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ORAL HISTORY
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I, Donald L. Nelson, of
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Box 0, North Pole, Alaska,
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99705, transfer to the University of Alaska Rasmuson Library
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my title, interest, and copyright to the interviews recorded with

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Donald L. Nelson & Genevieve L. Nelson
signature

4-2-91
date

Don Nelson

Don Nelson

Today is April 2, 1991. This is Margaret Van Cleve. Also present is Doris Southall. Don Nelson will be talking about his missionary work in Stevens Village and establishing a radio/TV station in North Pole. This is part of "On the Road" series made possible by a grant from British Petroleum. This tape is being recorded in the studio of KJNP in North Pole, Alaska.

You knew the rural areas of Alaska ~~first~~ before moving to North Pole. What was it like in 1956 when you first arrived and how did your missionary work lead to your present position as General Manager of KJNP?

Airplanes and TV/radio bridge the distances in Alaska

Were you sent to Alaska or was it your choice.

People you knew there - Stevens Village Communications?

1967 flood

Fund raising - trips down the highway

150 trips calc.

*1970
50,000
Watts*

*1977
FM*

*1981
channel
4
oscillator*

H91-19

ORAL HISTORY BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

NAME: Donald L. NELSON
(first) (middle) (last)

(NICKNAME:) Don (MAIDEN NAME:) _____

MAILING ADDRESS: Box 0 North Pole, ALASKA 99705
(city/state/zip)

DATE OF BIRTH: 12/30/23 BIRTHPLACE Minneapolis, Minn.
(city/state)

SPOUSE: Genevieve L. NELSON (Thompson)

MARRIAGE DATE: 12/11/43 PLACE: Mpls. Minn.

CHILDREN: Judith Diane (NELSON) CARROLL - (DECEASED 8/1/89)

ALASKAN RESIDENCY: April 24, 1956 to present.

OCCUPATION/PROFESSION: MISSIONARY/PRES./DIR. KJNP AM-FM-TV.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT IN RELATION TO ORAL HISTORY:

INTERVIEWER: Margaret Van Cleve

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 4/2/91 TAPE NUMBER: _____

Don and Gen Nelson

Alaska did not appear to be a likely place for Don and Gen Nelson to carry out missionary work. Don had first visited the north when he worked on the Alaska Highway in 1942. His memories of Alaska were few people and -50 F temperatures. He made yet another trip north in 1951 and returned to Minnesota to finish Bible college.

When Don, Gen, and their daughter Judith arrived in 1956, it was by chance that they landed in Stevens Village. Their week's stay extended to nearly eight years where the Nelsons began their ministry.

"It was a quiet time with God and he could speak to me. During those early morning hours with a gas lamp hanging in the ceiling and with an opened Bible, I believe I got seven years of training from God. It prepared me for what we're doing today," Don says of their years there.

While at summer camp at Barrow one year, Don noticed that the Eskimos used oscillators from old phonographs and could broadcast short distances, transmitting the signal to AM radios on a given frequency. Don decided to do the same thing in Stevens Village but when he learned that it was illegal, he quit.

Delayed by bad weather one Christmas, Don decided to buy some time on KFRB in order to reach the people in the villages. His half hour spot of gospels and prayer was so popular that he was asked to do "Far North Hymn Time" for \$25 a week. A chance remark about wishing he could buy the station brought him face-to-face with the owner in Anchorage, Don had only \$1.87 in his pocket. Although the negotiations did

not work out, Don decided to build his own. With donated land and building materials, KJNP radio station became a reality in 1967. The staff, from secretarial help to the engineer, does not receive salaries. All donate their time, living on the site which is called "Jesus Town."

To get needed supplies for the station and its staff, the Nelsons travel the highway frequently, 141 trips at last count. They have hauled back the TV tower and all electronic equipment to freezers full of meat. Donations and dedication keep KJNP on the air.