

AMANTE TONSETH HANSON - Fairbanks

July, 1973

REEL 1

Amante Tonseth, 133 Fourth Ave., Fairbanks. This log house is the one that Mr. Tonseth bought. Two rooms on the east side were moved up from Chena and added to the log house. Those two rooms were moved in 1909.

Amante was born in Portland, Ore., June 3, 1900. Parents both Norweigan...same area from Norway but did not meet until they lived in Portland. She was their fourth child.

Her father tried his luck in the gold rush. He went to Dawson in the fall of 1900 and stayed that winter and came out. Thomas Henrik Tonseth, the eldest son, died in 1903 of spinal menengitis at the age of 9. Younger brother born in Oct. 1903 and named after the older brother and father. "We called him 'Little tom'". Einar and Borahil were between me and Little Tom.

Father came to Chena. Sister died Jan. 1907 at the age of 9 and also died of spinal menengitis. Sent for mother and two children (remaining children). Einar died in 1968 (at any rate she says he died five years ago and this was taped in summer of 1973). Her other brother went to and graduated from Anapolis in 1925. Retired as a captain in the Navy.

Amante and her mother came on the steamer Humbolt to Skagway. She was seven at the time. Came from Whitehorse to Tanana on the Steamer Selkirk. Went up to Chena from Tanana on the the old Lavelle Young (she also saw the same boat in the spring of 1921 on the Kantishna, not Kantishna but Kuskokwim River. It was the same boat that Barnett came to Fairbanks in when Fairbanks first started. Mrs. Chrysler was the school teacher at Chena. Her father worked in the store owned by VAshon and Sterling. He was tranferred to Fairbanks where they located the store at the northwest corner of First and Lacey Streets. He was a warehouseman. He never did mine. In 1900 he was a mule skinner... teamster in Dawson. On 11th of Nov. 1911 he had accident.

School: Eighth Avenue and Cushman. She describes Old Main. Bu the time it burned her oldest son was in the fifth grade.

She arrived in Chena 14 September 1907. Had always seen her father in a beard but to welcome us he had shaved and we did not recognize him. Lived there until November, 1909 and moved to Fairbanks. Describes house in 1909. Father very religious man and visited old timers on Sundays in hospital. Wooden bridge across Chena went out with spring breakup...or in July when high water came and brought drift wood. Tells about the old narrow gauge railroad. Her first trip to Fairbanks on the narrow gauge was at Christmas time in 1907 to visit father's sister Mrs. Jack Slipperin. First recollection of Fairbanks was stopping at the old Lacey Street Hotel. Also going to the Eagles Hall and attending different events there. Moose Hall on Wickersham between Second and Third...lots of events there. One of the last things she attended there was the funeral of Dr. DeLavern.

Back to the house. Einar went outside in 1915 to attend Oregon Agriculture College in Corvallis. Before that he worked as a clerk in Healy's store on lower first avenue. He later bought that and had it a couple years and then joined Lavery's staff. Later he was city clerk; deputy marshall once also.

Amante's father always wanted to be a farmer. He assumed the debts of an old man and re-located the homstead up the Chena River about 17 miles. Settled up the estate after the elder Tonseth's death. Two brothers divided up the ranch and Amante took the log house in Fairbanks.

In 1913 her father brought down saplings of birch that they planted. Now huge big birch in front yard. She reminisces about old places in town and how progress is destroying the old Fairbanks. Lost 90 per cent of what she owned in the 1967 flood. Goes into detail about flood and damage.

REEL 2

Rooms from Chena cabin moved up in the winter of 1915. Her father went to Chena in 1906. Probably built in 1905 or 1906. Main house in Fairbanks about the same time. After big fire of 1906 it was built, she thinks. Divorced 25 years ago last January.

Graduated from high school 55 years ago last spring...Margaret Keenan was principal then. Later married Martin Harris, influential man in the Territory in 1907. Lived in Valdez a number of years. Talks about school nad principal. Alton Nordale died in a plane crash . His remains were recognized later because of the back brace he had to wear (the plane burned). His daughter is Mary. Mrs. Nordale was Kathryn Driscoll Nordale. Son is Jim NOrdale, attorney for borough presently. Mary is attorney, too. One time Alton was trying to get to his seat...heavy and seat busted...everybody laughed.. Keenan very severe and angry at laughing.

After graduation she went to 18 Mile Roadhouse to tutor three children of the owner of the Roadhouse. Ann Bergman, Bobby Sheldon's wife, was eldest of three and Amante got her ready to enter 8th grade in town.

Examinations at Mason Clinic since 1958 (cancer). In 1958 went out to Rebeccah Assembly and cooking at the jail at the time. Eva Larson talked her into seeing her doctor in the Mason Clinic. Found that she had tumor on intestin. Entered hospital July 1, 1958. Tumor was full of malignant cancer. Fortunate. Father died of cancer of liver and gall bladder in 1939. Mother had cancer of breast three years later. Cancer had already spread and for two years she took care of her, watching her die by the inches. Monday will be 39 years since mother died. Agony.

Amante bought her first car to celebrate cure of cancer. Wrecked the car on the way outside. Broken ankle from that. Another exam. Found little cancer in the rectum. Had a complete colostomy. It will be 14 years the 26th of August since that colostomy. Later found that she was diabetic.

. Last summer she came up to Alaska because her oldest son and wife were King and Queen Regenst for the Pioneers in Anchorage.