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Narrator: Paul Banks

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Interviewer: Gordon Keffer Place: Paul Banks home, Homer
Alaska

G. Paul, when you moved here in 1940, what were the schools like?

P. Well, they didn't have much, I couldn't see much in the way of schools. I guess they had, been using some log cabins around town, other buildings of some sort. But as far as any regular established buildings, I didn't find any when I came here. Like I said before, there was a school on the West Hill, the top of West Hill, for all the homestead kids. That took care of pretty near everybody up on the hill there. As far as down in town, like I said, it's just these few buildings they'd been using but the main school building, I think, I never, I think that was built in, after I went off to the army. They built that main school building. It was a big frame building about where the Jr. High School is now. It was on this, it was on the east end of where the Jr. High School building is now. They built a big frame building there, that was the first school I noticed here in town.

G. Do you know who ran that school?

P. Well, it was run by the state, state had all the schools in those days and, I don't know who the principal was at the time, I never paid that much attention to it. Seems to me, I just can't remember any of the teachers or any of the people in that school.

G. Could you estimate how many students there were?

P. Oh, I don't know, probably, 40, 50 maybe, kids.

G. Fairly small school.

P. Yeah, it was a real small school. There might have been a few more but I don't think, I don't really remember.

G. Now what was the name of this school, there were two schools I remember, the Kachemak Bay School or something...

P. Well, I don't even know their names. I don't know what they called them. They could've had a name for them but I never heard anything about that

G. So you never...

P. Some of the other people around town could probably tell you more about the names of the schools.

G. In our last one, our last interview, you mentioned the police very briefly afterwards.

P. Yeah, well, when I came here there really wasn't any police in town here. The nearest law we had here was over in Seldovia, it was a marshal, and he'd come over if you had to have anything done by the police. Anything that required police attention, then they'd send over to Seldovia and that marshal would come over here and take care of anything here that was necessary.

G. So he'd just come over by boat?

P. Yeah, he'd come over by boat and whatever way he could get over. They didn't have too many planes here, once in awhile a bush plane would come in here. Chances are he'd come over by boat, most of the time.

G. You mean, you said a couple of bush planes would come here now and then...

P. Well, people could charter airplanes out of Anchorage to fly to different parts of Alaska at that time, you could get an airplane but as far as I can remember, they had no regular ^{scheduled} airline route. They flew into Homer time and again but all they had was a little place dozed out here, cleared away you might say. Where the airport is now, so a plane could come in here and, other than that you very seldomly saw an airplane in here, just very rare.

G. So there was no airport?

P. No, not what you'd call a real airport. They finally got one built out there, but in the beginning there was nothing there.

G. Just kind of like a landing strip.

P. Yeah, just kind of like a wilderness landing strip, yeah.

G. We're going to change the subject now, we're going to go to cabin building. See what we can get on there because I know you built your cabin and I kind of like to know how you built it?

P. Well, first, of course, without any chainsaws or any power tools of any kind we just went out with an ax and a saw, we had a great big five foot crosscut saw, and you just go out and you find the place you want to build your cabin,

P: Try to find some kind of level spot there. Maybe you'd take a ~~mat~~ mattock or hoe or something, and try to level off the ground a little bit. Get you a flat place to build. Then you go out, with your saw and your ax, and cut your trees down. Now, sometimes they're quite a ways from ~~the~~ cabin, you might have troubles getting them down to the house. Some guys rigged up pulleys and stuff like that to pull the trees if they were close around but if you were quite a ways ~~of~~ you'd have to get a horse. Now, there were a few horses around ~~tht~~ you could get. Now I had, this old fella who lived on West Hill there, had a horse, big old white pack horse, and I cut my logs all down and this horse pulled them in. Well, I had about 60 logs, so I used this horse to bring them in. Now when you bring them in you pile your logs up and get them around where you want to build your cabin at. Well then you put in pilings, you know what they are, that's these post, you stick them in the ground, usually below the frostline if you can put them down that deep, I'd say about 3 or 4 feet down so the frost doesn't heave them out, and you put all these pilings in at different corners of your building or in the middle, wherever you want to put your logs. You then start with your base log, usually you pick the biggest log you can find for your base log, and you set that down on the piling and that gives you the first two logs. Well, then you start right up crisscrossing your logs. Notching them so they'll fall in, crisscrossing. Just build your logs right on up. Just probably like, maybe like you've seen these toy logs that kids use, it's the same principle. ⁴ Now there's different ways of notching logs, they have what they call a dove tail which is a, sort of a wedge shaped notch you put in the log and the log fits real tight together, real good. Then you have just a regular round notch, one I used, it's the easiest one to make, and you just notch on the end of the log, you just cut a 'v' shape, or round, and you just notch that so it fits over the, over the top of the, of the bottom, the log your putting it on, and you just go up that way just notching these round notches out all the way up. So then, after you get those walls all up, as high as your going to go, then you have to figure out some kind of a roof. Now we didn't have any lumber in those days and people would take and split, take the smaller poles, oh, about four to six inch poles and split them, with wedges. You just split this log however long you want, say your going to have a ten foot roof and the center ridge, down to the edge of your logs, it's going to be ten feet. Well, you get this ten foot log and you split it, and you put all these logs and turn them over, lay them round side down. That gives the flat side up and that gives you sort of a flat surface. It's not lumber, it's not like lumber but still it's a flat surface. You split all these logs and you lay those up. You have what you call a ridge pole and like I says, when you get to the top of your logs as high as you want to go, say six or seven feet, then you come up with you gable ends and that's a taper, that gives you a taper for ~~the~~ ends of your house. Then you put on the top of this, these two gable ends, you run what's called a ridge pole and you run that thing the full length of your cabin. Maybe down about halfway you put, about halfway between the ridgepole to the first wall you probably have another log if it's a big wide building, and they call that a purling

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and you stick that in and that gives you more support. Then you lay your split poles on top of these logs like this. Then whatever kind of roofing your going to put on, whether it's tar paper or whatever you've got to put on, shake shingles or whatever your going to put on, you just put that on your split poles. Most of us used rolled roofing tar paper because you could buy that down town here and get a roll of that and take it up. And just about everybody used that. Some people got hold of pieces of tin and galvanized stuff. I don't know where they got it, but some of them had that. But most everybody had tar paper.

G: What did you use to insulate it between the logs?

P: You could go out here. ~~There~~ There was a certain kind of moss - you could go outhere with a gunny-sack, out here in the timber and around the base of these trees. There's a different kind of moss; there's a red moss. It's a stringy, tough moss. Then there's a long white fiber moss, and you take the white moss. It's got long, really long fibers; and they're real soft. And you fill that sack full of these; and you bring that back and take sticks and you poke that moss in where your cracks are. Works pretty good, makes pretty good chinking. A lot of people used straw and mud and hay and things like that, But most of that stuff fell out, but that moss would stay in, stayed right in there.

G: How did you pick a location for your cabin?

P: Of course, mine - I picked it because my water was close by. I Have a creek running behind my cabin, real good water. So I said, "That's an important thing." Most people do look for water. Then they try to find the flattest place nearest the water that they could find. Most everybody determined their cabin by where the water supply is. And if it isn't too far away, they would built as close to the water as they can.

G: You just got your water by a pail?

P: Yeah, well yeah. I just dug a hole in the ground right there by the creek there and put a box down in there about three feet; and the water just flowed right through the box. Dipped your pail right in there, get your water - worked pretty good.

G: Couldn't that get a little bad with those little germs in there?

P: Yeah, well, it does. It gets stirred up, and you have to keep it cleaned out all the time. The best way to do is not put in the center of the creek, which a lot of people will do to begin with. They don't know any better. They'll dig a hole right in the middle of the creek allowing the water to bring all that water, all that mud and silt. And it just keeps filling up, and you got to keep digging. You offset the side of the creek, then you build it. Now water will seep in but it'll be clean, especially if you put

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boards down around it pretty tight just so, just barely - The water can just barely get in. You won't have all that mud and crud and stuff. But you'll still have water. So you build it off, you offset it to the side of the creek.

G: And you won't get the little germs. . .

P: Well, you'll get those wigglers. They come in. There's no way of getting around those that I ever found.

G: Did you ever have any problems with them?

P: Oh, we'd have them. We just, you'd find them in the water and you just strain them out, throw them out.

G: What would you do in case. . .

P: I think they're mosquito larva or something. I don't know.

G: What did you do if something did come up. How would you get to a doctor?

P: Nearest doctor was Seldovia. They had a hospital over there and they had a doctor there. And that was the same proposition that you had with the law. Had to contact them by radio in an emergency. A lot of emergencies in the old days - just things that happened to people. They'd have to do the best they could. It was possible to charter a plane from Anchorage, to bring them down and take them up to Anchorage. Well, that was good. Sometimes you could do that. That's where they, a lot of them, they would just take them out by boat or take them to Seldovia by boat.

Now I had an accident. We had several accidents up on the hill there. I used to take care of myself, and I knew a little bit about first aid. And I'd take care of a lot of the people around here. A kid came in one time, he had ripped his arm right open on a barbed wire fence. Right underneath his arm. He just ripped it wide open, and the blood was just pouring out of there. And they sent for me, and I jumped on my horse and rode over there - and I took my medicine stuff with me. I saw that big wide open wound, and I got a compress bandage on it to hold it tight to stop the blood. Then I told the lady if they had any fishing line, a real thin leader - boil that up. Boiled that up, and I said, "Got any needles?" Well, she said, she had some sewing needles.

I said, "If they've got a big enough eye for that thread to go through," I said, "I'll sew this kid up." Believe you me that was a tough deal to boil that all up and get the needle and put the thread through the needle. And that kid had to sit right there, and I had to sew him without any anesthetic at all. Had to sew that big gash up.

P: I put about five or six stitches in that arm under there. Wrapped him up real good, and I had some sulfa powder that I got in the army, during the war, and I had that with me. I sprinkled a lot of that on there. And, by golly! I told him to come over in a couple of days. He came over in a couple of days. I took the stitches out and kept him wrapped up. And he pulled through.

Those were the kind of things you had to do in those days. Now women that were going to have babies, it was a tough go for some of them. Most of them were born at home in log cabins. We had some ladies here in town that were pretty good mid-wives, and we had some nurses here. A lot of people lost their kids. I know I had a neighbor, a lady, she had a miscarriage. She lost two little babies up on the hill there. Oh, off and on, you'd hear a story of different people who didn't have anyway to take care of them and lose them. And that was just one of the things you had to face.

G: So the doctor not being there caused a lot of problems?

P: Yeah, not having a doctor handy. He could have saved a lot of lives. But that's the way it is on any frontier country. You just got to try to get by the best you can, until you can get doctors and thing in.

G: What would you do normally for something like pneumonia?

P: Just do the best you can. Just hope they pull through. I never ran across it. Fortunately I never had any trouble with pneumonia. Although we did have severe colds. You didn't seem to get as much sickness either in those days. People knew how to take care of themselves and did take care of themselves better. You weren't around that many people to pick up germs, but still people did get sick. You just did the best you can with pneumonia, and just hope - if it got too severe, and you could get him to a doctor, you'd do that. If you couldn't, you'd just do the best you could. And sometimes people would die. Not too many here that I ever heard of. Most people seemed to be pretty healthy and take care of themselves.

G: What would you do? Just put them to bed?

P: Well, yeah, you put them to bed and try to keep them warm and give them hot drinks, or whatever. And if you've got any kind of medicine at all that might help why, you just give them what you got. I think, pneumonia is a real severe thing it really involves the germs in the lungs and all, I don't know. You can pull through pneumonia. It depends on how healthy your body is, how much resistance you've got. If you're really weak to begin with, pneumonia can take you right away. If you're not a strong person. If you're a healthy person, you could probably survive a bout of pneumonia by just going to bed, drinking hot drinks and taking care of yourself. Just a matter of chance, that's all.

Alot of people had old home remedies and things that they used, that they heard about. They'd use those for different sicknesses and things.

G: Do you know what any of those home remedies were?

P: Oh, yes, I don't know. They would, if you, my mother, when I was a kid, used to use turpentine alot. You'd get a cut, cut your finger, cut you leg or step on a nail. Mother always used Lysol and water and put your foot down in there and soaked that, then put a bunch of turpentine, we used alot of turpentine. Turpentine has got healing power, real good stuff. It stings, it's pretty rugged, but it works pretty good.

I remember one time I was working out in the woods and I cut my. Real bad cut, on my ax, I slipped and cut my finger. It was just bleeding all over the place and I just took my handkerchief and I wrapped it up real tight and stopped the blood, and then I reached up on a tree and got some of that real pitch that comes out of a spruce tree, real good pitch, and I just put a big gob of that on there, wrapped it real tight. When I got home I took it off, cleaned it up, wrapped it up again and in a couple days it was beginning to heal. That turpentine in that pitch healed it.

There's alot of things like that. Some things I'll hear in the wilderness that you can use for different things. Herbs and things like that if you know what to look for. Not too sure about all that stuff but there are people who can tell different things.

There's this puff ball, it's a little plant that grows about this big around (5 inches) and you can use that to stop the blood. If you get a cut, if you're out here and you get a cut and it won't stop, your blood won't clot very good. Just find one of those puff balls and just kick it open, bust it open and sprinkle some of that stuff right on there, all over your wound. That will stop the blood if you're bleeding too bad. I don't know, it wouldn't probably stop if it was an artery bleeding, you'll have to put some kind of pressure on there. If it's just a vein, if you just cut across a big vein and it's bleeding pretty badly, it'll help it stop, wrap it real tight.

G: What was the worst thing that happened to you, was it that cut?

P: Well, the worst thing that ever happend to me, that I was involved in was I was mowing some hay up on the hill here for a fee for a guy in this field, and I had got my tractor and mower. I had a cutter bar, about an eight foot cutter bar. These kids were playing in this field and I told them, "You kids better get out of here. I got to mow this hay." They didn't get out of there right away, they were playing all around. So I went, took a swaft clear down around the bottom of the field and came back up and they were up on these hay poles, playing on these hay poles.

Well, I had to cut around those hay poles. I came around and hollered at those kids, "You better get out of the way." They got up on these hay poles and one kid slipped and fell right down in front of the mower and I ran over him.

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Well, that scared me to death, and I ran out there and I picked that kid up and I had cut this big tendon in his heel, Achilles tendon. I cut that with that mower. He was bleeding something awful, screaming and hollering. I grabbed that kid up, and I don't know how I raised that cutter bar up but I got that bar up and I jumped on that tractor and I raced up to the house.

It so happened that his grandparents were there. I took the boy in and, he was bleeding all over the place, this fellow happened to have some of this sulfa powder and he happened to have a big army compress bandage in the house. I took one of those, I sprinkled all this powder on that, all over that heel there and I just wrapped it ~~real~~ it real tight.

He put him in a car, he just happened to have a car at his place, and the roads weren't too bad then. He came down town, he radioed first, after they got to town they radioed for a plane. That plane was over here from Seldovia in jig time.

They plt that kid on there, took him over there to the doctor and the doctor took that bandage off and he got him sewed up.

To this day that kid is able to walk. I have never talked to the kid much. He's still in town, it's Ray Bellany, lives up on the hill there.

I have never seen Ray since those days to find out how he is, how his foot is but I've never seen him limp or hurt. Whether he limped or not, but he did, he ?. But just cut that big tendon in there, but that really scared me when I saw that happen. I was afraid he was going to lose his foot.

G: You knew pretty well what you were doing.

X P: Yeah, will I had been in the war you see, and we treated each other. I knew how to treat a wound, a gunshot wound or anything like that, or any kind of a cut. I did pretty well of taking care of something like that.

we happended to have the stuff to do it with and that made alot of difference too, especially that sulfa ? powder, that was real good for infections. You use plenty of that stuff and you won't have much Problems later on.

G: You learned while you were over at the war?

P: Yeah, I picked that up while I was over there.

G: Did somebody teach you?

P: Well yeah, I was battery aid man and that's what my job was, to take care of men.

G: What were you?

P: Battery aid man they called it. Go out with firing batteries and that's what your job is.

G: Who taught you?

*Raydships
Homestead*

Bellany

P: You had to learn in the army. They have schools and they would just teach you how to do that. Then you pick up what you can pick up from experience, you learn pretty fast. You got to, you know.

G: Or else your going to be in trouble.

P: Yeah, When your the only one around, it don't take you long but it's pretty much routine, you do it a coupl of times and you know what to do from then on. Sometimes you can't save a man's life, you do the best you can.

STRAFFED?
 We got scraped one time by some Germans, and there wasn't anything we could do. We wrapped these guys up and they died. One guy had his back broken. There wasn't anything we could do. We put him on a stretcher and took him back - and his back was broken and his spine had been cut. And there's certain things you can do so much of, but if you can't get them back to the hospital where they can be operated on in a hurry, why they're gone. They lost him. He was paralyzed from the neck on down. His backbone was cut right through; his spinal chord was cut.

X then
 You do what you can like these paramedics here in town. They do what they can. And when the doctor takes over from there. And if they do as much as they can, they can save a guy's life. And that's the way it used to be done in those days. We'd do all we can - sometimes you could save a guy's life, sometimes you couldn't. Sometimes he'd pull out of it and be ok.

G: You mentioned the paramedics - brings to mind the fire department. Did you guys have anything here as a fire department?

P: In those days?

X G: In case of fire ^{or} of anything.

P: Oh, we had a volunteer one. Let's see, that started later on. I think a fella by the name of Gnad, Mr. Gnad started that, the first fire department. And that was all volunteer. And they had an old truck . . . I'm not too familiar with that fire department. They had an old truck they got somewhere, and then of course, it was just a bucket brigade type of thing to start with. Then gradually it developed into a pretty good fire department. In the beginning, it was just a matter of everybody jumping in and helping to fight fire.

G: The spring burn: I've heard a lot about this, but I don't really understand what it is.

X winter
 P: Well, you see how tall this grass is out here, you know. Ok, this' darn grass is so tall and heavy, and in the intere, the snows knocked it down and it just piles up in great big mounds all over your land. Well, in the first place, if you're ever going to use that land, you can't do anything with that old dead grass. So everybody, before they plow, or before they'd cut hay or anything, they'd burn that over in the spring, usually in May. As soon as the snow leaves the ground,

they'd start burning. And so just everybody around the country was burning off their grass so they could work.

But the thing about it is, in those days, people didn't care what they did. They'd set a fire and forget it, as long as it burnt their land off, they didn't care whether it went on down to their neighbors or half-way across the country. I can remember up on the hill there, there'd be guys settin' fires. I'd watch these guys settin' fires from my cabin. They burnt clear down the whole side of Lookout Mountain and clear on down to Beaver Flats - must have burned about three of four miles.. Burned the whole country, everything you see. The big trees going up, great big
You see the line of fire that went right on down that side of the mountain and right on down into the canyon. Usually it would go when they'd get down into a patch of timber where there's a lot of trees and little clumps, and it would burn those trees right up. That's what they called a spring burn.

They finally got a fire marshal in here, a fire warden. He was staying here in Homer. It was the late '40's I think, or at least early '50's. It was his business to check on people burning. They were supposed to get his permission and stuff. That's what that was all about - spring burn.

G: So there was a lot of danger to property of others.

P: Yeah, you could let your fire go and it would go over and burn somebody else's place. That was a problem I had there. A guy let his fire go and it came over to my house and boy, we had to get out there. My sister and I had to get out there and fight like fury to keep it from burning our haystacks up. He came over and said, "Well, I didn't intend for this fire to get away like that." I said, "No, you didn't. But it sure did." So we finally got that put out..

(Moved to shed to continue interview)

G: Did you have any problems with your spring burn, or did you burn?

P: Yeah, I always tried to keep it within certain boundaries. Especially on my land. I knew it wouldn't hurt much if it got away, but I did have neighbors there and I didn't want to burn their land, especially if they weren't looking for it, expecting it.

I had a backfire. I would go down in the trees and build another fire to come up and meet the fire I would set in, so they would all stay in the one area. And you can do that if you're careful. Say you got a big old field you want to burn well, you got to figure out which way the wind's blowing. You can tell that by right away when you start burning which way the wind's blowing. So then go and set

another fire at the other side of the field and try to burn towards the one you're burning. They will burn and do it that way, if you start them out real small and keep them stamped out and just let the main part of the fire burn.. Don't let anything get behind you. You can keep a fire going until you get all corners of the fire, all coming together in the middle. You can control your fire if you want to.

A lot of people didn't want. They didn't care. It didn't make any difference to them. But if you really wanted to control a fire and you're careful - as long as the wind doesn't change too fast on you. It it changes too fast, it can jump ahead of you and jump right over. And then you lost it once it gets out, gets away from you. There's nothing you can do, just let her go.

G: What was the worst thing that happened to you? Was it that fire?

P: That was the worst, yeah. It came down, almost burned up my haystacks. That was the worst problem we had with fire.

G: So all in all, it wasn't that bad?

P: No not for us. I guess some people might have lost their cabins, I don't know. Usually around a cabin there's not much grass. People keep the grass pretty well down. Most of the people would burn around their cabins first anyway. Just as soon as the snow got away from around their cabin and the grass got exposed. They would get out there and burn it. Then you'd go our and burn your fields; then if any fire does come along later, it will come along as far as where you burned. It will stop because there's nothing there.. But that's what a lot of people did: they burned around their cabins first.. If somebody did happen to set the country on fire, they were pretty safe. There was usually a cabin nobody was living in and grass was growing up. And over the years the grass could get to growing up all around the cabin. And then, any fire gets in there, they just take the cabin and all.

G: Did you have it burned around your cabin?

P: Yeah, usually. I used to burn right around the cabin there. But I had trees and stuff there. I didn't have a whole lot of grass. Just on one side of my cabin I had a little bit of grass there, and I'd burn that off.

G: If something had happened that was really bad, what would you have done? Let's say if your whole field was in flames and you didn't even know it, right at first, say. What would you have done?

P: Well, if I looked out there and saw a big fire out in one of my field, why I'd probably go up there and see which way the wind was blowing and try to set a backfire to stop it. That's all you could

do. There wasn't much else you could do. There wasn't anyway you could get any water up there, and there wasn't anyway to. . . In the old days, they could plow, you know. People could plow around a field. But in that tough country, there wasn't any way you could plow. So we just had to run up there with gunny sacks and soak 'em in a creek. That's what we used. You can use a branch off a tree, but pretty soon that gets all dried out and the needles fall off. So, the best thing we found were gunny sacks. Just take a bunch of gunny sacks and soak 'em in a creek, get 'em soakin' wet and take 'em up there and slap 'em. You can slap a lot of fire that way. Pretty hard work sometimes, you know.

G: What else did you use besides the tree limbs and -?

P: Well, just rags and that's about all I ever used. Oh, maybe an old pair - say, you had an old pair of overalls or some old rags that were heavy, heavy enough to do some good. Or something like that, that'd work pretty good.

G: What did other people try? Did you pay much attention to that?

P: No, I never - people pretty much used the same thing everywhere, I guess. Whatever they could find. I don't know, there wasn't any way you could (fight it. There wasn't any way you could) get water, wasn't any pumps, or anything to pump water out of the creek to put a fire out. "Till later on. At first everyone had to do everything by hand or let 'er go. As long as it didn't burn your house down, most of them just let it go.. Get it away from their house where it didn't bother them, why they'd just let it go..

G: Did you ever hear of anyone being trapped by fire?

P: Never did, Not here.

G: Everyone was pretty careful.

P: Yeah, they were pretty careful.

G: We're going to change the subject again. This time we're going to go to roads. When do you think. . . The main road, the Sterling Highway: were you here when it was first built?

P: Yeah, '48 or '49/ I got the figures on that somewhere here. I bought my truck the year they opened up the road. It was - I think the ~~year~~ fall of '48 that they finished that highway, the road from here to Seward, and Anchorage. And that was December, they finally finished it up late in the Fall, then. I think it was 1948, December 1948, first part of December they opened it up for the public between here and Kenai and Anchorage and Seward, that country over there.

G: Did you ever use that much?

P: Oh, yeah, after they opened it why, once they started using it, people went everywhere. That's the only means of getting to Anchorage you had other than a plane or a boat. We, of course, the roads were so rough too, when they first opened them up and all. The people didn't travel too much unless they had a four-wheel drive or a truck of some kind. For cars it was a pretty hard road because they're a lot of mudholes and places and all. Seemed like they were constantly working on it, doing something to it, tearing

? Roughest stretch of road in the world I think was between here and Ninilchik. It was really - nobody wanted to go to Soldotna or Kenai very much. You'd only go if you had to, like go to the dentist or something like that, that was the only reason you'd go. Otherwise you'd stay off that darn road, too rough. Finally they got it down where it was a little better and, of course, eventually, they paved it. That was the beginning of a good road.

G: You said something about going to Soldotna to go to the dentist. They didn't have one down here.

✓ P: They didn't have a dentist here, no. They guy came down, it was old Doc Pollard, he lived up at Kasilof there. He was the only dentist around this part of the country. There might have been one in Seldovia, I don't know. I never went over there. This old Doc Pollard come down every summer. He had a horse and an old wagon, kind of an old closed-in wagon there, and he had all his dental supplies. And he'd come into town. He'd set up down there and, by golly, he'd take care of all your teeth. Everybody who had to have anything done. Mostly he pulled them out, but he did fill them. He'd stay here for maybe a couple of weeks, two or three weeks. And he'd take off and go back. So if you had anything to do in the way of dental work, you'd get him while he was here. Now if you didn't want to do that then you could go up to Kenai. They had a dentist. They finally got a dentist in Kenai in the later years, and most everybody went up there.

G: Did you ever use this Doc Pollard?

✓ P: Yeah, he either filled one or pulled one for me, I can't remember now. But I do remember coming down and having him work on it a tooth of mine.

G: Kind of like the doctor, nothing really intown.

P: No, for a long time there was nothing in town. You had to send up for everything.

They had this flying doctor. His name was Dr. Bannister. He lived in - this was later on - he lived over in Seward. He'd fly

all over the Peninsula, and he'd take care of all these. He'd drop into Homer and stay for a while. And he'd take care of, mostly the women who were going to have babies. And he'd stop and take care of them.

A lot of time, the women who were going to have babies, when it came time for them to have their babies, they wouldn't wait for the doctor to come here because he might not make it. So they'd go over to Seward and go right into the hospital. When it was their time, they'd go in the hospital and stay there until time for the baby - because he was their doctor and he was stationed there. He'd come and see them periodically all during the time. And then X then, a few days or a week, whatever, before they were going to have the baby, they'd take off, go to Seward. Fly there or go by the road, and I know, quite a few kids who were born here, were born over in Seward because that's where the doctor was. They were Homer kids. They weren't born in Homer. They were born over there in Seward in that hospital or in Saldovia, either way.

G: Did you ever go up to the Seward hospital?

P: Yeah, I went over with Bob Hoedel when his wife, ~~P~~^Peggy was going to have a baby. That's when Nancy, their daughter Nancy, was born. And Bob and I and Marion Browning went over there to see Peggy after her baby was born at that hospital there.

G: Was it pretty nice to what you were used to?

P: Yeah, it was good to have a hospital. We didn't have anything at all.

G: Fox farming, did you ever get into fox farming?

P: Never had anything to do with that.

G: Did you know anyone who did?

P: They had a fox farm across the bay here somewhere, I don't remember where it was, seems to me like it was either before you get to Halibut Cove or past Halibut Cove somewhere over in there. They had a fox farm, somebody had a fox farm. Now all I ever heard of was the fax farm, but I don't know who the guy was who was running it. I don't really know about it. That's something I didn't have anything to do with.

G: You really don't know much about fox farming? From what I understand, there was a lot here in Homer.

P: Could have been in different places, but... Yeah, you didn't get around too much. It wasn't easy to get around and to go anywhere.

You had to walk so you didn't get around to see all these things. Nowadays you can see everything that's going on here, but in those days if something was going on, it may be ten miles away and you may never be able to see it. Enough to walk to town and back to get your supplies and everything. Going all over the country to find out what everybody is doing.

G: Transportation was not too great.

P: Not much, if you lived on the beach, along the beach you could always run to see your neighbors and go places by boat. You knew pretty near everybody all around there, but people living back here in these hills, you didn't know too many people.

I didn't know a lot of people who lived on the West Hill over there because it was too far away. They were just over there doing their thing, and we were doing ours over on the East Hill. They could've been miles, worlds apart, far as we were concerned.

They finally, people got more transportation like more tractors and more vehicles come in. Why, you could go over on the West Hill and see people a little more often, and get together. And we did get together, and we formed a farmer's co-op on the hill there. But all of us up there, and the people on West Hill joined us - from Gus Lofgrens that's clear over by the cemetery from that end of the hill clear over to where we lived over there. Pretty near everybody around came and joined that co-op, farmers co-op. We got along pretty good with them. We got a lot of things done. Talked about a lot of things - how to get seed and feed cheaper, and get groceries. You could get groceries through the co-op, get them cheaper and all that kind of stuff!!

That was the only way you ever got to know anybody usually was by belonging to some kind of group. Otherwise you just heard these names, but they didn't mean. People were always asking me, "Do you know so and so?" I said, "I heard his name, but I never got acquainted with him, He lived too far away."

G: Who started this co-op?

P: Oh, just a bunch of us got together on the hill there and . . . Old Gus Lofgren over the West Hill had been in a co-op down in Washington when he was younger. I think he was the guy that began talking about it, and he contacted some of us over on the East Hill here, wanted to know if we'd be interested in getting together to form a co-op. And we didn't know anything about co-ops. "Well," he said, "he'd been in 'em and knew quite a bit on how they were organized. So we just called a meeting one time at Brownings' cabin, that's Gene Browning's cabin, and everybody from our side of the hill got together with all the people from the West side and Gus Lofgren was there, and he explained to us about these

co-ops and what you have to do to become a co-op member. We got together and elected us some officers and a secretary; and she began writing letters to different co-ops to find out how you organize them. And we learned how to do it and we organized our own.

G: What all did you do with this co-op?

P: well, this co-op finally fizzled out. It was supposed to be able to sell you stuff cheaper as you sell them together. One thing the co-op did do, though, they started the first fair that they had in Homer. They used to have fairs back in those days. Our little co-op group had the first fair. People would bring in anything they could raise. They'd bring into the fair and show it off. And that's what the co-op usually did was try to sell the produce from the farms. It would help the farmers sell the things they had, eggs and produce and farm - truck-farming, and all that kind of stuff. The purpose of the co-op is to help the members to buy their seed cheaper and to buy their feed. And also, like I said, you can get groceries cheaper through a co-op, and so people were glad for that one reason. They could get their groceries cheaper than they could have them shipped in here. That was one of the purposes.

Well, like I said, about the only thing we ever really did with the co-op we did manage to get our groceries a time or two that way. We started the first fair down town, and it was pretty successful. People brought all their stuff, to sell off their vegetables and their animals, whatever they had. And they had games and different fun things for the people to play and all. It was the first fair they ever had.

Then it finally fizzled out. People moved away from the homestead, went off looking for jobs and stuff. The homesteads really weren't providing a very good limit. So they left and when they did, the co-op just dissolved. And there wasn't much so they finally . . .

G: Tell me a little bit more about this fair. What kinds of games and all this?

P: Well, I can't remember too much. Let's see, ah - they had raffles and stuff and they had - what the heck else did they have? This one penny pitch where you throw penny in this thing and they had - I think they had a baseball throw. And they had - they didn't have any rides or anything. Because there wasn't any way to get rides in here like a merry-go-round or things like that. It was just a little small fair. And then I think they had in connection with the fair, after the fair was over, that evening they had a dance right there at the theater.

The theater was right beside the fair-grounds, where we used as a fair-ground was right at where the Methodist church is now. And there was a big field there. And the theater was the building right alongside right about - just about where the church building is.

And there, the fair itself and the

And then we had these, this fair itself. And they exhibited vegetables, and they exhibited animals and whatever, and they had the dance at night. And that was about the size of the fair. I can't remember too much about it. I remember I came to the fair. I remember my sister was working in the booth there. I think they sold drinks, and all the women made cookies and stuff like that. Just like they do in most of these fairs, you know. They have different booths for different stuff, just sorta like the winter carnival. This winter they call it the bazaar they have.

G: Did you ever exhibit anything down there?

P: No, I never did. I didn't have much to exhibit. I helped out setting up the booths and stuff like that. I don't know whether we played any music or not. Seems to me like we did play music with our instruments. The only fair I had anything to do with was that first one. Then they got a regular fair established over where the fairground is now and that became later. This first little fair that we had, we sponsored that. I don't remember if they had a fair the next year. I think they had fairs after that. They finally got together with the town people down here, and they made a great big fair. They got a fair-board and then they started holding the fairs where the fair-ground is now. But this first fair was really just sort of a spur-of-the-moment thing.

G: Do you know what year that little fair was?

P: I would say around the early '50's.

G: You mentioned something about a regular fair coming in: when did that happen?

P: I can't even tell you the date of that, but it wasn't too long after our fairs. Two years later people got together with these town people down here, and everybody. The East people our East on the East Road had all those farms and things where they raised a lot of vegetables. They got together and decided they wanted to have a big fair. It's kind of vague in my mind as when that was. I think it wasn't too many after we had ours.

But they finally decided they wanted to have a bigger fair, you know - a bigger deal. So they stuck together, organized the fair and got a new fair board. And appointed their president, and they worked on that. I think they took people from everywhere.. I think some of the people from the hill were on the fair board, and people from the East End and maybe people from the West side over there were on the fair-board. It got to be a pretty good-sized fair. And then eventually as the fair went on, it seemed to me like they had rides and a merry-go-round in, or a ferris-wheel, I guess they had a ferris-wheel then. Then baseball games on the day of the fair. People would bring animals. They had a stall to bring them into. They'd bring their beef and whatever they were raising. They'd those in and it got to be a pretty good fair, like an ordinary fair.

I don't know if they have the fair now anymore. I haven't heard of any in the last three years. For awhile that was one of the things they had to look forward to in the summertime was a fair. Because there really wasn't much stuff going on. The fare was one of the things people could all get in on.

G- Were you involved in the fair?

P: I never got involved in the big fair until once they started recognizing it. I don't remember when it was. I used to go and see the fair, but I was never involved in it as far as setting up and things like that.

G: Do you remember when they put electricity in?

P: Yes, I got, we organized what we called REA, the HEA. I got something if you want to stop that for a second. So that was about 1946. It was called the REA, then they changed it to the HEA.

G: Do they still have REA now?

P: Rural Electric, yea they have that in other places.

G: Ok, we'll talk a little bit about this map so we'll have it on tape.

P: OK

G: When did you make this map, get it?

P: Well, that map I made it I can't really remember. I got this map in Anchorage. I don't remember where it is. When I went back up there..well when I stopped in the first place to find out. I think it was after I sat my homestead. I went back up there to Anchorage one time. I don't remember what year it was. And I went into the land office and I got this map and I traced off their big map where this river was and the different places here. And later on as time went on, new people came in, why, I filled their name in around mine' here. Like this Henry, where it says Henry that was Jim Henry. He filed on 160, right next to me there. And oh, he ah, he left he relinquished it so he never did keep it. And same way with this Tex. He came in and filed on Well, I was the first one here, the first. This was all there was. There was nobody else anywhere around here. Except this guy here, these guys here and this guy. (referring to the homestead plat-map) Then I was sticking way out here. And people began coming in. First thing you know, there was people all around you. They were all filing on land like Brownings and Harry Mead.

All the Meads, Herbie Mead, Harry Mead. They all filed over there, beyond me here and Bill Aldridge bought about the same time I did. He came down about a month or two after I did and he filed. Right here on these. There's 440 here, and he took \$20.

G: Did any travel any where?

P: Well, I started, I started over here, about where the West Hill is. The West came clear over here like this, and it came over and ended right over in here, so it isn't on this map. But it's West of Olson Mountain. So then I took off. This old fellow broke a trail for me for a ways, and then I was on my own. And I went clear way down the river here, clear down across the Anchor River here, then came back up on this side. This is all Beaver Flats. before you get to the Anchor and Bald Mountains off over this way.

G: So you just made almost a full circle.

P: Yeah, almost a full circle around here before I finally came up over here and found this peice that I like. It had good water and everything.

G: Do you know very many people that are still living in Homer?

P: Nobody around here anymore than the Meads (?), all gone, Tex is gone, Henry—all these people are gone now, every one of them. Yep everybody—Nelson died and Thompson died. These guys moved away, Henry moved away, Straubs sold out. Nobody around anymore. of that whole bunch of them, they're all gone. Now just a bunch of new people in there now but all those original ones are all gone.

G: You mentioned in our last one about a big cabin here of Straub's.

P: Yeah, this big cabin of Straub's, right down here, a great big cabin, a great big cabin.

G: The southeast corner there.

P: Yeah and it's all gone now, it's all fallen down and somebody took the logs away or something because last time I went down there it all.

G: On your homestead is there anything left there?

P: Yeah, I got a cabin, I got a guy living in it now, he's keeping it up pretty good. My cabins right about, let's see, somewhere down here I believe right here.

G: Down on the south end. Was there something about having your cabin down on the south side?

P: Well yeah, here's where the creek starts, the head of the creek flows by the cabin then goes right on down into this canyon, goes right on down this way to the river so my house is right there, I had this creek and it was sheltered. It was rather important in those days for me.

G: Who's this right here?

P: That's a guy named Jim Acree. I don't know what ever became of him. He was all around Look Out Mt., east of Look Out Mt. or I mean east of Ohlsen Mt. I mean, I saw him one time at Mrs. Wallys, I don't know if he still owns that homestead or not. Same way with this guy. I don't know this guy either, I never met him. Fred Harbison I knew. He just died ^{here} recently - he was 85 or 90 some years old. This fellow died, he moved away. He left his homestead and went back to Montana. He died back there. He was an old guy too.

G: Each of these sections here is forty acres?

P: Yeah, each little square is forty acres. Then you have your great big ones here, that's a whole section you see. Course this 27, that's the center of a section. It's a mile each way. You got 16 sections in there or sixteen forties in there in each section. And the number is right in the center of the section.

G: So that way you just filled out that one number?

P: Well, like very corner here, let's just take this square here. You just find a post here and you find a post here. There should be a post on each corner. Now these posts when they were put in there, they were put in in 1917 so you can imagine it's hard to find them. They were brass posts, and they didn't rust out, but they're hard to find unless you stumble on them. Usually if it's through a patch of timber, you can see where they cut the trees and even to this day you can follow a section line right down through the timber, because you can see where they slashed the trees with their ax. They cut different trees down. As long as - of course, if people have moved in here and moved around a lot of times, you can see some of the trees they cut. If nobody was in here before you came, and you saw a whole bunch of trees cut in a line, you assume it's a survey line. There should be a post here and a post here. In other words, you'd have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 around a section. so you got something to go by pretty much here.

G: Just two post per hundred and sixty acres?

P: Yeah, you just have the two on each 160 if it's a square. Now if it's an "L"-shaped right on the center you'd have a hard time finding it. This guy here, Fred Neitenhelzer, helped me find - he knew where that post was and he was the first guy I ever met.

I walked over to his house, stumbled on to his place there and he said, "I'll show you where that post is." And he got his boots on,

and we went on down there and he showed me where that corner was. Finally I found this post, and I found this one. (indicating on map). I looked around this trying to find where the other posts were but I never did find them.

G: Tell me a little about Neitenhelzer.

P: Old Neitenhelzer, well like I say, he was here before I came. He was from M^Untana. He was a cattle rancher from M^Untana. He had a nice place. It was all open land. On the side of Lookout Mountain. I don't know if you've ever been to the ski-tow, but anyway you come up here and you go along past the ski tow, and you go by his place.

It's a real nice open place, but he never did very much with his land. He was a pretty old ~~man~~ fellow when I came in here, and I think he just wanted to get a piece of land. He lived in Montana all those years, and he decided he wanted to come to Alaska. So he came and got that piece of land up there and like everyone else he was trying to do something with it. He never did do much with it.

G: How did you happen to meet him?

P: I just happened to stumble onto his cabin. I was stumbling through this country and I looked over and saw this cabin, so I walked down to see if anybody lived there or not. I walked up the road and finally, I came up the trail there and I came onto his cabin. And he was inside. He came out and invited me in for a cup of coffee. So he wanted to know what I was doing. You didn't see many people in those days, and if you see a guy walking through the countryside you wondered what he was doing. Strangers, you know, so I just come in, sat down, had a cup of coffee with him and told him I was looking for land. But I had found a piece 'way out over here, but I said I didn't know ~~wh~~ how I would go about staking it out. He says, "Well, I can show you where there is a stake over that way." And he said, "You want to come with me." So I said, "Sure," and that very day, we took off and walked clear down across here, and way down here. And he took me down and showed me where that stake was. And that helped me a lot, because it got me close to my land. If it hadn't been for him, I would have been out there looking for that stake.

Everytime you found a stake you would put a rag on it so you could find it again. I'd get up and cut a tree. I got up from the top and cut all the branches out of the tree so the top would stick up. You could climb up anywhere in the country and you could see that tree that had been peeled off. That way you knew where to head for. Limbed all the branches except about four feet, just left a little tiny ball on the top. You could see that darn tree from all over the place. No matter where I was I could always find my way home with those darn trees.

G: Well, I guess that that's all I can ask. Thank you.

P: Okay.