



Sandra Earle

Transcript of an Oral History
Conducted by
Anjuli Grantham
at
Bird Rock, Uyak Bay, Alaska
On August 1, 2015
(With subsequent corrections and additions)

Kodiak Historical Society

About West Side Stories

This oral history is part of the West Side Stories project of the Kodiak Historical Society. West Side Stories is a public humanities and art project that intended to document the history of the west side of Kodiak Island through oral history, photography, and art. The oral histories chart the personal stories of individuals with a longtime connection to the west side of Kodiak Island, defined for the scope of this project as the area buffeted by the Shelikof Strait that stretches from Kupreanof Strait south to the village of Karluk. The project endeavored to create historical primary source material for a region that lacks substantive documentation and engage west side individuals in the creation of that material.

The original audio recording of this interview is available by contacting the Kodiak Historical Society. Additional associated content is available at the Kodiak Historical Society/ Baranov Museum, including photographs of interview subjects and west side places taken during the summer of 2015, archival collections related to the west side, and journals and art projects created by west side residents in 2015.

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Note on Transcription

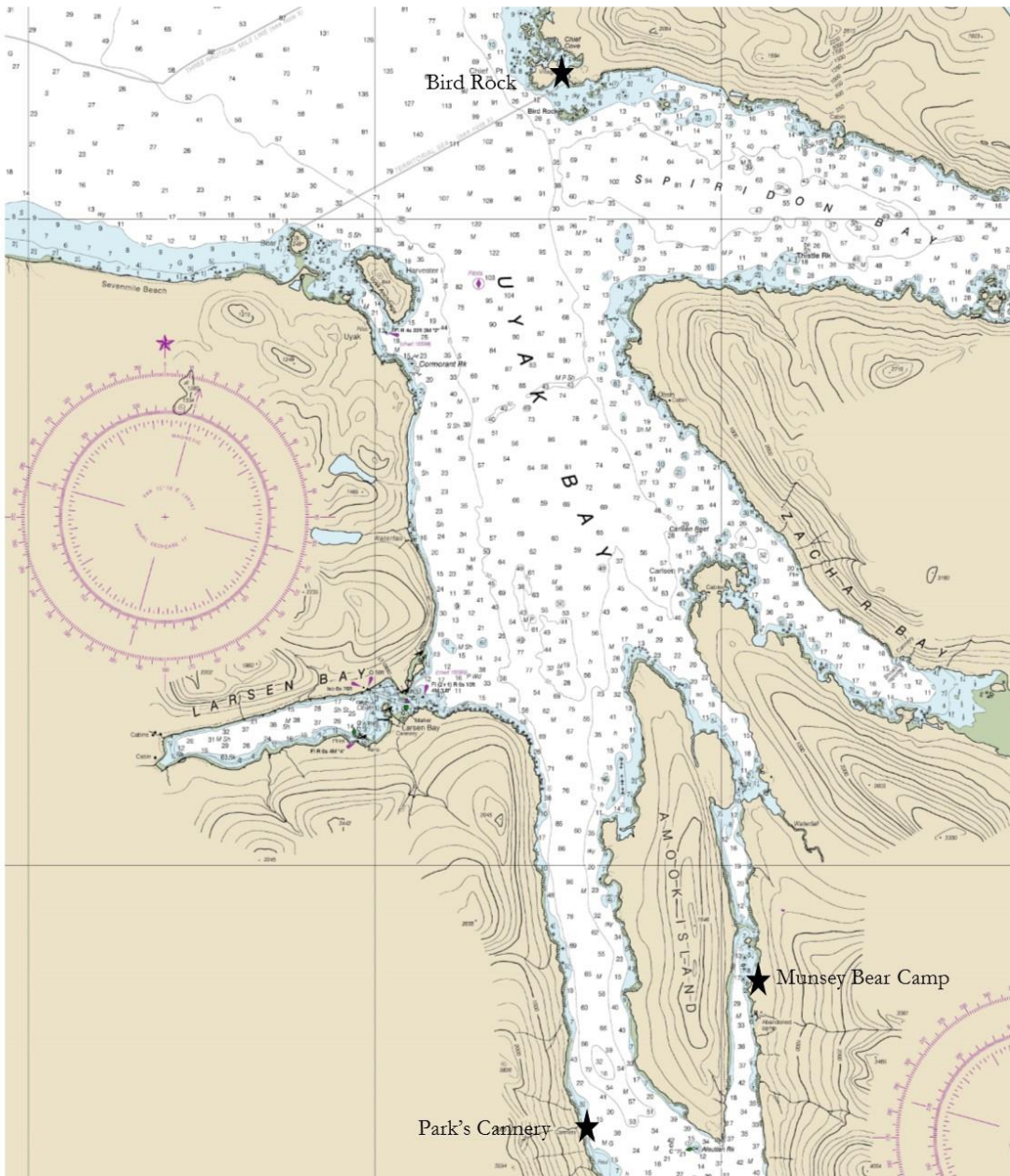
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. Editing is intended to make the interview easier to understand. Bracketed words indicate they were added after the interview. The use of [...] indicates that something that was spoken does not appear in the transcription. Often, these are false starts. In some cases, it is information that the interview subject retracted later. The original audio file is available for listening.

Citation

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Cover Photo: Sandra Earle, archival photo P-1012-21, for West Side Stories.



Select locations within Uyak Bay mentioned in the oral history.

Oral History of Sandra Earle

AG: I am sitting here with Sandy Earle. It is August 1, 2015. This is Anjuli Grantham. This recording is taking place as part of the West Side Stories Project. Thank you, Sandy, for hosting me today.

SE: You are welcome.

AG: Let's start from the beginning. I always ask people when and where were you born and what is it that brought you to Alaska.

SE: Okay. I was born in Los Angeles, California. My father was in the Navy and he was stationed there and the year was 1945, the end of the war. I was actually born during the war, and then they dropped the big one, I think, in August. I always have a fear of radiation, and I always think about the radiation coming over on the winds from Japan. I always have that fear that I got a good dose of it as a vulnerable child.

AG: Well that and growing up in the Cold War. They made it pretty darn aware of the fact that radiation was everywhere.

SE: Yes, exactly, and at any minute and any moment the bomb could be dropped. [...] Talking about saving things, I still have the comic book that they gave us in elementary school. It was about protecting yourself if they dropped the big one. [...] One of the windows in the comic book was the teacher explaining to the children what to do.

(Brief conversation unrelated to the West Side project)

The teacher was stone faced and drawn. Just looking at her put the fear into me. Just looking at that illustration, that one little window. It was very haunting at the time. We'd always have drills about getting under your desk if the sirens went off. We would do that I think once a month, we'd have a drill. That's kind of the era of fear that I grew up in (*laughing*). [The irony was, and we all knew it, that hiding under your desk with your hands over your head would be an act of futility if we really were being attacked. I think all of this helped form my escapist tendencies.]

AG: So how did you make it to Alaska?

SE: [...] My middle sister, she was ten years older than me, she became a teacher and got married. It was [not a happy] marriage and she decided to get as far away from the marriage as possible. We were living in Baltimore at the time. She thought, "Well, Alaska's pretty far away," so she just quit her teaching job, applied for a job in Anchorage as a teacher, got on the plane, we waved goodbye. Within the next couple of weeks she was teaching in Anchorage at an elementary school. My parents would go drive up from the east coast maybe every third [or fourth] summer, and when I got older I started making the trip, too, with them. Just started to like it. [Alaska was enticing- fresh crisp air with no ring of smog on the horizon.] Then Danny and I got together, and we were disenchanted with the big city, with Baltimore, and one of the things we really had in common was, "We need to get out of here." I said, "Let's go see my sister!" So we did. [...]

AG: What were you doing before coming to Alaska as far as work?

SE: Dan had been in college and I had been in college. I had three years of college and decided I wanted to be a social worker, and I became disenchanted [with the whole system and we both wanted to get away from the ever-present smog, traffic and inner-city decay of] Baltimore. [...] I'd been to Alaska and thought I would much rather be in Alaska than Baltimore and let's go. So we

did. Just getting away. [We both wanted to leave behind the crowded urban setting and have a healthier lifestyle closer to nature.]

AG: What happened when you arrived?

SE: I was telling those guys. My mother did not approve that we did not let my sister [...] and her husband, my brother-in-law, that we were coming. My mother said, "You really should call. You really should call her." I said, "No, we want to surprise her." [This was July 1969 and as Neil Armstrong & Buzz Aldrin were landing on the moon, we were landing on the tarmac at the Anchorage airport.] So we got to Anchorage, got to the airport, took a taxi to her house, knocked on the door and nobody was home. There wasn't a car in the driveway. Since I'd been there before I knew several of the neighbors and I walked over to this woman, Mickey. I walked over to Mickey's house, knocked on the door and she looked at me, she said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Oh, we were going to surprise Carol and Bob." And she said, "Well honey, the surprise is on you because they just left for a week's vacation yesterday." We said, "Oh," and then we realized what a stupid thing that was that we had done. She said, "But the living room window is open." But it was on the second story. She said, "If you stand on his shoulders he can push you through. So just go on in." She said, "It will be fine. I'll come down and check on you and see if you need anything." So great neighbors right away. Just a fantastic Alaska welcome even though it was a very rude thing to do. We stayed there for the entire five days of their vacation and finally they came back and saw us there and said, "What are you doing here?" We said, "We thought we would surprise you." And they said, "Well, you surprised us and you surprised yourself, too, didn't you?" [...] Both the boys were born at that time, both my nephews, but they were very young and they didn't know what was going on. My brother-in-law was very hospitable and he came in and unloaded all their things, and he got back in the car and went to the grocery store and bought a bunch of groceries and I think he bought pizza



The Munsey family.

or hamburgers or something so we could just all eat. They took fantastic care of us. My brother-in-law, Dan probably told you this, arranged for Dan to get a job at a crab cannery in Sand Point [Wakefield]. My sister found an ad in the paper. They were both very active in looking for jobs for us so they could get rid of us was the prime motivation. We were looking around, too. I think we went to the job service place and checked that out and didn't find anything. Then one day my sister said, "Sissy, here is your job!" I said, "What?" She said, "Right here!" I still have the clipping that she showed me. It said, "Wanted. Teacher aide for hunting camp on Kodiak Island." I had done some in-classroom teacher aiding between college [semesters] when we left. I interviewed with some friends of the Munsey's and I got the job. Danny had already gone to Sand Point, so I was in Anchorage on my own. I flew over to Kodiak, was met at the airport by Park and Pat [Munsey] and got in the first float plane I had ever flown in. Park was the pilot. We just came out from Kodiak and landed at the bear camp and met the kids. It was fantastic. It was great. The kids were, it was just Mike, Bobby, [Peggy] and Jerri. The others, Patty and Toni, were old enough to be in high school in town and they were living with other families in town. [I was instantly impressed by their work ethic. The kids, including 4 year old Peggy, hopped to, tied up and unloaded the plane, and carried my suitcase and the camp groceries up to the house.]

AG: What year was that?



Pat Munsey with daughters.

SE: [...] That was 1969.

AG: Okay.

SE: Okay, and we got married in Kodiak later on in another trip through Kodiak.

AG: Describe the Munsey Bear Camp when you arrived.

SE: Oh my gosh. Well my father had flown into Kodiak and Dutch Harbor when he was in the Navy and during the war and he always talked about Kodiak and what a fantastic place it was. The Navy Base was there. He knew a lot about it, and I'd always wanted to go to Kodiak because of what he said. Well the flight, never having been in a float plane before, number one just getting in the float plane and having this pilot who I didn't even know. But they were very very kind to me. I remember what I was wearing. I wore a skirt and loafers and I think nylons or something like that. I had no idea what I was getting myself in for. But I definitely had a skirt and just regular shoes on. It was rustic but exotic because it was the only [...] buildings around. Here I was

coming from [...] Baltimore with skyscrapers and horrible neighborhoods and people crammed together in row houses, and here was this house completely self-sufficient [homestead with its own generator and water system]. Everything was contained there. [...] They were so kind to me and the kids were so fantastic [mature and conscientious workers]. I just felt at home. [...] They made me feel like part of their family, and I still have very protective and fond feelings, especially now, about Jeri [who was in 5th grade] and Bobby [who was in the 4th grade] and Mike [6th grade] and Peggy, who was [the youngest and] sort of my [special buddy]. She was four years old. I would sit and giggle with her and sometimes her dad didn't like her giggling so much (*laughing*). At one point [...] I had Peggy in the schoolroom with me and we were looking at a book and being silly and Park said, "Honey, don't be giggling in there now." And I said, "It's okay. It's okay. We're having fun." (*laughing*) He just kind of backed off. He was very serious about that kind of thing. The kids were just amazingly independent. They knew how to be out in the wilderness and how to handle guns, [...] the boys especially. The girls didn't take too much to that but they really helped out Park with skinning hides and all of that. These kids were just the fifth and sixth grade, sixth and seventh grade, so I was very impressed. It was a very old-fashioned lifestyle. I always wanted to live on a farm or live in a different era. I did not like the modern era so much, so I felt like I found the place.

AG: Was it shocking for you the first time that you saw then process meat, for example?

SE: No, no it wasn't, no, because I'd been in butcher shops before. It just seemed like a natural thing to do. I felt sympathy for the bears [and the other game, and I never had a desire to hunt], but it was Kodiak, and Kodiak bears, and [hunting for your own meat], that's what Kodiak was all about in my mind.

AG: What was kind of the conservation ethic of the Munseys? Did they have the sense of conserving wildlife? I know that shifted drastically over the years, the sense of the relationship between bears and humans. What did you gather of that relationship when you first arrived?

SE: Respect even though they were killing bears. They had strong opinions about a lot of the hunters and the way they went about it because I think they felt like [...] the bears were not being



Park Munsey and child.

respected. It was their livelihood, and I think they did it very well and still do have a lot of respect for mountain goats and bear and whatever else they go for. You always felt that, that there was a right way to kill and a wrong way to kill and you always [felt there was a] very strong ethic about the right way to treat their animals. [On moose and caribou hunts, the meat was always brought back to camp, butchered and frozen. There was no waste.

Park had strong opinions about some hunters and the way they hunted because he often felt that

some of the game was not being honored and treated well after killed and kill limits were sometimes

ignored. He was also upset when he heard about a sloppy, careless hunt, or a wounded animal that got away. Mike and Bob still have those same ethics and respect for all of the game they hunt.]

AG: What was the right way to kill?

SE: With one shot (*laughing*). Just clean, a clean kill, and then taking care of the carcass and the hide afterwards, well the hide, and not being greedy. I guess that was it. [...] If you're going to kill something you need to, I want to say bless it, but just have that gratefulness to the creature for what they are providing even though it's only a skin [...] It was a very strong ethic of, like I said, repeating myself, respect, and doing a good job of it. Being very careful about the rules and regulations, too. [...] [Park was very supportive of the Fish & Game and their regulations, and knew their management was necessary for their conservation of wildlife, and hence his business.]

AG: Describe a day in the life of being a [...] teaching aide out there.



Pat Munsey.

SE: We'd get up pretty early because Park was always up and ready. I remember Pat [...] would stay up late after [...] all the kids were in bed and I'd stay up with her, too. [...] I think for breakfast they had some kind of powdered juice drink and she would make that the night before. I think it was powdered milk, also, and she would make that the night before [...] and put it in the refrigerator so that everything was ready in the morning. [She was very organized.] She did all the cooking [and baking and the meals were always generous well-presented and delicious].

I don't remember helping her in the kitchen much at all. [She worked as hard and long as Park and the guides and always had a smile on her face and an easy laugh. She was the behind-the-scenes mistress of the household and the business while raising six kids.] We'd start pretty early, like at 7, 7:30 or if there were hunts, probably Park and the clients were out earlier than that. [...] After breakfast the kids would come into the classroom and we'd just follow the book [Calvert's School Teacher's guide], basically. [At one point, Bob realized that I liked to do research if they had questions that weren't covered in the text books, so he would think up questions to ask me, and we would all get involved in searching Park's book collection for answers to his queries. So, frequently the boring standardized Calvert curriculum was postponed for another day. But what we were doing was still educational, so I wasn't too worried about their learning process. Clever guy, that Bob, then and now!] But we also did some things like we'd go on photography trips. We'd take a day off from school. We'd go out into the woods and take pictures and then after they were developed we would look at them. I can't remember if they actually made an album out of anything, but it was just a way to get out of the house. One time there was an old barrel there [...]. It was just deteriorating and I asked Park if we could use it for an art project. He said, "Well, yeah, we've got some paint. You

can." I said, "I'd like everybody take a slat and made some designs on the barrel and see what happens." I had a photograph of that somewhere, and I've been wanting to find it and show it to the three kids that did it, Mike and Bob and Jeri but haven't found it yet. It's in my archives somewhere. We'd take walks. We'd do nature walks in the spring. [...] Danny and I would also go back and babysit for them when Park and Pat had to be in town. I remember taking hikes in the woods and taking pictures of salmonberries which I'd never seen before. [...] We'd do nature hikes and woods walks and things like that, and they could just zoom through the woods like nothing. I'd try that and I'd fall flat on my face because they were just so agile and so used to running through the woods like they're wild children.

AG: What sort of curriculum was it?

SE: It was the Calvert School. Oddly enough, it was a correspondence course and it originated in Baltimore, which is ironic. Just very basic. It was all a series of textbooks with tests in them and I'd have to send the test results back. I don't remember ever writing any subjective progress report. It was pretty analytical kind of stuff. "What grade would you give them? Did they complete these tasks successfully?" Of course I said yes to everything (*laughing*), and I really felt like I was being educated



Park's cannery winter house, 1973. P-1012-26.

more than they were. There was just so much to learn out here. They were so self-confident and very tuned into their environment and smart. Just a lot of life smart skills that they had. I didn't really worry about them. We did do some art projects that I did have to send in, but I don't remember ever getting any thank yous back from the Calvert school or anything like that. Maybe Pat did, got some results, but I gave them all passing grades.

AG: Were you there for a full year?

SE: No, it was just six months, I think, or maybe not even that. It was, no, it was maybe like two and a half or three months because when the hunts were over Park and Pat moved back to Kodiak and took the kids. Then they enrolled in, of course, public school back in Kodiak.

AG: What did you do?

SE: Then we winter watched. [...] Because Dan's time at the [Sand Point] cannery was finished [Park] said, "Well what are you guys gonna do now?" We said, "We don't know." And he said, "Well stay here and watch the place." [We were thrilled at the prospect of spending our first Alaskan winter in an isolated hunting camp!] The water froze up and we had to pack water and keep the pipes from bursting and keep the generator going and all of that kind of mechanical thing. [...] They did not have a mail plane [at the camp] at that time, so we got our mail at the Parks Cannery. We would wait to hear from the Van Landingshams, Leila and [...] Frank. They were an older couple and they had just wanted to get away from [...] city life. They were at least in their, maybe, well at the

time we thought it was old, mid-sixties [...]. They were over there all winter by themselves and we were at the camp by ourselves. We made contact and we'd go over and she'd have things baked and she'd have our mail sitting there for us. Just a lovely couple. I still have her cornbread recipe. We kept in touch for a while afterwards but somehow lost track of them. Those were our only [consistent] contacts with other people except [...] Dan would have to go over to the village to get oil in this God awful dinky little skiff. One time he had a really really scary trip back from Larsen Bay in a skiff with a 55-gallon drum of oil. He made it just barely. We did have visitors from the



Victor Carlson. P-1012-33.



Johnny Aga. P-1012-15.

would come in there would be booze on it and then there'd be a lot of gun shots and a lot of craziness that night or for the weekend. But people were fantastic. They were just so genuine and so generous. And Dora, anybody could go to Dora's at any time unless you were drunk[...]. She would have a huge meal prepared for you, or give you things, give you jam or give you some meat that

village. Eddie [Paakkanen] and Victor [Carlson], and Johnny would come over. Johnny Aga would come over, also. When I first got there, Pat said, "Well I know that we'll be getting a visit from Eddie soon, Eddie Paakkanen, because he always likes to come over and check out the new teacher. Every time we get a new teacher Eddie comes over." And he did and I just took to him immediately, giggling and laughing. Then he and Victor would come over [...] in the winter when we were there by ourselves, too. Got to know them very well. They were priceless and precious people. They don't make them like that anymore. Johnny took really good care of us. [...], and Johnny ended up bringing a lot of our fuel over because he knew [...] it was risky for us to come over with the skiff with a drum of oil. The village people really took good care of us.

AG: What was the village like when you first went over there?

SE: Oh, [...] it was from what we read a typical Native village. Lots of drinking, lots of partying. When the mail plane

Johnny had shot, a deer leg or something. Just very generous, very kind, very open, very loving friends that we made there. The old timers were that way, very old traditional morals and values. Maybe not the morals so much, but the values (*laughing*) of taking care of everybody else. They were really good to us. [Even though they pegged us as “hippies” and, as we heard from the kids, they thought we carried knives, everyone invited us into their house and spoiled us with tea, baked goods, salmon, and occasionally a good helping of advice.]

AG: How was it then that you started setnetting?

SE: This is getting into the marriage thing. After the bear camp, Pat and Park came back and we went back to Anchorage. I got another teacher aide job in a junior high school in Anchorage and Dan had some carpentry jobs. In the spring, let me figure this out, in the spring Danny got hired on



Dora Aga. P-1012-9.

with the Department of Fish and Game to be a stream, what is it, a stream spotter or stream counter in Southeast. Coincidentally, his sister was graduating from high school and his parents sent her up to Alaska as a [graduation gift] [...]. So Dan left and Danny's sister, Glenna, and I were in Anchorage alone together, and I loved her. I've always loved her. We said, "What are we gonna do? Let's get a job." So we went to the job service and we thought, "Let's go clean houses or something. Let's see what they have." We both sat down at the desk with this woman and we told her our situation and [she quietly sang], "Cloo-cloo-cloo" [while checking her screen]. "Let me see what I have." She said, "What about cannery work?" Oh, cannery work. Yeah, that'd be great. His sister was up for anything and she said, "Yeah, that'd be good. We could do that." And she [job service woman] said, "I'm looking at a request from a cannery in Larsen Bay (*laughing*) and they need people." I said, "Larsen Bay! I know Larsen Bay. I just came from Larsen Bay six months ago. Sure. I know people there. Let's do it." Glenna was all up for it and very adventuresome. She [job service woman] asked my age and I was, I don't know, twenty[*four*]. She

asked Glenna her age and she said it was either sixteen or seventeen. The woman said, "Oh, how old are you?" And Glenna said, let's say, "Seventeen," and she said, "Are you sure you're seventeen? What if you were eighteen? If you were eighteen I could get you these jobs, so you could both go together. This is the cut-off age. You have to be eighteen or older." Glenna and I just kind of thought, "What's she talking about? Then it hit us and I kind of went like this to Glenna, I poked my elbow, (*whispering*) "You're eighteen. You're eighteen." She said, "Oh, that's right, I am eighteen!" So the woman clicked and signed off on, gave us some sheets and I think we got our flight paid for [that included free tickets all the way to Larsen Bay]. We [flew out on the Kodiak Air Goose] landed here and one of the first things I did was take Glenna over to Dora's. Dora said, "What are you doing here? (*laughing*) What the heck are you doing back here?" [She made us tea and brought out a

loaf of her bread and we had a visit.] So Glenna and I finished out that canning season and went back to Anchorage when that season was over, and Danny, he had been finished by then, too. Glenna went back east, and we spent the rest of that winter, that was the last winter we spent in Anchorage. In the meantime, [...] we met the [...] two women who were fishing Dora's site that summer. I told Danny about it, I said, "Dora's got this site that she isn't fishing and she leased it to these other people. What if we ask her if we could fish it?" And he said, "Let's try it." And we wrote to her. In the old days, no phones or internet or anything. We sent a note to her and she said we could do it, so that was it. So here comes the marriage thing. When we were in Anchorage we'd been talking about getting married. I had a ring. He'd bought me a ring. We got a license but never did anything, never did a formal ceremony, so we just kind of let that slide. Then we got to Kodiak and we were stuck because of weather. We had the license, I had the ring, and there wasn't anything else to do, so we said, "Why don't we go get married?" So we went to the justice of the peace and got married right there in the office. There were several odd coincidences about that, because Danny had been at Sand Point and he had met this fellow who had worked, I think, with Fish and Game or something. Anyway, he knew this fellow and he happened to see him when we went to the office, to the Justice of the Peace office, and they both said, "Oh, what are you guys doing here?" Dan said, "We're getting married." He [Fish and Game fellow] said, "Oh, that's great. Let's go out afterwards for a drink." I think he ended up being our witness because we didn't have anybody, or his best man or something. We were signing the papers and there was the Justice of the Peace and his clerk and she asked us a few questions. She said, "What are you doing and what's your address and where are you going?" She said, "Larsen Bay! My husband has a herring barge out there. He's been processing herring out there. Look him up." [...] As it turns out, she was the mother of a woman who would become one of my very best friends later on, Peggy Holm. Her father was Norm who had



Sandra and Dan Earle. P-1000-7-395.



Sandra and Dan Earle. P-1000-7-274.

this gigantic barge there. When I was signing the papers for the Justice of the Peace, he saw my birthplace. He said, "Los Angeles, California?" He said, "Where were you born?" I said, "Los Angeles." He said, "No, I mean what hospital were you born in?" I said, "The Stork's Nest Hospital." And he said, "That's where my daughter was born." He said, "We lived there." I think she was born the same year I was, too. I just thought all these things coming together in one little ceremony. [So it all seemed like a favorable omen.] The weather was still bad that night, so we ended up calling Park and Pat because we didn't have any money at all. We maybe had twenty dollars left after we paid for the ceremony and tipped the Justice of the Peace of whatever you do. Park and Pat kept a van in town that they would use when they would come to town, and it was parked down at Kodiak Airways. We called them and said, "Would you mind if we slept in your van tonight? We still can't get out and we don't have money for a hotel room." Because I think a hotel room was probably thirty dollars and we didn't have it. Park said, "Sure, just go in. I'll call them and [...] have them give you the keys." So we spent our honeymoon night on the benches in the van. There were chains on the floor and burlap sacks and all this stuff and it was cold, too. (*laughing*) That was that, and that was 1971. [...] [It was quite the memorable honeymoon. The weather cleared up the next day and we flew to Larsen Bay on Kodiak Air and the Munsey's picked us up in their Whaler. This time I was prepared- I had my hip boots on. And, I'd always suspected that Park secretly paid for our flight out.]

AG: Tell me about your experience working at the cannery.

SE: Oh my gosh. We got put in the egg house. Danny's sister read a lot and there were a lot of, of course, Japanese supervisors. She made friends with the one who was at our table, and I think [...]

he was sort of the overseer of all the Japanese fellows. They were very polite and very kind and very helpful. [...] This one spoke very good English, and Danny's sister would talk to him about Kabuki theater, and he was very impressed with her that she knew all of that. [...] To be in the egg house was an upgrade because you could have been put on the line processing, and that was noisy and wet and you had to be really fast. You could get carpal tunnel from pulling eggs and stuff like that, so somehow we got really lucky and got put in the egg house and filled those wooden boxes. There was a certain way you had to [fill the boxes, you had to layer and arrange the roe delicately in the box and sprinkle the salt from a round bamboo basket with fine screen on the bottom in a very precise way.] [...] The Japanese would come around and you would think your box looked perfect but it wasn't. They'd rearrange and it kind of looked the same (*laughing*) as what I thought I had done, but obviously I didn't have the eye for it at the time. It was cold and damp, but it was a lot of camaraderie. There was a woman who was six foot two and she [...] was the one who put the egg boxes together. They were wood at the time. Course now they can't use wood, so they are all plastic. [...] She didn't have to wear raingear because she stood [...] at the opening of the doorway. She had a huge stack of the box parts and she had a big staple gun and she would just "bam bam bam bam" and make the boxes. Then she'd hand them to somebody else and they would line them with the plastic. She became a very dear friend of ours and we still see her. She lives in Bellingham. They have three kids and we keep in touch a lot. That was another relationship formed there. I guess when you go through these things you have that in common. [Both the desire to be in the biggest, wildest state and the wish for adventure.]

AG: Where did you live?

SE: At the cannery. We lived in the farthest bunkhouse on the end towards Frenchy's Point. Glenna and I lived first [...] in one of the smaller houses on the office side, just a few people in there. We got some things stolen from there which was not nice. For some reason then we got to go into one of the bigger bunkhouses. I really would like to go up there because we were on the spit side and we had a window. One time I went up to the room and Glenna was in there and she was carving her initials in the windowsill on the outside. I'd love to go up there when nobody's there, of course, and see if I can still see her initials in the wood and take a photo and send it to her. I'd really like to do that. I think at the end of the season when nobody is there I'll ask and see if I can do that.

AG: Was it segregated?

SE: Yes, it was as far as Japanese and Americans. [...] I don't remember any Filipinos or any Japanese in the bunkhouse. Course this was the woman's bunkhouse, too. It was separated by sex and by culture, too.

AG: How did you find that?

SE: I didn't think anything of it at the time, [and we were pretty busy and napped or slept when we got a break, so there wasn't much time for socializing. Except I do remember that the Native and Filipino women who worked in the cannery were given cheaper rain gear than the white women, and their gear did not last longer than a week, sometimes less, and their clothes would get wet. Glenna and I did go to the cannery store, where the gear came from, and protested. But I don't know if we made any difference on that issue. We also encouraged the Native girls to ask for better rain gear if offered the cheap ones.] Except I wish [...] I spoke Japanese because the Japanese would go out on low tide and get octopus. It was the first time I'd seen an octopus. They'd come back with a big pole and there'd be three octopus hanging from the pole. They'd take them over to their quarters and cook 'em up. I was very curious but we just didn't mix. There was no way to communicate unless there was a translator there. They were polite. They would bow when they would see you walking by

in that traditional Japanese way they had. That part was disappointing because you did want to learn, but at that time it wasn't happening.

AG: Was that when the Alaska Packers still owned it?

SE: Yes, it was.

AG: Did you note a change at all after APA sold it to the next owners? I mean, in between cannery owners was there a marked change in the operation that you could see?

SE: Boy, I'm trying to think. He [Dan] would probably notice more than me. It depended more on who the superintendent was than I think, from our viewpoint, because that's who we dealt with because we were fishing at the time. I don't remember any real cultural change except bad superintendent, good superintendent. That was the big difference.

AG: Tell me about your first experience as a set netter.

SE: Oh my gosh. Did he tell you about Dora divorcing us?



Sandra Earle picking fish. P-1012-16.

AG: Yes.

SE: (*Laughing*) Did he tell you that Eddie would say, Eddie was fishing right down from us [...], "What are you guys yelling about in 'dat skiff?" He didn't tell you that? Because [at 5'2 and 110 lbs] I was not as strong as him [Dan] and we did not know what we were doing and it's a terrible spot. Really very very strong tide. Sometimes the buoys would be underwater. I'd be pulling and pulling and pulling and being very ineffective, and he would say, "Grab it! Grab it! Grab it!" (*laughing*) I couldn't. I couldn't physically do it especially when the tides were running. When it was calm it was

fine, but was stressful, very stressful, especially when Eddie could hear us (*laughing*). [...] But it was satisfying because we were on our own and this was something physical, we were outdoors, beautiful, the setting. How can you beat it? We've always liked getting out and being outside. I'm a Pisces, so it seemed to be a natural fit that I'd be picking fish out of a net and working on the water. [...] When we got this place things became more mechanized and bigger, more sets, more permits. It just got to be too much. Dan really needed big help. Big male help. So I ended up sitting out. Being on shore.

AG: When did that transition happen?

SE: Probably two or three years into it, maybe. It didn't take that long (*laughing*). It didn't take that long at all to realize that this is a different ball game altogether.

(Brief conversation with someone entering the room)

End Recording 1

Begin Recording 2

AG: What inspired you to purchase Bird Rock?

SE: Oh my gosh. How did that work? We wanted to be on our own. He probably told you we fished at another site the second or third year. [...] He tendered with Eddie and then I fished with Dora once or twice and almost killed Marilyn. Marilyn was maybe four or five and she was on the boat with us. There was a leak in Dora's exhaust pipe and it [exhaust] went through the fo'c'sle, and Marilyn was in there sleeping. I think I went down or Dora went down and Marilyn looked a little strange. She was asleep. I think maybe I tried to wake her up or Dora tried to wake her up and she wouldn't wake up. Then we realized she'd asphyxiated, almost, because of the leaky exhaust, the leaky pipe that came through the cabin. Dora grabbed her and brought her outside and tried to get her breathing, get some fresh air, get her moving again. She woke up but she was really groggy. Dora said, "My God, a little bit longer and she would have been a goner." I think she kind of turned a little blue or very pale. I can't remember exactly but it was scary. She did not look good. [...]

AG: Were you seining?

SE: Beach seining.

AG: Tell me about that operation.

SE: Oh my gosh. Dora was a screamer. It was me, Marilyn. Of course, Marilyn wasn't old enough to do anything. She was just there because Dora was taking care of her. And somebody else, some kid from the village, some boy, I think. Oh, it was Gussy. It was Dora, Gussy, and me and Marilyn. I was supposed to plunge. I had no idea how to do it. I'd never done it before. I watched Gussy and he plunged and showed me how to do it. [But Gussie was almost six feet tall and bulky and I'm 5'2 and weighed maybe 110 lbs at the time.] Then I would do it and nothing happened (*laughing*). I did not translate well. I either didn't have the strength to do it or I just never got the technique. Dora would be, "Ra-ra-ra-ra, you're not plunging right, ra-ra-ra." And me, I'd just say, "I don't know what to do! I'm trying as hard as I can. I just don't have the knack or something." And she'd say, "Well just go get in the skiff," or something like that. So anyway, we weren't out long. We were out maybe three or four nights and days. [...] She wasn't really out to make money. She just wanted to get out there and pretend like (*laughing*) she was serious about it. I know she was serious about it but she was, gosh, probably in her sixties and very strong. She could pick up an anchor and carry it up the beach by herself. Just a fantastic, big hearted woman. [...] Also, there was a certain way that they

wanted the deck washed. I thought I was doing it right. I had a bucket and a scrub brush, and nothing I did satisfied her (*laughing*). I kept saying, "What should I do?" And "Ra-ra-ra-ra-! Watch what he does!" I thought I was doing what Gussy was doing, but it didn't work out. I'm compulsive about cleaning things, and I thought I did it right but I didn't. Anyway, it was fun except I hated it when she would—. I remember especially a couple of jars of mayonnaise. She'd make sandwiches or I'd make sandwiches and then she'd take the jar. She'd screw the lid on and just toss it overboard. That's what everybody did in those days. [...] Coming from the east coast I was this environmentalist, supposedly, and I'd go, "Ahh, I could take that back to the village." And she's, "Ahh, it don't matter." (*laughing*) And there it went. Anyway, it was fun [and gave her some extra ammunition to nag me about. She loved to try to get your goat, any chance she could, and she also appreciated getting a good dose of her own medicine thrown back at her. It was the source of entertainment]. I think we only did one or two trips. I don't remember even catching anything. [But those memories and that experience was priceless and worth more than a boat load of salmon.]

AG: What was the name of the boat?

SE: [...] [It was the *Margie J*, named after her daughter, Margaret Jager, her daughter with her first husband, Bill Jager.]

AG: Where would you beach seine?

SE: We went up in Uyak. We went up past Parks Cannery and hung out at a little spit way beyond there. Where else did we go? We also tried fishing right out in the middle of Larsen Bay. We thought we'd catch some of those humpies from that creek there. I don't remember getting anything out of there (*laughing*) [but we were close to home and safer in case of breakdowns.]



Tom Keck. P-1012-32.

AG: Was anybody else beach seining in Larsen Bay? Or Uyak?

SE: That's a good question. Ray Paquette. That was maybe before or sort of toward the end of his career. [He had a log cabin up past Pollack Point and would mostly fish alone, I think, but one summer he hired Mike Munsey to go with him.] He would do that. I can't remember.

Tom Keck was beach seining just for the heck of it [...] because he was mainly gillnetting. You



Mike Munsey. P-1000-7-406.



Eddie Paakkanen. P-1012-18.

know, I don't know. It might come to me because it seems like there was one other Native family that was beach seining at the time.

AG: Who was setnetting?

SE: Oh boy. Let me see. Eddie, of course. [...] [And I think Victor was still fishing up near Harvester, but winding down his operation. Bill Woods was at Seven Mile, the Fields were there on Bear Island. I'm sure that Jake and Tiny Aga were still fishing, and also Nick and Alberta Laktonen. The Haugheys and Yatsiks, who I think all came at about the same time we did, or a little before. Don Peterson and his family, Tom Keck, and the Franciscos were on the east side of Uyak. Most of them were Kodiak school teachers. On this side, in Spiridon, the Abstons were here at Chief Cove, and Stan Ness and his dad were at what is now called Clover Rock, on the south side of Spiridon. Wayne Kotula and Tony Madsen were at Hook Point on the north side of Spiridon.] There was an old fellow on Amook, Lars Larson. Have you heard about him?

AG: Dan said a little about him.

SE: Okay. He probably told you that he used to call us Montana sheep farmers or sheep herders or something like that. Did he tell you every time he came to the village how well dressed he was? He always had this scarf wrapped around his neck. Very natty (*laughing*). He was over there on Amook. Jim. I think Jimmy Johnson setnetted. Well Victor, Victor was, too. I'm thinking further up in the bay. I can't remember. Peggy Holm and Jim [Pryor] were fishing but that was a little later when Peggy and her husband came out to fish. [...] I'm trying to think if the Wasilie's ever setnetted, I'm not sure.

AG: How was the transition from being crew to owners of your own site?

SE: Oh boy, very liberating. Very liberating. It was very freeing. We couldn't have done it unless we had the experience. Oh, Pete Peterson and his wife were still fishing, and we leased their site one summer after they quit. Pete and Pauline. They had fished in Old Uyak, also. I think they sold out to the Franciscos. That was the way it went. They were there for a long time. But

yeah, it was very liberating and we made more money. [...] The first year we fished here with very limited experience and very poor equipment, and I don't think it was that good of a season. [...] [But we were happy to be on our own and felt very grateful to be breathing clean air and living on an island surrounded by wilderness and salt water.]

AG: How were you paid? What was the crew share?

SE: You mean at Dora's? That's a really good question. I have no idea. I have a feeling it was 50/50. I think the first year we grossed \$1000. That was gross. I'm pretty sure that was it because I remember Alberta Laktonen, actually Jake and Alberta were still fishing, too. She found out, or we told her how much we made. She's a dear person. Well, she still is. I see her with Chris in the winters sometimes. She lives [...] outside of Seattle. She said, "You guys did really good. You made a thousand dollars." And we thought, "Oh yeah, but how are we gonna live on a thousand dollars?" (*laughing*) But she was impressed so I thought, "Oh, we must have done okay." Then I think the first season here [...] we grossed six thousand. That was a big increase but not enough to live on even then.

AG: What was here when you bought the site?

SE: Oh my gosh. This house. Let me see. Where was the outhouse? Maybe the outhouse was still up there. This house was pretty much as it is now except for the kitchen's been completely redone. [And Dan built a new bedroom for us during the oil spill summer, and we have this wonderful new porch that we built a few years ago.] [...] This place had been vacant for awhile. In the winter people would just come and use it for hunting or somebody got stuck because of the weather. The doors



View from the Earles' home at Bird Rock. P-1000-7-288.

were open and the windows were out. It was pretty bare and basic. The bed was here. The back room was just, well, it's still a mess (*laughing*). It had sort of cardboard walls and just a bunch of junk in there. We got rid of all that. The main thing I remember was we ended up sleeping out here because it was the warmest place. There was an old barrel stove right there where the stove is, where the stack is. The dining room table was in front of that window. Danny built that whole porch. That's new, that's fairly new. [...] The table was there. [...] I think we used to hang one of those Aladdin lamps from there. There was a hook up there. That was our lighting. There was a kitchen sink. A kitchen counter was built by some giant because Danny had to build me a box that I could stand on. It was at least eight inches high, just so I could reach into the sink. It was plywood covered with some kind of fiberglass and one big white ceramic sink and no running water, of course. We had to pack all the water and heat it on the stove. Uh, I hated that. That was just the worst 'cause I'm compulsive about clean dishes. The warehouse was built in '91, I think. I can't remember. He



Sandra in the kitchen. P-1000-7-295.



Net mending needles. P-1000-7-285.

built that with the help of a friend. Of course, the Abstons have been here forever, too. That's it. And that backroom was just a big empty room with an old wringer washer, a gas wringer washer. [...] The oil from it had leaked and the floor was coated with oil. Our first crew was my nephew, Mark, and we put him back there in that god awful room and he slept back there. That was the crew quarters for awhile until Danny built the crew house. The old warehouse was here, of course, and I loved that building. That's fantastic. Try to keep it going. That was it. And the outhouse, but that's new, maybe it's the second or third outhouse, but I think it was up that hill anyway.

AG: Did you have a banya?

SE: No, we used to use the Abston's banya. No, there wasn't a banya here. No, he built that one. We would go there, go into the village to take a banya or just wash at the sink. We would just get desperate. It was basic, very basic and primitive.

AG: Tell me about the transition from [...] being a fisherman to being on land most of the time.

SE: Oh, that was hard. That was very hard because it was my identity. That's how I thought of myself and how I saw myself as being competent and strong and able to do it, but [...] [as you can hear from parts of my history- that wasn't always the case.] I realized [that my retirement from the skiff would be] for the best because I would come in from picking, especially in the morning, and be exhausted. Then cooking and cleaning up [and laundry and gardening, etc. to deal with- and those can be full time and, of course, necessary jobs.] [...] But I just got exhausted by trying to do both. I realized, I guess he's right. We do need to hire somebody. But I was resentful. "That's my job! That's



P-1000-7-297.

my job!" It was bad for my self-confidence, like I was a failure, but it definitely works out [better all the way around]. It's the only way to do it.

AG: How did it work out for you? Did you get over that?

SE: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. [I put my ego aside.] Now, there's no way I would want to be [fishing]. [And it was so much better and eaier for Danny, and that was a relief for me, also.] Then things got so mechanized, there's no way I'd want to be out there with pressure washers and big skiffs. [...] I could run the small Laktonen skiff myself. I could start the kickers by myself. I wouldn't know what to do. We kept getting bigger motors and by the time we got to a 60-horse, unless it was warm, I couldn't start it myself. I thought I had upper body strength, but I guess I didn't. I just couldn't pull the cord hard enough. Plus it was kind of an old funky motor. If it was warmed up [...] I could start

it again, but if I got stuck somewhere and yeah. I realized, yeah, time to find another job (*laughing*). It really worked out better.

[Another benefit of hiring crew was that we hired my nephew, Mark, to help Dan for my first year on shore. His introduction to set netting led Mark and his wife, Jeanne, to crew for us and eventually they brought their own site just around the corner from us in Spiridon. And we are very very happy about that. Unfortunately their first year at their site was the year of the oil spill, so they didn't get to fish until the next season.]

AG: What did your job become?

SE: Cook (*laughing*), housekeeper, grocery orderer, planning, finances. I've always done those, and painter, which I have not finished yet. I've got a lot of painting to do. I just had Robin Munsey get me a bunch of paint chips because I tend to change my mind in the middle of a project. "I don't like this color." So I quit. Just that kind of stuff, day to day housewife stuff. [...]



Uganik Cannery. P-1012-12.

AG: Well, business manager.

SE: Yeah, okay, that sounds official doesn't it (*laughing*). Thanks, oh I feel better now. I'm going to get a little tag. A little pin. There you go. I like that.

AG: When you moved out here for the summers, did you continue to do winter watching?

SE: [...] We watched, wait, we winter watched Uganik for one year [after we bought the site]. I think we did Park's for two years and Uganik for one year. Uganik was the last winter watching job we did.

AG: What differences do you see between Uganik and Uyak?

SE: Oh my gosh (*laughing*). Don't get me started talking about the people. Well the cannery, of course. It was an operating cannery and it was in much better shape. But I gotta say, I don't know who's going to be listening to this, the people over there were much wilder, and we thought that Larsen Bay people were kind of wild. Uganik people were really interesting characters. Very classic types. [Sort of like characters out of the wild west.] I wish I had

written more about them because they were unique. I've never seen people like that before. Wild. Much wilder, but some fantastic old timers, too. Nan and Dan Reed and some fellow whose name we can't remember, but we talk about him a lot because anytime now we bring out a loaf of sliced bread, which I don't usually buy, he used to—. [...] He lived in Village Islands or right around Village Islands and we'd go to visit. A little old sweet man, and he opened up—

AG: Teddy Pestrikoff?

SE: Maybe it was. Maybe. Did you know him?

AG: Well, he had the mail plane stop at his beach, so I don't know.

SE: Oh. Well the mail plane stopped at the cannery so we didn't need to do that. That might have been him, but I can't imagine him carrying mail bags though. He was pretty frail. But he'd sit there and open the loaf of bread and it would be sliced, and he'd go (*said in a whispering voice*), "Sliced. Sliced." And he would take one piece, then he'd go "Sliced." Take another piece (*laughing*). We still say that when we open up a package of sliced bread. Then he'd spread butter on it. "Sliced." It was so sweet and adorable. Yeah, just classic types. They were real people, authentic characters. A lot of drinking. A lot of craziness. Some very scary people over there, too. I think they're all gone now. But Annie [Anderson] and Paguk. Annie was fantastic. She was a good mother to us all. She was a real sweetheart, and he wasn't always that nice to her either. [...]



Annie Anderson. P-1012-31.

[...] Yeah, very different characters over there. It wasn't like a village. There was no center to it like Dora's house was the center of the village. Dora's or Alberta's or Victor's were kind of where you went for good companionship and advice, but over there you were pretty leery about people. Maya and Gary Cue were there, and they'd come up and spend a couple of nights. [She was exotic and he was a bit of a mountain man and we enjoyed their company. I'd turn my kitchen over to her and she made great biscuits.] [...]

But again, hardy souls, living with not much. Talented. Gary and Maya, he trapped and she made mittens and hats, hand sewn protective wear. They were definitely different [and self-sufficient]. (*laughing*).

AG: Sounds like an interesting winter.

SE: Oh my gosh, it was crazy. [I wouldn't exchange the experience for anything, but we were happy to get out of there.] [...]

AG: I'm wondering if you were to talk about the last forty years of your time out in Uyak, what are some of the major events or turning points that you would name?

SE: Workwise, the big thing for us as far as fishing goes is the mechanization, the bigger motors, pressure washing. [The things I see that helped us as far as fishing goes have been the change from wooden skiffs to aluminum, which meant no more skiff painting every spring, more security if you hit a rock, and less maintenance. The bigger aluminum skiffs could carry more powerful outboards and had room for pressure washers.] We used to have to, as you know, shake the slime off the nets. One of the innovations was—

(Brief interruption when someone enters the room)

The big thing were the innovations, and then different people coming in. Prominent Mound taking over from the crazy guy whose name I can't remember now, but he was a character. It's more civilized, more organized. We still have the Eddie Paakkanen annual setnetter's picnic because Eddie always had a July 4th picnic at Deadman's Point. That still continues except we all share. Probably

going to be Becky Haughey this summer. It's become so huge and now we're into the third and fourth generation of people. We've been here for, well it's more than forty years because we had the picnic on our fortieth year of fishing, not our fortieth year out here. I think as far as the physical fishing thing, like I say the mechanization, the pressure washers. I was going to talk about the uh, what do that call that artificial grass that they put down in stadiums?

AG: Astroturf?

SE: Astroturf. Yeah. Andy Povelite [and/or some Uganik fishermen] came up with this idea of putting it on your gunwale and just dragging the net across it to get the slime off. That worked for a bit, I think, but I think it was too hard on the nets. Everybody tried it because slime is the enemy. That's what we're always fighting, slime. That's what the pressure washers are for, slime and jellyfish. What did you ask me about?(*laughing*)

AG: Just about the transitions.

SE: [Also we now have brailer bags and totes so we can ice the fish and get a better price and deliver a better product. And now we deliver to tenders with iced fish holds. Then there was the oil spill summer that brought a sense of dread for our future and frustration with Exxon- but that's a book.] The changes, yeah. More families. Extended families. The families are bigger and they're staying the same, which is great. There's a real affection and camaraderie with everybody in the bay because we've been friends for so long and we do the same thing and we have so much in common. All the new kids coming up are great. It's just so fun to watch everybody grow up and change of regimes will be coming soon, I think. Well it has in a lot of places, like the Haugheys are on their second or third generation now. The girls I think are taking over really well. [...] Did you talk to them at all?

AG: Yes. We took photos yesterday and I'm hoping I can catch Al [Haughey] when he's back in town.

SE: Yeah, that's gonna be fun. It's gonna be neat. [...] Did you see the old Laktonen skiff down there? We still have one. It's turned over and it's deteriorating and I would love to restore it.

AG: Retirement project for Dan, right?

SE: (*Laughing*) Yeah, exactly.

AG: Well Sandy, we have so much to talk about, but I feel that I should probably get back down to the beach. Thank you so much!

SE: Oh yeah.

End of Interview

[I would like to send my deepest gratitude, respect, and affection to all the characters I've discussed in this interview, both living and on the other side, both family, dear friends, and casual acquaintances. Without your support, encouragement, caring, and strong personalities there would be no story. Thank you- Sandra Earle]



P-1000-7-397.