

Magdaline Cassady  
Alaska since 1937  
1 hour tape

Interview by N. Jacobs  
Cassady home, Fairbanks  
August, 1974

Magdaline Viser came to Fairbanks in 1937 to join her fiance, Jim Cassady. Magdaline was raised in Seattle, engaged to Jim there. Jim worked on the dredge at Nome; to get to Nome you either had to catch the first boat out of Seattle in the spring, or else take the boat to Seward, train to Fairbanks, and the fly to Nome from Fairbanks. When Jim and Magdaline got engaged, Jim changed his job to work for the Northern Commercial Company in Fairbanks in order to <sup>have</sup> year-round employment. Soon after, Jim transferred to the N.C. Cat Department, where he worked until his death in 1967, six months after his retirement. He was service manager for the N.C. Co.

The Cassady's were interested in Alaska's history and aided in the formation of the Yukon-Tanana Historical Society and themselves began taking oral histories in the 1960s.

Magdaline came to Alaska by ship to Valdez then bus to the ferry which was on the Tanana River at Big Delta. Here Jim met her. She describes the trip and stops at lodges along the route.

Magdaline talks about the development and change in the country a mentions a trip to the states in the 1980's.

During World War Two Magdaline lived in Fairbanks, at home raising children. Many townswomen left but she decided to stay. She had a baby in 1942, then in 1944, so was involved with family life in this period.

Magdaline tells about Fairbanks during World War Two--how the Russians appeared to Fairbanksans; how food was short and various conditions, blackouts , attitudes, a fire in the city.

During the Forties there were transportation problems and

with developing aviation there were scheduled and "non-sched" flights.

Magdaline made one unusual trip right after the war to Bethel. Unique circumstances gave her a one-day excursion on a bush flight along the Kuskokwim River. She describes the flight in an old Pilgrim airplane from a "layman's view." Highlights were a stop at the various villages and taking on a fur buyer whose black cigar overwhelmed the passengers.

Midway through the tape: The Cassady's had an interest in the Red Top mine at Kantishna--discussion about this typical small operation.

Follows discussion about game; trips; Jim's work for the N.S. taking him to mines to take care of equipment; mining during WW-II; Closure of mines in WWII leading to permanent stoppage of mines.

Magdaline tells about a trip with Jim on a barge down the Yukon from Circle City to Fort Yukon. The barge had a leak. It was towing a scow that had a dragline and they had to go back to Circle for repairs. Finally they got in several hours late. She says Evelyn <sup>Melville</sup> Melville was at the Fort Yukon Roadhouse, running it, and she was up and served breakfast to them when they arrived.

While they were there, an Austrian computer scientist came through in a kayak, going down the Yukon. He went on to Fairbanks and visited the Cassadys there. Several years later the scientist brought his wife to Mount McKinley Park and Camp Denali, and the Cassady's "ran into" the scientist there, again. This conversation continues with detail about the Austrian, his travels, and their own travels in connection with the meeting at Camp Denali.

Conversation then goes to road problems from the eastern park boundary to Kantishna, located beyond the limits of federal park roadequipment, and too far for the Bureau of Roads to put special equipment just for short mileage maintenance; consequently Kantishna road has no maintenance.

Interviewer questions about homemaking--use of local products, freezing, canning, meats, fish, berries. Prices discussed; getting salmon from fish trap and preserving.

End of tape: conversation turns to wide assortment of native artifacts and curios "around the house," Magdaline explains a jade blade came from the Kobuk--Jim went there to work on the dredge at Bornite. Magdaline went to the new town, but the copper mine was flooded. Discussion centers on current talk about recovery of the Bornite mine.

Finally, mention is made of the Cassady's children--one was killed in an airplane crash, and the surviving daughter lives in New Mexico.