

Visit with Terry and Ann Moran, 16 May 2001, at their residence, 730 El Rancho Lane off Bennett Rd. Bruth George is the other voice. Mileages are on Chena Hot Springs Rd. unless noted.

B: When did you folks come out here?

T: 1951.

B: How did you find this place?

T: Fabian down here and a guy by the name of Bowen that used to live up here that I was in the army with. They told me about it. Bowen sold to Jennings and Jennings sold to Coty.

A: One time we were visiting in Yellowstone Park and going down this little pathway and someone said, "Hi. Hi there." You know who it was? Carl Herning.

T: We met more people that lived in Fairbanks or were out on vacation. Some old fellow coming up the path says, "Hi, where you from?" I told him. "I got a boy up there, maybe you know him." He gave me the name and he's the guy I was going to for a therapist.

B: This is a 1953 School District map. Here you are. Were you coming in by Steele Creek Rd.?

T: Yes. From the hill (at about 1 M on CHS Rd.) over to the other side of Gettinger's, that part of Chena Hot Springs Rd. wasn't in. The year before the military came in, we got together and collected money and got the road commission to come in. All they did was laid a grade (on Bennett Rd). We put together \$400. This was matching. Then when the military came in they fixed this road up rather than go that way (Hot Springs Rd.) because it was cheaper. All they did was widen it out and wherever there was a low spot they took a grader and made a ditch. No culverts, no ditches, no nothing. It was the best road we had. Then when the State took over we had to have ditches and all this fancy stuff and there went the road.

B: The map shows Bennett Rd. stopping here at Fabian's.

T: That's where the end of it was at that time. It was a wood trail.... When Bennett left, his cabin was up there right next to the where the fire department is now. Real old cabin. Might even have fallen down by now. He enjoyed being in a rustic situation. I always figured he was a WWI vet, disabled. He never seemed to have to do much work to get by. He fiddled around, raised a few potatoes.

B: Did you know Voris Patrick that Woods bought from?

T: He was something of a character. I always figured there was something wrong there. He was a good mechanic, electrician and all that. He was working for City Electric and here he moves out here to raise potatoes. Now, he was making union wages. He just got tired of working for

other people and wanted to be by himself. He was so good natured, everybody out here took advantage of him.

B: Supposedly the community went together and bought some kind of a fire truck and kept it at his place.

T: Sounds familiar but..... Dr. Fitz (a minister) lived right over there. Bert (Stimple) says, "I have to get up at midnight to put alcohol in my gas tank. Otherwise, he'll give me hell."

B: Dr. Fitz must have been here when you came out.

T: Yes. Bert Stimple moved out here after we were here. He was over on Farmers' Loop. Almost across from Grenac Rd.

B: What about Farkas? When did they come in?

T: After we were here. There was a big fight over that. He didn't want the road to go down to Chena Hot Springs. He wanted it to end at his property. So the State said to Fabian, "Well, you don't have to give him a place to park." He can drive down there, but if you don't want him to park there, send him out." There was no turn around, no nothing.

He was a real hot-head. He finally conceded the thing could go down through his property. He started telling them where to go. He told them to go right down into the middle of that swamp, thought that would kill the whole project. Well, they just ignored him and kind of met him halfway. What they should have done was gone up on the property line between his place and Loud's and they would have come out right on top of that hill. The way it is now, his place is chopped up, with the road in the middle.

B: Where did you folks come from?

T: Montana. Conrad, near Great Falls.

B: You came up with the military?

T: Yes. The old guy that owned TipTop tried to sell me a half acre out on South Cushman out where they are now. I laughed. I said, "What the hell do I want that for?" He says, "Don't worry, you'll be back, in about six months."

I got out of the army, outside, right when everybody went on strike, one union right after the other. So I said, "That's enough of that crap." I loaded our stuff up and came back up. You could do things here but out there it was like here now. At that time, if you wanted to work, here you could find something to do. If nothing else, you could go out and cut wood. Now, you gotta have BLM come along a put a ribbon on the tree before you can cut it. Same thing with moose hunting. We got a moose every year. I was working for the railroad and I'd take my leave and use it get a moose. We'd take the whole family and make a vacation out of it.

When I started raising hay for (Minot) Howard¹, the moose started coming through here. We had as high as fourteen come through here at one time. They had a ritual. They'd come through this valley, go over to Wood's place and clean up the potatoes that he threw out, go down to Gettinger's. Five days later, they were right back here. That's how I got a bull one fall.

B: You mention raising oats. Did you grow potatoes, too, like everyone else?

T: This part of the house was up on the hill, just a cabin and I took money and bought machinery to raise potatoes so I could get money to build a house. Ain't going to make you any money.

We went without a well for twenty years. I figured we'd have to go two hundred-fifty, three hundred feet to get water, the way everybody else was talking. Finally, when I put a well in, I had to only go a hundred twenty-four feet. Excellent water. Fabian Lane is a dividing line. This side of the road, good water, other side bad water. If you kinda watch the tree lines, wherever there's spruce, there's pretty apt to be bad water.

B: Did you know the Kivehlen's?

T: Yes. He used to be a police officer in town. If you saw him, you'd feel sorry for him being a police officer. He looked like he was almost one foot in the grave. Skinny and frail looking. Tougher than whalebone. He was quite a bit older than we were. Probably fifteen years older.

That fire station (on Steele Creek Rd.) was humorous when they put it in there. Illegal as all get out. They didn't have enough land on this side of the road and the property they bought extended on the other side just a little bit. So to make it legal, they said, "Let's just include both of them."

(tape change)our kids had to walk up to the top of the hill here and that guy (school bus driver, Carl Herning) was never a minute early, never a minute late. Charlie Ward (who drove for Carl, later) was the same way....

B: What was your work?

T: I worked for the railroad. Car inspector.

B: How long did you folks raise potatoes?

T: Eight or ten years, I guess. What happened, I was doing real good, working four to twelve, or relief shift, either one, and I put an ad in the paper and I was selling a hundred pounds to individuals, all over town. That added up to about eighty ton a year. These guys got ring-rot in their potatoes that they were selling to the Base and the Base turned them down. They run to town and were selling for two dollars a hundred and these damn-fool people say, "Hey, that's a good buy." Thirty days later the sack collapses (from rotting potatoes) and I'm getting phone calls saying, "You SOB. Are you the guy sold us those potatoes?" Ruined the market. You can't fool the public.

¹ Minot Howard operates the riding stable on Bennett Rd.

In the meantime, I was clearing more land anyway and the dairy business was starting in pretty good so I was going to raise barley. Thought about going into a dairy, myself. In the meantime, Matanuska was in here and about the time people had a bunch of cows ready to produce, they pulled the plug and closed the creamery.....

Carl Wilson never did anything with that property (where Weller School is now). Hagaman got ahold of that property.

When they put the power line in here, Steve Kerner was the chief cook, bottle washer and secretary and everything at Golden Valley at that time, the only guy. So I went down to see if I could get power. He says, "Well, bring a truck down here and I'll give you poles and guy wires. You put it in and I'll come out in the evening and hook you up." That's how you got your power. If you didn't want to put the pole in you were just SOL. If I'm not mistaken, he had another job. Golden Valley was just a part time job. Electricity probably came in in '53 because we were using lamps the first couple years.

That's the whole point up here. You could do things like that. Now if you were in Washington or Oregon, all these places outside, you had to have a license, almost, to go to the bathroom. Most of the people, when we first came up here, were jack-of-all-trades, really didn't know a lot about anything but could get by.

When Ann's dad was a cook at Miller House, he was called for jury duty (in Fairbanks) and had to walk in. You tell that today, they'll call you a liar. We complain because it takes so long to drive up there.

B: So you grew up in this country, Ann?

A: Yes.

B: What was your family's name?

A: Carrol. My dad was from Aiken, Minnesota. The gold rush brought him up. My mother was born up here. Her name was Martin. Her dad came up with the gold rush, I imagine.

T: Her dad talked about them not having outboard motors, then. They put a rope on the boat, one guy poles the boat away from the bank, another pulls upriver. I can't even imagine the pain and suffering of trying to do something like that.

A: My mom and dad were in the store business for years and years. I left home when I was twenty. I was born in Ft. Yukon. They had a store up there.

B: NC? Or AC?

A: No. James A. Carrol Store. It was competing with Alaskan Commercial. No, it was Northern Commercial, by golly. There were four stores. Ft. Yukon had two schools, a hospital. Real nice place when I was a kid. Now it's a nice place to be from.

T: Well, the fur business is gone.

A: We even had a movie theater.

B: When did you get phones in here?

T: Around '63. There were so many people on the line.

A: Remember the time you tried to sell a car?

T: I had a pickup to sell. Somebody called and one of the neighbor's kids cut in and said, "That pickup ain't worth a damn." Another man down here, old man Loud, used to call up his kid to get him up in the morning. The kid lived in a different place. I'm getting off work at midnight and I don't appreciate getting waked up at five o'clock in the morning. So I figured, he's fair game and I come home, I pick up the phone and call him. Didn't take very long before it stopped.

Ernie Plunkett bought this little piece down below the gun site (on Gettinger's). Gettinger made a deal, I think, swapping some land on CHS Rd. to get that forty acres. At one time there was talk of putting (Weller) school out there. That would have been an ideal place, that place where the big dish is sitting. That's where the school would have been....

B: Remember Denton, down by Steele Creek? He was the one who fought the Chena Hot Springs Road going through.

T: No, but you had to have one in every neighborhood..... There was some old guy I knew that was back here (on Amanita). Frank Fassler. He had an Oliver cat, same as I had. They were a reasonable price and Herning got them in here.

B: So that was when Harold had the agency?

T: Yes. Trouble with Herning trying to sell that farm machinery, there wasn't enough of it. You have to have like Craig-Taylor now. They've got the farm machinery line but they've also got a whole bunch of other stuff that keeps it going. Back-hoes, Bob-cats, all that kind of stuff. I had a little OC3 and I run that to death and got a bigger one. Then I wanted to get a wheel tractor. I was borrowing from the Farm Home Administration and that guy says, "You gotta sell that to get this." I didn't really want to sell it, but when they got their thumb on you, you gotta.

B: How many acres of hay did you grow?

T: Probably eighty acres or so. Started out with oats, then went into brome hay.

A: Here's Annie Creamer(on the map).

B: You knew her?

A: Yes. When we lived in town. We used to live around the corner. She'd come over and bring ice cream and milk. She was real nice.

B: When you left home from Ft. Yukon, you came into Fairbanks?

A: I wrote to the employment office, of course, before I came down, to make sure. They said there was all kind of jobs. So I came over with my brother and his family. First thing I did was go to the employment office and got a job, I think it was babysitting. What was the name of that Fish and Wildlife fellow, got killed? In an airplane. Anyway, that's where I met Harold Herning. He was with Fish and Game. He knew my dad.

Everytime a good job would come up, the employment office would call me. "Oh, I got a better job for you." I finally ended up at the Frances Doyle Café. I was a waitress.

T: Kind of like a little dinner house. Lower First Avenue, near the Masonic Hall. Frances Doyle was a character, genuine sourdough if there ever was one.

B: Someone mentioned Tilly Brockman running, maybe owning, a place called the Kopper Kettle.

T: That was on First Avenue. Tivoli Café was in there, too.

A: People were so nice, those days. They'd help you.

T: We got laid off at the Base, so me and another guy ran a wood saw all winter. We probably made as much money as if we'd sat on our butts and rode unemployment. That spring, he was working on his house and I was going to build here, so we went to the Employment Office and told them, "There's no more wood to cut and we don't have jobs. We want to work on our houses, but we'd like to go on unemployment. He says, "That's no problem. You guys stayed on that job all winter. We'll put you on self-employment." Can you imagine that happening today? You could talk to anybody and somehow or another, something would work out.

B: Who were you selling wood to?

T: We weren't selling, we were sawing wood for other people. Bill Thomas had an Allis-Charlmers tractor with a saw on that back of it. People would get the wood delivered and we'd saw it for them. We got a dollar a cord, each, and the saw got a dollar, the guy that owned it. If you worked real hard, you could get eight dollars a day. O'Leary's had a big woodyard, over in Graehl. I mean, those rows of wood were a quarter of a mile long. We'd saw and saw and think, man, we've got a pile of wood here, then we'd look at O'Leary's and we hadn't touched that sucker.

I had an old Chevy truck I drove to town one day. Battery wasn't very good and I didn't want to get a new battery. It had a good place to crank it. I pulled up over at Gavora Mall. When I come back out, I pulled the crank out and two old guys were sitting there and they came running over. The truck just started right up and they just couldn't believe it. Almost made them homesick.

We had an older one when I worked for the railroad, and when winter came I never bothered to use the starter because it was too hard on the battery. I had what was called a Sportsman heater and I'd stick it under the corner of the engine by the starter and that kept the engine warm. I'd put a tarp over it. Other guys sitting there, no heat, no nothing, are crying because they can't keep their vehicles going. I had a little ditty box on the back for the kids when we went to town. Had blankets and stuff....

A: When I was walking up the road from the field, one day, I saw three animals. Thought they were dogs till one climbed a tree.

T: Jerry Coty had a lynx trying to get into his chickens. We had fox dens around here. I'd fill that hole up and stomp it shut and come by the next day and the hole's dug out again. Right out in the middle of the field. I filled it up three or four times. They finally moved farther down in the field and I left them alone.

A: Remember when we first moved out here, I used to lock the door when the moose came around?

T: The house was dug into the hillside right next to a big birch tree. The moose was standing on the house to reach the birch tree. She runs in a locks the door.

B: There's some wonderful animal stories, like the one about the bear on the Presses house.

A: Betty Press was related to me.²

T: That Betty was an artist that wouldn't quit. She could sit here and draw a face and put in every mark.... I imagine she was just a natural artist.

A: I'm a painter, too, but I gave the best ones away. Here's one Betty Press did of my mother. Betty was my second cousin or something like that.

Transcribed and edited by Bruth George

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

² Lloyd and Betty Press lived