

## Summary for H87-82-05

### Lola Tilly is interviewed by Gayle Maloy in Fairbanks, Alaska on 11/2/84

Gayle Maloy interviews Lola Tilly in Fairbanks, AK, on 11/2/84. She is known as the first head of the Dept. of Home Ec. at UAF, formerly known as the School of Agriculture and Mines. Tilly was born on January 16, 1898, in Wayside, IL. She's 86 years old.

In 1929, she was teaching at the U of MN, when her dept. head came down and said, "How would you like to go to AK?" Pres. Bunnell wanted to interview prospective teachers. She was offered a job as head professor of Home Ec. She said she wanted to go but that she could only stay 1 year. Bunnell said that was OK.

Two weeks later Bunnell wired Tilly a contract from Fairbanks, and asked her to bring another teacher along. The salary was \$3,000 a year at that time. Tilly took her office mate, Eileen Sewell. There was no affirmative action or tenure back then, and women were not paid as much as men, states Tilly.

It took 2 weeks to get to AK. They took an AK steamship from Seattle—it was 1 week to Seward. Their train trip to Fairbanks was 2 days with an overnight in Curry. They stopped at College Station, where dorm hostess Veema Salmons boarded the train to take them to the Model Café for dinner as Bunnell's guests.

They stayed at the Nordale Hotel on 2<sup>nd</sup> St., where the Co-op Drug is now. That hotel burned in 1972. They ate at the Model Café across the street, where the prices were very high, three times a day. They'd go in groups to get a well-balanced meal. Bernie Carr and Pete Despo were co-owners. Lil Augeman was a waitress. The average meal cost less than \$5, which was a lot then.

The next morning, they were taken by car to the university for orientation. After that they went on the "Brill Car," or the Tunerville Trolley as they called it, on the railroad. Art Marsh, the conductor, would wait for them to arrive before leaving the Cushman St. Bridge in the mornings.

Tilly arrived on August 24, 1928 (55 years ago).

Paul and Flora Grieman had the first bus on the dirt road to the college; it was one-way traffic through the peat bog. Sometimes they walked the track the 3 miles, to save money. They'd take a 22 rifle along, to bring back grouse or rabbit for dinner.

For clothes, they wore "up-to-the-minute fashion": high boots; pants that tucked in to the boots, military style; and leather jackets, which weren't very warm. They soon learned to layer their garments.

Nothing was shipped by air at that time. They learned to use evaporated and dry milk, and dry eggs. There were no pennies in use then, since nothing came at such a small price anyway. Pennies arrived after the Piggly Wiggly came to Fairbanks. She used to go into Bredlie's Shoe Repair Shop on 2<sup>nd</sup> St., for shoelaces, and had to buy 2 pairs because it was 2 bits (25 cents) anyway. There were no nickels or dimes, either.

At the grocery store that Lavery and Daley owned on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Cushman, Hal Bailey, a jokester, used to have a gag where he sold 1 grape for a dollar, to wow onlooking tourists. There was no paper money in those days, either, just coinage, recalls Tilly.

There were many more men than women back then. One of the "eligible bachelors," was Martin Pinska of Pinska's Clothing Store. He always bought cakes at church bazaars for the teachers at the hotel: Anna Beth Renny Hanlin, Sylvia Elarth Pratt, Laura Lee Carr, and Mary Benjamin Adler. Ann Robinson Wien and Beth Green Waukwitz rented Mrs. Hess's cabin on Cushman St. Mrs. Hess was later a member of the Board of Regents, and selected the site of the first building at UAF.

Tourists used to wrap their legs in newspaper or toilet paper to ward off mosquitoes; they used to wear it underneath silk stockings. There was no TV or radio, no paved streets, no Eskimos, 1 or 2 blacks, and no dial phones—you just asked the operator for the name of the person (e.g., "Can you connect me to Minnie Clark?"). Mrs. Herring, Mrs. Brandt, Mrs. Weir, and Edna Lawson were operators; they were very helpful.

They had skating under the Cushman St. Bridge. Dog teams started from there, too. The Ice Palace was there for Winter Carnival. There was a ski trail up where Birch Hill Cemetery is now.

Bunnell always found a job or a loan for students who might have had to drop out for financial reasons. He had a garden by the old Main Building. He dug up vegetables himself and gave some to Tilly. He was very supportive of the Home Ed. Dept.

Tilly had less than 100 students. Bunnell got several cases of canned salmon for their classes to develop original recipes with, which were published in Canned Salmon Delicacies. Frozen foods were not on the market at that time, but they did a lot of experimenting with freezing. They also developed recipes with low-bush cranberries, which were published in a New York newspaper. This gave publicity for the college.

Everyone thought the local potatoes were too sweet. Tilly found that with proper storage, they became "acceptable." She was also able to work with archaeologist Otto Geist, who brought back Eskimo artifacts from St. Lawrence Island. She worked with him in the old museum in the old Main Building. She wrote four articles with descriptions and pictures on Eskimo food habits, clothing, shelter, and toys. Bunnell carried them to Washington, DC, to be published in the National Journal of Home Economics (1930s). The originals are now at the museum.

The university offered some short courses for townspeople, hoping to increase enrollment. Miners' short courses brought in prospectors and miners during the winter, who lived in the dorms, except one man who lived in a nearby shack. Ann Luke, the popular cook, saved leftovers from the dining room and froze them outside. The guy in the shack stored them on boxes and stumps outside his door. He chose his menu each day and hacked off a portion of whatever he wanted.

Tilly's camp cookery course was held in the old Main Building. An old prospector asked her how to make biscuits out in the bush. He was actually just testing her to see whether she knew. But she'd been teaching camp cookery at the University of MN to forestry students for a long time.

Students in the 20s and 30s were serious students, from AK and Outside. There was a mix of men and women. Tim Twitchell, one of her students, got a job as a cook with the AK Road Commission, which paid for his 4 years of college. Ally Murphy, who got a job on the Defense Early Warning System, was one of the graduates. Jack Naybee, the famous "Sourdough Jack," out in San Francisco now, sent her an autographed copy of his book, Sourdough Cookery. Leo Marc Anthony used his knowledge in teaching mining short courses after he graduated.

A student of Tilly's wrote her a letter, after 50 years. She quotes the letter. He lived in a cabin with 2 other bachelors while at UAF. The cabin belonged to Prof. Gasser. He took Tilly's camp cookery course. Ken McClarty brought a turkey for Thanksgiving and Tilly showed them how to dress it. They took it down to their cabin to cook. Ken and his brother Herb had invited 2 old sourdoughs to dinner (sharing with others was characteristic of that time). They made 3 dried apple pies, and 2 quarts of ice cream flavored with wild cranberry juice. They mashed local potatoes and cooked local green cabbage. They had cranberry jam with baking powder biscuits. "It was one heck of a memorable Thanksgiving dinner that lasted all afternoon," said Jerry Knox.

UAF was a very informal campus. Bunnell had high standards and was very perceptive. He suspected young 6-year-old Ernest Patty was turning out the lights, and got him to admit it.

In the early 30s, teachers took voluntary pay cuts to keep the college open. Ms. Sewell took the semester off. Tilly taught her courses. Her first trip Outside was to teach in the U of MN for a summer in 1930. She took the train to Nenana and the sternwheeler riverboat up to Tanana, up to the Yukon River, to Dawson City. She changed to another sternwheeler and went down to Whitehorse, where she took the narrow gauge railroad (White Pass) to Skagway, where she took a boat to Vancouver.

On her return she took a steamer to Valdez and the "stage," a 7-passenger Cadillac on the Richardson up to Fairbanks. She was the only passenger, and they overnighed in Copper Center. Her father had been so impressed with her hunting experience, he bought her a .22 from Sears. The driver assembled it for her, and he watched for grouse as he drove, and she shot them, and when she got to Fairbanks she had enough grouse to share with her friends.

During the Depressions, they didn't have ration tickets here.

For fun, there were lots of things going on. There were four churches with activities. Every Saturday night there was a dance at the Eagles' Hall or Moose Hall, a Fireman's Ball, Library Dance, or Elks' Purple Bubble. The town and college coordinated activities.

There were no florists. Instead of corsages, men would send baskets of fruit to their women friends.

There were lots of bridge luncheons and dinners. Women always wore long dresses to these affairs. There were also movies at the Empress Theater around where the Co-op is now. The first sound movie she remembers was with Al Jolson. Don Adler was the organist at the theater. Tilly also had a weekly program on KFAR for a while.

In 1937, she was married to Grey Tilly. He was a WWI veteran. In 1923, he had taken a weekend cruise to Southeast AK. He stayed, working as a purser of the old Estebeth Mail Boat out of Ketchikan; then he worked in the Juneau Treadwell Gold Mines, and mined in the Chistochina area. When paydirt ran out, he came to Fairbanks by dog team.

They built their own home. Tilly lived there until Grey died in 1973. She moved into a condominium in Fairbanks in 1974. It's exciting to have served under the first four presidents of UAF: Dr. Bunnell, Dr. Moore, Dr. Patty, and Dr. Wood. She feels she was a part of history in the making.

Tilly is involved with PEO Fairbanks Sisterhood Shelter, Farthest North Girlscout Council, VFW Ladies Aux., American Assn. of University Women-Fairbanks Branch,

United Presbyterian Women's Assn., American Assn. of Retired Teachers, American Assn. of Retired Persons, was in Who's Who of Women 1980. Her secrets to living are faith in God, and the love and concern of her friends. She also swims every morning at Hamme Pool. She's got a positive outlook, and is inspired by young people.