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Narrator: Eunice Collins interviewed by William Cashen

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Series: William Cashen Collection

The recording starts with Cashen and Eunice's discussion whether she receives the Alumnus –magazine and why she didn't receive it in 1970. She says she is not an alumnus. Finley Bailey who was among the first graduates [of Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, later UAF], worked as a chemist for the West Foods mushroom plant but changed careers to become a post office clerk. He brought the Alumnus to Eunice because Cashen's Corner had something that might interest Eunice. Cashen explains that it was an open letter, and tells about his way of writing since Eunice complements it. Cashen also explains his book project about Dr. Bunnell and the history of the University, which he was planning on starting once he retires, but the Board of Regents hastened the start. Cashen says that he has had a lot of fun at this trip and says he might want to go to Oregon, to which Eunice replies that he should go there since they were "the early ones".

Cashen tells about the meeting of San Francisco area Alumni at Palo Alto on Friday, after which they had a party at Francis O'Neal's house on Saturday. Francis was one of the later ones from Cashen and Eunice's perspective. He came to the University when Cashen was leaving. Cashen says that he is recording tapes, not to quote them verbatim, but to take the stories and smooth them out. Eunice thinks it's marvelous that Cashen has a tape recorder. More discussion about recording vs. note taking.

Eunice's parents lived in Tacoma [Washington] and her father was a railroad-man who had worked on every railroad from California to British Columbia. Finally when the trains were organized, he was a conductor on a passenger train running out of Tacoma. They lived in Tacoma and Eunice was about 6 years old when her mother and father "came to a grief about another woman." This was about the time of the Gold Rush, and Eunice was born in 1893. Her dad took off and they didn't hear from him in many years. First he tried to get into Dawson and he came back. Next try was to get to Valdez and walk into the Interior. His name was Charles Walter Thread. He took his residence in Fairbanks district "and took a fling at mining and he did this and he did that."

For many years he was on charge of that big, red, warm storage for the NC-Company that was right over back from Samson's Hardware, across town. He had a room there and it was his job to see that the temperature stayed "just so." He was there when his family got a track of him and he sent for Eunice's

sister Nell and that was in 1911. An interesting thing about that was that Margaret Thomas Murie and her mother were just on the boat ahead of her. In Margaret's book she tells about the crew and they were all the same. They went up to Dawson and then down river.

Then came the WW-1 and Nell was there just a year and came out. She knew Bobby Sheldon and could tell really interesting stories about the people that she knew. Her stories correspond with the stories about Fairbanks that Margaret Murie tells in her book. She came outside in 1912 and then there was the war. Eunice went to school, her dad sent some money and she went to Poland [?] to preparatory school. Then she went to Business College, and the war came in 1917. She worked at a ship yard and when the war was over in November 1918, she wrote to her dad and asked if there was something she could do up there. She was trained for office work. Eunice's dad said yes, and all arrangements were made for her to go in in June 1919. That's when Eunice first saw Fairbanks. As a matter of fact she didn't see Fairbanks in quite a while because she stopped at Nenana. Cashen notes that "there was a big going-on there." The railroad was being built and Nenana was the headquarters of the construction.

Cashen asks if they ran a narrow-gauge railroad from Chatanika to Nenana, and Eunice says that they did. Even after the standard-gauge railroad had been built as far as Nenana, there was no bridge and they had a hard time to [unclear] to "get that crossing." At North Nenana, as it was called, the narrow-gauge ran up to Fairbanks.

Discussing Eunice's work there: She worked in Nenana, but the bridge construction didn't start until Eunice left. Cashen asks if the river was too wide or if it was the war that was holding up the construction. Eunice says it could have been that too, but that there was a lot of discussion about the footing. They had to go up stream, up near the Indian Village. Cashen says they needed good bedrock. Eunice tells that right there, across the Nenana, it was all silt, so they went up stream and were able to get onto the rock. She was working for the Engineering Commission as a secretary to the accountant. After working for him for two years, they got married. His name was John McIntosh. During that time, her name was Eunice McIntosh, and that was her name when she went to work for the University in 1926. They hadn't been working for the railroad all that time but had gone outside, but they had been bitten by the Alaska bug and they were Alaskans, so they went back again. This time they moved to Fairbanks.

Cashen asks when she first met Dr. Bunnell. Her husband had become an alcoholic, which is a shame because he was a brilliant man and a fine fellow. He just went to bed with a bottle and stayed there and drank and Eunice couldn't get him up to eat or anything. Finally it was so bad that Jack Buckley, who was a marshal and a good friend, said to Eunice that she can't live with that and that she needs to do something with John. They send him out to Morning Star and he died there. Cashen comments that lots of brilliant men go that way. Discussing recent possibilities in curing alcoholism.

During that time Mrs. Bunnell was in charge of the Episcopal Bazaar. Eunice didn't belong to the church or the Bazaar but she joined in and helped get the exhibits ready just to find something to do. Cashen says that bazars were a big thing those days, and Eunice confirms this. When it was all over, the rest of them [bazar volunteers] disappeared and Mrs. Bunnell was left alone to return the chairs, tables, dishes

and to return all the equipment that was used in running the bazar so Eunice volunteered to help her. Mrs. Bunnell asked Eunice to meet her husband who had had a terrible time finding a secretary and so she invited Eunice to their house for dinner and talked to Bunnell who was evidently impressed. This was the spring of the year, just about the commencement time, and she had his staff for the summer, including secretary. Florence Braw [sp?] was to be his secretary for the summer, but Bunnell asked if Eunice would like to start the 1st of September in 1926.

Cashen says Eunice was there while he was there too, and asks Eunice when she married Riece [?]. It was in 1930, and Cashen came there in 1933. Cashen remembers that she did many things there, and that they all had to. Eunice had the title of the Secretary to the President, and that was her only title then. Cashen asks how long she held that title, but Eunice says she had so many. Cashen remembers she went into accounting business quite fast, and Eunice confirms this. Cashen tells that all the old books are in the archives and tells how Eunice's fine handwriting is distinguishable from all the others. He also notes that Bunnell was "no slump at accounting" and he knew [what was going on].

Cashen asked if Eunice did both, being a secretary and accountant. She had a combination job for quite a while. Professor Chase was acting as a registrar while she was the secretary to the president. At that time they were doing accounting at Bunnell's office and that was the largest part of work they did at his office. Chase did the registrar work at his office upstairs the old main building. Then Chase stopped being the registrar and they were looking for somebody who could do the both, while Laverna Keys had been the secretary but got married and stepped out. Then Bunnell asked her if she would like to come back since she had experience on doing the registrar work and being the secretary. Laverna took over the secretarial and registrar work. At the time the library and the bookstore needed attention so the general accounting went to the bookstore with Eunice, and she had the library to look out after. She also took care of the food service and had to order onions long distance. She was there for quite a while. Cashen says that she did that when he started at the University. Eunice says that that was the way it had to be done because it [the College?] wasn't big enough to have more until it qualified as a university. [Unclear.]

Cashen tells that in 1935 Carl became the Registrar and about that time the Keys left. Eunice tells how Carl first started and Eunice had to turn work over [unclear] like going to town with [unclear] Mrs. Hess [unclear.] Someone had to "put him through his paces" and it was Eunice. He resented a little bit the idea of a woman directing him. Eunice didn't realize that so he attempted to find out about something from somebody and they said to ask Eunice about it. He came to Eunice and said: "This place ought'a be called Euniceversity." [Sounds like there are other women present in the room, perhaps Jean Bunnell.]

22:40 Eunice says that she has been thinking due to her current inability how she was back then able to pick up boxes and shove them around and pack and armload of boxes upstairs in the main building. Days were spent that way, unpacking the laboratory equipment. Cashen says it all had to be cross-checked against the invoices, and Eunice confirms: they had to do that before they could pay the bills. Cashen did that two or three summers, opening the boxes, and Eunice says everybody who spent summers at campus did that.

Eunice remembers her first car trip with Cashen: She didn't know Bill [Cashen] at the time. Bill's job was to drive the car and he came around to the main building and went in while Eunice got out and went in the car. Suddenly the car "started off" while Cashen came out but the car was gathering momentum to go over the bluff and Eunice didn't know what to do about it, but Bill got there in time and jumped in.

Cashen says she is "telling it too good" and asks if Eunice and Jean would like to hear his version. Cashen had to take Mrs. Collins to town so Eunice got in the car. Cashen says he hadn't driven very long time at that point. While the car was parked, a little bird got into back seat and just while Cashen was starting, Eunice said there is a bird in the car. Cashen looked around while the car kept going straight over that bump in the hill and when Cashen turned around again, he noticed they were over the hill and so he put his foot on the accelerator and drove right up the slope and back to the road. Eunice said "I hope Dr. Bunnell didn't see that," and Cashen agreed.

Talking about their different versions of the same story. Cashen recaps the story: he turned around to shoo the bird away and went straight over the hill, and straight back up the hill. Jean asks what happened to the bird, and Cashen says there is nothing scarier than dumbfounded birds in his opinion and that he is worried about them pecking his eyes or ears out.

According to Cashen, vouchers were the bane of their existence. They had to make bank drafts, take them out for signatures, and then take them to bank because certain outfits wouldn't take their checks but they had to be certified checks. Cashen remembers the running around they had to do to get signatures. A woman's voice says she was the third errand girl when she came to town.

At Cashen's senior year, her [probably Eunice] and Riece [sp?] took over the food service. That was in 1936 or 1937 and they did that only for that year, after which they got Earl Pearl. Cashen says he is now a retired general now. He stayed in the quartermaster corps at the military and "went right up" [in rank] because they need quartermasters too. He was a general for a long time and retired.

Eunice asks if Cashen remembers how Bunnell always in summertime was his sleeves rolled up, picking up boards. He liked it and it was good for him. Cashen said he needed exercise but that he always tried to shame the rest of them. Eunice says he was such a good worker. Bunnell was roustabouting around with sleeves rolled up, looking nothing like a college president when a tourist, a fellow traveling by himself, came to the campus and stopped to talk with the gardener [Bunnell], asking all sorts of questions. He got answer and after quite a long conversation the tourist handed Bunnell a dollar for a tip and congratulated Bunnell for his knowledge. Bunnell never let on that he was the college president, and he kept the dollar.

Cashen says that there are different versions of the story, but that the incident probably happened more than once.

Another story was a fellow who came to campus and engaged Bunnell in a conversation and wondered aloud if there was any chance to talk to the president of the University because he was very interested in it and wanted to know some facts. Bunnell said "probably," and that they'll have to see about it, while leading the guest towards the building. While they walked, Bunnell was rolling down his sleeves and

straightening up his shirt. He walked to the office and to the coat rack, put his coat on, sat down on his chair and said to the man: "Now, is there something I can do for you?" The man was speechless.

Bunnell had a tremendous sense of humor.

3250 Jean remembers how she was taking a walk with Bunnell. She had just come from the University of Chicago and was feeling very intellectual. Bunnell asked her: "You know what distinguishes man from the animals?" To which Jean conjured up her best classical description and said: "I guess it's the power of rational thought, abstract thought." But no, "Man is only so damn fool to get on two boards and slide downhill."

Cashen remembers how on their rides to town they kept up some kind of banter. Cashen developed an ability to be a "straight man" because he would toss those questions at him and Cashen had to admit he was clueless, and ask Bunnell what the story was. Some of the puns were bad. Cashen's favorite was the one about the Morningside, and Cashen heard him tell it so many times to different people. The conversation would lag or go into nonessentials and pretty soon he'd say: "Well, you know there's some people at Morningside for no reason, and there's some people with no reason at all." Morningside was the mental institute where Alaska sent their patient, explains Cashen. Cashen heard it over and over again, and got it. Morningside means different things for people from different regions, and to Alaskans it meant a nuthouse in Oregon. Eunice says it was inside, outside and Morningside.

In 35:27 Jean mentions about about [unclear] who Eunice should have gotten together to tell stories. Eunice says she never met her, and that she never met Margaret Murie except for briefly. Margaret was meeting Bunnell at his office when her oldest boy was just a creeper. She put the child down on the floor and while they were talking, he crept to Eunice's office and around the desk and down the hall. Eunice went to retrieve him, he had fallen some steps, and Margaret was so busy talking that she didn't notice him. Eunice got the baby back inside and was briefly introduced to Margaret Murie. She'd love to meet Margaret Murie. Cap Bruce [?] mentioned. About Dr. Raw.

Discussing mushrooms at the campus and poisonous mushrooms. Also talking about a fake-mushroom exhibit at the Golden Gate Park. People at the UAF used to have mushrooming expeditions between the campus and the experimental farm. Up in [?] meadow mushrooms came up between the Rose [?] and McGrath's potato field. They were marvelous and one year they came up to the campus on clover or hay and that year Dr. Bunnell had it put in potatoes and between the potato rows grew mushrooms. Dr. Larsen and Dr. Shapiro were there to go to the St. Lawrence Island and Dr. Bunnell picked the mushrooms and asked Eunice to cook them up to serve mushroom on toast. It was good.

Cashen asks if Eunice went back to the offices after being on food service business, and if she was there over the war years. She says she was, and Eunice's sister came back to Alaska. They needed someone very much at the office and they couldn't rely on student help. She ran the bookstore and post office, and it was all together in the basement of the Eielson. Eunice was at the Museum during those years and she had a combination job there too. She used to do typing for somebody [she is trying to remember who it was for, but doesn't]. Half of their good faculty had left. Museum was kind of an

orphan during those years. Cashen says it was condensed into one room upstairs. Discussing a Japanese girl from Anchorage, Makami, who was always general help at the Museum.

The army took over the barracks and the food service, and the power plant. Bunnell brought all the stock [food stuff] on hand. The Army didn't want it, and they didn't want to pay for it anyway. It wasn't an enormous stock of food, but it was a lot. It belonged to the University and so he paid the University and moved this stuff into his house. He had a basement pretty well stocked, says Cashen. Eunice continues that there was two kegs of butter put in brine.

There wasn't room for Nell and Eunice to live in, so Bunnell asked if they wanted to live upstairs at his house. They offered to keep house for Bunnell in exchange for eating meals at his house so they wouldn't have to eat at the Army Mess. He agreed to it. Nancy Seaton [?] always wanted a dog and kept asking Bunnell if she could have one, but Bunnell always said they can't have dogs at the campus. She found a little Scottie-type stuffed dog and gave it to Bunnell for Christmas and he named it Ned. If Bunnell just got up in the morning and had a cup of coffee at the mess hall, not coming home for breakfast, Ned would be standing on the table with a message. They would do the same if they would leave and not see him. They did that all the time since it could be days when they didn't even see each other. Bunnell really liked the little doll.

Then Bunnell got a kitty, but that was after Eunice was gone. Cat sneaked into the campus and into his house, and he liked it as he finally admitted. It was a known fact that he hated dogs, or he didn't hate dogs since he even had a dog team while he was in Valdez, "but it was true that if you let one dog on the campus" [end of recording].