

**Call number: 94-13-06**

**Name and place: Clyde Lawson interviewed by Margaret Van Cleve**

**Date: November 15th, 1993; Fairbanks, Alaska**

**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen**

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**Series: Pioneer Tapes**

Margaret introduces the recording with Clyde Lawson, who is known as the Carrot King. The tape is made possible with a grant from Igloo No. 4 Foundation of Pioneers of Alaska.

Margaret asks what attracted Clyde to Alaska in 1922. He tells that he went fishing in the Bering Sea area. He's originally from Texas and he got to Alaska by boat with a trawling boat from Seattle. He did his first fishing in Juneau and went on up further north to Bristol Bay.

2:00 Margaret asks if he had a partner. Clyde says he had a partner who had a big cannery "there". They had a 44-foot trawler. They just went to Bering Strait area and did fishing. There were quite a few canneries in the area to which they sold their fish. Margaret asks if they were contracting with different canneries, or if they only had one to whom they sold their catch. [Clyde says something unclear.] Margaret asks what they got for an average boatload of fish. Clyde says he doesn't remember.

3:49 Margaret asks what Clyde did after fishing at Bering Sea. He tells he trapped in southeastern Alaska and caught mainly beaver and marten [answer is prompted by Margaret]. Margaret asks how he ended up in Fairbanks and if he was trying to get a mining job. Clyde tells that Fairbanks had boats "out there," and that he operated a boat. Fairbanks Exploration Company [later, FE-Company] was mining gold and Clyde's job with them was to take the gold and process it and then they would refine it and sell it.

Margaret clarifies if this was in late 1920s, and asks if F. E. Company was out on Steese Highway. Clyde tells they had a little processing plant and that they build a nice, big place there.

8:19 Margaret asks if he stayed at Chatanika Gold Camp bunk houses. [Unclear talking.] They owned different places. Margaret asks who were some of the people he worked with, and if he remembers Mr. Boswell. He says he does. Margaret says that at that time there were lots of people involved with mining, and Clyde tells that there were quite a few people working there.

Margaret asks if it was dredge mining out there, and Clyde says it was. They did strip mining. Margaret wonders if they only worked in summers, and Clyde tells that they worked a summer or two. He was hired out to see what [unclear] and how much money they were making. He was mining gold.

Clyde worked for Jack Linck who worked for the F. E. Company. They had offices at the main building on Illinois Street and Jack Linck worked there for years. He was a fine gentleman and a nice fellow. He was one of Clyde's bosses.

13:08 Margaret asks how long Clyde stayed with the F. E. Company. He tells that he was with them for at least 25 years. Most of his work life was with them. They had a big power plant that they were running. Margaret asks if that was the one that used to be where the Golden Valley is now on Illinois Street.

Margaret says that somebody told her that Clyde also helped constructing the pump station which is now the Pump House. It was to bring water to Ester. Clyde tells that he was primarily involved in running the pumps. [Unclear talking.] They called it the Chena Pump because it was in the main part of the Chena River.

15:06 Margaret asks if Clyde helped in construction of the building. Clyde says he didn't. That was done by another [unclear]. Clyde just worked out there, running the pumps and washing out the gold which they sent to the F. E. Company. They processed it and went through the work. They would figure the profit.

Margaret asks if it took many people working at the pump station, but Clyde says there weren't very many people. The main people who worked there was Paul E. Linck who was in buying and processing and so forth. They [unclear].

17:47 Margaret says that Clyde also worked for the Agricultural Experiment Station at the campus. Clyde tells that that's how he got interested in gardening and doing outside work. He says he's trying to think what they grew there. The farm started near the University Avenue there. They had a few animals. Margaret asks what his job title was, and Clyde tells that he just worked there, milking the cows and working there. He bought a lot of hay there and processed the hay and grain [unclear].

Margaret asks who the director of the experiment station was at the time, and if Dr. Georgeson there while Clyde was working there, or Dr. Gasser. Clyde tells that Gasser was his boss.

21:09 Margaret asks then if Clyde did market hunting and selling meat to Model Café. Clyde tells that the Model Café processed and sold meat. Margaret asks where he usually went hunting, and Clyde tells it was mostly out on the Steese Highway. He used to travel 76 miles out there with a car to get to the hunting area. He would shoot 4-5 caribou, clean them out, and process them right there on the hillside. He sold the meat. Margaret asks if he also cut the meat. [Clyde says something unclear.] He had a little place south of town that had a big shed. He rented it and would go there with his pickup full of meat. He had a couple of tables there and lots of hooks and he processed the meat there. When it was ready, he went to the Model Café where Jack [Unclear] processed a quite a lot of meat too. Jack ran a [unclear] establishment with food and libations and everything. He would process, buy and sell [meat]. The meat might sell for \$200-300 dollars.

26:10 Margaret asks if Clyde did this on regular basis, and asks if Clyde would make a contract with them beforehand. Clyde recalls knowing ahead of time how much he would make. Margaret asks if the Model Café sold it to other people and cooked it at their restaurant. Then she asks if Clyde also did some moose hunting, and Clyde says he got one every now and then. [Unclear talking.] Margaret says that caribou [hunting season] was in the spring.

[Unclear talking.] Clyde explains that caribou are about a half of the volume of meat [compared to moose]. Margaret clarifies that Clyde had to catch more caribou, and Clyde says he had to catch more to make any money. [Unclear

talking.] Margaret tells that one can't sell meat to local restaurants anymore and that that's something that isn't done anymore.

28:53 Margaret asks how long Clyde did hunting for living, and if he did it through the war years. Margaret says that gold mining was shut down by the war and Clyde asks when the war was, to which Margaret answers that it started in 1941. Clyde says he doesn't remember when he did hunting. He sold caribou and moose to Model Café [unclear] and to Jack Nerland [?] who owned a big restaurant down town and was good for maybe 200-300 pounds of meat. Nerland sold it to miners around town and was operating a [unclear, a shaft?] out there where he had 3-4 men.

There were 5-6 fellows around town [unclear] who were doing gold processing. They hauled the gold to somebody else to process and made maybe several hundred dollars for processing. Margaret asks if these were the miners Clyde sold the meat to, and asks if they paid in gold. Clyde tells that some paid in gold and some paid in cash. [Unclear talking.] Margaret clarifies that the value of gold was based on weight, but could also be estimated on the size of the nugget. Clyde says that the bigger the coin, the more it was worth.

33:20 [Clyde shows gold coin sizes with his hands.] Margaret describes Clyde's illustration by telling that the gold coins started from the size of a 50-cent piece, but Clyde says they started out from bigger than that. Margaret says that they don't see coins like that anymore, and says that gold was selling for \$35 dollars per ounce in those days, that is in the 1930s and 1940s, and that it's 10 times that now.

34:06 Margaret asks what Clyde can remember about Fairbanks during the war. Clyde tells that there was "quite a little activity." There were things that didn't pan out so well and [unclear] went to work somewhere else. Joe Anderson processed gold and everything [unclear] near Farmer's Loop Road. Joe was "a good old boy" and a good prospector.

He ran a prospecting project at the upper end of the [unclear]. He cut out gold, mined, and processed it. Another one was [Unclear]. He had a partner whose name Clyde can't remember.

36:42 Margaret asks when Clyde got into gardening. He tells he got into it at the Experimental Farm. Margaret says that she remembers how he grew carrots at his lot downtown, and asks if he sold carrots to the Army. Clyde tells that he did. [Unclear.] He didn't have anything to do with the army, but he just did farm work. Later on, after doing farming around town, he raised carrots and sold them every once in a while. He sold them to stores and to individuals too. Some people processed carrots and put them up for winter.

38:29 Margaret asks how many pounds of carrots Clyde grew per one season. He says he has no idea. Margaret suggests that he had a pretty good size lot for a town lot. Clyde says he grew lots of carrots. Margaret asks if he raised lots of other things, and Clyde says he had carrots and parsnip. He liked growing carrots better than anything else because they had a better market. Margaret says that carrots would keep well over the winter and asks how they would process them for winter storage. Clyde tells that they [unclear] them to people who would keep them in cold storage. Maybe late in September one would process a lot of carrots and put them in cold storage. Margaret asks if they were laid with sand to keep them from drying out, and Clyde agrees that they were. They kept through the winter in basement.

40:52 Margaret asks if he had any particular kind of carrot that he grew. Clyde says he grew cabbages, carrots, and onions. Margaret asks again if Clyde grew only one kind of carrot, and Clyde says that he did. [Unclear] was the best carrot to grow. Margaret tells that she has tried to grow carrots and the one that Clyde mentioned is her favorite too. Margaret asks Clyde's opinion on why it is the best carrot. He tells that it's easier to keep and it's better to process.

Margaret asks how Clyde weeded them, or if it just goes along with growing carrots. Clyde tells that a person gets lots of weeds. Margaret asks how early he would plant his carrots and if he would seed them directly into the soil. Clyde says he doesn't remember. He would start in June, July and August. He would have three [unclear].

44:04 Tom Brand got lots of big potatoes out there. He made lots of saltpeter. He put out a nice volume of [unclear] in there and 3-4,000 gallons of [unclear]

manure. He would process it all and accelerate his growth. If one put that much [unclear talking]. Margaret says they [potatoes] got to 4 inches in diameter.

Clyde says that maybe once a week he would nip the tops off [of his carrots?] all the way through, so that they just build up down below, getting bigger and better all the time. Margaret says that made them bush out, and tells that Clyde's garden was a tourist attraction at 5<sup>th</sup> [Avenue] and Kellum Street. [Unclear talking.]

47:14 Margaret presumes Clyde didn't have too much trouble with moose coming in and eating his garden. Clyde says he didn't because it was all fenced off. The fence was put up and it was made of board and concrete. Every once in a while there was a stray moose that would jump the fence, but for the most part they stayed out.

Clyde says he married Edna. Margaret asks if she was born in Fairbanks and Clyde says she was. Edna was a Fairbanks girl, and Clyde forgets now when they got married, but it was years and years ago.

Margaret says that they moved to Kellum Street after they married, and that's where they had the garden. Clyde tells that he forgets when he moved to Kellum, but it was a long time ago. Margaret suggests that it was probably in the 1940s, but Clyde says it was earlier than that.

49:45 Margaret asks who were some of Clyde's neighbors. [Unclear talking.] P. B. Agden lives there. John Paul and Pete Agden have lived there for years and years. There were lots of neighbors of whom some have moved away.

Margaret says that neighbors were important in the early days of Fairbanks. They share good times and tough times. Clyde had a house fire in September 28<sup>th</sup>, and his friends and neighbors pitched in to help him. Margaret thanks him for the interview.

[End of the recording.]