

H97-66-26 Pt. 2

Sister Hubert

Fairbanks, Alaska

September 27, 1966

Sister Hubert talked about her father, John Vashon. He was a French-Canadian from Saint Raymond, Quebec. He was very talented musician and a story teller. He had diabetes. Her mother was Scotch-Irish from Boston. After her mother turned down her father's first proposal he went to the gold rush in the Klondike. He was there when the slide occurred on the Chilkoot Pass. Her father was the captain of the fire department. About eight years later he came back to Boston and married her mother. They traveled back to Dawson and lived there for five years. They had four children: Haydon, Otis, Mary Josephine and Margaret Louise. In 1910 they moved to a homestead at the junction of the Tanana River and the Tolovana River. It was about seventy-five miles from Fairbanks. There were buildings on the land. There was a roadhouse. In October of 1910 the mail service had just left and there was a fire. They ran outdoors and saw their building on fire. Her father was returning from the river and ran back into the building. The oldest boy survived but was unconscious. They telegraphed from the station at Tolovana. Peter Vashon and Dr. Pool came to Minto to treat. John Vashon's head and hands were badly burned. He was taken to Fairbanks for treatment. It took three days to go from Fairbanks to Tolovana. Usually the trip was made in the winter with a double ender. Two horses pulled the sled. She remembers a driver named Red. They had pretty good mail service when they could get through. Tolovana had a roadhouse, a general store and their own home. There was an Indian Village about ¼ mile from town and the telegraph station on the other side of the town. The three Vashon brothers were in the fur business. Andrew was in Tanana and he bought furs from the Natives. Her father had a fox farm and bought pelts from the Natives. Peter was the agent and dealt with the Hudson's Bay Company in Seattle. Her father had about twelve female foxes. She describes the boxes that the foxes were kept in. The foxes couldn't dig their way out of the cages because of chicken wire. They raised cross foxes. Her father would skin the foxes and stretch the pelts. Pete Vashon married the daughter of the postmaster in Fairbanks. Her name was Miss Carol Crumb. Peter's job was to make contact with the buyers of the pelts. Little by little her father built up his fox farm. Chief Alexander didn't like the idea of the fox farm and called a meeting. Her brother and sisters were buried in Tolovana. John Vashon died in 1920. Peter died in 1942. After the fire in Tolovana her parents went back and rebuilt another roadhouse and trading post a little farther from the river. In 1911 her mother made a trip into Fairbanks and on November 26<sup>th</sup> she was born. They named her Mary Louise Vashon after her two sisters. Doctor Sutherland delivered her. They were in the hospital for a month. There was a telegraph station near Tolovana. Major McFarland was one of their friends. They headed back to Tolovana and it was 60 below. It took them three days to get to Tolovana and arrived on Christmas Eve. There were two more sisters born after that: Francis in 1913 and Rita in 1915. They all went to Boston for the birth of Rita. Hayden stayed in Boston to attend school.

Mrs. Baker had a restaurant in Fairbanks. Dad Ellis ran a store across from the restaurant.

Sister Hubert talks about Fairbanks and people they knew when she was a child. Sister Jewells was from Montreal. She came down the Yukon and stopped in Tolovana. She loved their little dog and they gave the dog to Sister Jewells. She went to Fairbanks with the little dog, but they had to give it away when she got there.

Her family would travel to Fairbanks. Their life was bound up with the church and the sisters and priests.

One of the Indians loved her mother. Little Justin would come to the store and stand around. He wanted her to leave her husband and come live with him. The riverboats stopped at Tolovana for wood. The last boat of the year would always bring in the staples for the year. They would always have a cases of oranges, lemons and grapefruit. Her mother would make marmalade out of the fruit that wasn't completely good.

She had a warm close family. In 1920 her father died. He had diabetes and had to live on a very restrictive diet. They moved into Fairbanks and lived across the street from the Episcopal Church. After her father died they moved to Boston. She attended school in Boston. After a year Major McFarland started proposing to her by sending telegrams. She finally sent a telegram back and said she would go back to Alaska. In 1921 they returned to Alaska. They were married in Seward. On the way down to Boston they took the train from Fairbanks to Nenana. The ice was starting to break up a little bit. They had to get off one train and crossed the river by rowboat and get on another train. They returned to Anchorage where they lived for a year. They lived in Santa Cruz, California for a while and she was cold all the time. They returned to Alaska in 1923 and her stepfather worked as a park ranger in McKinley National Park. Harry Carstens was the superintendent at the time. In 1924 they returned to Fairbanks and she attended Main School. Her stepfather was the dispatcher for the Alaska Railroad. Mrs. Pedro was always a close friend of the family. One time the men that worked for her didn't want to work under her. There's a memorial window in Immaculate Conception for her dad. In 1926 they decided that she needed to go to school. Outside she went to school at Vancouver, Washington. Her stepfather went back to McKinley Park and worked there until 1932. He died in 1942. Her mother was still living at the time of the interview and was ninety years old. Sister Hubert joined the Sisters of Providence in 1932.

She talks about some of the people she knew. Coke Hill owned a magnificent dog team. Their lead dog was a pure wolf. They had to keep the wolf separate from all the other dogs. During the summer one man let the dog teams run wild. Some of the dogs were full of porcupine quills. They had to chloroform the dogs to remove the quills.

Sister Hubert talks about the Scurvy Kid. It was about 1918-19 during the flu epidemic and the Scurvy Kid went through all the Indian villages and collected lots of ivory items. He brought them around to sell. Sister Hubert tells a story about her father and Christmas. Her father told the girls he caught Santa in a bear trap for them to see. They refused to see him because they were afraid that he wouldn't come back the next year.

Sister Hubert shares photos of her family. She reads a letter that her mother wrote when Sister Hubert was born. Her mother describes the trip from Tolovana to Fairbanks. They stopped at Ester and took a

car to Fairbanks. They returned to Tolovana after Sister Hubert was born and arrived home on Christmas Eve.

She reads a newspaper article about the fire in Tolovana and the funeral for her siblings in Fairbanks that was published in Boston.