

Person Interviewed: Peter Nielsen

Interviewer: Isabel Ingram

Date: August 13, 1981 1

Place: Nielsen Home

I. I understand you fished in the Homer area for quite some time.

P. I've been here for 23 years, oh let's see, about 25 years.

I. 25 years?

P. Yeah, I fished in Bristol bay, and I fished outside quite a bit. I quit about 2 years ago, I retired.

I. Uh huh, did you live in the Homer area for all those 25 years?

P. Oh, a little longer than that, I've been here off and on since 1919.

I. 1919?

P. Yeah.

I. And I understand you came up here with your brother?

P. Yeah, the whole family came up here.

I. The whole family?

P. We all came.

I. Uh huh, what did you do in the winter time instead of fishing?

P. No, actually just working away, ^{just} spending time I ^{suppose} guess you'd call it. Or sometimes, many years ago we'd trap in the winter time.

I. Uh huh, trapping.

P. End of the season, in the winter we used to, after we'd get through fishing, we used to fish Herring across the bay in Halibut Cove. You've heard about that, haven't you?

I. Halibut Cove?

P. Yeah.

I. Uh huh.

P. Yeah, we used to fish from October to the first of the year and then on we'd trap animals.

I. Uh huh, so fishing and trapping were your....

P. It's the main...

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I. Did you homestead land up here?

P. I didn't, my dad did.

I. Uh huh.

P. And one of my older brothers did, but I never did, I just bought this place about 27 years ago.

I. And you've lived here the whole time?

P. Oh, well, I've been here since then, since 1951 I've been in this here, I bought this in '50. I've been in Homer since 1951, I bought this place in '57. I've been here since then.

I. Oh. Did you enjoy the fishing industry?

P. Oh yeah, it's my way of living.

I. Uh huh.

P. Mostly.

I. Uh huh. And you did all commercial, right?

P. That's all, commercial.

I. Uh huh. What brought you and your family to Homer?

P. Well, my dad, he came here 8 years before we did,

I. Uh huh.

P. and took up a homestead, we all come up here in 1919, came up here to Homer, our family came to Homer, ended up here anyway.

I. Yeah, I hear you drove a truck from Seward to Homer?

P. I never did,

I. You never did?

P. No, no I never did. There has been roads here since, oh last 30 years, before that there was no roads anywhere.

I. Uh huh.

P. Not even to Anchor Point

I. Not to Anchor Point? There was two cities, there was Kachemak city, or Miller's Landing and Homer?

P. Miller's Landing was probably most, most families lived in Miller's Landing when we first come here.

I. Uh huh.

P. And there was some people where they call Homer now.

I. When, in 1919?

P. Uh huh.

I. I see, and you decided to stay in the Homer area instead of...?

P. Oh yeah, definately.

I. So you've lived here, like from 1919, that's

P. 62 years.

I. 62 years.

P. Yeah.

I. And you like it here, right?

P. Yes, I like it y here all right, you have to live somewhere, it's as good as any. Do you live here?

I. Yes, I live, I've only lived here for 2 years.

P. Oh.

I. But, I enjoy it.

P. Do you go to school here?

I. Uh huh.

P. High school?

I. Uh huh, my last year.

P. Oh is it?

I. Yeah. Were there alot of people here when you first came?

P. Oh, there might of been 3 dozen at the very most.

I. Yeah?

P. Most of the Bachelors, there was no families, there was nothing appeal for them.

I. Uh huh.

P. Most of them were, I don't think ^{there} ~~it~~ was ^{women} ~~more~~ than 35 at that time, ~~they~~ couldn't have been that many.

I. Uh huh, yeah that's, Homer's grown alot.

P. Oh yeah, you can say that again.

I. Yeah, do you like Homer now?

P. Oh yeah, yeah, I wouldn't want to go back to what it used to be, not at my age anyway.

I. Uh huh.

P. Too old to go through what I had to.

I. Yeah. Did you find it hard to live in what Homer used to be like?

P. No, I don't think so, you always see differently through progress.

I. Uh huh.

P. and the hardships go with it. Not really, I couldn't say, I was young then, I was probably your age, fifteen,

I. Uh huh.

P. sixteen, back in 1919

I. So you grew up on the homestead though?

P. Yeah, you might say, the time I was 16. We came from the old country in 1919 and then we came down.

I. You came down? What was it like growing up on a homestead? Or living like that on a homestead with such, no refrigeration or electricity, or anything?

P. Oh, we didn't seem to mind it somehow, no we didn't have anything like it before, you know, you don't miss it until you've had it.

I. Uh huh. Right, you had alot of chores, daily chores?

P. Oh, yeah, we had, when we first come here we had, oh to start we just had cattle and horses, sheep, pigs, we used to sell some of it, raised a garden and sold some of it.

I. Uh huh.

P. Vegetables.

I. Yeah, who did you sell to?

P. Well we sent quite a bit over to Seldovia and over to Halibut Cove, we take alot of it over there for the salteries,

I. Uh huh.

P. At that time there must've been about 15 or 20 salteries over there opened up then,

I. Uh huh.

P. Now thats all gone.

I. So,

P. That was part of our living.

I. Uh huh.

P. Later on we had a fur farm, we had foxes and minks.

I. Oh, you had a fox farm?

P. Oh yeah, foxes and minks. Then we ~~get-rid~~^{we} did away with the cabin.

I. Oh, so when you got foxes you got rid of the cabin?

P. Just kept cows, you know.

I. Uh huh. What was the fox farm like?

P. Oh, we had silvers and blues, we had them out ^{there} on the homestead.

I. Where was your homestead?

P. Oh let me think, what's the name of this bar out there?

I. Oh the homestead tavern?

P. No, the, let me think.

I. Putter Inn?

P. Putter Inn.

I. Uh huh.

P. About 1/4 mile past the Putter Inn, we had 2 ~~of-them-~~ homesteads there.

I. Oh 2 homesteads?

P. Yeah, then we ~~moved-down-town-and-we~~ sold them all.

I. Did you, when you came here did you buy the homestead or did you homestead the land?

P. No, we ~~just~~ homesteaded.

I. Uh huh.

P. And you had to be over 18 to take up a homestead.

I. Oh, I see, so you had to be over 18?

P. Yeah, you had to be 18 or over.

I. Oh, I see.

P. Yeah, it isn't like that anymore.

I. Uh huh, right. The fox farm, was it alot of work?

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P. Well, you had to, we had to hunt all the feed for them like Porcuppines, cook for them and feed them every day.

I. Uh huh.

P. Yeah, it kept us busy.

I. It kept you busy, yeah. Did you go to school?

P. Yeah, 2 years here.

I. 2 years.

P. We lived in a log cabin when we first came up here, then we built a bigger place,

I. Uh huh.

P. and given up the log cabin ^{we had} ~~for~~ a schoolhouse in that log cabin for 2 years.

I. Uh huh, and where was that at?

P. What's his name, do you know Art Colerman, he used to have one of the grocery stores in town?

I. No.

P. You know that big house past the Putter Inn on the left hand side, the great big house?

I. Uh huh.

P. Have you noticed that one?

I. Uh huh.

P. It's the first great big house, right straight up from there we had it.

I. Oh.

P. Yeah.

I. So you guys lived on ~~the~~ Miller's Landing part?

P. What?

I. You lived on the Miller's Landing?

P. On the whole thing, they call that Miller's Landing.

I. Uh huh.

P. From there on -----?

I. Kachemak City.

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P. This is in Miller's Landing, I'm only a couple of miles away from it.

I. Oh, yeah. What was the school like?

P. It was just grade school to start with.

I. Oh, yeah?

P. Yeah, and a couple there, then you had high school.

I. Uh huh.

P. And, of course college.

I. It was just one room school?

P. One room school, the teacher lived ~~down-below~~ ^{up above}.

I. Oh I see.

P. After she come then we built, she had a daughter, just an infant,

I. Uh huh.

P. And we had to have a caretaker for her daughter so we built a home next to ~~it~~ the log house, like the school house,

I. Uh huh.

P. Used that for a kitchen and for the woman who took care of the kid there, and then sleep in there.

I. Oh yeah. Was there alot of community?

P. Huh?

I. Community effort?

P. Yeah, there seemed like alot, even the teacher too, got along together,

I. Uh huh.

P. and we had alot of activities, she was one of the best teachers who ever came to Homer, Mrs. McCullar, that was her name, Mrs. McCullar.

I. McCullar?

P. Yeah. She taught 2 years and then her sister took over, her name was Ms. Crab, she was here a couple of years,

I. Uh huh.

P. 1 or 2 years, then we had a different teacher, then we had a, we used to have just that one school house then we had one on the west side, Oh, what,

I. Homer Heights?

P. Yeah, just about in there, yeah that was Homer Heights.

I. So then they had 2 schools?

P. Then we had the 2, I and another guy built that school house over there.

I. Oh.

P. Oh, that's 4 or 5 years later.

I. Uh huh, so Miller's Landing developed before Homer did?

P. Oh yeah, that was the main place,

I. Uh huh.

P. ~~Especialy-when-the~~ That was the only place you could get down on the beach, everybody got together and built a road down to the beach, it's all gone now, it's washed out.

I. From the earthquake?

P. Yeah, from the earthquake did most of it.

I. Uhhuh.

P. Then the road commision come in and built a road a little ways from the Miller's Landing over here.

I. So now it's just called Kachemak City?

P. Well, yeah, I, they've been calling it Miller's Landing, I think, I've noticed.

I. Yeah.

P. Miller's Landing is ⁱⁿ Kachemak City.

I. Uh huh.

P. Right at the front of it.

I. Yeah.

P. Somehow it skipped this part.

I. Yeah, did you have any communications between each other, the homesteads?

P. Yeah, we had, another we did we all got together and put in a telephone system,

I. Uh huh,

P. It ran all the way out east and right direct from here, probably 7-8 miles and went clean to the end of the Homer Spit, then we had a

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P. branch-line that ran all the way to the top of the hill.

I. Uh huh.

P. There was thirty-some phones in Homer.

I. That's , so the community all got together....?

P. Yeah.

I. Well, that's interesting, there was something about a spring burn up on the hill?

P. A what?

I. A spring burn?

P. A spring burn?

I. Uh huh. When you burned the grass.

P. Yeah, well, we used to have them ~~all-the-time~~ every spring, we had them all the time.

I. Uh huh.

P. Now there are too many houses out there and you can't do it any more.

I. Uh huh.

P. Do you see all that black stuff on top of the hill in places, that's from burning grass.

I. I see.

P. We had it down here too.

I. Oh really?

P. Yeah.

I. Did you garden, how did you decide what to grow in your garden?

P. Oh, how did we decide?

I. Uh huh, like how did you find out what would grow in H^Umer?

P. Oh, I imagine we tried everything.

I. Uh huh.

P. Any thing that grows here doesn't grow on the outside.

I. Uh huh.

P. Do you have a garden?

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I. Uh huh.

P. Have you?

I. Uh huh.

P. I've got sort of a garden here, mostly flowers and...'

I. Yeah, it's nice. How did you choose Homer?

P. Me?

I. Uh huh. To live in?

P. That's the only that was up for homesteading at that time, it was one of the better places, that's why my dad come down here, to homestead, him and my brother.

I. Yeah.