

Mariah Maloney/Velva Hatfield

M-This is Mariah Maloney interviewing Velva Hatfield on August 12, 1981. Why did you come to Homer?

V-We came to Homer because we had a cousin up here and he thought it would be a nice place for us to come and job opportunities.

M-Did you live where your living now when you first came her?

V-No we lived in Homer when we first came.

M-In town?

V-No, ~~we lived in Homer when we first came.~~ Yes, in the town of Homer

M-Then when did you move out here?

V-We moved out here in 1958.

M-What was your first impression when you came to Homer?

V-Well when I first come to Homer we had about five feet of snow and all I wanted to do was go back to Oregon.

M-So you came from Oregon then?

V: Yes,

M: Did you just say, "Oh no, this is terrible," when you came to Homer or did you have any doubts?

V: Well, my first impression of Homer was, "Wow, what a little small town." But I thought, "Well, I better look at the optimistic." And there was opportunities, and there was work here for my husband. So I thought, "Well, It might be a nice place to live after all."

M: How did you get here?

V: We drove up the Al-Can Highway. We had a pick-up with a little trailer house behind, and we had all our belongings in the back of the pick-up.'

M: So you drove quite a ways then.

V: Yes.

M: How was your family supported?

V: My husband, he was a construction worker. He had his own equipment.

M: Was there anything you had to do to help him?

V: No, I didn't. I just stayed home and took care of my family.

M: How did you choose this location that you're living at right now?

V: ~~Well~~, at the time, this was a homestead; and so we decided we wanted to move out of town, and we got this place here.

M: You guys didn't sell any goods, did you? Like farm stuff.

V: No, we didn't.

M: The development of East Road. What year did people start coming out here?

V: I'm sorry, I don't remember.

M: Early '60's, was it anywhere around there?

V: I imagine it was around the early '60's. Yes.

M: Were there any schools out here?

V: No. My girls had to walk a mile and a half down to where Middleton's live now to catch the school bus.

M: So that's as far as the school bus went?

V: Yes, it was.

M: How many hours were involved in your husband's work?

V: Probably about eight hours a day.

M: Did he work everyday?

V: No, because he was self-employed, and he just worked whenever he had a job.

M: Would he work individually?

V: Yes.

M: When you say construction, do you mean like carpentry work or . . .

V: No, he did like clearing off land and road work like that.

M: Did he help make this East Road?

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V: No, he worked just for people just on small roads.

M: What did you do to establish ownership of this land?

V: ~~Well~~, to get ownership of it, you had to clear 22 acres to prove up on your land.

M: Did your husband do that?

V: Yes.

M: Do you still own those 22 acres?

V: Yes, we have a hundred and sixty acre homestead, is what we have now.

M: Is this the homestead, where you're living now?

V: Yes.

M: How long did it take you to gain title of your land?

V: It takes three years.

M: Did you have a garden?

V: Yes, we had a garden. We put in potatoes and the fall things that we would need for the winter. And then we had the fresh vegetables and things like.

M: What did you do in the wintertime about food?

V: ~~Well~~, we canned up moosemeat and beef and canned the vegetables. Because at that time we didn't have electricity. So we canned everything in jars for winter.

M: It would last you the whole winter?

V: Yes.

M: Was your husband ever a hunter?

V: Yes, he hunted moose. He didn't like to fish, but we had a lot of game.

M: That's what Buddig told me. They did a lot of hunting, too. What kind of equipment did your husband have on his job?

V: He had a caterpillar of his own.

M: What was the hardest thing about life then?

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V: ~~Well~~, the hardest thing in the wintertimes was - we just had a coal stove on the kitchen range, and our house was small and it wasn't insulated, of course. And in the wintertime, well, the ice would freeze on our wash basin and on our waterbuckets, and we had to get in the morning to that. But it was all the fun of the life.

M: You said you lived in Homer then before you came out here. What part of Homer was it?

V: It was up on. . . it was then called the C.T. Road. Now it's called Bartlett Street now.

M: Were there any major setbacks or hardships then.

V: No, I don't think so.

M: What did you enjoy the most about those days?

V: Well, it was fun being with my children out in the country. You had a lot of fun times. In the wintertime, we would go sledding, and one time my boy though, "Well, maybe you should ski." So I get on the skis with him, but I was just the regular snowplow, just fell off into the snow.

M: What kind of social life did you have then?

V: ~~Well~~, we had a band and we played for dances. And on Saturday nights we played for the grownups, and on Friday nights, we'd have dances for the teenagers. It was fun that way. My girls when they were small, they used to sing together at the dances.

M: A lot of socializing then.

V: Yes.

M: You knew everyone in town then, too.

V: Yeah.

M: How would you get sugar and salt and stuff like that?

V: ~~Well~~, we had a four-wheel ~~drive~~, and we'd bring it up as far as our driveway, and then we'd pack it up in back packs. And we did have horses at the time.

M: So would the salt and sugar come from Seldovia?

V: No, we just got it from the store in Homer.

M: Was Homer like a community before you came?

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V: There was just one school building.

M: Was there a grocery store?

V: Yes, a grocery store and a small drug store and a post office.

M: So it was sort of a community.

V: Yes.

M: How would you get your mail? Was the mail in there everyday, or was it monthly?

V: It was everyday.

M: Did you have electricity then?

V: No, we didn't, just used little gas lanterns.

M: How would you get ahold of the gas?

V: Out on the spit.

M: What about phones? When did you get them?

V: ~~Well~~, I just got mine about two years ago.

M: What kind of health care did you have?

V: We just had one doctor in Homer. Dr. Finger.

M: Was there a small hospital then?

V: No, there wasn't.

M: Was there a school here before you came?

V: There was a school here.

M: So they didn't have to take correspondence?

V: No, they didn't.

M: Were there cops then?

V: Yes, there was a patrolman.

M: Do you like Homer better now as to what it was like in the '50's and '60's?

V: I like it better now. You have more opportunities now for the children and for everybody. And you have a big hospital. A lot grows up, you know you sort of want it like it was before out in the country. But I like to see progress. I think it helps everybody.

M: What are the things that Homer doesn't have now that you liked a lot?

V: ~~Well~~, I think people got together more. They had more time for one another. And they had more entertainment for people to get together and more enjoy one another. Now it seems like people are more busy and like to do their own thing, you might want to say.

M: So you never had cows or a homestead really?

V: No, we didn't.

M: How did you get milk? From the grocery store?

V: Yes, we used powdered milk.

M: How did you provide water here?

V: We had a spring, a little spring.

M: About how many people lived in Homer then?

V: Not too many.

M: When you had your children, was there a hospital then?

V: My last boy was born in Homer.

M: Was it very hard to support all five of your children?

V: ~~Yeah~~, it was pretty easy then.

M: Because the prices and the clothing and everything were not as expensive as they are now.

V: Of course then the people that had clothes that they weren't using then, they would hand them down to my children, which was nice.

M: Did you sew their clothing?

V: Yes, I did.

M: Well, I guess that will be all for this interview. It's been a nice interview today, and I'm going to come back for sure.

V: ~~Yeah~~, thank you

M: Thank you.