

**Call number: ORAL HISTORY 02-00-64-10 CD 2**

**Narrator: Eunice Collins interviewed by William Cashen**

**Date: 8/8/13**

**Place: California**

**Summary created by: Varpu M Lotvonen**

**Date of summary created: 8/5/13**

Cashen, Eunice Collins and Jean Kennedy are talking about fires and how amazing it was that the school [Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines] never caught fire with its all-wooden buildings. Cashen says that he used to think that there must be a guiding hand over the place because everything was tinder-dry and even a spark would have caught the main building or the dormitories on fire. And that cold weather creates drafts and they didn't have a fire department or nothing. Eunice adds that she is not even sure how much their water supply was in the one well. Discussing about how it was in hands of fate or a higher power that the school kept growing.

Jean says that her father [Charles Bunnell] had a terrible fear of fire. Cashen says that outside of freezing to death burning to death was the second worse. Another one of the ladies mentions that there was a fire in the house. Someone threw kerosene there. Eunice says that Jean's father never locked the doors. He went out the back door and perhaps the kid knew this and went in there when Bunnell was elsewhere and poured the kerosene there. Cashen asks if there was evidence of this and Eunice says that the way traveled in streaks was evidence that it had help. The interior of the house was destroyed, paintings and all.

[They are looking at some picture. Kayton Dally [sp?], Aplegreys [sp?], Floyd Haggman [sp?].] Discussing a picture Louise painted of Cordova dock from a deck of a ship: Cashen describes what was in the picture. Louise [unclear].

Cashen asks if Jean [?] ever read the "charming letters" between Bunnell and his sister while they were in college. When he was in Bucknell, he used to write to Louise just about every week. He'd write a weekly account of a life in Bucknell, and Cashen has quite a series of them from a half a year. The letters give a good depiction of a college life, but more importantly, she was financing him. She'd send him a dollar or two in every letter and he would write thank yous. He was serving tables at Mrs. Mary's boarding house and promised to send his sister back what he owed. During the first summer he worked for some map publisher. Cashen tells more about Louise's work at a general store.

Talking more about Bunnell's correspondence that is kept at the archives, and what happened to his belongings. Jean remembers some very rare things he kept at his safe that were to go to the University and wonders about the fate of some gold nuggets. Maybe they went to the Museum.

Cashen tells also about little cash books from Bunnell family's year at the Wood Island where every transaction was written.

Jean wonders if Cashen has the sequence of events from their time in Valdez. Cashen tells that it's not too clear, but that Bunnell was teaching a school there up until 1907. Then he resigned and went into law practice with Edmund Smith. At the same time he was engaged with something else. He was perhaps in the sheet metal company or perhaps lumbers. No-good stocks, mining stocks [unclear]. Jean tells about how she found two lovely pictures from 1910 where Bunnell is playing in a band with his trombone for 4<sup>th</sup> of July. [Unclear.]

Around 11:30 Jean and Cashen shows Eunice pictures they found from Jeans house. Bunnell family photos. Their contracts from teaching were found from a scrap-book. Mr. Bunnell was paid \$80 a month and Mrs. Bunnell was paid \$60 a month. Mentioning Francis who is approximately same age with one of the ladies. Owen mentioned. Talking about Bunnell's weight and finding a picture that was taken of the Bunnell House before the fire, around 1930s. Picture of the Rainey [Now Rainey-Skarland] House which Cashen is going to write about in Cashen's Corner. Talking about other pictures of Jean, Valdez, tennis court.

Around 18:04 either Eunice or Jean says that it was true that early day Fairbanksans were fancy people. They were a special class of people and most of them were the ones who followed the gold from the gold fields in California into Alaska. Their dinner parties were in tuxes and evening dresses and one didn't go downtown to the NC-Company or to Rectors to buy some meat if you didn't have your suit and your hat and your gloves. In 1919 this culture was still there, and that's the way it was in 1911 when Nell went up. Eunice continues that Margaret Murie and her mother went up to Alaska just ahead of Nell, so they had the same crew and when Nell read Two in the Far North. They had a very same captain and crew than when Nell went up, so when Nell was reading the book, she recognized the characters.

Looking at a picture of Mrs. Bunnell somewhere in Kodiak. 2006 Cashen tells what pictures he has of Bunnells. Cashen tells about his book project briefly and tells that he has written small historical pieced to the Collegian. Discussing people in relatively daring clothes: Albina Miller, Elizabeth Romig and Audrey Stanfield Loftis are mentioned in relation to some photograph, as well as Mrs. Preckard [Pritchard?] and Dorothy. There is also an unknown person whom Eunice or Jean doesn't remember. They might be of the class of 1927, so perhaps the picture was taken in 1923 or 1924 when they were freshmen. The picture was of a class team.

Discussing Collegians [The Farthest North Collegian]. The University has them all bound and archived, and as far as Cashen knows, there are no missing copies. Eunice [?] says they worked hard on that. Dr. Bunnell encouraged people to write to their mothers because he said that old ladies keep everything. Eunice's mother came up with a surprising number of papers. Different women around the territory also gave some papers. Eunice asks if anybody would want the Collegiums she has and if they would be good "for the Alumnus file" and Cashen says they would, but continues that there are two bound sets: one for the archives and one for the general Alaskana. Cashen intends to read them month-by-month. Discussing Eunice's collection that she says is not perfect.

Eunice “came out” [left Alaska] in 1950, and she had been working at the College up until that point. Cashen notes that there was a change in the administration in 1949. Dr. Moore asked Eunice if she wanted to stay but Bill O’Neal came to talk with her and but Eunice had already talked with Mrs. Hess, and though that the new administration could use a clean sweep. She was the only one besides Dr. Bunnell who had worked there that steadily and so long. Eunice started working there in 1926 and she had several leaves of absence but she always came back. Eunice says she was always quitting but Dr. Bunnell persuaded her to take a leave of absence instead, and after leave was done, she came back. Sometimes she feels guilty for not [staying at the College] since he wanted her to. [Unclear.]

Cashen says that Eunice was setting a record by staying employed for so long, except for Bunnell himself, but that Cashen has caught up. Eunice says he’s ahead of her already, and Cashen thinks that his work there as a student was service already and that running the paper and driving the car counts. He’s now worked there for 28 years.

Eunice says that Earl [Pilgrim?] comes next. He came in 1945 or January 1946. He was a major at the military. Cashen mentions some old-time university faculty members: Minnie Wells who came in 1945 and is still there. Cashen says she looks better than last year and that she had difficulties with her eyes but now they are all corrected. She saved [Bunnell’s] papers and somebody assumed that she wanted to write the book about Bunnell, but “you can’t walk in from the cold and start writing a book from that office.” She only prevented the papers from being destroyed but Cashen doesn’t think she more than glanced through it and didn’t intend to write a book.

Eunice wonders if Dr. Bunnell wrote something, but Cashen says he doesn’t think Bunnell ever put the sentences together. He was busy. But he talked about it. Eunice says he talked about writing. Cashen’s opinion is that he wrote short stories and essays and that he was collecting files. Perhaps the early history of the College was assembled in his mind, but there is no manuscript.

Some of his summaries of the story of the University are good. Bucknell alumni secretary, Frank somebody who was a Superintendent at Valdez and applied for Commissioner of Education. Frank Davis. Bunnell wrote Frank in 1944. Frank had asked him to write a short history of the College, and had written a 4-pages long story that certainly serves Cashen’s project by building continuity and highlighting the things Bunnell thought were important.

[Unclear discussion about some things that might fit in.]

Cashen likes to do archival research and time just flies by when he is working in the archives. Eunice [?] talks about getting a taste of it [archival work] when Marion and herself worked with some old papers about the history of Alaska. They were titled Fugitive Papers. She gave them that title [? Unclear.] The papers were from all over. There were things from New York Times, from Baltimore Herald, from Louisiana, telling tales about Alaska: how terrible it was, how good it was, how rich it was, how bad it was. Dr. Bunnell thought it was very important.

Cashen is trying to think about a title to his book, with continuity. Cashen is talking about his sources for the book. Eunice tells that in order to have a board [of Regents] meeting they had to shanghai Morton

Stevens in order to make him collaborate. Discussing how to write about Stevens, and talking about Edmund [Morton's son?] who is married to an alcoholic woman. More talking about Edmund. [Recording becomes quite unclear.]

4030 Morton Stevens wasn't the only attorney in Fairbanks who was an alcoholic. Marquam [Markham?] was one, and Collins. [Unclear.] Cashen says that he has heard that Stevens was a brilliant lawyer and a fine mind. Eunice mentions Fred Crane and the man whose wife's name was Faith and had a beautiful red hair. Herling. He was one of the worst [Unclear].

Cashen says Stevens supported Bunnell, and Eunice confirms that and says that Marquam did too. Cashen says that on the other side of the fence they had Lavery and Bloom. Cashen talks about his interview with Bloom and how he didn't think Bunnell was qualified because he was only a secondary school teacher to the Indians. Bloom was a Republican and liked Wickersham.

Cashen also tells about a letter he found that requests Bunnell's resignation for the good of the university, and it's written on the back of a Bailey and Lavery grocery bill. Lavery made the motion, Bloom seconded it and Snodgrass too. This was only the second meeting. According to Bloom, they thought that Stevens was on their side, but Bloom suspects that "somebody got mixed to Stevens" and he went over to the other side.

Eunice says he wasn't a merchant. The feud between Dr. Bunnell and the merchants of Fairbanks was that they wanted all of the orders routed through them so they could "pad them" but Bunnell decided to order his stuff directly from Seattle and Portland. That's what made them sore. [Unclear] attorney was neutral on that.

During their years of construction Eunice wrote all the orders for lumber and hardware and everything that went on. Cashen says they ordered it from Seattle. Seattle played bold and though sometimes that they could ship them some obsolete and "odd lots" instead of filling their order with specified standard stuff. They figured that Alaska is too far to send stuff back from, but Dr. Bunnell did, and about after third time they stopped sending junk. Cashen wonders if they were doing that because of the other merchants in Fairbanks were asking them.

Around 45:40 Jean [?] mentions [unclear] strong phobia or feeling about Seattle. Eunice says it was partially due to dealings like that. Jean says that the businessmen certainly wanted to exploit Alaska.

Cashen starts taking a leave and wrapping up the interview. [End of the recording.]