

Tape Logs for Oral History Recordings of
Roy & Ruth (Larsen) Olson

"Meet A Pioneer" Interview with Gayle Maloy
KFAR radio, 4 October 1985

Introduction -- greeting Ruth & Roy; 1st Anniversary of show; 1st guest on 1st show was Stan Bennett, Engineer of KFAR transmitter

Ruth & Roy's 50th wedding anniversary, 7 Sept 1935 -- where married; ceremony

Roy's birth (1910) & youth in Seattle; Arlington, WA for 4 years on 20-acre farm; Roy's father worked in logging camps north of Everett, WA

Roy to Fairbanks, AK -- worked for uncle (Helmer Johnson) mining on Chatham Creek; smallest dredge in AK; Roy has two buckets of dredge; Roy came to AK in May 1928 at age 18; drove truck hauling coal to dredge; did this for three summers; Wilson Business College in Seattle in winters; Sans Motors job in Seattle; pay difference

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Roy's school years in WA; school mates in Arlington, Johnny Contento & Irene Palmer; dipped hair in inkwell

Roy stayed in AK; got job with AK Road Commission; winter work; redecking old Cushman St. bridge; old bridge at Cottonwood near Nome; "please walk your horses" sign

Roy met Ruth at dance at Moose Hall; mothers in balcony chaperoning; Ruth lived with family in town

Ruth born (1915) in Dawson, YT, Canada; boat going up or down river alternating weeks; no road to Fairbanks then; back to Deadwood Creek at about 1 mo

Ruth's parents from Norway; father's uncle in WI sent him a ticket to US; father came to Dawson around 1900; to Deadwood in 1904; "Swedish Syndicate;" Nels Rasmussen silent partner, freighter, daughters Elsie & Lillian were Ruth's friends

Ruth's mother came later from Norway; stayed with cousin in ND first winter; didn't know English well; older ladies on creek taught her American style cooking

During WWI many left Circle area; sinking of Princess Sophia; 13 died from Circle District; Ruth's mother only woman in area then; miners often came to Larsen home; including Ruth's uncles there were eight in mining crew

Ruth only child on creek; didn't know children's games; Christmases special, mail order packages, baking, gatherings, one miner played Santa Claus; Uncle Einar made Ruth a sluice box mining operation; Riley Ericksen planted coin in sluice box as joke; Charles Taggart retired teacher, taught Ruth basics of reading & writing

Larsens went to Norway (1922-24) for year and a half; Ruth went to school there; mother had pernicious anemia, needed blood transfusions, family stayed in Bellingham, WA for 5 yrs upon return from Norway till 1929; Ruth in 3rd grade in 1924, finished grade school there; hard to adjust; miners were Ruth's friends ("her boys"); visited father's relatives in WI, Ruth visited cousin's school, "funny child with Norwegian accent"

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No school in Circle District; Ruth out of school one year; sophomore year Ruth & mother lived in Fairbanks; junior year Ruth boarded with Joe Crosson family; Ruth met Roy that year; senior year Ruth & mother lived in Fairbanks; not many jobs in 1930's; Ruth had one year college (AK College of Mines) & worked in dining room, had scholarship; only six girls enrolled that year

Ruth & Roy married 7 Sept 1935 at her parents' 2-room cabin on Deadwood Creek

Roy worked for AK Road Commission in its early days, pioneering purpose, new roads, access; job hauling supplies to engineering & construction camps; roads a challenge; Livengood, Steese, Richardson Highways, Donnely Dome, later Hickel Highway to Prudhoe Bay

Early names of Road Commission workers: Lloyd Lonsberry (shop foreman), Clarence Burglund, Frank Nash & Woody Johanson (engineers), Elmer

Tape logs - Olson recordings

Parkison, Allen Brown, T. Hugh Wilson, Bill Cameron, Ollie Backlund,
George Vincent

Road challenges: frost areas, rock, high altitude, crossing summits; most difficult road was Sagwan; truck traffic, ice bridge over Yukon, carving out timber

Roy with AK Road Commission 28-1/2 years; four name changes - to War Dept, then Dept of Commerce, then Dept of Interior (all as a territory), after statehood, AK Dept of Transportation

Ruth & Roy's first child, Sylvia; Roy bought new car to bring home baby (Chevy Sedan for \$1250 "on time"), didn't pay in winter if not working, no interest

Wireless Station at Circle City, news & communication among miners, Rasmussens owned phone co at Circle, Dr. Barnett wireless operator; different rings, roll call every night; one night neighbor didn't answer, had died of heart attack; phones cost \$5/month, comfort; customers maintained the lines

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