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Lou F. Joy

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Lou Joy was born in New York in 1890. His mother's name was Ida May Fryberger. His father was from an island in the St. Lawrence River which made him a Canadian. His father became a United States citizen. He had one brother and two sisters: Levan, Pearl and Mary Dana. He came to Alaska when he was eight years old. They landed at Skagway. They lived in the Atlan country. His father was killed in a hunting accident in Skagway. They returned to Clinton, New York. In 1914 his family returned to Alaska and landed in Fairbanks. It took them a month from New York to Fairbanks. Things were tough in Fairbanks. His mother had a homestead at Fort Wainwright. He worked for a sawmill and hunted moose for the market. They spent a few years on the homestead. In 1920-22 he went to work for the NC Company as an electrician. He had worked for several places in the lower forty-eight working in electrical work. He worked for the NC Company until the city bought them out. He worked for the city until he retired in 1957. He served on the school board. They had a two story wood building which later burned down. The city built the schools. The Fairbanks school system was advanced. The children that left Fairbanks would be placed in a higher grade at other schools.

His father came to Alaska after his uncle was in Alaska. His Uncle Charles was on the vigilante committee that went after Soapy Smith. His father decided they should all go to Alaska. He has seen a lot of changes since 1914. They had the beginning of the Richardson Highway. In the summer they had to use boots to get through the mud and the mosquitoes required nets. It was hard to get meat in the early days. They would drive cattle over to Whitehorse and bring them down in cold storage boats. There was lots of moose hunting. He didn't think the moose population was hurt too much. He disagrees with limiting moose hunting to just bulls. They stayed with Harry Buzby when they first came to the Fairbanks area. Harry would take him moose hunting in the Wind River country in September. They would float down the Tanana and up to Clear Creek. They would go up as far as the Bonnefield Trail and then travel to Blair Lake. They would kill the meat over there and then pick it up on horseback after freeze up. One year they were harassed by a bear. One time they had sixty moose cross the trail. They usually sold the moose for 25 cents a pound for hindquarters.

Harry Buzby was one of the pioneer farmers. He lived on the Fort Wainwright area. He had a garden and raised hay. Lou once worked at the flour mill in town. It worked well for a while. It demonstrated that you could raise hard wheat here in Fairbanks. Charlie Peterson rigged up an automatic water pump on the engine. There was a bit of opposition to the mill. They made good flour. It burned down.

They later took up a homestead outside of Fairbanks. He went up to the land office and Tom Hunt told him about a place with 600 feet of river. He took the land and had to have an eighth of it cleared. They got title to the land and built a home out there. They finally had a road built out there after Alaska became a state. He cut wood with Harry Badger. He spent one winter working with him. They sold it to the independent mill.

On Barnette Street by Airport road the NC Company had their wood yard. The NC Company would give you anything you wanted and just trusted at clean up time they would get their money. If they didn't have the money then they'd cut wood. Everyone was cutting wood. The wood was used to run the power house. The company finally started burning coal after the Healy coal mine opened up. The whole town had to be switched over to alternating current and the whole town needed to be switched over. Horses would haul the wood from the wood yard to the power house.

Lou talks about George Gasser. Gasser developed a lot of hybrids. Lou never heard of a crop failure with the hard wheat and it made superior flour. He talked about the brewery in town.

Lou met his wife in Auburn, New York. She said she would come to Alaska if she was going to get married. Their children are Bill, Ruth, Lois and Bob. Bill now has the job with the utilities. They no longer stay in Alaska during the winter. They move to Arkansas for the winter because of his wife's health.

John Stump taught Lou code. He got his license. All the airlines would call him for the weather conditions. He communicated with Corporal Kirk in Old Crow. He had a charge against him of communicating with a commercial station. He applied for a commercial license and got it. Jim said he communicated with Chicken through Lou. Jim told a story about Mrs. Johnson ordering 40 pounds of carrot seed which turned out to be parrot seed. Lou said the ham radio was a wonderful thing for the miners and the bush community. Jim said Lou would call at about 6:30 every evening.

Lou said all the pilots would call him about the weather at different places. He was amazed that the pilots would never doubt his word. He though he took his first airplane ride with Frank Pollock. He remembers the first plane that came in to Fairbanks. He said Eielson was a teacher when he first came to Fairbanks.

Lou hauled meat with a dog team. He said they would be out of energy until they saw a rabbit. He described how they would haul a load up steep banks and just get to the top and stop and make him push it over the hill.

One year he cut lumber at the mill. The logs were floated down the Chena. They floated them down Piledriver Slough, too. In the early days they tried to put a weir dam at the head of Piledriver Slough to make more water so the steamboats could go up. They later tried to divert the water from Piledriver Slough into the Chena River.

He talks about the game wardens in the early days. Sam White would be called out when the kids would go out to the edge of town and shoot ducks.

He handed out the diplomas for many years. One of the highlights in the later years was to hand out diplomas to the children of previous students. He spent 1947 in the state legislature.