidents with Ray. He bought a brand new John Deere crawler tractor, little dozer, and he had a place out on Chena Pump Rd., out at the very end by the river and he was working out there piling up brush and burning it. He kept pushing stuff up and a log came up and knocked the air cleaner off his tractor. Well, he didn't think there was enough dust in the air to worry about and run it and run it and run it and finally it wouldn't run anymore. He took it in and they wanted to know what he'd been doing. Well, he'd just been using it. Well, how long have you had the air cleaner off. Oh, about a year. Well, you've run so much dust through it, it's bored the cylinders out so big we gotta go to forty over.

Then he started building a house and dragging logs up. He had a pretty good high cliff there to drag the logs up and slide them over. Well, he pulls a log up and jumps off and he didn't get the tractor out of gear and it went over the cliff. It was just one thing after another. He came to work for us, after he was chief of police and we asked him, what did he know about a police force. He said, "Nothing. I just stuck around there. I thought somebody would come along who knew something about it, but no one ever did." So he finally got out of it.

Then one day he came to work and he said, "The house burned down last weekend while I was gone." He'd just bought a new chain saw. He started to town to go to work and he remembered he'd left the chain saw outside so he went back and put it in the house. He'd stoked up the stove and forgot to close the draft. So when he got back, the house had burned down and his new chain saw was gone.

While he was police chief, he came home for lunch one day, took his gun belt off and laid it on the sofa and him and his wife were eating lunch. Pretty soon they heard a shot. The kid had picked up the gun and killed himself. That was a blow to their marriage. Then they adopted that native girl. I run into her in town once in awhile. She's turned out to be a pretty nice person. He was the one that overfilled a tank, over at the base one day and the boss called him into the office and said, "How can you sleep on the job?" Well, he was trying to work on the base in the daytime and on his homestead in the other part of the time without getting any sleep. So he'd gone to sleep and run this tank over. While the boss was chewing him about going to sleep on the job, he started snoring.

Back in those days, the Co-op had a big root cellar there by where the Club Car was.⁵ Jim Gunning had the Club Car. We used to store a lot of vegetables there. Paul Elbert used to grow a lot of cabbages and carrots and store them in there. We stored potatoes there as well as in the root cellar at home here.

BR: How long did the Co-op last?

G: I don't know. It was in operation in '46 when I came, then I started raising potatoes and bringing them in there. Harold and I were working together on it. He had a few acres down in front of his house. I had that old ton-and-a-half truck and we used to haul a lot of potatoes with it.

BR: This was up over Steele Creek Rd?

G: Yes. Now, here's Reno subdivision, that's where Kasalek built that house on the corner (*of Old Steese and CHS Rd*). That was an interesting house because that was built out of packing crates from the Ladd Field dump. Those boxes were twenty feet long by 6 feet high and 6 feet wide. There was quite a lot of lumber in those.

There was a story about some people that homesteaded out near Two Rivers Lodge, on the other side of the road. A big family moved in there and Walter (*Eberhardt*) swapped haying equipment with them a few times. One time he went out and they had moose that was going bad hanging in the barn. He made some remark about they should take care of it. No, the guy said, when it goes bad we throw it away and go get another one. We don't pay any attention to seasons out here.

Niilo Koponens were the first people I ever saw that had their cattle in their house. They said the cattle helped heat the house. Well, Ed Davis did the same thing over here on his place. He built that long building and put the house on the top of the upper end of it and had all the cattle, sheep and goats and chickens and pigs below.

BR: This is the property coming down the hill at four mile?

G: Yeah, right across the road from the igloos. Then they started a Children's home in there later on. Yes, he had a long building, I helped build it when I was homesteading. He was running the Co-op,

⁵ On the Old Steese north of Trainer Gate Rd.

he was the manager of the Co-op at that time. He had a truck and we used both our trucks hauling potatoes. I don't remember whether he was growing potatoes at that time. He was clearing land after he built that house and I think he did raise potatoes for a couple years, then put it all into hay or something. Everyone in the neighborhood used to complain, said he was feeding dogs to his dogs. But he was getting stillborn calves from Creamer's Dairy and everybody thought his dogs were eating other dogs.

BR: No one has ever mentioned who the manager of the Co-op was.

G: Yeah, I don't know when he became manager. He was manager when I first got into it. I got out of the service in '49 and I hauled a bunch of building supplies up for him from Spokane when I came back up the highway the summer of '49 and helped him build his house. It was about where that cabin is now (*CHS and Love Rds.*) and extended on down.

Then they built that house that's there now, the big one, and when they were building that, the Children' Home, they were going to pour the foundation and we told them, the way they had it wasn't going to work. When you pour concrete into that deep a thing, it's going to spread out, they didn't have enough reinforcing for their forms. "Oh, it's going to be all right." Well, they poured it and it blew out so they had a basement full of concrete. It took them a while to get that straightened out. I can't remember the name of people building that. I don't know whether they had a children's home in mind when they built it or whether that came afterwards. It was after Ed Davis had been gone quite awhile and I don't remember the people's name.

This wasn't Edby Davis. This Ed Davis was from Davis, California, from a well known family down there. They had a big ranch and after his parents died, he went back on that ranch. I stopped to visit him one time and he was getting Alzheimers or something like that.

BR: Where were you from?

G: California. I was born down in the oil fields, down at Taft, southwest of Bakersfield. Then we had a ranch up in the foothills in Madeira County about thirty miles from Yosemite Park. Dad was one of the original surveyors to survey that country. He came down from Oregon. He'd come down surveying homesites and homesteads, then he'd go back up to Oregon and he said the last time he went down he didn't buy a round trip ticket and he couldn't afford to buy one to get

out again so he just stayed there. Then his mother homesteaded a piece next door to him, so we had a 400 acre homestead. Well, the 160 he homesteaded, the 160 his mother homesteaded, then he bought two other pieces of ground people were going bankrupt on. He bought that eighty acres for \$3.85 an acre at a tax sale, I think.

BR: Where in Oregon was he from?

G: Around Prineville. I got a map and history that one of my brothers put together several years ago of that area and the different families. My great-grandmother was a Huntley. They all had homesteads in that area. The Huntley of Huntley and Brinkley was a distant relative.

Transcribed and edited by Bruth George

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

name

date