

## Summary for H87-82-02

### James Savage and Dr. Raymond Evans are interviewed by Gayle Maloy in Fairbanks, Alaska on 10/12/84

#### SIDE 1

Gayle Maloy interviews James Savage and Dr. Raymond Evans in Fairbanks, AK, on 10/12/84. Savage was the head of public health in Fairbanks, and Dr. Evans was a medical doctor and medical examiner for AK from 1962-1972.

Savage came to AK in March 1940. He came looking for a job; the Depression was on in the States. In 1932 he rode freights and hitchhiked cross-country from New England to California to see the Olympics. After he got out of college he moved to CA, getting a job in a Hollywood restaurant. Lucille Ball, Stewart Irwin, and June Collier ate there. He was a dishwasher, a job he's worked many times. He made \$17 a week in Hollywood. He saved his money for the \$40 steerage to Seward and the \$28 rail to Fairbanks. (He had a degree in microbiology, and was 26 or 27 at this time.)

Nat Gerson, a friend of Savage's was going to UAF. They and steerage friends pitched a lean-to by the railroad roundhouse (where the industrial area is now). They hunted rabbit. Savage's first job was peeling poles for tripod poles for telephone wires. Then he worked at Ladd Field/Ft. Wainwright. Fairbanks in 1940: they were paving the street in front of the Federal Building; everyone knew everyone else in town.

Savage was transferred to Yakutat Field. He joined the Army, but he always knew he wanted to come back to Fairbanks. In Fairbanks, he worked as a carpenter, building a lot of houses. He tells how Chuck West and Phil Johnson were starting a travel business and had a lot of army tents. They pitched the tents, put down wooden floors, and built a utility house (this was where the Fairbanks hotel is now). Tourists slept in the tents. Cushman St., out front, was a mud hole in the spring.

Savage left in November-December to visit his parents. While he was there, Pearl Harbor was bombed, so he joined the Army and spent 4 years overseas. He enlisted in the Medical Corps. and ran a health lab in a field hospital.

In Dijon, he met his future wife, Suzanne Cooper. He sent for her when he was back in AK, and they were married by Father McDonald; the first 2 people who came along acted as witnesses. They lived in a wanagon, a movable house, for about a year. In 1950, Savage built a log house on 8<sup>th</sup> Ave.

In August 1949 a state lab was opened in Fairbanks, and Dr. Albrecht in March of 1950 asked Savage if he wanted to work in the state lab (on 6<sup>th</sup> and Noble, where the Comic Shop is now). It was a public health lab, which tested water, and watched for epidemics. They did work for all the clinics in Fairbanks, as well, since they were the only lab in town. Savage was the only employee except his assistant. He made \$420/month then. It was tough to live on, though he worked every day of the week.

The big problem in AK at that time was tuberculosis. The sanitarium was full. They also had polio, diphtheria, salmonella, sidella, measles, mumps, and whooping cough epidemics. He tested milk and water for the Army and town. One time a man tried to bribe him with whisky, because he couldn't get a clean water sample (in order to sell his house). From then on the sanitarians picked up the water, not the individuals trying to sell their houses.

The N. C. Co. supplied the water downtown, to the Model Café, etc. This water was not too good, because it was so close to the Chena; it was heavily chlorinated because of this. The company used river water for steam power, and this brought river water close to the well. The Chena was also used as a sewage line for Ladd Field and Fairbanks houses along the way. Once, samples were taken all the way from Chena Hotsprings Road to the Tanana, and the bacterial count went up where houses were dumping sewage.

Dr. Raymond Evans was out in Liberia, West Africa, where he corresponded with Dr. Frank Schaible. He promised Schaible he'd come up to AK when he finished his tour of duty. Schaible got back late in 1958 and Evans arrived in March 1961 in Fairbanks. The first night he was here, he helped Schaible perform a caesarian. There were about 7 or 8 doctors in town, who all worked 10-12 hours a day, every day. Evans met Savage early on. He always Africa, where so many epidemics strike, needed, is a good public health department.

## SIDE 2

Dr. William Wood was elected chairman of the committee collecting money to build a new hospital, after the Fairbanks flood, says Evans. The committee met every Friday morning at 7 am in the Travelers' Inn. The hospital was always plagued by a lack of money. Red Porter, Terry Miller (head of the Senate), Evans, Gene Gess (head of the House of Reps.), and Mike Bradner wrote a bill arranging for the state to contribute 25% of the costs to the hospital (25% local, 50% federal). On Thanksgiving of 1972, they were behind in payments, and Porter and Evans went to the state legislature, had a meeting with Governor Egan, who called Art Warford and his attorney general in and somehow got the necessary money together for Porter and Evans.

Savage talks about current health concerns: AIDS, new genetic diseases and viruses, the "radioactive problem." When he started working he had 2 ½ people in the lab; when he left he had 12. Now the field is moving so fast, and computers permeate the workplace.

In the old days, it was rare you saw someone you didn't know in Fairbanks. Now, it's the opposite. He used to walk to work. First his office was on Noble, then 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. in the Hall Building, then in the State Building. He and his wife had 6 children.

Evans comments that things like child molestation, homosexuality, incest, and child abuse have always existed, but they never used to be talked about.

Savage says he doesn't feel like a pioneer; he still feels like a cheechako. Evans says the North Star Borough owes a debt of gratitude to all the people who donated money for and participated in bringing a hospital to Fairbanks.