

DON ADLER - Redmond, Wash

July 23, 1973

REEL 1

Don Adler was born July 12, 1896 in New York City...on the East Side. His brother Dave Adler was two years older. Dave passed away about four years ago.

Don Adler was studying for the concert circuit....piano. He was advancing in his work and had great talent, according to his instructor. Adler wanted to go into the Army during World War I, but his instructor tried to stop him...saying there were plenty of men who could go fight the Germans who did not have the talent that Adler had and might lose if he were killed. His instructor told him if he enlisted not to come back to him. Adler did enlist, and he was turned away when he returned from the war. His instructor had studied under List.

Adler got work as an entertainer. He joined a carnival and traveled to Seattle with it. He had been reading about all the gold in Siberia and in Seattle he talked to a man who had been in Alaska before. Adler decided he would go to Siberia via Alaska. He bought a pack and outfit, got a steerage ticket to Alaska, and headed for Cordova. That was 1923.

He never did get to Siberia. In Cordova Cap Lathrop owned a cabaret and Adler tried to get a job playing piano in the place (since he was so much better a musician than the person who had the job). The manager of the cabaret told him to go to Anchorage to see Cap Lathrop if he wanted the job. Lathrop turned him down without even listening to him play. Adler went back to Cordova and opened his own cabaret in the Odd Fellows Hall and soon all the business left Lathrop's place and patronized Adler's. Lathrop blackballed Adler, sending word to Fairbanks and Anchorage not to hire him if he ever came around. The blackballing was effective because Adler couldn't get a job doing anything in Fairbanks. He and a friend Clyde Ibrid (check tape for spelling) ate rabbits (thank goodness it was a good rabbit year!) in Fairbanks for a long time...snaring the rabbits themselves.

Adler picked up an occasional piano playing job...many times on the prostitutes' "line" where homesick or nostalgic miners sometimes would have him repeat one tune scores of times.

Finally one day Oscar Webber, the theatre manager, was desperate for an organist and piano player to replace his sick entertainer (for the silent movies). Of all days, Cap Lathrop was in town and at the theatre that night. He marveled at the talent of "that new feller" and told Webber to hire him permanently. Webber thought he would get fired by Lathrop because he had gone against Lathrop's orders and temporarily hiring the blackballed Adler. Adler and Lathrop hit it off okay after that and Lathrop hired him. Adler was vice president of the company when he retired, but the beginning wasn't so glorious. He played the organ and piano for the movies. He also opened the coal bunkers in the mornings, checked the Lathrop Apartments, checked the theatre and cleaned it up. Gathered news for the News-Miner and in the process learned to operate the linotype...finally setting

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his own column. W.F. Thompson was editor. One special chore Adler had was to see that Wrong Font had a bottle of booze in his desk every day.

The only vacation Adler ever had from Lathrop Company was the week he got married.

He tells about meeting such famous entertainers as Al Jolson during World War II.

Recalls that he was chief music director for the United States Lines (before heading west with the carnival and eventually to Alaska). He traveled back and forth across the Atlantic on passenger ships in that job.

He met his wife on a boat to Alaska. She played the sax as an entertainer on the boat. Courted her on the boat. Courted her through the mail. First time he kissed her, he said, was when she got off the boat in Alaska. He made his own recording for his wedding march (We are Gathered Together Here and the St. Louie Blues).

Significant date in his life: Nov. 15, 1941. That was when Adler organized the National Guard, Company C. 297th infantry, Alaska Scouts. Some Fairbanks men who joined up then were Earl Beistline, Joe Kelly, Harvey Marlin.

REEL 2

Talks more about the Alaska National Guard. He was sent to Anchorage and then Annette Island (Major). Commanding officer of Annette for awhile. Dispatched to the Aleutians as head of special services (entertainment). Did advance planning and accompanied such famous figures as Bob Hope, Ingrid Bergman (he really like her...a LADY in ever way, he said), Al Jolson, Joey Brown. Talks about Captain Mad Man Smith in Annette during the war.

Lived in Fairbanks on Illinois Street (in house that Cecil Wells later bought and later Jim Messer bought...messer this date has moved the house to Wells Street since the corner of Minnie and Illinois has been converted into service station).

His daughter is Jo Anne Tollifon (in states). Accompanying Adlers on this trip to Alaska is grandson Ted Tollifon. Tells of seeing old, old friends like the Rogges, Herings, Jack Linck.

Talks about his brother Dave Adler who was secretary of the Elks Lodge in Fairbanks for 25 years. Don was Department Commander of the American Legion here. Also in the Forth et 8.

Mary Adler (Dave's widow) enters conversation. Talk about E.B. Collins as the first exalted ruler of the Elks and Dave secretary for 25 years. Dave was the last of the charter members of the Elks.

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He talks about Frank Nash (in Fairbanks now, also) and Donald McDonald. He calls McDonald a "man of vision" in road building.

Adler was in Cordova when President Warren Harding visited Alaska in 1923. Out of the service in 1946. Retired and left Alaska in 1947. He still teaches in the Seattle area. Recalls the Cordova days...ore hauling from Kennecott.

NOTE: Adler's address: 18834 N.E. 95th St.
Redmond, Wash 98052
Phone: (206) 885-1651