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INTERVIEW WITH LENA METROKIN
AT KODIAK, ALASKA

HS: Where were you born?

Lm: Chignik.

HS: Chignik, and what year were you born?

LM: 1908.

HS: Who were your parents?

LM: Natalia, and Victor Ericson, I think her maiden name was Anderson.

HS: Could you just tell me a little about your parents?

LM: I guess my dad was from the old country'. They came on the sailing ships to get to San Francisco at that time, and then I don't know how they got into Alaska, like in Chignik there were a lot of them. There were Sweds, there were Norwegians. Irish, Italians, Danes. They got there. And then years ago there was fishing and fish station up in Anglaon a lots went up there I guess I don't know when they were tried of that they came over to Chignik and married.

HS: And so your father wasn't native?

LM: No.

HS: He was white?

LM: He was Finnish or Swedish.

HS: So your mother was native?

LM: Yes, and the way Chignik was Sailing Ships come into there and thats how food supplies came, and we had to get stuff to last us for at least six months, I'm sure.

HS: Six months?

LM: Everything was salty just everything, we had to soak them out, and fruits and apples, and stuff were dried as the years went by the food got better.

Hs: It took less time to get up there.

LM: Yah, yah and it was just really pretty. I was getting big like 14, or 15 years old and three of them (ships) were in the bay. I pictures of it that show three sailing ships. Alaska Packers and they call the other canery North-western that was Seattle, and Alaska Packers thats San Francisco that was the biggest one. Now that Star of Alaska the city of San Francisco bought it and its a museum down on the water front.

HS: I think I have been there.

LM: YAH, and then the third one that was they had her name was susan, they had it for years.

Coming up, then finally I think about 1926, the year I was married, the steamer started the there were no more sailing ships just steamers, big passenger boats.

HS: Whats your husbands name, and how did you meet him?

LM: Well he was from here (Kodiak), but he use to come over there (Chignik) to work and thats were I met him.

HS: Whats your husbands name?

LM: Ellie Metroklin.

HS: When did you move to kodiak?

LM: I moved to kodiak in the fall of 1927.

HS: Thats a long time.

LM: Yes I think its about 65 years.

HS: So you were here during the earthquake?

LM: Yes.

HS: Do you remember it?

LM: Oh sure.

HS: Could you tell me about it?

LM: Yes, it was kind of scary when I first come to Kodiak I had only one little girl, the oldest one. She lives in Seattle now. And I had two more after that, girls. Yah that was really scary we were working down in the canry there was a canary right below our place our house sat up on a ridge like. The canary was down there and we had worked there for, I think its about 27 days with no days off, we were really working. There was a lot of crab, I wish those King crab could come back and then the that day was a Thursday it was a good friday the boss

told us that we could go home now and come back saturday morning but there was nothing there. That warehouse canary had so much frozen halibut in cans and two or three live tanks out on the docks just full of those huge King crabs. Thats what we were to work on when we came back, but everything was gone. The canary was one of the first things that washed out.

HS: Was the canary right on the water?

LM: It was built upon the water, yes.

HS: How long did you work at the canary?

LM: Well I've worked a lot but mine was kind of off and on. I had thyroid trouble and I had to go to Seattle and be under doctors care. I worked up at the school and sometimes I get back to late to be there and I didn't want to go and interfer with who's working there so I just worked at the canary.

HS: What school did you teach or work at? Were you a teacher or...

LM: Chignik years ago, Oh I see what you mean the school up there but its much bigger now.

HS: The High School?

LM: Yes, I was manager there thats were I cooking. I was there for six to seven years I guess.

HS: Did you like that?

LM: I liked that yes, You have to learn how to balance foo but it doesn't take long. And the amounts of food.

HS: The amounts you have to give to the people and stuff.

LM: The frist year, the first nine months I kind of worked with the Home Economics teacher. But after that I was fine. And they all tell me, T ask different one's of those dietitians, once you know how to balance food then thats it, you don't have to keep on learning how to balance food.

HS: Once you know it you know it. COuld you tell me about your children? You have three of them right?

LM: Yes, Three little girls, I had the oldest one when I came here, and then I had two more girls. THEY all went to school here, finished high school here. And my oldest

girl she was going with a soldier here during the war. So when he came back they were married, I guess there only a few that happened to, but they were married. And he died a long time ago, but she kives out there. She comes up here, she tried to move back here but she's been away to long she moved back.

HS: Whwn you first moved to Kodiak how many people were here?

LM: I think there were about 450

HS: Thats a very little.

LM: Yes, there was no street I mean no roads nothing here just little trails.

HS: When the Army came in how did, did they totally change, what was it like when they first got here?

LM: Oh that was WWII, they had this mission road that was one of the first oneas put in that was there. A lot of soldiers came.

HS: It must have been werid having all these Army men all of a sudden.

LM: Yes, but what he had to go threw all the stuff after that bombing, we had to, we blacked out all the time.

HS: Why did you have to have it on your windows?

LM: Well they didn't want to show no light. I think they would have, the Japs, would have gotten over here but after they were bombed over there in Dutch Harbor for about three days the fog was so thick you could cut it with a knife. God was sure helping us wasn't he. Well they probably couldn't find it here. We stayed out in the woods for about three days and then we gat alerts every once in awhile. We had places out in the woods.

HS: Did you like it on Kodiak or did you like Chignik?

LM: I liked it, I went home a few times. I left there in 1927 and I went home in 1929 and then I went back in 1933 my youngest was about six years old. Then I didn't go back until after 50 years I went back on the fairy. I stayed over there for about eleven to twelve days.

HS: Had it changed a lot?

LM: Yes it's changed quit a bit. They have trucks there so they can drive around a little bit.

HS: What was it like when you were growing up there?

LM: Well there were three canaries in the bay. Three ships look so beautiful anchored out in the bay. And there were three canaries. One ship was the Seattle and one was Astoria, Oregon. A lot of Russian finns are there Astoria, Oregon. And then the Star of Alaska, the biggest one was San Francisco. And after they were settled down in the spring the sailors would be up putting the sails around it. And before they are ready to leave in the fall they unwind them again.

HS: What did your husband do? Was he, did he work in the canary?

LM: No he worked in a store he clerked in a store.

HS: Which store?

LM: Colombia Packers. No it was Colombia River later years it became combined. It was Colombia River. Thats where we were that one, different people, this one from Seattle was called Northwestern, Alaska Packers was way up there, were the big fishing is now.

HS: When you first got here did you belong to any organizations?

LM: No therewas nothing going on. And I was pretty shy. And it took me a while to get aquanted.

HS: Do you like the changes of Kodiak? Has it gotten better?

LM: Oh I think its better but the only thing is that there is to many people coming in
My husband was a big game guide.

HS: Did he kill many deer and bear?

LM: Bear hunting. He was a brave man. He shot a bear, his guide was with him, they were sniking up to a bear and he stubbled on something a fell down, good thing he had his packbar on this back pack , the bear tried to bite him but he got into the wood and he did give him a big gash on him but what saved him was the wood frame on the backpack. And my husband shot the bear while he was chewing on this man. One shot the bear was busy chewing it but they were so scared because the man was right there.

HS: Where did he shoot the bear? In the shoulders?

LM: I don't know just were ever it shot him.

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