

NM-82-127-6
Person Interviewed: Vi Chapman

Date: August 17, 1981

Interviewer: Jim Evans

Place: Anchor Point, Ak.

J: How long have you lived in Anchor Point?

V: We came up in 1945 and homesteaded in the Anchor Point area? That would be . . . thirty . . . thirty-six years? Thirty-six years we've lived here.

J: Was there a reason for your coming to the Anchor Point area?

V: Not actually, some friends of ours came at the same time and naturally, you know, you go where there's somebody you know. That was the only reason we came to Anchor Point is because these other folks had come here.

J: How much land did you own?

V: We owned a hundred and sixty acres.

J: Was most of this town on your homestead?

V: Yes, there was no road when we first came of course, and when the road came through, it just cut our homestead in two. Our south line is the south line of the Anchor Point school, and we had a half a mile of road, on both sides of the road. So all of the business part of Anchor Point is on our homestead.

J: You first gave away land for a school?

V: Yes, we . . . when the need of the school came, we . . . actually, we relinquished five acres to the territory, because it was a territory then, for school purposes. So the five acres is included in the 160. Actually, we only had 155 for our own use. We relinquished part of our homestead. We didn't have to. We gave a deed for it, we gave a deed to the territory and the school was built on our land next to the road, next to the highway.

J: Was there a community out here?

V: No, there wasn't anyone living around here. There was some other homesteaders south of the river, but the only other one north of the river was . . . (tape stopped briefly) There was our friends, that came up when we did, homesteaded on this side of the river, and there was maybe a couple of other homesteads, but that was all that we know of that was on this side of, this same side of the river. So it was just, really just coming into the wilderness with no development at all until the road came through, and then it started to develop. Other ones came in to homestead. There was a lot of ones came in the next year or so. Different ones to homestead.

J: Did you agree with the roads coming through?

V: Oh yes, oh yes, we were anxious for the road, we didn't get anything out of it except development. We didn't get any money or anything like that out of it, but that was what it takes to develop an area is roads, so we were glad for the roads.

} Roads

J: Do you like the development that has taken place here in Anchor Point?

V: Oh yes, yes, it's been very interesting to see what has happened. At first the land we let go, we let go very cheap, of course, because the prices then were very low. It seems like now we almost gave it away. But we've profitted, we've profitted by the different businesses that have come in here. We've really enjoyed watching this place develop and grow. It's been really something to see.

J: How has it developed, more people move in?

V: Yes, other ones came into homestead. Some of them tried to raise cattle but it was kind of a hard way to go because it wasn't actually ready for agriculture, it needed to be developed more before they could do much in growing things, agriculture, but the fishing industry was what kept it going. A lot of the people that come in they worked in the fisheries they were fishermen. Some of the folks, the men were carpenters and there was always something new to have to be built, and when the roads went in that gone quite a few of the local men a job clearing the road right-of-way. Some of the homesteaders were the military and they would come in and would only have to live on their homesteads for seven years.... seven months, seven months and then they could prove up on their homestead. Quite a few came in like that. Some of them which made it bad for the development, they would just leave some of the land just laying there and not being developed, it just hindered some.

J: Not having a community out here, did you go to Homer for your supplies?

V: Yeah, we had to go to Homer to buy supplies and things and before the road was in we had to walk the beach. Some of the fellas that came in had stock, had horses and they would take the horses on the beach with wagons or carts or whatever they had. Some of the folks had Jeeps that they could drive on the beach.

Just practically all of our foods that we bought to be brought in Homer and had to be packed out or either was ordered from outside, but it would come to Homer and then it would have to be hauled out from Homer. They could haul it by boat, they could haul it different ways like that. That was all before the roads came in. But when the road came in, of course, then they could haul foods from there. We bought alot of it by ordering from the mail order...from the wholesale houses in Seattle. Some of it would come to Seward and some of it would come to Homer. Our staples, you know, flour and sugar and things like that. It was cheaper than to buy it right from the stores. (Tape turned off)

V: Every summer we personally went to a cannery and worked in the fish cannery all summer long. We'd order quite a bit of our things through the cannery. It was cheaper for us to do it that way. That was our only source of income was going to the fish cannery. We went to Port Chatham Packing Company which is out at the south end of the Kenai Peninsula. Port Chatham is a harbor down there that shows on the map, Portlock shows on the map too. There isn't anybody living there right now but the place is still marked on the map.

J: Did you live mainly on the homestead?

V: Yeah, we lived on the homestead during the winter and then we'd go over there in the summer. We'd move in the spring to go to the cannery. We'd get to Homer the best way we could and then we'd get on the boat and go across to Seldovia. The fishing boats from the cannery would pick us up in Seldovia, sometimes it would come to Homer and pick us up in Homer and then we'd go there for the summer and come back in probably August, the latter part of August. We would live on our homestead during the winter. We did that for fourteen years.

J: Did you provide for yourself on the homestead or did you rely on going to Homer for supplies?

V: Oh we actually relied on the income that we got from the cannery. Our homestead, we didn't actually make any livihood on the homestead because when we were going over there in the summertime we couldn't even have a garden then. support

As things developed, other things came up now after the school came in, that made a job for my Sherman, my husband. He was a janitor then in the wintertime for the school, and in the summertime he'd go to the cannery. He worked that way until about '65, then he quit the school janitor job. He worked at different places. After we didn't go back to Portlock anymore, the reason we quit Portlock because it went broke. There was no more job there so we had to do other things, so we worked in other places And I tried to have a bakery, I started a home bakery out here at Anchor Point. I sold bakery stuff and that helped a little bit. Then I worked in different places like the different restaurants. I worked at Our Point of View Lodge in Kenai Lake. I've worked in Homer and different places, worked in different restaurants, cooking and baking. And the Anchor River Inn. All of it has helped us to make a living for our family.

When we came up we didn't have any children and our oldest boy was born in '46, just a year after we came up. He was born in Seldovia. There was no hospital in Homer. In '49 our second boy was born. He was born over in Seldovia too because there still wasn't a hospital in Homer. It was really sort of tough living in those days, no water, no electricity. Of course, after electricity came through from Homer, that really was a big boost for the people in Anchor Point. We were some of the charter members of HEA.
(Tape Turned Off)

J: What did they process in the cannery? Salmon?

V: Yeah, salmon. Yeah they didn't freeze it like they do nowadays, so much, it was all canned. The cannery where we all worked was a small one so a lot of it was hand worked but it really made a good product. We didn't work, well I have worked in Homer in the crab and shrimp a little bit, but most of the cannery work that we've done was salmon. I've worked up and down the inlet in different places.

J: Did you work in herring at all?

V: Oh yes a little bit in herring, yeah, I did that too in Homer.

J: Did you get vehicles here very soon after you came?

V: We didn't have any vehicles until about '53 we went outside to Seattle to visit and we went out and worked in fruit for awhile. We took the boys, they were small, three and six. We flew out and then when we were out there we bought a car. We bought a Ford pick-up. When we came back up, some people that we had worked for, they were the people we had worked for out Portlock. They were coming up with their power barge and they loaded our pick-up on the power barge and brought it right to Homer. That was our first car. I don't remember the year that the pick-up was, it was an old...course it was in the '50's I think fifty something. I don't remember for sure. So that was a big boost to have a little bit of transportation. And that was about '53, so we were several years without any motor vehicle at all.

Of course there was cars here before we got that one. People around here had cars. Mostly four wheel drive Jeeps and weapons carriers because they could go out across the muskegs and out through the woods with these vehicles were off the road vehicles actually.

J: Before you got your truck how did you get to Homer, did you walk the beach?

V: Yeah, we walked to Homer. Well we didn't have to walk on the beach when the road was in. In those days people had the vehicles were real helpful and we would go in with our neighbors. They did ~~have~~ hauling for us too. Of course, they were payed for it, some of them would take payment and some wouldn't. It seemed like when we needed help like that, people were alot more helpful than after everybody got cars and it changed. It wasn't so helpful. People were...

J: Did you have any livestock on your homestead?

V: NO. we've had chickens and that's about it. We had a goat one time that a man gave us over at the cannery, he gave us a little old goat. We brought her home and we had goat milk for awhile. But we haven't had any other animals. It's...the ones that have had animals were pretty sucessful. After they got their barns built and had protection in the wintertime. That was what was bad right at first when they didn't have protection for their animals from the weather for the wintertime. That was alot harder on the horses than it was on the cows, actually.

J: What did you use most of your land for?

V: Well we only...Just..had gardens, and then we had it subdivided and sold. Sold the plots. That's moslty what our land was used for. We never cultivated only just for garden.

J: How much land do you own now?

V: We own one acre plus four-tenths. One with..just about an acre and a half, that's all we have left. Plus there's some in the...our boys have some. They have about a ten acre piece we deeded to them. It didn't amount to ten acres after it was all cut up and right-of-ways and the easements and everything were put in. It amounted to a little over eight acres a piece.

J: Are you happy with what has happened to your land?

V: Yes, I think maybe we might have done it a little bit different if we had known the outcome, but it's been pretty good all along. We don't have any regrets.

J: Who were your neighbors? Did you have neighboring homesteads?

V- Yes, there was Vern Much had a homestead, and Henry La Motte, and Earl Johnson, ...and Clark Peterson. What's some of the other ones close to us?...Oh, Bob Williams, Robert Williams, he had a busuness here in Anchor Point. He had the first lumber...where you could buy lumber...a building material place. He isn't here anymore but he had a home-

stead . Eddy Shoalenberger had a homestead...next to us.

J. Did they all have 160 acres?

V. No, some of them were 80 acres. Some of them were just.... they could homestead on a forty or an eighty or a hundred and sixty, but they couldn't homestead more than 160. Up to 160 then they had to, that was all they could homestead but they didn't have to be it all in one place...that right?

J. How did you get your land? Did you apply to the territory?

V. Well, after we got here, the requirements were that the man would have to see his homestead, to see the land, and then fill out an application and send it in to the land office in Anchorage. It cost, I think around sixteen dollars for application. After they got the application, they would send, well, after you knew it passed, then you could start in proving up on it, making improvements, you'd have to build a house, a leveable house and cultivate a certain amount of acres. We had to, there was twenty, I think twenty acres that we had to cultivate. By cultivating, we had to clear it and plant, make one crop. Then afte that was done, then a man from the land office would come down and inspect to see if everything was done like it's supposed, like everything was passed. After that, though, they would issue our patent and then it was ours. Over a period of, you had to have it done in 5 years. You could do it sooner than that.

J. There were only three amounts of land to get, 40, 80, and 160?

V. Well, that's what they usually would do, some places you know, the... maybe there wasn't a whole piece that would make a hundred and sixty, and they'd take maybe some of it out there and then in another location they could take out the rest of it. They could homestead 120, which would be three 40's, you see, there's four 40's in 160. It usually went out by 40's, you see, a quarter of a quarter of a quarter or something like that.

J. Did you have the largest homestead in the area?

V. Yeah, well we had the, no, there's several had to pay a hundred sixty acres but that was a large as a homestead could be.

J. Was your homestead in the center of the homesteads in the area?

V. Well, I don't, I don't know. I think that probably...It was...well, it might have been, ort of been the center east, north and south but you see, towards the west it was only just a hundred and sixty acres or so between lus and the Inlet. It was lretty nearl pretty well centered. People all around us took up homesteads. Some of the people would maybe not prove up on their homestead and move out and someone else could come in and things is if they weren't going to prove up on it they could apply and get their homestead. There was some homesteads like that. Some people it didn't corrupt. Maybe they would, knew the people that was coming in after then and they could relinquish what they had and then that would give the other ones a chance to prove up on it. I dno't remember what year it was that homesteading closed down so nobody else could come in and prove up on anything like that.

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J. Did you have a telephone?

V. We do now, we've had our telephone for just about a year.

J. When did telephones come into Anchor Point?

V. Well, quite recently. I would say in the last, probably five or six-seven years, something like that and maybe, not quite that long ago. There haven't been telephones too long in Anchor Point.

J. After you donated the land to the school you sold land?

V. The grocery store and the Post Office were the first. The Post office when it first came in was down closer to the beach along the river on Clark Peterson's homestead. And Mrs. Peterson was the Post Master. Then later he, Clark Peterson built...after the road came in he built a store and had his cabin business called...no, it wasn't, he didn't name the place the Selver King Lodge, he sold it to somebody and they named it that. I don't remember what he called his store but anyway he had the Post Office the store and cabins along the river, close to where the bridge is. And then after, and they moved the Post Office from the first location up there in the pet store and then later Kenneth Frickly (Z) came and got the job as Post Master. He built a store where the homestead Supply is now. He had a store there in the Post Office, he had a grocery store and, he had that for several years. And then there was the motel, which is the Anchor River Inn. It was April built that, and they had a restaurant and then a motel Bob Williams came in with the building supply company and he sold lumber, he sawed lumber and he sold lumber and he had other building materials. And then there was garages came, Anchor Point, I can't remember the name of it but it was where the Texaco is now, that was our first garage where they sold gasoline and worked on motors and repair. And the Baptist Church, there were all three churches. They were all on our homestead. As yet we have churches on our homestead, but no bars (laughter). The Anchor River Inn is just across the South line of our homestead, you see, that isn't on our homestead. When Heddell's camping shop, that came in early too, that was a variety store. And then there was other small businesses it's just hard to remember them all at once here. I should have brought my book that I wrote a chapter in and I could have got, I had it figured out just what years that things happened, you see. Another interesting thing, the first graduating class from the Anchor Point School was in 1950. One student graduated from the eighth grade. You see the school was under the territory, before it was under the territory they people of Anchor Point taught the school but the territory furnished the teacher and they paid the teacher. ~~and they paid the~~ The community kept up the maintenance on the school and then when it was turned over to the territory they enlarged the school and the janitor was paid by the territory and the teachers were paid by the territory. We had a two room schoolhouse with two teachers and then it developed and we had to have a bigger school. About that time is when the State, the borough took over the Borough came in and since the Borough took over is when the school was enlarged to what it is now. I guess we have over - well over a hundred students and there's probably six teachers, something like that and to begin with they had one. It's been an interesting history of Anchor Point school.

J. Did your children go to school here?

V. Both the boys went to school in the anchor Point School, they both graduated from eighth grade, then they both went to Home and graduated

from Homer High School. Our oldest boy graduated in '65, and the younger one graduated in '69, I think it was.

J: Was the road poor when it first came in?

V: Yeah, it was. . . just a gravel road, of course, at first, before they got it really. People were using it, naturally before it got enough gravel and everything on it. But during the summer it was pretty good. But in the spring that's when we had frost boils and. . . and a lot of mud. Sometimes before the road got settled and everything like it - so it was pretty bad in the spring to try to drive it. It was a military road at first, but anyway, it kept being improved. And then, then they changed the route, and out at the forks here at Anchor Point the New Sterling goes along the river, follows the river. The Old Sterling was the first road. It just follows the first trail, sort of, that was made out from Homer and goes as far as eight mile, and then from eight mile on into Homer-~~and~~ is the Old Road. They improved the road by putting it by the river. After that stood for a while, maybe it's about two or three years, it is one of the better pavements actually on the Kenai, that has really stood up good with the spring breakup. It's had pretty good maintenance. The Homer road crews have really done a pretty good job of keeping the road up.

J: Was part of the river on your land??

V: Yes, we had some river, just the - it would be the southeast corner of it. It crossed. We had some river bank.

J; You've been fishing on it for some time, then.

V: Yes, that's where we get all our salmon for the winter. We hardly buy any salmon, just go down to the river and catch what we want; process it. It's been a big help for our food for the winter besides a pleasure for those who like to fish..

J: Do you have a boat to take out on the Inlet?

V: No no. Well, the boys have had just sort of row-boats that they would take out a little bit, but not the kind of boat, you know, that would be suitable for on the Inlet. We never have had any boat like that.

J: How did you choose your land? Did the territory choose it for you?

V: Well: we would just look on a map and see what land was open for homesteading. Look it over and then just give a description and send it in, you see, to the Land Office. By looking on the map what section it was in, the numbers. Sometimes we made mistakes. We had to have it corrected once because the description we gave was... the land was out in the Inlet! So we had to change it. It was a little bit interesting, you know, to try to find where you wanted to be. It was hard to see it all, you know, in one. . .

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Well, you had to do a lot of figuring and walking. Sometimes they had a land-... what do they call... the one that would help to choose your land. There'd be somebody that did that for a living, you know to come help you choose your land and they would give you a lot of information. And he could help with getting the right description and everything like that.

J: You built your cabin?

V: Yeah, we built a log cabin, a sixteen by twenty, and we moved into it in November, just got the roof on and the snow came. It was just all rough, of course, rough log boards. The logs weren't even peeled. We moved into it in November and then it was '50 before we proved up on it because we had some... we were delayed in doing the things we needed to do. It was first. . . just good fortune, some of it was, that we saved our homestead, because someone thought we hadn't proved up on our homestead. Didn't put the improvements on it we should, and they contested it. But through the help of the Land Office in Anchorage, we got our homestead saved.

Then they gave us a little extra time to get at all proved up, to refile and prove up on it. It was just a big help for us for them to give us the extra time. They realized that, through no fault of ours, we didn't have the improvements in time. Really in time that we should've had. And so they just - after realizing that we really wanted our homestead - well, they helped us all that they could...

-interruption-

SIDE TWO

J: How long would it take to walk from Anchor Point to Homer?

V: Yeah, the walk to Homer on the beach would take about five hours. It was 16 miles and before we had the Post Office out here, we used to have to go to Homer and get our mail and pack it our frmm the Post Office there. One person would usually go in and pack it out for everybody that lived out here. Sherm made the trip, several times he'd make the trip for the mail. Another interesting thing, there was a lot of moose hereat that time. There was just moose all over the woods. Wasn't any job at all to go out and get a moose, you know, and you'd have all the meat you wanted to eat. And you know in those days, a homesteader was allowed all ... what meat they needed for their winter meat, you know. It wasn't like it is now where you could only have one. If you needed the food, well, you could kill it. . . kill the moose. I don't remember now how many moose that Sherm saw in one herd, how many do you think you saw in one herd?

Sherman: Oh, I imagine around fifty.

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V: Fifty moose in one herd. That was a little different then now. I used to be afraid to get out in the woods because I was afraid of the moose. Well, they would attack, you know, they attacked you, too. There was a lot of black bear in this area, too, in the early days. A lot of bear. We'd see bear every once in awhile.

J: Did the bear cause any problems?

V: Well, they didn't cause us any problems, but they caused problems in areas with the small farm animals. Especially the brownies. The brown bears would kill calves and things like that. There wasn't too much of that in this area. There was a few brownies that would come in but most of the bears were black bears. There was a source of food there, too because at the right time of the year when the bear were feeding on things that didn't taint their meat, they were ... that was good meat. But if they'd eat fish or some of the plants that grow in the woods like skunk cabbage, the meat would taste. So at that time of the year it was a good idea not to kill them for meat.

J: Did you have problems with porcupines?

V: The biggest problem with porcupines would be your dogs would have a fight with them or something. And the poor dogs would suffer. Porcupines do kill trees, some. They'll rim a tree and kill it. They weren't too much trouble.

J: They didn't cause any trouble with you cabin?

V: No, not too much.

J: You still live in your cabin?

V: No, we're living in a trailer and a lean-to. We lived in our cabin for quite a few years, and then we bought - oh, after quite a few years of living here and there - well, we bought a trailer, a twelve-by-sixty foot trailer and put it down next to our cabin. That winter our cabin burned, so our cabin is no more. It was the oldest building in Anchor Point. It was just a rough log cabin, 16 x 20, but we had a lot of stuff ~~in~~ stored in it. It would have been quite a historical thing if it hadn't burned. Since then we've lived in a trailer. We built one house, or had it built, and sold it, sold it with a lot. It was a log house, too. It had an up-stairs in it. It was about a three or four room house. We sold it with a lot.

J: Where was it located?

V: The one that we sold? It was right where the Homestead Supply is, I mean the Kachemak Food Cache. It was on that lot. The log cabin that we sold. But they tore it down. The people that bought it tore it down and used the logs for something else.

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J; Where was the original cabin located?

V: It was back of the Baptist Church. It was actually just a little ways away from where we're sitting now. It was just a little bit to the West of where we are. Back of the Baptist Church, back of the Water Hole Family Center. It was just a little bit down the hill from here where our first cabin was.

J: When you were building the cabin, where did you live?

V: We lived in a . . a little eight-by-ten cabin we had put up the year before. Part of the time we lived there and then part of the time we lived with our neighbors. The neighbor man helped us build the cabin. He was one of the early homesteaders. He had a team of horses that he helped with the building of the cabin, to pull the log up. That was the power they used to pull the logs up, you know, where they couldn't lift them, because they were pretty good sized logs. Took a horse. They had to pull pretty ~~good~~ hard to get them rolled up. They rolled them up on logs to get them in place.

J: Is there anything else you would like to add?

V: I can't thing of anything right off, no.

J: Did your cabin have easy access to the road?

V: It was, yes. The road was close to where the cabin was.

J: Right where it is now?

V: Yeah, this si where the road was right through here.