

H97-175-09

Arnie Lee

Fairbanks, Alaska

No date on tape

Harrie Hughes, interviewer

7" reel

Arnie Lee first came to Alaska in the spring of 1930. He was born in Norway in 1908. He left Norway in 1928 and landed in New York. He then went to San Francisco and worked in various jobs. In 1929 he went to Kodiak on a fishing job. He returned to San Francisco before moving to Fairbanks, Alaska. His sister was living in Fairbanks. She still lives in Fairbanks. For a few years he was a miner. One morning he walked in the Nordale Hotel and was offered a job. He started working immediately and has worked there ever since. In 1934 he returned to Norway to get married. He married Margaret Sanbo who he knew from school. His wife didn't return to Alaska with him because of immigration laws. The following year she came to Alaska. They have three children: Jean is 23 and lives in Virginia. Ingrid and Norman will be eighteen on their next birthday.

After he was married he lived in a small cabin on Wickersham. Then they moved to Sixth Street. In 1937 they had a bad flood in Fairbanks. There was three feet of water in the basement. The water was deep in the streets in some places. He remembers Lenard Seppala coming into the hotel. Joe E. Brown and Joe Louis came into the hotel, too. Some of the miners at the time were Gus Utilla, John Holgriese, Sid Polson, and Hans Tilson. The Miscoviches used to come into town, too. They went out in the fall and came back in the spring. Louie Larson was another miner who was known for his muscatel wine. Bill Arthur used to run the liquor store in the Nordale Hotel. He was Noel Wien's father-in-law. Harrie talked about the ball games on Weeks Field. The bush pilots used to land there. Harold Gillam would fly in from Barrow. He flew a biplane. Arnie talked about one of the planes that Noel Wien had. He remembers seeing the first bomber plane that came into Fairbanks.

Harrie asked Arnie about the car he won. Einar Thompson was the chief of police and fire chief at the time. Einar brought the news that he had won a car. Einar told him he could drive without a license for a day or two. He also won a trip to Seattle.

Harrie asked if he came to Fairbanks by boat. Arnie said he came up on the Northwestern to Seward. He came by steerage. There were a lot of Chinese men on the boat at the same time going to the canneries for work. He was supposed to take the Alaska Railroad to Fairbanks. They had trouble finding a place to stay for the night. He ended up just staying in the lobby of the hotel. He got on the train to Fairbanks. He talked with several miners while he was on the train. When he arrived in Fairbanks it was -16. He went to stay with his sister. He went out on Fairbanks Creek with his brother-in-law. He had gone into Bob Bloom's store to buy heavy boots and they were \$2.75. They took off in an old T model Ford. They only made it to the summit. Nelly Bird was operating the roadhouse at the time. They hiked down the creek. Harold had a cabin on the creek. Arnie lived there for two or three months. He started working for Fairbanks Gold Dredging Company. He spent the winter in Fairbanks and went back out in the spring to work again for the Fairbanks Gold Dredging Company. He worked for them for five or six seasons. He started working for the Nordale Hotel in the spring of 1936. He hadn't planned to stay in

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town but when he was offered the job he took it. They were remodeling the hotel at that time. Rick Rivers was the engineer for the job. That was in 1937. They built the third floor of the hotel at that time. Harrie was working for them at that time, too.

Harrie interviews the rest of the family. Ingrid Lee is a senior at Lathrop High School. She plans to attend Oregon State the following year. Harrie asked her if she liked this country. Ingrid said she has basically only known Fairbanks. They did go to live in Norway for a year when she was three years old. When they returned to the United States she only spoke Norwegian. Her older sister is Jean Marie Lee Shryer. She has one son name David Christine Shryer. Norman Lee is also a senior at Lathrop High School. He is a band member and is interested in electronics. He plans to study electrical engineering or electronics engineering. He plans to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks for the first two years of his college career. He is also interested in playing the trumpet. He is an amateur ham radio operator. He talked about the different places he has contacted through the ham radio. Margaret Lee is a homemaker. She made a trip out to visit her daughter in Virginia recently. She said it took her a month to travel to Fairbanks from Norway. When she first moved to Fairbanks she didn't speak a word of English. She described their first house. The floors were very uneven. She cooked on a wood burning stove. They had their water delivered to them. She described how she had to do laundry by hand. She lived out at Fairbanks Creek with her husband in an old cabin. It was pretty rugged conditions for her.