



Alberta Laktonen

Transcript of an Oral History

Conducted by

Anjuli Grantham

at

Kodiak, Alaska

On October 29, 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

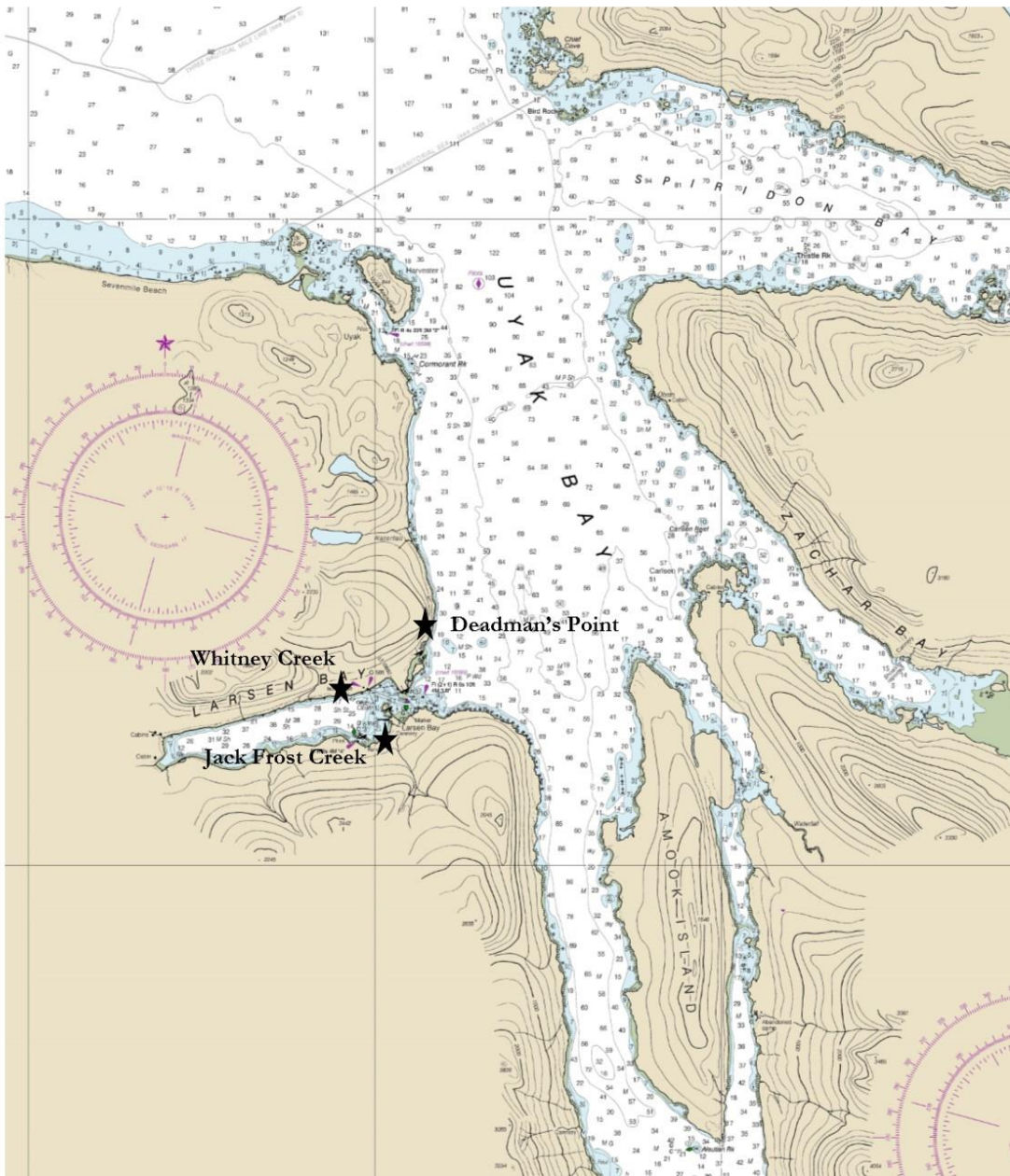
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. Editing is intended to make the interview 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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Key Words: Larsen Bay, Karluk, cannery, commercial fishing, setnetting

Cover Photo: Alberta Laktonen, at Kodiak, on October 29, 2015. Photographed for West Side Stories. P-1001-16-01.



Select locations within Uyak Bay mentioned in the oral history.

Oral History of Alberta Laktonen

Also present: April Laktonen Counciller

[Chatting]

AG: This is Anjuli Grantham. It's October 29, 2015 and I am here with Alberta Laktonen as well as April Laktonen, her granddaughter. This recording is being made for the West Side Stories Project. I'm hoping, could you maybe begin with telling us when and where you were born and who your parents are?

AL: Ready?

AG: Ready.

AL: I was born in Karluk, Alaska. And then born 1930. My parents was John Aga and Alice Malutin.

AG: And so your last name or your maiden name is Aga?

AL: A G A. Was, yeah.

AG: And could you tell me about your parents?

AL: My dad was a fishermen and my mother was a housewife. That's all I know about them.

AG: Where did your dad fish and for what?

AL: He fished out of Larsen Bay. He was also a mail carrier between [...] Larsen Bay, Uyak, and Karluk.

AG: Could you tell me about being a mail carrier? What did that entail for him?

AL: He had little, he had a boat. I don't know much about it except there was a bigger boat that would bring the mail down. [...] He'd pick it up [at] Uyak and take it to Karluk and then take some to Larsen Bay. Then he was also carpenter, too. I do not know too much more, but.

AG: Yeah. So for what company was he fishing?

AL: The one I know he was fishing for was; I can't remember now.

AG: Was it the Alaska Packers?

AL: It was for Port Bailey anyway.

AG: Oh okay.

AL: They had a name, but I can't remember it.



Larsen Bay Cannery. P-1000-7-486.

AG: So was he a set netter, a beach seiner, or purse seiner or?

AL: He did set netting.

AG: Where was his set net site?

AL: Where was his site? It was outside of Larsen Bay along the coast there.

AG: I should have brought a chart so that you could show me. Maybe I can bring one by later and you can show me? So tell me about Karluk when you were a child. What are some-

AL: I don't remember. My sister said that I went to school there, but I don't remember. My dad got a school in Larsen Bay. We moved to Larsen Bay and then got a school there when I was nine years old.

AG: Okay.

AL: But I don't remember going to school in Karluk. She told me that I went to school in Karluk, but I told her she should know, she was ten years older than me.

AG: What was your sister's name?

AL: Agnes.

AG: Okay. And what prompted your family to move from Karluk to Larsen Bay?

AL: What made them move? My dad was doing carpenter work I think that's why. For the Alaska Packers, the early days.



Alaska Packers Association fish trap sign within the Larsen Bay cannery.
P-1000-7-176.

AG: Can you describe Larsen Bay from when you were a child?

AL: Not too much. It was nice. [Laughing] It was nice. We, didn't have stores. We had one store there and they sold from food to few clothing, not too much. That's all I remember. They also sold like, like medication, like aspirins. I don't think they had fish oil though. Yeah I don't remember too much about it.

AG: Was the store at the cannery?

AL: Yeah. The cannery had the store, a commercial store.

AG: And was there much else in the village or was it mostly cannery at that point?

AL: Work?

AG: Just in the buildings, if you were to think about the village itself.

AL: Oh I don't know. My dad built a house in Larsen Bay, but they had a store. We were build it to the side of the cannery was built. We used to go over there and buy our food and stuff. The later years my father used to order the food from the company he fished for [...]. He'd ordered food in the fall and then the beginning of spring by case lots and bag lots. We had a cellar where we'd store the vegetables. My mother had a garden.

AG: What would you grow?

AL: She grew turnips, rutabagas, carrots, cabbages, lettuce, radishes. What else we used to steal [from the garden]? [Laughing]

ALC: Did you have potatoes?

AL: Oh potatoes yeah. She used to have a lot of potatoes. She had a big garden. Then she had the, I don't know where she got the rhubarb plants, but she had rhubarb and plants that she put in.

AG: And was the garden just by your house or was it elsewhere?

AL: No, our house was on like a little hill and then there was between us and then the next hill there was a lake and she grew that stuff in that second hill. Where now the school is.

AG: Okay. And how would you prepare the garden?

AL: Pardon?

AG: How would you prepare the garden?

AL: Well when we got bigger I remember we used to pack- my mother, the boys used to do the tearing up the ground for her and then we'd carry feed for the plants, we would carry seaweed for the rest. That's all I remember about that. It's been a long time.

AG: It's true. What other sorts of chores did you have when you were a girl?

AL: Pardon?

AG: What sorts of chores did you have when you were a girl?

AL: What kind of what?

AG: Chores.

AL: Chores. I don't know we were sort of small so we didn't have too much 'til we got older. Then each of us had the chores. One would do that dishes, one sweep the floor, one fix the bed. Sort of separate us a little bit. The youngest one was four that I remember. She used to pile the food and then the table from the, the sugar and stuff push on the chair and she'd climb up on another chair and then put them up on the cupboard. She was four years old.

AG: Well trained, that's helpful for such a small child.

AL: Yeah. We tried.

AG: Yeah.

AL: Yeah.

ALC: They had a big family. There was about fifteen kids.

AG: Wow.

AL: Then we used to carry water. My dad put in a well, but then it used to dry certain time of the year and then we'd walk, about how far was it the creek, the well in the beach?

ALC: I'm not sure.

AL: About quarter mile. We had those-

ALC: Yoke?

AL: Yokes with two lines and then two five gallon cans to carry water to home and we washed clothes with the tub this.

AG: Wow.

AL: Later years we got a washing machine. Motorized. I don't know, just good life. I mean we got bigger we got to understand it.

AG: How many children lived at home when you were growing up?

AL: *Laughing* Well, there was, I remember twelve. But I talk with my sister and she told me there was fifteen children. I mean I'm just quoting what she told me. And I told her [...] I didn't know cause I was too small I could count that good yet. *Laughing* So I don't know. I mean everybody tells you something different, they added up some added. I mean we never talked about it.

AG: Were there children that were like stepchildren of your mother or father that were part of your family?

AL: One daughter was a half-sister. My mother's married to a German fellow before, and then the rest of them was my dad's, after she married my dad. He was from Norway. They were just like any of those other people that came in to work, fished to fishing or either working in the canneries.

AG: Your father was from Norway?

AL: Finding jobs. Pardon?

AG: Your father was from Norway?

AL: Yeah.

AG: Do you know where at in Norway?

ALC: I do. There's a town Agatunet. There's a living history museum at Aga in Norway and we have connected with those relatives. My sister Alberta, who we call Little Alberta even though she's bigger than grandma. She went there a couple of years ago and got to meet the relatives and she got to sit in grandma's dad's chair and they still have the family boat there and they use it as a cruise ship up and down the fjords in Norway. It's very cool.

AG: I see. So why did your father go to Karluk?

AL: Pardon?

AL: Why did your father go to Karluk?

AL: Well just like any of the other people that are foreign, they came over. They're looking for jobs and to San Francisco to get jobs. He went to Karluk to work for, I guess there was Alaska Packers. I don't know. I think they had another company down there. I'm not sure. It was before my time. I mean I was there, but I was too small to know.

AG: Do you know when he arrived in Alaska or anything?

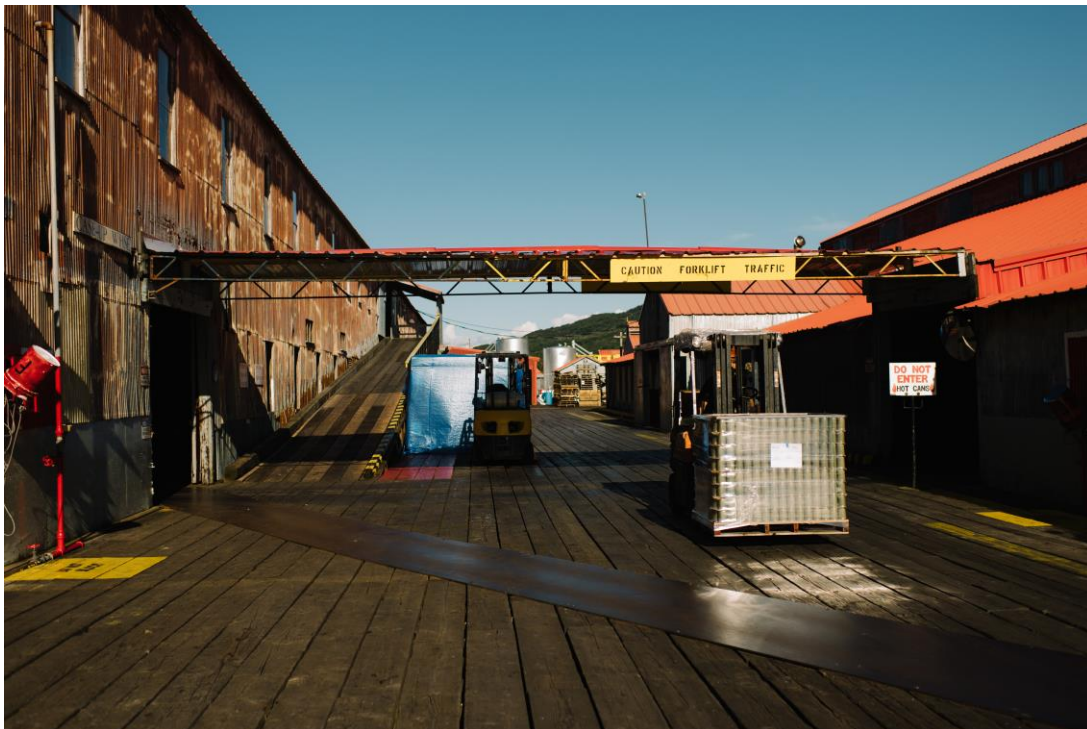
AL: No. I did hear he was fourteen years old when he left Norway. He came cross, he came over.

AG: And what about your mother's family? What's their history?

AL: Oh I don't know much about her. I think she was from Afognak. I'm not sure and I don't know too much about her.

AG: So with so many children how did you fit in the house?

AL: We were set up good. Nice house. My dad built the house. I remember he built two houses. He built one in Karluk, I think. I think he built that one, there was. I don't remember that, but the one in Larsen Bay he built. I don't remember what year it was.



Larsen Bay Cannery. P-1000-7-192.

AG: You said he was a carpenter. Does that mean he was on the beach gang or?

AL: He was working in the cannery when they weren't fishing, when they were off season for fishing, then he'd work in the cannery.

AG: What sort of winter work?

AL: Pardon?

AG: What sort of winter work was that?

AL: Yeah fall till the weather got bad then wouldn't work anymore. They stay home, do their own work at home.

AG: So was he building boats or?

AL: No just working around the cannery I think. I don't think he did any building boats.

AG: What do you remember about the cannery when you were a child?

AL: Nothing much. I don't know too much about the cannery. We never was, we stayed mostly close to home. We didn't hang around the cannery.

AG: Why was that?

AL: Pardon?

AG: Why?

AL: Well, I guess our parents didn't want us around there because we could get hurt. You know the cannery was pretty big. They had the one part of it for canning fish and then storage and they had the store. They had a hospital, a mess hall, a cook house and living quarters for the workers. So that's something.

AG: Did you become friends with the workers?

AL: No, we stayed away. Not get in there. At least I wouldn't get in there. I don't remember.

ALC: But she did work there eventually, which we are probably getting to.

AL: We didn't work at the cannery though.

ALC: You worked at the mess hall.

AL: That's much later though. That was after I got married.

ALC: I guess I'm jumping ahead a little. *Laughing*

AL: Yeah. No I didn't. When I was a kid we stayed away, I guess. I don't know, I don't remember. We played around home. We'd make swings and climb trees and just having a good time. My dad made a big sled one time. Yeah.

AG: In the winter?

AL: Yeah for winter. There was a hill there and we use to slide down that hill.

AG: So tell me about your education when you were a child.

AL: Not too much. I went to- my dad got a school when there was twelve children in Larsen Bay. Finally got a school and I went. I was nine years old and I went to all the grades there and I came to Seattle one year there and I quit.

AG: So you said you did nine years of school at Larsen Bay?

AL: I was nine years old. I was about fourteen [...] when I came to Seattle. Fourteen.

AG: So then, I'm curious because I've looked at the census records before for Larsen Bay and it seems that for many years people did not live there year-round. It was really a place just of cannery work in the summer time.

AL: Yeah, well the people would come up to work and then they'd leave. Some married there and they stayed otherwise they would go back to San Francisco. Some of them would go back home, come back again. Later years, I remember, they had lot of Orientals come like Filipinos, Chinese, and them.

AG: When you moved to Larsen Bay with your family, were there many other families that lived in Larsen Bay?

AL: I think. I think there was about two or three families. Then they started moving after school came and started. From Karluk mostly.

AG: Okay.

AL: That's the only place I remember they moved from, from Karluk.

AG: Who were these families that were living in Larsen Bay when you were a child, these two or three families?

AL: I don't know. I know one was a Naumoff. I heard my sister talk about them a lot. And then Malutins I think and I don't know. At the time I didn't have the sense to think about it.

AG: It's true. What is it you think that inspired people from Karluk to really move to Larsen Bay as time went on?

AL: They got work in the cannery for some reason. Then Karluk was sort of getting- they had beach seining there and I don't know why they quit fishing, beach seining. They used to catch a lot of fish

there and then they quit then they came to Larsen Bay. Then they were working there and then they moved their families there. I think, I'm not sure, but I think lot of them did that cause winter time the weather would be too bad to get in and out of Karluk. That's why some of them moved there.

AG: Well that's why the cannery moved there, I know.

AL: Yeah, but the cannery wasn't working winter time just summer time. June to September I think.

AG: Well it make sense because Karluk is so exposed.

AL: Well Karluk had a cannery there too. I don't know why they quit fishing there. They were getting lots of fish there and then all of a sudden they quit fishing there. When the seiners had come around the fishing then. When I stayed down there one time I saw. There was lots of fish in that river. The river's wide.

AG: I am curious about your father and his set netting operation. Was he set netting in Uyak when your family was still living in Karluk or how did that work?

AL: He was set netting in Larsen Bay. I don't know how long, maybe a mile or so away from the village I think.

AG: And how did he get started with that?

AL: I don't know.

AG: Yeah I'm trying to figure out when people started set netting in Kodiak and how that all began so anything you know about that early history would be great.

AL: No.

AG: Do you remember who was set netting when you were a child out there?

AL: Who was the what?

AG: Yeah who was set netting when you were a child?

AL: No I don't know.

AG: Your father and...

AL: I don't know who was.

ALC: Did he have any fishing buddies?

AL: My dad?

ALC: Yeah.

AL: He fished with the family. The boys, my brothers helped.

[...]

AG: So did you help with the fishing as well?

AL: No I didn't. I didn't do anything with fishing til I went on my own. I was working on the mess hall and they tried to put me in the laundry and I just said no. Then he said, "Go get your pay now." I said, "Good I will," and I got my pay and I went home.

AG: So before you tell me about your time in the mess hall, which I can't wait to hear about- when you were a child you said you did a couple of years at school at Larsen Bay, do you remember who your teachers were or-

AL: Yeah we had one teacher. It's easy to remember that because he is Mr. Belka Parks. He was there for five years I think. He was there another year after I left. He taught from the 1st [grade] up to- he had twenty one children in one room.

ALC: Half of them must have been Aga's. *Laughing*

AL: Don't tell. *Laughing* Yes, most of them were my relatives, were my family.

ALC: She was just telling me that the teacher- when they came to take everyone's tonsils was that the *Hygiene* that came or was it the other boat?

AL: No that was the German- I mean the military ship.

ALC: Oh.

AG: Tell us the story.

AL: Yeah. We were going to school in Larsen Bay and there was, on the Navy ship I think it was, there was a German guy on there. And he was taking tonsils out then pulling teeth without no pain reliever and the kids are all messed up.

AG: Did that happen to you?

AL: No, he didn't do it to me cause he said. Should I tell her? *Laughing* He told me that he wouldn't, he wasn't going to work on me because he reminded me of his German girlfriend. I would say I was about twelve, thirteen. Yeah about twelve I think.

AG: So maybe lucky you huh?

AL: I was sure glad of that.

ALC: She said all the kids were just laying.

AL: He had them all laying on the floor. Their blood was coming from their teeth and tonsils.

AG: That must have been a different occurrence for the military boat to go into Larsen Bay?

AL: I don't know how he ever got on that. They finally caught him, he was a spy. That's what I heard. I don't know. That's true though. I mean you hear most anything, you shouldn't repeat it. That's what we heard you know.

ALC: I've heard stories of this German spy from the elders from Old Harbor and Ahkiok, as well. That he was coming through stealing everyone's teeth. There must be a big box of teeth somewhere.

AL: Yeah.

ALC: You know, taking people's tonsils with no reason.

AL: No stuff to numb you, but I got out of that.

AG: Oh my gosh.

ALC: Grandma had really red hair, she was so beautiful, so I think that's why.

AL: I don't know, it was always messy. Yeah. *Laughing*

AG: So why is it that you went to school in Seattle?

AL: I went to school in Seattle just one winter then I went back to Alaska. The next year I was at the sea. And the next year I got married.

AG: Why did you go to school Outside?

AL: I don't know, my sister wanted me down, I guess, so I came down to stay with her. They were both working, her and her husband, I was there all day, most of the day, alone. Then school, I went to Bailey Gatzert first and then I went few months to Roosevelt [High School] then I went back home because school was over.

AG: Did you want to return to school when you left?

AL: No.

AG: Why not?

AL: I want to grow up. *Laughing*. I guess. I don't know, there was no school there and they didn't have, like you can now, where the kids can go to Mount Edgecumbe or Wrangell. In them days, I don't think I never heard of it. I think the later years they got that. Most of the kids just finished grade school and that was it. I don't know, but after that.

AG: Do you remember some important lessons that you learned in school.

AL: Yeah. I'm going to tell you some in real life. The teacher was really smart there. He was a really good at teaching. He was teaching us everything out of our noses even. Not to spit, and he even taught us how to chew our food. He told us, "Shut your mouth when you chew your food, don't



Larsen Bay. P-1000-7-488.

chew like a cow. Cows only chew like that." A lot of the stuff he told us I really think he was pretty cool. He was really a nice guy. When we weren't in school on weekends, he'd take us up to Karluk River, took us sport fishing or either hiking the mountains. But he was always involved [with] the kids. Even though he was done teaching, and he took care of the bathrooms and carried his own water and wood and all of that stuff.

AG: So he was a close to all of the people in the village then you think or?

AL: Pardon?

AG: He had a good relationship with the people in the village you think?

AL: No.

AG: No?

AL: I think from what I could figure he stayed to himself a lot. I mean he was working all the time. He had no time to visit or anything. He came over to my dad's one time. My four year old sister wouldn't go to school. [...] The teacher looked at her and said, "Your daddy know your here?" She said, "No," and he finally put her to school. Went over and talked to my dad and he put her in school. But he had the desk way up and he told her she gotta be quiet there, otherwise he'd have to send her home. She's just quite all the time and she was happy she got to go. She was four years old.

AG: Wow. And tell me about your mother. What was her character?

AL: I don't know much about her. I don't know much to say about her.

AG: When was it that you were married?

AL: I wish somebody told me something good. *Laughing*

AG: You don't remember her clearly or.

AL Pardon?

AG: Did she die when you were young or-

AL: No, she was still alive when I got married, but there was, I don't know, distance I guess. I don't know what the problem was, but we were more daddy's kids, not mama's kid. We loved our daddy he was so nice.

AG: What was his character?

AL: His? He was real gentle, really nice. He never got mad at us. He'd help us play, we'd play and he would come and make stuff. Help us, teach us. He showed us how to make skates out of milk cans. You crush both sides, one for the shoes. We used to have fun on the ice. But he was always really nice. He was there for us.

AG: And when was it that you were married?

AL: When I was married? When was it? I got married in 1946. And I got married at Karluk, on the *Shuyak*, the mail boat.

AG: Tell me about your wedding day.

AL: Exciting. *Laughing* I got married on the *Shuyak*. I went to Karluk to get married, and my husband was down there, he was working on the boat, we broke down. And then I got down there. We got down there about six in the evening then we had to send for a couple of people to be our witnesses. Then his brother and his sister were our witnesses.

ALC: Which brother and sister where the witnesses?

AL: Oh Nadia Laktonen. And then Jacob Laktonen, Jr. was our witnesses.

AG: And can you say, who was your husband?

AL: We didn't have a ring so I told the captain if he had a spark plug ring. A spark plug ring was a ring. We didn't need one anyway.

AG: Did you get a spark plug ring or?



Mail boat *Shuyak*. P-421-4.

AL: No.

AG: No.

AL: Anyway, we got married out there and then we went ashore. Then we went up to his folks' place and he told his dad that he got married, and he said, "Nikolai, don't lie. Don't tell stories," he says. He didn't believe him. And he said, "No really Papa, we got married. I married Alberta." And he said, "You prove it!" Then so he pulls out the marriage license and his wife was in bed sleeping. He was hollering, "Mama, Mama, wake up!" He said, "Nikolai got married." He said, "I got proof." He was hollering to her and she didn't get up. She stayed in bed. She was smart. *Laughing*. And anyway after that we just lived with them for about- let's see- then I got pregnant and my first child was the year after.

AG: So why did you go to Karluk to get married?

AL: Well he was down there. I don't know. His sister, Nadia, was the one who talked me into it. I almost was mad at her. I told her that she was

the cause of it. But I was glad though, I was married fifty-one years.

AG: Wow.

AL: That's okay now. Everything was okay. So so, you know.

AG: How did you meet him?

AG: He was from up there, Larsen Bay. He used to hang out with my brother and just got friendly, you know. Anyway, he was gonna come up to Larsen Bay to get married to me, but then he broke down. He was working on his engine so they could get it going. Nadia talked me. I guess I wanted to go too, I wanted to get out of there. She said, "Alberta, you gotta come or Nick is going to cry." I said, "So what." I didn't wanna go for something. She said, "Come on Alberta, you gotta go." So I went and got married.

AG: And what boat was it? You said his boat broke down. Was it a seiner? Was it a-

AL: His same boat broke down the name of it was *Rio, Rio*. He used to do seining, him and his brother. They bought the boat together, I guess. After we got married he had it for another year and then I told him to just get rid of it because I didn't care for Alexander, his brother. He was always a

troublemaker-like. He sold the boat and he did different odd jobs. He went to Karluk and did seining with the beach gang and he did a bunch of jobs in the cannery and then he was doing port mechanic and electrician and all kinds of jobs. We moved to Larsen Bay when the baby was about three months old. He built the house by himself and then he first fixed the cabin up there for us to stay in. My dad wanted us to stay with him but, Nick was, "I'll take care of my own family." And my dad kept on trying to get us but he wouldn't. He said, "I could take care of my own family," so we stayed there. It was nice though. We had a wood stove. He used to tell me, he says, "Alberta, don't do anything around the house. Just take care of the baby." He was worried about the baby. Make sure she's okay.

ALC: Will you tell about when the eagle almost got Karen?

AL: Oh yeah. One time we walked down. My brother and sister-in-law moved down close to us and we were left home for a few days alone so we decided to walk down to the village. And there's a little point there, across from the village. I mean yeah. Her and I was playing hop scotch, just lay the baby on the beach, and we were playing hop scotch. And I felt that big wave, I could feel the eagle's wings it was so close and he had a hold of my baby, carrying her away. And I took my coat. I grab my coat and swinging it and hollering and she just dropped her and she, "Wah!" And I often think about that. Why, I mean, we never checked to see if she was hurt, just took her home. Never checked to see if she had any marks on her. No kidding. That's how stupid we were, both of us. Anyway, my sister-in-law told me, she says, "Alberta," she said, "let's quit playing and we should take care of the baby." And I said, "Yeah, I guess we shouldn't have done that." Larry was across on the other side and I think he might have saw the eagle pick the baby up cause he came over right away to pick us up.

AG: Wow was that at Larsen Bay?

AL: Yeah. Yeah, but those eagles do that, they take the big dogs like April's. They pick them up by the back. We had one. Well my sister, well Jake and Tiny's dog, he picked the dog up and flying up. My husband started shooting up and the eagle just opened his claws, dropped the dog on the rock pile. That's how they get their prey, their animals.

AG: Gosh.

AL: Anyway when he opened up his claws, Karen, the baby, I could see his nails sticking way out. But you know we didn't even have any sense to check to see if she had any holes.

AG: Was she your first daughter?

AL: Who?

AG: Your first child?

AL: Yeah. That's first baby. Then almost about five years and then I had the next one.

ALC: She also has a great first birth from Karluk, if she's willing to share.

AG: What was it like to give birth in Karluk?

ALC: With the midwives in Karluk? Will you tell?

AL: What's that?

ALC: How your labor was so hard?

AL: Oh yeah, I labored for three days with the first one. They say said she was nine pounds and a quarter. Three days I labored. They used to tell you had babies, you find them under rocks. You know, devil fish rocks they called it, octopus rocks or somewhere in the bushes or somewhere you know. They never said anything about labor or anything.

AG: Oh I see.

AL: Anyway I woke up one night, my sister-in-law was sleeping at the foot of the bed. I said, "Hey Tiny." She said "What, what's wrong?" I said, "I think I ate something that disagreed, I got a stomach ache." She said, "No you're having labor pains." I said, "What's that?" That's how smart we were. They wouldn't talk about stuff like that. They said it was nasty. And I had to learn from A-1 all the way up. Then I labored for three days, then I finally had her. My mother-in-law said she thought I was going to die. She said my lips turned purple, my nails turned purple. She ran out the house and she went up towards the clothesline and then she heard the baby cry and she came running back.

AG: Wow.

AL: She thought I was dead, I guess.

AG: What did they do to help you to give birth?

AL: Nothing. They just sat there and I'd go lock myself in the bathroom, just sitting on the toilet seat. They called me Ukuk, that is daughter-in-law, I guess. They said, "Come on out, your gonna have a baby in there. She's gonna drown in the toilet." And I just listened and I just sat in there and I'd go out whenever I felt like it.

AG: Wow, three days.

AL: Three days labor, that's the worse labor I ever had.

AG: How many children did you have?

AL: I had four.

AG: What are their names?

AL: Padon?

AG: What are their names?

AL: Karen, Jerry, Judy, and Nicholas.

AG: Okay.

AL: Jerry- I had Karen, then almost five years after I had Jerry, and then something happened thirteen months I had [Judy].

ALC: Judy.

AL: Judy and then about almost eight years I had my second, but they all got lighter in weight.

AG: The opposite way that you'd want it huh? *Laughing.*

AL: Went down to 8 [lb] 4 [oz] or 8 [lb] 5 [oz].

AG: So tell me about when you lived in Karluk when you were a young married women.

AL: How I lived there?

AG: Yeah.

AL: I just lived under my in-laws roof and I did all the chores, mopping, cleaning, helping her. My mother-in-law, she couldn't talk English. She was from the mainland and she talked Russian and I guess their own language, too. And I used to think she was mad at me so I stayed away from her, I just kept the floors clean and dishes washed. Kept busy all time. And then few years after, they used to come stay with us for a month or so and then she started talking and she learned to talk a little bit of English and she can understand that. Then her and I got along real good. I thought she didn't like me, Nicholas was her favorite. They had a favorite.

AG: But it was just that you two didn't speak a similar language huh?

AL: Pardon?

AG: It was just that you two couldn't communicate huh?

AL: Yeah, communication were not.

AL: She was nice.

AG: Did your father speak to you in Norwegian, too?

AL: No I never never have spoke. Never have heard him. He never talked about Norway. Never.

AG: What language did you speak at your home when you were a child?

AL: Pardon?

AG: What language did you speak at your home when you were a child?

AL: Just English. I guess we didn't- my sister was telling me they were in Karluk, they were children, they talked Aleut there, the Natives, they washed their mouths out with soap. I don't remember that. I tell her, "Agnes, I didn't go to school there." "Yes, you did," she'd tell me. I said "Well you know," I said, "I was more stupid, I guess." *Laughing.*

AG: No, that's the thing- older siblings have these longer memories, you know.

AL: Yeah she was older ten years. She should know more.

AG: I'm curious, when you were living in Karluk when you were a young wife and young mother, was this the time in which they had the Karluk Reservation?

AL: Yeah they had reservation then. They never heard much about it thought. They used to have meetings and all that stuff. We never went though.

AG: No? Why not?

AL: I don't know, we just didn't I guess.

AG: What sort of fishing was your family doing at that time in Karluk?

AL: He wasn't fishing, he was probably- they were probably beach seining. That's the only fishing I know down there.

AG: Do you remember the beach gang and who was doing all the fishing at that point?

AL: Alec Brown, Sr. I think he was the head guy. And my father-in-law used to work with him. A lot of them, they are all gone now and I don't remember all of them cause we didn't go to the village too much. We just stuck in the house with her and helping her out. She was getting up in age. She was a really active lady. In the later years she used to go over the mountains and carry five gallon container of berries, cranberry. She'd carry them home and then she'd have a barrel and put water in them and that's how they kept them for the winter.

AG: Oh. Would they freeze them?

AL: No. She just kept them in water. In the cellar.

AG: What other foods would you eat?

AL: What kind of food? Oh, just like we are eating now. A lot of fish. Potatoes and then garden stuff. They had gardens.

AG: What was the preferred fish?

AL: Salmon, there was a lot of salmon. We never had- a lot of things we never had till after we moved to Larsen Bay. We started to do our own catching of crab and salmon and halibut, red snapper and stuff like that. My husband and my sister-in-law, they were scared to eat some stuff that I suggested they try like octopus. My brother told Nick, my husband. He said, "Nick if you eat that

and if you live tomorrow I'll eat it." He wouldn't eat it until he made sure Jake wouldn't get poisoned. He all said they'd get poisoned. Then I taught them about clams. "How come you didn't eat clams in Karluk?" They didn't clams in Karluk, I don't know why. Maybe because there's too much rock. There's a lot of rock there along the coast.

AG: What other differences did you notice between Larsen Bay and Karluk?

AL: Difference? Well like the seafood and that they didn't- well I didn't either till [I got] back to Larsen Bay. I had when we were kids there though, but we were too busy playing outside to pay attention, just eat and go play.

AG: So tell me about when you started working at the cannery at the mess hall.



Mess Hall, Larsen Bay. P-1000-7-692.

AL: See I had the three children then and my husband came home one day and says, "Alberta," he said, "they need a waitress in the cannery, in the mess hall cannery." And I said, "Well what about the three children?" He says, "I got a baby sitter." He had Tina Antonson for babysitting. He had all this planned before without me knowing. So I went anyway and they hired me and I worked there that year. Then the next year I went, they hired me again. And then they wanted to put me in the laundry and I didn't want laundry cause I was figuring that the

blankets would be heavy when they're wet. That'd be heavy to lift. And so I told the cook, I said, "You hired me for the mess hall," I said, "if I can't have that I'm going." He said, "Go get your pay." I said, "Gladly," and I left. And I went over, and my husband was at the post office and he saw me coming. But all of a sudden before I got there I had fishing in my mind. It just struck me, just that short distance, and I never fished in my life. And I told to my husband, I went in there and he says, "Geez you're off early." He said, "What happened? They didn't have a big crew or they quit early?" I said, "No, I've quit." He said, "Good, you can go home and take care of your children." I told him, "They're yours too, you know." *Laughing* And he didn't say anything for a while then he says, "Well what do you plan to do?" I said, "I'm gonna take them and I'm gonna babysit them and I'm gonna take them fishing." He said "Fishing?" I said, "Yeah, I'm gonna go set netting." He said, "You'll drown the children." I said, "I'm not taking them to drown the children." I said, "I'm gonna put them up in the bow of the skiff and if they don't sit still I'll tie them down." And he just shook his head so I walked out and then I was trying to figure a way out. I never fished in my life. I didn't know nothing at all, and I tried to figure a way out how I was gonna do it. So I met this friend of ours, and I heard he was gonna be a tenderman. He had his anchors out and that, and he had his net out on the rack. So I met him and I said, "Eddie," I said, "Can I fish your site? He said, "No." He said, "If I let you fish Nick will be after me til I die, be on my tail 'til I die." *Laughing* Then I told him I said, "Come on, Eddie!" He said, "You'll drown your children." I said, "I just got done talking,

going through that same song." I said, "I'm not going to listen." And I told him, I said, "I'll make a deal with you. And he said, "What is the deal?" And I said, "Guarantee \$700 in a week." And I never fished in my life, I don't know how I did this. To this day I just can't figure out how and I planned this. And he says, when I told him that, he said, "Well you can fish, but you better watch those kids real good." I said, "Don't worry about them," I said, "They'll be okay." So I went back and told Nick and he told me I was crazy *Laughing*. And I told him, "Well," I said, "I'm going to go." He said, "Alberta you never fished, do you know what you're doing?" And I said, "No, but I'll figure out something." And I had to figure it out my own way. And I went to start fishing the next week and I went fishing. He [Eddie Paakkanen] made his seven hundred so he was happy. He let me fish it the rest- for two years.

AG: Was that Eddie Paakkanen?

AL: Yeah. I had the three children, the oldest one was seven or eight, close to eight. She baby sat the two while I was fishing. *Laughing* The way I told her, I said, "Karen, keep those two in the house. You stay in the house cause there's bears out there. If you go out they'll eat you, they'll tear you up, they'll chew you up and she kept them in the house. They behaved pretty good. I don't know why, they could have got hurt in the house. I think nowadays, you know, they would be in trouble because of child labor. I mean I learned a lot. Finally I fished his gear and it was so, the set gill net were so heavy. Linen, you know, soaks up all the water. Then he had those big corks and lead lines and if you didn't get your net out in the real slack tide you know it could take you- and I always figured it out. But one morning I looked out- it was a real nice day. And I look to the window and there's a great big whale by the beach and I got scared so I didn't wanna go out, I just missed the tide, so I didn't set 'til the next day. I missed one day. But it was nice then cause you could fish for a whole week, but then now they were doing it for hour by hour, that's why I was glad I quit because that's a lot of work setting and pulling in [nets].



Eddie Paakkanen. P-1012-25.

AG: Because before you would work from Monday thru Friday or what was your fishing schedule?

AL: Oh yeah Monday 'til Saturday and then they pull up [nets] and then they'd start again. But there was a lot of fish those days. Now I guess it's dwindled out. And they have harder work now than when we were fishing. I guess it was hard, but I mean now-a-days I say it's hard cause they have to pull the gear up so much and then have to set it out again. But if you have crew members- later years I've been hiring my own family fishing.

AG: At the beginning though for those two years were you at Deadman's Point?

AL: Pardon?

AG: Were you at Deadman's Point, is that Eddie's site?

AL: Yeah, close there.

AG: Do you know why it was called that?

AL: I don't know. I never did find out.

AG: It's one of the questions that remains unanswered.

AL: Yeah, that's right. I don't know why they named that.

AG: Yeah and so the first two years, who's gear and boats were you using?

AL: I got, got my own.

ALC: Well first it was Eddie's for two years and then she got her own.

AG: Okay. So tell me about when you got your own gear?



Alberta Laktonen.

AL: Bad. *Laughing* Anyway I decided I still wanted to fish. I learned by myself now how to do it so, I learned how to set the net out, how to drop [anchors]. Of course I had a friend help me with the anchors, Eddie Paakkanen. And then I didn't have nobody to sell my fish to, and my husband says, "Nobody will take you cause they don't know you, they don't know you for fishing." I said, "I'll try anyway." I said, "I'll get someone." I said, "I'll try right now." So anyway I've been trying the Alaska Packers. I write them letters, I call them and leave messages and they wouldn't answer. And that's why Nick thought I wasn't able to do it. I was thinking this one cannery there, used to be Parks. Parks cannery and I told him, "Well I'm gonna try something else." I wouldn't tell him what it was at first. Then I called up this fellow and I went up there one time. I met him with my sister-in-law, when we go fishing with her. We were talking to him. Anyway, he says, "Well Alberta, well Mrs. Laktonen," he says, "plan coming in on Thursday. Bring your list." I told him I didn't have anything. I didn't know how I was gonna do. I said, "I just wanna see if I could get help." And he said, "Well come in Thursday, bring your husband with you." He said, "Bring the list."

And my husband had a list that long- I mean a page that long. And when we got there, he says, "Did you bring a list?" And I said, "Yes." And then he said, "Well we can't talk business til we have full stomachs." He said, "It's not good to do work with an empty stomach." So he took us down to the wharf and bought us a lunch and then we went back and I hand him the list. He says, "Where's the list?" And I hand it to him and I was sitting there, I was just nervous and he said, "You sure that's all you need?" And I thought he was making fun of me and I didn't know if I should cry, swear, or laugh or what you know, and I said, "I don't even have a skiff." He said, "We could get that for you, too." I'll never forget that, boy that was tough sitting for a few seconds there. And then he said, "Well we have a tender going up to Parks on the first of May." He said, "We'll get the stuff all together." And we had anchors, lines, and net and right down to hanging and mending twine. And then I didn't have a skiff and they got that. They asked me if I could get one, buy one from my brother, he'd sell it to me. He said, "Well, let us know where it is and we'll pick it up and bring it up." And when they came up they brought everything in the skiff, to bring it ashore. But I was so surprised. I think my husband was, too. I think he tried to make it so I wouldn't go. I guess he was worried about- he should have been worried about me too- but I think he was mostly worried the kids would climb around. But they sat up in the bow there and now to this day I think, gee, it would've been easier now that duct tape instead of rope *Laughing*. Just sometimes when I'm alone I think of stuff like that and I smile. So that's how I started fishing.



Alberta in a full skiff.

AG: So then you sold your fish to Parks Cannery?

AL: I sold it to Park Cannery for quite a few years, til they quit. And then I sold it to Western Alaska for about two years, three years. And then I, then Larsen Bay got it, and I sold to them. And then I sold it to Beardsley and who else. And I fished for a while more than I figured, gee you know those anchors, two hundred pounders, was heavy they drag. I hired my grandson. He fished with me when he was twelve up to eighteen. We had the tender pull the anchor, that's the very first time they'd ever did it. And I told my grandson, I said, "I quit fishing." Because my neighbor came down to help. He said, "What about me?" I said, "Dino, I tried to tell you to get involved with other fishing because I said I can't fish no more, cause I'm getting older. The anchors way too heavy, two hundred pounders are heavy." I said, "You know what?" I said "Now a loaf of bread is heavy." And he says, "Grandma how's that?" I said, "I don't know, I'll have to figure it out and tell you tomorrow." So anyway, next day I got up early and I was twiddling around and I saw the raisin bread and I called him. I said, "Hey, Dean, I found out why the bread is heavy. It has nuts in it." And he started to laugh. He told me

I was crazy or funny or something, I can't help that. So that was my fishing life.

AG: What year did you begin?



Alberta picking the net.

mainland. But I don't know why, to this day I still don't know why I did what I did. I mean nobody told me to, nobody talked to me, but I just, going over to my husband's work in the post office and just walking over there and all of a sudden I wanted to go fishing, and I finally did something I wanted to do. Then I had my husband fish with me one year and he didn't like it. Anyway he was trying to find a way to get out of it, but I had no crew so I had to have him. And he said, "Alberta why do you cut the kelp?" I said, "Cause Nick, it's like this," I said, "the kelp they have a head and it's hollow." And I said, "If you, if you had a hollow head and if I punched a hole in it you would sink too." *Laughing* He thought I was crazy and I had to find something, but you know it was a really good life. We lived in a Eddie's place first off, and then we lived in a tent then he built the cabin for us. He was handy.

AG: When was it that you moved from Eddie's place? How did you determine where to fish after that?

AL: Pardon?

AG: What year did you begin?

AL: I begin 1953 I think it was I started.

AG: And when did you end?

AL: I fished in [...] '95 I think. I don't know, I don't have a good memory.

AG: Wow.

AL: It was a good life though. I really liked it cause I thought it was good for the children, for the weather was even rough rainy weather we'd go out when. You get that salt air, I thought it was the best thing. It felt good and I never got sick or anything.

AG: And at the beginning then you had no crew, it was just you?

AL: Yeah the first years when I fished Eddie Paakaanen's site, I fished it alone and I always watched the tide cause I used to hear my dad talking to somebody else about a strong tide, you know. And I had to watch the strong tide because when the tide comes it will just take you. I used to hear my dad say that when the tide comes it could take you over to the

AL: Well the year I fished with my husband. He was dropping anchors, pulling anchors. We had a boat then and I got tired of that. So he said, "Well we're gonna go drop there anchors." I said, "I'm not gonna go. If you wanna go drop you go along." So he went alone. I was thinking to myself, boy that's sure stupid cause he's losing his sight. He wasn't really blind yet though, he could see. And I was worried about him. Pretty soon I see him coming and the boat coming ashore. He said, "Well Alberta, I got the site." I said, "Where did you put it?" He said, "Over by the boneyard." And I said, "Oh my gosh." I said, "I was worried." He said, "Well I'm glad you didn't come cause I know you're getting upset dropping anchors." We dropped them seven times I think before we found spots. Then I found this one, right down towards [Old] Uyak. That was a good site.

AG: And is that the one that you stayed at?

AL: I stay there yeah. Just til about the end then I sold out everything. And I think it was '98, '90-something like that.

AG: To who?

AL: To Jane Petrich.



Jane Petrich at Farside, formerly Jack Frost Creek. P-1000-7-502.

AG: Okay.

AL: She bought it. I think her sons' got it now. But it was nice there. My husband and I we built the high, big house there in Larsen Bay. He built the first house by himself and then I helped him with the other one. He did all the plumbing. That's the only house, I think, in Larsen Bay that's well insulated. He had insulated on the wall even on the floor, the ceiling. It was really warm in the winter time.

ALC: Grandma, wasn't it grandpa that brought the telephones to Larsen Bay after the war?

AL: Yeah. Yeah my husband. He was really good with electronics and everything. He brought the first telephones came to Larsen Bay, he had these windy kind. The first one he got from our place was to Jacob Aga's, my brother's, and then the second was down to the school. He got this wire from the military, I don't know if they gave it to him or if he bought it, but they brought coils and coils and him and I walked through the woods carrying this, putting up the wires for it. Then he had the school hooked up and then he had an amateur radio and he used to make calls when people came to work in the cannery. He'd call a certain state, and he'd make phone calls for them. They talk to their wives or their families. And the first off he did was when the school had it, and he called the

teachers and they talked to him. In Larsen Bay I think we had the very first hot and cold water plumbing that he did. I helped him with it. And then the next thing was he got a Jeep, bought a Jeep for \$425. For a pretty long time after then Charlie Aga- my husband got a truck he bought from Don Boyle and he gave Charlie the Jeep. And Charlie, my brother, he would have it parked and he'd break down, his battery would go dead on the beach and the water would come in out of it. And Nick would get it going for him again then he just gave up on it. But he did get the school for Larsen Bay, not the big one, but the one red one. He was really busy. He was busy person.

AG: What was the name of your set net site?

AL: My site? Didn't have a name for it. The boat's name was *Alberta L.* But the one before that was *Karen Marie*.

AG: So did you have a number or how would you identify your set net site?

AL: Yeah we had we had numbers on our buoys, but I don't remember now.

AG: So you just say fish camp-



Dora Aga. P-1012-19.

AL: Yeah we used to come to Seattle. After the earthquake we lived in Kodiak, then the earthquake came and then we moved to Seattle. Cause my husband said he wanted the children to learn, to see what their learning out of the book, instead of all out of the book, so that's why I went. Then every May 10th, I tell my husband, "Well tomorrow May 10th, I'm leaving." He says, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm going to get ready for fishing. I have to gear up and get ready and all that." I'd go up there. Then later on my crew would come just when we'd start fishing. Good life.

AG: When you started fishing, were there any other women that were set netting?

AL: None that I know of. Dora Jager [Aga], she used to fish with her husband, but she was more cooking then, then she didn't do it by herself. I'm sure, as far as I know, I was the only one that really went out on my own. But to this day, I still wonder why I did it, you know, but I'm glad I did it. But then now I think to myself, you know, you're getting older and you lose your strength.

AG: But you kept it for a long time, it sounds like.

AL: Yeah, I kept it for a long time, my grandson fished with me. Well first my older daughter, she baby sat for me without pay for two years and I was feeling sorry for her, so I was giving her five cents out of a fish. She made enough money to buy two bike, skates, and a carpet for my living

room, a watch for her dad, and pots and pans. It was a good life though, sometimes I think about it and that's good thinking, you know.

AG: Yeah.

AL: Instead of thinking bad things you think good things.

AG: Who else was set netting when you first started?

AL: Pardon?

AG: When you first started who else was set netting?

AL: Who else was what?

AG: Set netting?

AL: I don't know.

ALC: Who else was fishing in Larsen Bay and Uyak at that time?

AL: Oh, Bill Jager. Well down along the line there was Jack Wick [Sr.]. You know Jack Wick's dad. And let's see, there's some other older fellow. Jack Wick's dad drowned, I think. He went down with the anchors, I guess. That was the only thing I was worried about. I always had enough sense to tell my partners, "Stand on this side of the line. Don't stand on that side cause you'll get pulled over." That's how I told him before they start, with Dino especially since he was young.

AG: Did you use an actual anchor or did you use the barrels?

AL: Yeah. I first had these, I don't know what they call them. They got long arms. And then I got the Danforths [anchors] which they fold. They were easier. We used to drag them down the beach and then lift them in the skiff and put them on a seat and put them on board and they start to teeter-totter. I sit on the board and then when my partner ran the lines out, the buoys out, and the anchor lines would come to the end and I'd let them slide off. That's how we did it, we worked like that.

AG: And did you use kegs or did you use the-

AL: First off I was using kegs and then later on I was using those buoys which was much nicer.

AG: That's a big improvement I can imagine huh?

AL: That is, yeah. And then first off, like I said, we had this linen net and then we went to nylon which was really nice. I mean still some time when the tide gets strong it would get pretty bad.

AG: What were some other changes in the fishing gear that you remember?

AL: The what?



Alberta with a wooden skiff.

AG: The fishing gear?

AL: Well, the weight. I mean it got lighter once we got all the gear. And then another thing is we got rid of those big barrels they used use [...] for buoys. And then this plastic balls came, and then that was easier. My husband was working for Carla Rodley Marine (?) here in Kodiak. And he got a lot of gear, lighter gear, brought that back in cause the other stuff was so heavy. He'd get them to give somebody some free [gear] then let them try it out and pretty soon everybody was getting those buoys. And he even got me some little ones, about that big, and one big strong tide took most of them. They floated away. So I had to go back to the old three buoys, they were cedar.

AG: Who made your boats?

AL: My brother made me the skiff and I bought it from him. We had two boats, first it was the *Karen Marie*. He bought that from Alaska Packers. They brought it from Bristol Bay. And him and I, we did quite a bit. We changed the ribs and stuff and I scrapped all the paint and painted. He was working in the cannery so he couldn't do too much. And then the next one we had was- we moved to Kodiak. We went to Seattle then he bought the house and all that down there so I was trying to help him make payments and stuff, just working together. And he sold that little boat, *Karen*, to Tommy Gallagher and then the next year he bought one of those LB boats from my brother, Charlie. It was sunk down the beach there all the time, washing in and out, and he bought that from my brother for \$1500 I think. And then we took it home and we stripped it, stripped the engine and everything and cleaned it up and that. And then we used it to live on when we were out

fishing cause we were a little ways from home. We'd sleep on it anyway, when we were fishing late. And we had that for a long time after and then he fiber-glassed the bottom after a while. And then we had it up on barrels by the place, and on the big tide during the winter, when we were in Seattle, it fell off and broke some ribs so he just burnt it up.

AG: You said the LB boats, were those the old Alaska Packers seiners or?

AL: Yeah, those one of the Packers' little boats they used to tow around. For when they make sets, they use the little one for holding one end or something like that.

AG: Okay. So they were like skiffs instead of seiners or?

AL: They had a motor in them, but then they got rid of them. I don't know how Charlie got it, if he bought it or what, but anyway he didn't take care of it. He was using it for fishing too, for a while. And then he's getting up there. He wasn't very old, he could've fished longer yet, but I guess he got lazy. *Laughing* Anyway, my husband bought it. He come home one day he says, "Alberta we got a boat." I said, "Oh my gosh. What did we get now?" Then I had to scrape it all. He didn't have the time to do it, I mean he'd say he's gonna do it Saturday, but you can't do much in one day. So I have it all scraped and repainted it inside and out. Put copper paint on. Her sister was fishing one year, I had my crew member. He was playing around, he was fifteen. And I just wanted company. My husband came but I was afraid he'd fallen in the fish separation bins. And so I hired her [April Councillor's] sister, Alberta. Anyway, she fished with me. Dino made me upset. I said after we pick the fish now, I wanted him to get to work and get the fish out of the net cause the tender was in the bay now and I didn't want to wait till midnight. He said, "Well grandma, they are your friends." That made me upset, it made me mad. I told him, I said, "Dino, they're not your friends when you are working for them." I said, "If you don't get the ticket then you don't get the money." So anyway, after we got everything done toward the end of fall, well I didn't say anymore until after we got everything done. I said, "Dino, don't come back next year, you're fired." He said, "What?" I said, "You can't play when you're working." I said, "You could get hurt. I can't have you next year." So I fired him for one year and I hired her sister. She was only eight years old. We wanted her more for company, it was funny, but we got along good. Anyway, she was a season I guess. I gave her a check and I wanted to make it legal. We go to the office, like big stuff, and then I got her check made out from Alaska Packers. And she said, "Grandma, I don't want to spend this, I want to frame it." I said, "No you spend it for your school stuff." She didn't want to spend it. I was telling her about it one day and she was laughing. She was eight years old.

AG: Wow.

AL: But we just wanted her company, you know.

AG: So you worked for, you sold fish to the Packers for a while as well, huh?

AL: Yeah one year I think, finally I went to them. They found out that I could fish. *Laughing* Sometime I'd come in with a load of fish at eight in the morning and again in the evening and we'd go out about 6:00 in the morning, again 3, 4:00 in the afternoon.

AG: Who was the tender? Or would you bring the fish?

AL: No we'd go to the tender, deliver to them. They used to just count them [salmon] before. Then next they start counting them and weighing them. They put a bag down you know. It was pretty good, but then now I guess, it's sort of- I don't want to say it. My daughter is fishing and she said, "Mom, it's not like when you fished. It's much easier." But now, when I was up there with her, I was sitting up in the bow of the skiff, and they get them great big totes and they are lifting them up. I was scared it was gonna fall on me, they're heavy, you know, those things. They take a lot of room. They have two of them in the skiff and it takes a lot of room.

AG: Do you remember when you were younger, the fish traps?

AL: No I don't remember too much about fish traps. The only thing I remember is when they bring their scow and they had a little building where they stayed on them. That's what. We never hung around the cannery so we didn't [know].

ALC: I saw a picture of Grandpa Jacob, you know Nick's dad, in one of those traps.

AL: Oh yeah.

ALC: A real old photo.

AL: Those guys would know yeah. They didn't have them in Karluk though, they had them across from Larsen Bay. I mean at Chief Point and those places, but they never- I don't recall them in Karluk. They had seining there. They had a beach gang. They called it beach gang. It was a really good life though. I sure wish I was getting younger. *Laughing*

AG: Do you remember what changed when statehood happened?

AL: The what?

AG: Do you remember when Alaska became a state?

AL: Yeah, my son was born. My last one, 1959. I have a letter yet from Governor Gruening, congratulating us for our first baby born in statehood.

AG: Wow how did he know?

AL: I don't know. I have the letter yet though. He was born September 3rd, I think, or 7th. I don't know. It's been a while- last one you'll forget it. *Laughing*. Yeah I remember that.

AG: Do you remember if fishing changed after that, when the state was in control?

AL: They voted the traps out and everybody was so happy. I don't know. They used to get a lot of fish in them though, I guess. Yeah life is different. But like I talked to Jerry, I told him, "All the houses and a lot of things are changing." He said, "Mom, that's progress." I said, "Yeah, I don't know if it's good though." I mean it was hard work, but I liked it.

AG: I'm curious, so your children would go with you in the summers and fish with you and how was their education in Larsen Bay?

AL: I thought it was pretty good. They went to school there until then we moved to Kodiak and then we moved to Seattle the year of the earthquake and Nick my husband told me, "Alberta," he said "You know I'd like to move out because he said I want the kids to see what their learning in the books." That's the first time he [told me before] every time he did something he'd tell me after.

AG: Why did you move to Kodiak?

AL: We moved to Kodiak cause my husband went up to Anchorage to get his eyes checked, a VA deal. And Karen went with him for [when] he was getting checked out. When she was a baby she had a touch of polio, I cured her. And anyway, he left Karen in Kodiak with some friends. He come back, he said, "Alberta, we've moving to Kodiak tomorrow." I said, "What time tomorrow?" He said, "Eight o'clock in the morning." It was six in the evening. I said, "Nick, our clothes are out on the line, they're stiff there and hanging." He says, "Just pull them. I'll help you pull them in. Just take them and throw them in the tub," he said. "It will be melted out and dry when you get back in the spring." I said, "Why are we going there for? How long are we gonna be there for?" He said, "I don't know. I got a job on the *Western*," I forgot the name of the boat. *Northwestern*, I think. Anyway, he said he was gonna be an engineer and I said, "Where we gonna stay?" He said, "Don't worry we got a place. Bob Harris found a place for us." A friend of his, ship mate. We moved in, we stayed in Kim Clark's down by the lake there. We stayed there for two years and we rented. Then it was \$125 a month. And anyway we had that earthquake and then he said he was getting on the plane to Larsen Bay to work. And the last thing he said, "Alberta, if you wanna sell the house, let's sell it." I said, "How much?" He said, "You sell it for whatever you want." And I sold it for \$15,000. And anyway, then I went to Larsen Bay and I went fishing again. May 10th I always say I'm leaving. He said, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm going to Larsen Bay to get ready for fishing." May 10th I always took that, I don't know why. Anyway we went to Larsen Bay and I was getting ready for fishing. He went to work at the stockroom in Larsen Bay and then I fished that summer. Then he got sick during the summer and he had to go to Seattle and he was down there til late, until we almost got done with fishing. We had a real good year that year. And then while he was there, they could never find out what's wrong. They thought he had the systemic acid or something in his stomach, I don't know, ulcers or something. Anyway, when we went down there he told me that he bought a house there. He wrote to me. We had our bank account here and he asked me to send him money for a down payment, him and I together. So anyway, I was so excited that I tore the numbers off the check. They didn't have the numbers and he called me and told me that. "Alberta, I'm gonna need that money by Monday." This was Wednesday. He said, "real estate wants the money Monday. And I said, "Well, what am I supposed to do?" And he said, "Just don't worry about it." And he talked to the real estate guy and he got together and they called the bank and got clearance and they called him, they called me, and they got clearance. He bought the house and he had it all furnished and then we went down there. My son was four years old, the last one. Nick picks me up when he got there, he drove us down. We got there and he carried me across the threshold and my younger boy

was crying, "Daddy, put mama down. You're gonna hurt her, you're gonna drop her!" He said, "Never mind, I didn't get a chance to carry her across the threshold and he said I can do it now. I said, "Yeah, he didn't get a chance cause he was afraid. If he tried to find it he would have walked right overboard." *Laughing* We got married on *Shuyak*- it was funny. Anyway, we got jobs down there. So we'd been in and out, spring and fall. Spring we would come up.

AG: Was it difficult to kind of adjust to life in Kodiak from Larsen Bay?

AL: Yeah, we just started living, just like kids going to school.

AG: And how was it to then to move to Seattle, from small town to big city?

AL: We liked living in Kodiak, wherever we moved we liked. I mean it didn't matter, the family was together and was always nice it seemed like. I like Kodiak. We both worked in the cannery here. The next year [when] him and I came back to Kodiak we lived on our boat in the boat harbor. And we were working cause we had to pay payments, you know. Buying a house and furniture and that stuff. Anyway, he was working in the stock room and I was shoveling crab around, playing with crab. It was fun. We worked there two years, but we had his brother. He went down there and sat the children, Karen was just about ready for- she was in high school, Jerry junior high.

AG: Which cannery did you work at?



Alberta Laktonen.

AL: Alaska Packers, that ship they had. I think didn't it go out with the tidal wave?

AG: Well now it's the *Star of Kodiak*, but it's the same spot right?

AL: Yeah.

AG: And.

AL: Anyway we worked there. The last day, my husband had ham radio and he said he was gonna pick it up next Monday. I said, "Nick, why don't you get it now? You got it so you could through the weekend hook it up, cause they are through in the cannery and not gonna work no more Mondays, cause they're closing up." And he says, "Well maybe I'll do that." So he took it and he hooked it up in the car and then we were the second ones up the mountain when that earthquake came. That's the same day.

AG: Because he heard it beforehand that it was coming?

AL: Pardon?

AG: Because you knew it was coming?

AL: No we didn't know, but it was sort of weird. We went home and the dog was laying under the porch. It was just dead quite, just no noise at all. No sea gulls, you usually see them when the fish are around the cannery. Nothing. And we just had a big dinner, Martin Cooper and his wife and daughter there- and Martin Cooper, a friend of ours, he says, "We're getting an earthquake." I said "Come one, Martin." Before I could say, "Come on Martin, quit kidding," it started shaking. And we just took everything from the table and put it in the car. [...] They took us in their car and then we went back home, got the stuff. It was just shaking. But when it was shaking hard, we were standing outside by those big trees. I was looking up at the trees thinking, "Those guys are crazy, we should've stayed inside." Nick and Martin and Kathy and them were standing outside. You could see those trees just waves, big waves the trees, their roots would come up and settle again. And then anyway, we finally got a car-Karen and this guy Dave Houser, they had our car there at Mary Larianoff's, we got our car, we went back home and took all our food. Martin and them left, they went home. And we got all of our food that we were gonna eat and took them to the car and we went up the mountain. We were the second ones up there. Ed Naughton was the first one up there. It was still daylight, I could see the bay just inside the boat harbor sucked out dry. You could see the mud, slate and stuff. Pretty soon the big, big waves come in. There was three of them. And then you could hear the buildings breaking that when you're up there. Then grandpa [Nick] was communicating with the city hall and he was taking calls for them to Juneau. There was no other communications. So we lived in the car for about three days. But my youngest son, he said "I wish we had another earthquake so we can eat in the car again, have a picnic." He was only four, he didn't know any better.

AG: How did you feel during all of that?

AL: Pardon?

AG: How did you feel during all of that?

AG: I don't know, I was pretty still. I mean, I didn't worry about it. My neighbor she was going batty I think. Anne Vocker, she had twin girls, they were two years old, and she had a five day old baby that had pneumonia. My husband got ahold of Seattle through his ham radio in the car and he got the military to get her out, her and the three children, the girls and then the baby. And called up, got a hold of her parents and her relatives and got them to pick her up. And now she was saying we were friends for fifty years, I told her, "I don't think so, I was married fifty years." Maybe twenty. I don't know, since the earthquake. But anyway it was a lot of commotion in Kodiak here. But he could go anywhere he wanted cause he had clearance because he had the ham radio so we could get out.

AG: And so he was, I'm sure, very important for all communication.

AL: Pardon?

AG: It sounds like the people with the ham radios were very important during that time.

AL: Yeah, they were, during the earthquake. He'd call the city hall with the CB radio and then he used his ham radio to get Juneau and then send them a message out. So anyway, we moved out after that.

AG: How did things change on the west side after the earthquake?

AL: I don't know. When we had the earthquake, my younger daughter was in Larsen Bay with my brother and his wife and then my husband's mother and dad was in Karluk. And he didn't know- he tried to get some information on either one and never knew. So anyway, I think just a few days after we just packed up and went to Larsen Bay. I went back to get ready for fishing. I don't see much things change that much though.

AG: No. I remember because-

AL: People weren't scared there. I thought they'd be panicky you know.

AG: Virginia Abston told me that some people told her that the fishing changed a bit that some sites got more reds after the earthquake or?

AL: I don't know. It didn't seem like it.

AG: Because it didn't sink as much as it did on this side of the island huh?

AL: Maybe where they were. [...] Yeah, I was fishing. I guess I took off twice. I took off one year in '70. I took off one year and went beach seining. That's another thing I did. I went to go fishing with my sister-in-law. She was beach seining.

AG: Was that Dora [Aga]?

AL: Yeah. And then that's in '70 and then '72 again I took off and fished with her again.

AG: Tell me about beach seining.

AL: Pardon?

AG: Tell me about your beach seining time.

AL: I don't know. I thought she was too rough. Marlene, she'd be sitting there- she'd have the rope wrapped around her waist and Dora would go full speed, you know, then I'd be scared that she's gonna cut her in half. Nylon then. And I said, "Marlene, you shouldn't do that." And she said, "I do that all the time." I said "Your mother's gonna cut you in half."

AG: She would tow her in the skiff?

AL: It gets tight you know. So anyway, I told her, "Just sit quickly, move down its getting slack." It got slack and I ripped it off and she said, "What about the net? It's gonna go." And I said, "Drop the anchor in the dirt and the sand and sit on it, that's safer." And she did. It worked.

AG: Oh I see so she would tie the end of the [net to Marlene when making a set].

AL: She'd have it wrapped around, it wasn't tied, and when she's running [the skiff] she set out fast. Then I'd tell her. One night we made a set up there and we got eight hundred some fish and then her skiff drifted. Marlene threw the anchor over and she didn't have the anchor line tied and the skiff drifted. And then I told Dora, we went over and told her that. And I said, "You know we should go back and make another haul cause there's a lot of fish there." She said, "Oh no, we'll do it tomorrow again at four o'clock." And I said, "The fish is gonna be gone." She said, "No they'll be there, I've been fishing for thirty eight years, I know all about it." Next day we went we got twenty some fish. *Laughing* They don't wait, I told her, they don't wait for you.

AG: It's true. How did you cure your daughter from polio?

AL: Well one morning, my husband and brother-in-law went to work in the cannery. And Karen was sleeping and then I went and looked at her and she was all feverish and her eyes were rolled. You know, when they get delirious-like they roll their eyes. I called my sister and then we had talkies from our house to her house and I told her and she came over. We gave her a cool bath, I mean we didn't know anything about medicine, we didn't have doctors there. And then we gave her- she crushed Aspirin and she couldn't swallow, she was just like delirious, you know, pretty bad off. And I told her, "Tiny, I'm gonna warm up some vinegar and soak flannel and wrap it on her feet and put a lot of socks, a lot of blankets to get the fever down." She was really hot. And she said, "Well you could do whatever you want." I said, "I'm not gonna wallow here because if she died then I'd feel guilty. Well I gotta do something, she's gonna die cause she's really sick." So anyway, I did that, I put vinegar on her feet, went to soak and heat up vinegar in a pan, then wet the cloth and wrapped it around her feet and put a lot of socks and blankets. She's sweating. By 5:00 in the evening she was crawling all over the bed again. She'd come back to life. Anyway, a few months after that my husband and I went up to Anchorage, took the kids with us. It was just Karen, Jerry, and Judy, three of them. We had took them to the doctor in Anchorage and had them checked out. And the doctor, when he came to Karen, he asked my husband, he said, "Your daughter was ever have high fever?" And he said, "I don't know I wasn't home. I was working, you'd have to talk to my wife." He had me take the kids and sit out there- I was a kid *Laughing*. Anyway, the doctor called me in. I went in and he was asking me questions, "Has your daughter ever had a fever?" And I said, "Yeah, she was delirious, her eyes rolled way back." And he said, "What did you do?" And so I told him and he says, "You know Mrs. Laktonen, you probably saved her life." Before he got to say that he said, "You did save her life." And I was sort of shocked. You know he said she had a touch a polio.

AG: Wow.

AL: I mean we didn't know.

AG: Is this your same daughter that was the hard child birth and that was almost taken by the eagle?

AL: Yeah. Yeah that's why she got three life. *Laughing*

AG: My goodness.

AL: Yeah, she's the same one. But I don't know, I was wondering how she could get- my husband was working in the post office then. And I was wondering how she got polio. You know we were staying at Whitney's Creek. We're across from Larsen Bay. Were you ever over there?

AG: To Hollywood.

AL: To Hollywood. Oh we were further in the bay the next off.

AG: Was that another place that you fished or did you live there?

AL: Pardon?

AG: Did you fish there or live there?

AL: No we lived there. Just before I went fishing. I started fishing when I went, then we moved to Larsen Bay side. Yeah.

AG: Why did you live on the other side?

AL: We moved. We lived up there. Nick wanted to build a house in Karluk and I told him, that's one thing I fought him with this. I said, "Nick, I'm not living down here. If you wanna build a house here you can live down here. I'm gonna move back with Daddy, Daddy said I've got room there." I was counting on that. He said, "Why don't you wanna stay here?" I said, "Well winter time the river freezes over and the planes can't get in and a lot of times the weather's bad and we've got a baby and if she get sick, she'd die on us before we get her out of here." I had enough sense to talk like that and I didn't know anything too much then and so he said, "Well maybe we'll go Larsen Bay, find a place there." So we were running around Larsen Bay, we found a spot and he build a house there.

AG: Oh okay and that was it when you.

AL: Pardon?

AG: At Whitney Creek you said?

AL: Yeah that was Whitney's Creek. And then when Karen started going to school then he came home, he was working in the post office, he had to go down to the village from Whitney's Creek. And he said, "Alberta, we're gonna have to go look for a different spot than the other side cause Karen's ready for school. And me working down there, crossing the bay gets pretty rough sometime." So him and I went out looking, we found a spot we liked. His sister named it the Jack Frost Creek. She had a place above from us and she called it Sunshine Cove. *Laughing* And anyway that's why we moved there, cause of Karen going to school. Well we figured there would be more children by then, so we moved over there.

AG: So it was Dora that named it Jack Frost Creek?

AL: No, it was Nick's sister, Mary Larianoff.

AG: Okay.

AL: They lived just a little bit away from us, at the end of the road. Yeah that was the life.

AG: Can you tell me how was it that things changed when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, ANCSA, happened in Larsen Bay?

AL: I don't know. They got the medical and that came in. The villages have aids. I ended up one time there, I had a case of gallstones and I was pretty sick and they got me out there. Had a plane come take me out, went to Kodiak to check it out. They said I had gallstones, I'd have to go to Anchorage and have surgery. So anyway, that was about in two weeks. And it ended up right on my birthday, on April 6 on the dot, and they told me when I was ready to go, they said they changed the date because it was birthday. They wait till the 9th so I waited.

AG: That's nice.

AL: I don't what they, they have things going there. I don't know what it's like now, but they were always busy at something.

AG: Do you remember when APA sold?

AL: No I don't remember what year it was.

AG: Do you remember that transition from if it was different from owner to owner?

AL: Yeah, we started quit getting ice cream and soda pop. *Laughing* They use to give us ice cream and soda pop, the kids liked it.

AG: The tender?

AL: When the Larsen Bay Tribal, they come in and it started to slow down. But I don't know if there was much difference. I mean your same fishing, you just go do them delivery of your fish and get ticket. When I fished that one year for Alaska Packers, the superintendent told me anytime I need anything they'd get it for me from Kodiak. So it never bothers me. I sort of stay to myself, even down in Seattle now.

AG: What about when limited entry came in, in the '70s?

AL: We felt that big amount they wanted. It was okay. It seemed like- as long as we could sell our fish and you get to sell them, but I don't know if it bothered anyone. Do you know anything?

ALC: I was too young.

AL: Never heard anyone say anything about it.

AG: And I always think because there's these moments in history that I have to ask everyone about, you know, and those are like limited entry and the sixty-four earthquake and

AL: Oh yeah, those things.

AG: Yeah. What were some other events that were, that made a difference in your life or the life of people in Larsen Bay?

AL: Well, for us we were more like, we worked for ourself, and didn't interfere in anybody else's business. We say more like, take care of your family, do what you were doing before. Hauling your own wood, your own fuel and stuff. Whatever you had to do.

AG: What about the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill?

AL: What's that?

AG: What about the oil spill?

AL: I wasn't there for that. I think I was there after that again though.

ALC: Well that's the summer me and Melissa came and stayed with you in Washington so dad and mom and my two older sisters helped on the cleanup that year.

AG: So it was a vacation for April. *Laughing*

AL: I don't know we- I guess it did affect a lot of them, but I don't know if it really did affect the fishing much, I don't recall.

ALC: Well, yeah it wasn't long after that we gave up fishing and dad started doing the art.

AL: Oh yeah. Yeah that's right, the price and everything went down, he said.

ALC: Are you getting.

AL: Yeah I think a lot of stuff, when I'm alone, I'm sitting there. I'll tell you about this. I sit there and I'm thinking about the funny stuff, the good stuff. I don't think of hard times or anything. And I can sort of tell I'm smiling, and I feel so good and I look through the window and I think to myself, "I hope nobody sees me, they'll turn me in." I talked to my doctor about it, and he said, "Well after that, what do you do then?" I said "When they start to come and get me I'll tell them I'm not crazy, I'm just happy." He said, "That's a good way to be. Laughter's good for your health." Sometime when I'm alone I think of the kids when they were small and stuff and that's a good feeling, you know.

AG: That is- you are my hero. *Laughing*

AL: If it is I make it.

AG: Well, is there anything else? I think we've been talking for a long time, we can take a break. I'm just wondering if there's anything else that you want to talk about or something that you remember.

ALC: Well, she told me a good story, was it yesterday, about when she- cause she always had to haul those propane tanks, those big ones.

AL: Hundred pound propane.

ALC: Yeah. Will you tell the story about you and grandpa and you hurt yourself?

AL: Yeah. Yeah, one time my husband and I was hauling propane tanks up. He came home and he had the bottom part, you know it's good for holding on there, and I had the part like this, the nozzle part. It was frozen out there and we were going down the hill and I fell, I slipped sideways, my boot, and I fractured my foot, the top. And then anyway, we got up there. And I told him, my hand was so sore, it was wrapped up with towels and soaked in water. And then he says, "Alberta, you gotta go see a doctor." I said, "What for? I'm not gonna go see no doctor, all they do is put a cast. I wouldn't get to go fishing." I told him. "Later on," he said, "you'll have problem." I said, "I don't care, I'm not going." Anyway I never did go and now I do have little problems sometime.

AG: Wow.

AL: That's a long time ago. But when I was fishing, I used to haul my own [propane tanks] up by myself. To this day, I can't- I talk to my nieces and ask them how I did it, get them out of the skiff, on to the seat and get on board and get them rolling down. And I don't know how I did it. I mean, just like a dream, I can't figure out how I was able to do that. Get the skiff down the beach and make a plank to roll them up, get them up behind the house and stand them up and hook them up. And I don't know. [...] Rhonda said, "Auntie Alberta, I used to really worry



April Laktonen Counciller and Alberta Laktonen. P- 1001-16-02.

about you. I thought you were gonna drop that thing on yourself." I'd stand them up, when I was standing them up she'd watch. They wanted to help and I tell them, "No." I wouldn't let them help because I was afraid they'd get hurt, they were my brothers kids. But I used to get them up and I don't know how I did it, I still don't. Now I think a loaf of bread is heavy.

AG: Will, I think. You had the will.

AL: Must be, I don't know. But Nick, my husband, he could really lift and work hard too though. I don't know, sometime when I'm alone I think I wish I could still do what I used to do, cause I really liked it. You know, I thought it was really good being out in the air, working.

AG: Well now you can visit.

AL: I don't know. *Laughing* There's nobody that will hire me now. They'll say, "Look at that old little lady coming, forget it." That was a really good life though, I don't know. I helped my husband build

a house. And then we bought a house here, I mean Kodiak, and re-done that one. It had a roof that goes up, like you know, like that. And he took and cut it, made like a ranch home. Hooked up heating in there, baseboard heating. He must, I think, he's picking lots up when he was in the Service, just a short time. Then he worked around Oregon and he'd go to parties and dances and stuff. Anyway, I mean I don't know, I really liked that life. And I really really wish I could do things yet.

AG: Well I want to thank you so much for spending time with me today.

AL: I mean I feel good about it.

AG: Is there anything else you want to share?

AL: Is there? No.

ALC: We don't want to tire you out grandma.

AL: Yeah don't pick the bone.