Jane Petrich

Transcript of an Oral History

Conducted by

Anjuli Grantham

at

Farside, Larsen 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.

This project is made possible due to the contributions of project partners and sponsors, including the Alaska Historical Society, Alaska Humanities Forum, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Kodiak Maritime Museum, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, Kodiak Public Broadcasting, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, and Salmon Project.

Note on Transcription

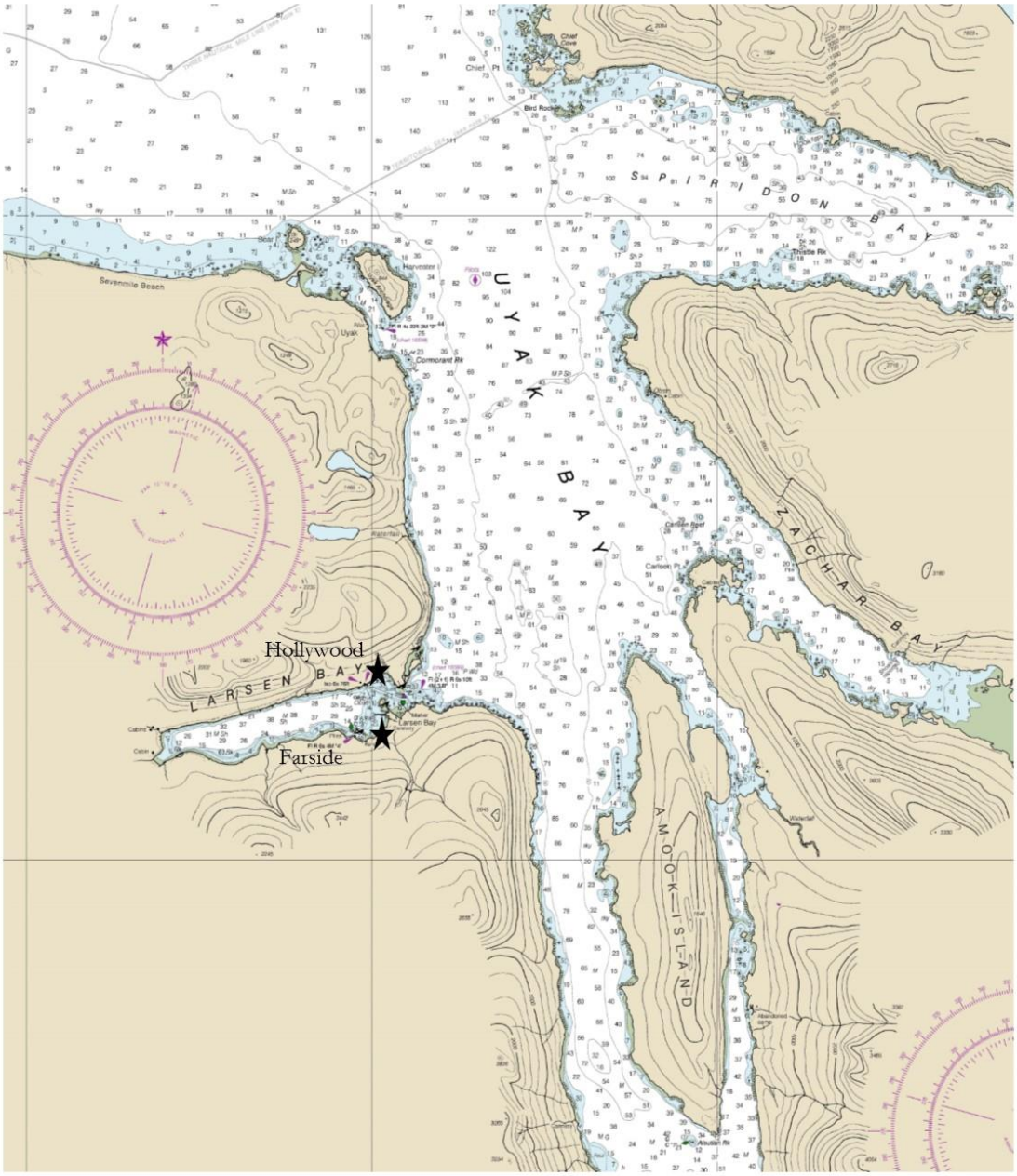
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The following transcript is nearly a word-for-word transcription of the oral history interview. Editing is intended to make the interview 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

Jane Petrich, interview P-1002-17 by Anjuli Grantham in Larsen Bay, Alaska, 1 August 2015, (Kodiak, Alaska: Kodiak Historical Society).

Key Words: Farside, Larsen Bay, cannery, commercial fishing

Cover photo: Jane Petrich, at Farside, Larsen Bay, on August, 1 2015. Photographed by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-7-502.



Select locations within Uyak Bay mentioned in the oral history.

Oral History of Jane Petrich

AG: It is August 1, 2015. I am in Larsen Bay at Farside with Jane Petrich. This is Anjuli Grantham, and this interview is part of the West Side Stories Project. So thank you, Jane.

JP: You're very welcome.

AG: Could you please begin by letting me know when and where you were born and what was your initial attraction to Alaska?

JP: I was born in Seattle, Washington but I grew up in Tacoma, Washington. My family, my grandfather and uncles, had a shipbuilding operation, Western Boat Building. I spent many hours down there. It was reminding me of the cannery when I got here. I don't know what the draw was, but I always wanted to come to Kodiak, Alaska. Always, from just a young girl. My uncles were really involved in the tuna fishery, getting that going. Anyway, I grew up around boats and fishing. My dad was the lawyer, so he was the business part of the business and so a little removed. But when I was going to college I would get contracts out of the cannery union office in Seattle. People would do that. I would go up there and I would get a contract, typically to Bristol Bay. That's how I would spend my summers, working in the canneries in Bristol Bay. Then my fifth year of college I was in Bellingham, Washington and I worked for a family. I did housework, you know, whatever, to make money for college. The dad worked with Del Monte, who at the time, Del Monte Foods owned Alaska Packers. […] Somehow I conveyed to him I always wanted to come to Kodiak, and he got me a job here in Larsen Bay at this cannery. That was in 1971. So I worked at this cannery in '71 and went home and told my boyfriend, "We're moving to Alaska," and we packed up a 1955 Jeep and drove the Al-Can and never left.

AG: And came to Kodiak?

JP: Came to Kodiak. Straight to Kodiak.

AG: How did you know about Kodiak when you were a child?

JP: I don't know. One of my sons did some family research, and apparently the first boat, the wooden boat that was built by Western Boat Building by my grandpa, was called the *Kodiak*. I really have no idea. We have a large family and lots of cousins and even nine siblings, and nobody's left the area. I'm the only one that's left the area, and they often ask me why. I don't know. I just know I always wanted to come.

AG: Were you also the only one to work in the canneries in the summer, or did other siblings or family members do that?

JP: My older brother was a pretty naughty youngster, and he was sent to Alaska to work in the canneries one summer because of his behavior. So he did, yes. Then a younger brother, David, he worked in Chignik in quality control, but he was a few years younger than I am. So I have a couple of siblings that did work up here. Peter, not by choice. David, by choice (*laughing*).

AG: What about other college students? Was it a common choice or a common path to work at a cannery in Alaska?

JP: Oh yeah. In those days it was all college kids. It was one big party at the cannery. Yeah, it was all college kids.

AG: Tell me about the cannery union.

JP: My only experience with that is one of my uncles, one that was involved in the tuna fishery, he's the one that told me to go to the Seattle union there. That's all I really know about it. I don't know if he pulled strings for me, or protected me or whatever, but it was a very simple process. Just go in and put my name in. In those days it was very simple. They would give you a ticket and tell you where to go and where to be, and they guaranteed you 48 hours a week. Forty hours straight time, eight hours overtime for in Bristol Bay, maybe a six week period.

AG: Where did you work in Bristol Bay?

JP: Naknek.

AG: Which canneries?

JP: Whitney. Whitney-Fidalgo Cannery.

AG: What sort of work did you do?

JP: I was an egg puller. That was before all the automation, and so you'd sit down the chink and as soon as the head came off, the fish would come flying by and you had to go in with two fingers and pull the eggs out.

AG: That was all day?

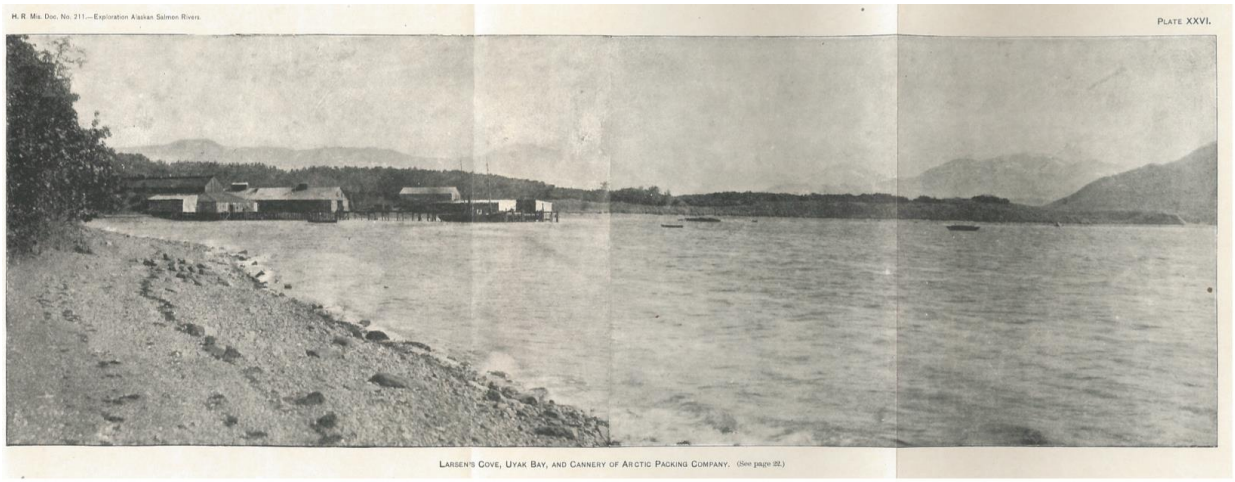
JP: Um-huh. It was very— it was—- yeah. Yeah, it was really great 'cause I couldn't do the eggs. It was too boring for me, so I was really fortunate that they listened to me and put me on there.

AG: Was the cannery segregated?

JP: As far as different nationalities? I guess I'm a little embarrassed. I don't remember that. I remember my roommate. I remember Dexter worked there that summer. It was the first time I met him. Van Johnson was there. But I don't remember those lines.

AG: That's so interesting that the same characters that you—

JP: Um-huh.



Arctic Packing Co, Uyak Bay. Current location of Hollywood setnet site.

AG: Tell me about working at the cannery that summer up here at Larsen Bay.

JP: It was great fun. It's corporate America now so there's lots of rules, but there were not a lot of rules then. There was a lot of partying and lots of, I don't know if there is now, but between the fishermen and the cannery workers, was lots of socializing. We did things, crazy things. There used

to be huge fuel tanks out on the dock, and I don't know how it happened, a wild hair or whatever, we dove off those fuel tanks. Dove, jumped, whatever we did. I just remember things like that. Nothing like that would happen now. Nothing. We had volleyball games and just lots of really fun, crazy things. One thing I do remember is that on the cleanup crew it was all guys. In that sense, the women had certain jobs. They wouldn't let the women do all the jobs. You know, now, women do all the jobs. I talked them into letting me be on the cleanup crew. I can get more hours and that was really interesting. First of all, they thought that I would probably fail. I almost did because that friggin' hose they give you. It's all wood decking, right? It's all wood decking. That hose, they turned it on, and I don't know if they did it on purpose, but it put me on my bottom the first time because it is so high pressure and that's how you clean it (*laughing*). I do remember that. I kept doing that, but I was pulling eggs then, too.

AG: Where did you stay?

JP: I don't know the name of it, but the bunk house is still there. It's that far bunk house on the left where the laundry is. That first top floor, first room on your right. That is still there.

AG: What was your impressions of Larsen Bay and the west side when you first arrived?

JP: They flew me out of Anchorage, so I had no awareness of anything. I mean, I was on the island and it was beautiful, and we hiked up in the hills and that type of thing, but I didn't get into the village. I didn't meet anybody.

AG: You were just really in the cannery.

JP: I was just really in the cannery. Yeah.

AG: What was it about the place that drew you back, that you went back and said, "We're moving to Kodiak."

Victor Carlson. P-1012-33.

JP: Again, I don't know. I know that I just always wanted to be here. I don't know. I can't tell you.

AG: Did you continue to work at the cannery or what was it that brought you back here as a fisherman?

JP: Oh well we moved to Kodiak and we were in Kodiak. So in '71 I worked here, and we didn't buy our permit until '78. Part of that time I was working with KANA, the Native Association. I worked in education. I traveled to the villages all winter long, all six villages. I just loved being in the villages and became friends with some of the people. Jim and Peggy Pryor were teachers here in the late '70s, and I would always go in the schools and volunteer because you would always get stuck here. They didn't have airstrips. You were just flying on the Goose. You never knew when you were gonna get home. I became good friends with them and they bought a permit, and I just— intrigued me, so I talked Jim into collaborating and buying a permit and we did in '77. […] We fished in '78.

Dora Aga. P-1012-19.

AG: Jim was your husband?

JP: Um-huh. Jim O'Brien.

AG: What about it intrigued you?

JP: Again I guess I can't—. I just loved the outdoors and the whole idea of fishing. Just the environment. It was so gorgeous out here all of the time. And the people, I loved the people. […] I was so lucky. Dora Aga was sort of a mentor of mine and Unkie, Victor Carlson. He was the watchman at the cannery for years. Anyway, I was just really fortunate in having people looking out for me because Jim worked in town with the cable company, whatever it is in those days, so he would only come out on the weekends. I had never fished before. I was really a city girl. I grew up in a city and went to college in California, so very different. There was really nothing that would connect me to this kind of lifestyle.

AG: From who did you buy your site and your permit?

JP: Alberta and Charlie Aga. We bought the permit from Alberta and the sites. Yeah, Alberta and Charlie. There wasn't anything that came with it. There was a couple of wooden skiffs and some raggedy old nets. Frida and Art Panamaroff had a place over in Hollywood, and they agreed to let me stay there for the summer.

AG: Why was it called Hollywood?

JP: There were four houses over there, and people lived there year-round. In the winter, those four houses would have their lights on, and people from the village could look over and see the lights of Hollywood. So that's what it was. I think Jimmy Johnson was over there, and Art and Frida lived there year round so they were over there. Who else? I know David and Tina Wasilie lived over there, but I'm not sure how long they were there. And then one other family. I can't think of their name, but anyway, they lived there year round and they'd skiff the kids over to school in the mornings. So it was the lights of Hollywood.

AG: So you stayed over there that first summer. Where did you fish?

JP: We fished on the sites that Alberta and Charlie had fished. We fished Hollywood right there, and what we call our middle net now, just past Boneyard.

AG: How did you learn?

JP: (*Laughing*) You just learn. You just hit and miss. You just figure it out.

AG: Did somebody teach you?

JP: No. We just did it.

AG: No help at all?

Lucy and Steve O'brien at the Hollywood setnet site in Larsen Bay. P-1000-7-458.

View across to Larsen Bay from Hollywood set net site. P-1000-7-440.

JP: No. You just do it. People draw you pictures. Actually, Jim and Peggy Pryor were really helpful because they had done it for one year before us. They were the teachers out here. So they showed us how to, you know, the lines and the anchors. They gave us that kind of information. Anyway, yeah, you just learn.

AG: And it was just you?

JP: The first summer, my husband and I fished. Jim was out here and he fished. Really short seasons then. We didn't fish in June, and everybody was all wrapped up by the middle of August, so it was a really short season. Jim and I fished together that first season, and there wasn't a lot of fishing time in those days. We just had the one permit. Pretty low volume. Tony and Kathy Drabek, I think were our tender on the *Beaver*.

AG: Were you selling your fish to Alaska Packers?

JP: Was it Alaska Packers? I think it still might have been APA at that time. I'm not sure.

AG: Would you just buy food at the store? What did the tender do? Did they bring you mail and all that? Do you remember?

JP: They brought you beer. Beer and ice cream. That's what they did. They gave you cases of beer. That was amazing. We put in a lot. […] We were so new to it I don't think we even had a generator that first year […]. Ate a lot of salmon. Figured out there was such a thing as canned chicken. You ever heard or that? Ever tasted that? You're lucky. Spam. That kind of thing. There was a store here. There always was a store here. It was pretty basic, pretty hilarious.

AG: Do you remember any of the challenges or successes or moments from that first summer of fishing?

JP: A lot of it was just personal, I remember, because we didn't know what we were doing so it was a lot of frustrat[ion] and anxiety. I do remember sitting down in the skiff, crossing my arms, and telling my husband, "I'm not moving until you apologize." And he was in a pickle. I can't remember what, but he had a line or something he couldn't move. He couldn't move and I wasn't moving until he told me he was sorry. So that was fun. I remember stuff like rolling oil drums up the trail to get to the house because that was our heat, and up a really steep path up to the house. The old Native guys coming over later and saying, "You know, if you roll it up the back way, it wouldn't be [so difficult]." It was dumb. We were just dumb. We didn't know what we were doing.

AG: How did you feel at the end of the season?

JP: How did I feel? I must have been feeling pretty spry because I went in and quit my job (*laughing*). I found out I was pregnant and quit my job. Successful, you know, we made it, and it was really fun. We began making inquiries of Art and Frida, […] if we could permanently either buy the place or what we could do to make it more permanent.

AG: What was determined?

JP: Yep, they sold it to us. They sold us Hollywood.

AG: That next year?

JP: You know, I don't know. I'd have to look through the paperwork. But yeah, it was never a question.

AG: So when you bought Hollywood, what did you buy?

JP: Just a very small lot over there and a cabin. The cabin is real traditional, at least in my experience. There was no drywall or anything. It was just cardboard, and inside the walls was straw. It was all beach timbers. Just tiny, you know, one room and one little side room. It was great.

AG: So the next summer then, did you have a child out here?

JP: Yeah. Erik was three months old.

AG: Tell me about that. What was it like to be a new mom with a baby?

JP: Well that was good because I didn't have to fish. Jim got off again and he brought his brother out. So […] yeah, he was three months old and I don't remember any challenges. Oh, he did get really sick. He had really bad asthma, but not till the next summer.

AG: Would you have to take him to Kodiak for—?

JP: For any medical, but we never left when we got here. We just stayed.

Jane Petrich with sons Steve and Erik O'Brien. P-1000-7-504.

AG: How did it work then as you continued to have children and come out? Would you kind of stagger? Sometimes you would be crew, sometimes you wouldn't? What was that kind of rhythm like, being a mother with young children and also a owner of a setnet site?

JP: I always had to hire like a nanny. I had to hire someone to be in the skiff with me and somebody to be on the beach with the kids. That's how it ended up with. That worked really well. I always had someone in the skiff and then somebody'd stay on the beach. That was never a problem because see David, David was one year old, Erik was brand new, and then Stevie was like two weeks old when he first came out here.

AG: You were fishing after having a baby after two weeks before?

JP: No, my sister and Dan Ogg fished for us that year, fished for me that year. My sister, Elizabeth, she was in law school, and she'd come up and either nanny for me or fish with me. Then my cousin, Susan Petrich, fished with me for a number of years, too.

AG: What were some of the major challenges of having children out here? Were there any?

JP: No. The only really big thing was Erik. He had really bad asthma. I just remember one night. We just had an oil stove and he couldn't breathe, his very first episode. He must have been about eighteen months old and he couldn't breathe, so I just walked him all night. We had the stove going with pots of water on it to try and open up his breathing passages. I was able to get a charter out there. Somebody had a sideband or something because we didn't have phones, so somebody got a charter for me the next morning.

AG: Were there any other injuries or anything like that that you had to contend with your children over the years?

JP: Oh yeah. Erik broke his arm really badly, and he had to go all the way to Anchorage for that because it was such a bad break. We must have been closed because I don't remember having to transfer. So we went there. He had surgery and then I got him back on the morning plane. Left him with one of my girlfriends in Kodiak and came back out. That was probably the worst. Then David broke his arm, sort of the same scenario. He didn't need surgery. We just had to go to town and then chartered out the next morning.

AG: How did they break their arms?

JP: Both of them were buoy swings. Erik was over there at Hollywood and fell off, and David was just right down the beach here and fell off.

(*faint laughter from both*)

JP: Yeah. You're like, "You're okay," and then the bone is sticking out. "Okay, you're not okay."

AG: Do you remember when APA kind of closed down and there was new ownership? Do you remember that transition?

JP: Do you remember those dates? Because I worked in '71 and I didn't fish out here till '78.

AG: I think it was right around then.

JP: Right around then. I don't remember all the different dates. I know there were lots of transitions and lots of times where there were periods of time—. In fact, I remember getting a letter after working at the cannery that they wouldn't be operating the next summer. I don't know if I had played with the idea of going back, but I know there was a time there that they didn't operate in the

Larsen Bay Cannery. P-1000-7-499.

early '70s. Then when we came back in '78, or when I started fishing out here, we did have tender service. Then when Susan was fishing with me— so that would have been, I think it was Pacific Pearl. They had a cannery then because Tom Emerson was running the boat. There was a couple of years that we didn't have a tender out there. I mean, we did have a tender, we didn't have a cannery operating. That was a little tough, you know, not having that.

AG: What was the difference?

JP: Well, you don't have the cannery for all the supports that the cannery provides for you. Tenders bring you fuel. We just got used to relying, showers, all sorts of things we used to rely on for the cannery. No store, those things. Susan married the skipper, so that was good. My cousin married the skipper (*laughing),* so we had good connections there.

AG: And then, do you remember when it started operating again, the kind of shifts in management and how that changed the cannery or the relationship that fishermen had with it over the years?

JP: You know, I was such a little player. You know, one permit. I wasn't really a player in all those things. The big guys like Leon [Franciso] and Pete [Danelski] took over all those responsibilities.

End Recording 1

Begin Recording 2

AG: You were talking about working in education. Was it something that you selected because you were able to have summers off? How much did setnetting or fishing in the summer impact your choice of winter work?

JP: Everything. It was everything to me to be able to come out here and fish. I had to make some tough decisions and choices when we divorced. My choices were fishing and having the kids with me in the summers. So yeah, it was everything. It wasn't until the children, the boys, took over the operation that I moved into full time year-round employment in Kodiak.

AG: When were you divorced?

JP: '88, '87.

AG: How did that impact the fishing operation or the west side living?

JP: It was a struggle, but to make things work I gave up Hollywood and bought in over here, retained my permit. So it was a lot of negotiating, a lot of—. You know, relationships are stressful. It was hard. I think it was okay. It was hard. It makes it so much more complicated, like where people fish or don't fish, so I got the permit and the sites and then Jim […] bought the permit that went with this property. But we kept going. We kept going. We kept fishing, and he was able to pioneer some sites.

AG: So you continued as business partners?

JP: Oh no.

AG: So it was separate operations?

JP: Separate operations. Not until the boys started fishing his permit. And even then it wasn't my, I mean […] we absorbed the permit and worked it as part of our operation.

AG: Who did you buy this place from?

JP: Alberta and Jacob Laktonen.

AG: Were they fishing here as well?

JP: Alberta fished. Jacob was older. He was blind by the time we bought it. I bought her permit, whatever, the whole divorce thing, her permit and this place and her— the Cotas, Judy Cota that fishes up there next to the Haugheys? That's Alberta's oldest daughter.

AG: Why did you call it Farside?

JP: What is that cartoonist? If I could think of the cartoonist […]. If you look out the window you can see Hollywood, so we were the Farside of Hollywood. […] In fact, I think his work is called the Farside. So we just became the Farside. Traditionally, this location was called Jack Frost Creek. That was the handle, and that's because the creek that comes out here, that's Jack Frost Creek. Actually I did use that. I think the first summer Jack Frost Creek was our handle and then I went to Farside.

AG: Was Jack Frost a person or the mythical being of winter?

JP: You know, I never asked. I don't even know who to ask how that came to be Jack Frost Creek.

AG: Was Hollywood always Hollywood or were there other names over there?

JP: As far as I know, and I'm really pretty new here, it was Hollywood. Marlene or Virginia might know the answers to those.

AG: It was '88 when you were divorced, and then '89 there was the oil spill.

JP: Um-huh.

AG: What did you do that summer?

JP: The spill year? We were here. We didn't do a lot. We didn't really get into that beach cleanup thing. There really wasn't a lot that you could find on the beaches. We just had a fun summer. Course we didn't fish, and we kept up on things that were happening. A lot of the people in the bay were picking up oiled stuff, all the seiners seemed to be busy. What did we do? Oh, we built that shed, that net shed there. We built the platform for that that year.

AG: How do you see that the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill impacted the west side?

JP: I don't know. How did it impact us? After that, fishing seemed to pick up a little bit. We had some decent years after that. Nothing great, but I don't think that biologically it impacted us, but they skewed the markets. They used the Exxon Valdez for pricing, and they used it in the marketing part of it. I don't think that there was any strife among fishermen or anything like that, that there was any problems there. I guess I don't think it had a huge impact except somehow the prices, or the pricing and the marketing and the powers that be, way beyond my pay grade, how that was skewed.

AG: When you first started fishing in the '70s, what was the relationship that […] that you or other west side fishermen had with management? Fish and Game?

JP: Oh, Fish and Game. We just pretty much did what they told us. Followed the rules. Now it's so much more interactive and responsive, but as a comparison we just did what we were told to do. We obviously followed the rules. I never was big into the politics of it or providing them information. I never went to Board of Fish meetings, any of those things in those days. I didn't get involved in that until the late 1990s probably.

AG: How is it more interactive now?

JP: Maybe they were approachable then and we just didn't do it, but we call all the time. Talk to James, you know, the guys, the biologists, and what's going on. "Here's what we're seeing and why are you leaving Outer Karluk open and closing us if we've met our escapement?" Maybe we're more educated. "The management plan says this. What are you thinking? We're curious to know." That kind of thing.

AG: What shifted in the late '90s that you became more active in that way?

JP: Broke the surface. As a single person, trying to survive in Kodiak can be a little challenging just keeping things going, so about all I could do is survive. I didn't have a lot of extra time or money or resources or anything. I think that was probably the big part of it.

AG: So further engagement was a way for you to hopefully improve your fishing enterprise, was that it?

JP: And awareness and interest in your business. Yeah.

AG: Have you experienced success in that way?

JP: In being aware of it?

AG: Um-huh.

JP: Well I don't know if success—. As a family business we are one. […] People feel very strongly about this, and we would love to be able to stack permits just because for our family it's such a challenge to keep all our permits fishing. There's other people that feel very much against that. My kids and I are sort of being on that side of the political spectrum and testified at the Board of Fish. Our view hasn't been adopted, but we feel like we are participating in the process, and that's really really really important.

AG: What's stacking permits?

JP: That would be if somebody couldn't be here that, say Erik, could hold two permits in his name and fish both permits.

AG: What are the shifts that you have experienced in gear?

JP: As far as—. Nothing's shifted for the setnetters. It's still the same.

AG: From the '70s?

JP: From when I started fishing in '78.

AG: You were using aluminum and all of that?

JP: Oh no. I was thinking of regulations. Oh no. We fished our wooden skiffs until about 1987 and then we built aluminum. […] At the same time, we went to pressure washing in the skiff, so we pressure wash our nets almost every pick. Yeah, and then we buy the ice machines for many years. I don't even know when we got our first one. […]

AG: What was the motivation for getting an ice machine and all that?

JP: They paid more. For years we would have to go to the cannery and get ice. That was always an extra step in the process that was very time consuming. We had to wait. Maybe they had ice, maybe they didn't. You got paid more if you provided your own ice. A little story that we in the village got started with that idea. I've done a fair amount of grant writing in my work, and I found a grant through USDA, Department of Agriculture. It was actually at Comfish and I was talking to one of the reps and said, "Oh, I'd really like ice machines." He said, "Oh, good luck with that one." Anyway, talking to him I found a way to write a grant for five ice machines for the community of Larsen Bay, for setnetters living in Larsen Bay. Larsen Bay Tribal let me sit down at a desk in their tribal office one day, and I wrote it out and Jack Wick signed off on it. I got the five setnetters in the village, Jimmy Johnson, Brad Aga, Beardsleys, us, and Jim Hamilton, to sign off on it. They gave us these five ice machines. That's how we got started in the village with it.

AG: […] How's the relationship over time between the village of Larsen Bay and setnetters?

JP: I might be just a titch unique in that for so many years I traveled to Larsen Bay twice a month for my work. […] There used to be Native setnetters, but now the only ones left are Jimmy and Darlene, or Darlene, right? Any other Natives?

AG: The Cotas.

JP: The Cotas and they don't stay here year round. I don't know. I think everything is pretty much status quo. I know that the lodges and the setnetters that come in the summer add a lot to economic stability of the community. I cook for the seniors a couple times a week right now, so I'm in the community. The other night, it was very interesting that Virginia, she's Virginia Stanton now, and Teresa, she's a Hochmuth but I don't know her current last name, we were talking about how the relationship between the village and the cannery is very different from when they were younger. So that was just second hand and listening to them. I think it has a lot to do with the old cannery superintendent, Gary Wiggins, and that whole crowd. They sort of took care of the village. The village was welcome into the cannery. It's not like that now. It's corporate America and there are all sorts of rules, so I don't think they have the connection at all that they used to. That's just my thinking, my perception of it.

AG: Why are there so few, now so few, local villagers that are involved in the setnet fishery?

JP: I don't know. The community of Old Harbor is really strong, and they've got their strong seine fleet. Actually, this community has a pretty strong seine fleet that's from here. Because they did it their whole lives and they wanted to get out of it. I don't know. 'Cause Alberta sold to us. Jake and Tiny [Laktonen] sold. I don't know why.

AG: Why would people choose to be a setnetter over a seiner?

JP: I think the family. The family. Well, traditionally, only the women stayed home and setnet and the men seined. That's what it was. The women setnetted and the men seined. I often wonder about that for my children, why would they setnet when I think they could maybe make more money seining? Stevie has a seiner, but he chooses to lease it out. I think it's a lifestyle choice. I think it's a lifestyle choice.

AG: Can you describe what makes that lifestyle attractive?

JP: For me, […] I don't know of anybody else that got to live, work and play with their teenagers. I got to live, work and play with my teenagers, and I was their boss. That's a pretty special relationship that forges some pretty special bonds, I think. For us it has. We're still managing it. I mean we make each other crazy, I know that, and that's silly, I know that, but that's why I built this house. I lost my train of thought. For me, it was just being with my kids. We did everything. We went on picnics together. We did everything. I don't think the modern family does that. I think it's a throwback to the old agriculture systems where you lived, worked and played with your kids, and I got to do that.

AG: What sort of changes have you noticed since you first started fishing in the bay?

JP: Changes like fishing?

AG: Fishing families.

JP: I think this bay has stayed pretty stable. Everybody here— like the Bassetts are the newest, right, and then other than that the newest fishermen are like Mark and Sheila Beardsley. They've been here forever and then I think we're next, so a really stable, family-based fishery. Dan and Sandy Earle, they didn't have children but their nephew fished with them forever, and Mark bought Hook Point, so it's sort of, I mean, it's a family. The Abstons and their kids are still out there. Of course, the Haugheys. I don't know if Al and Janine come up anymore. I haven't seen them in a year anyway. Anyway, I think it's a very stable group of people that really love being here and love fishing with their family.

AG: How do you see it as being a different experience to be a woman owner and operator of a site versus other situations out here? What have been your experience?

JP: It was hard. It was really hard not having that male strength, the physical strength, the mechanical ability, those things. Really being really a city woman, not having a lot of experience. Again, thank God for Dora Aga and the people that really helped me out often. Just stupid things like, "Jane, don't go through the channel when it's blowing that hard because you're going to swamp your skiff. Let me show you the channel to come through." That kind of thing. I guess what I found I had to be so much smarter because I didn't have the physical strength or the deep mechanical knowledge. I just had to be so much smarter to figure out how to do things.

AG: What are some smart things you came up with?

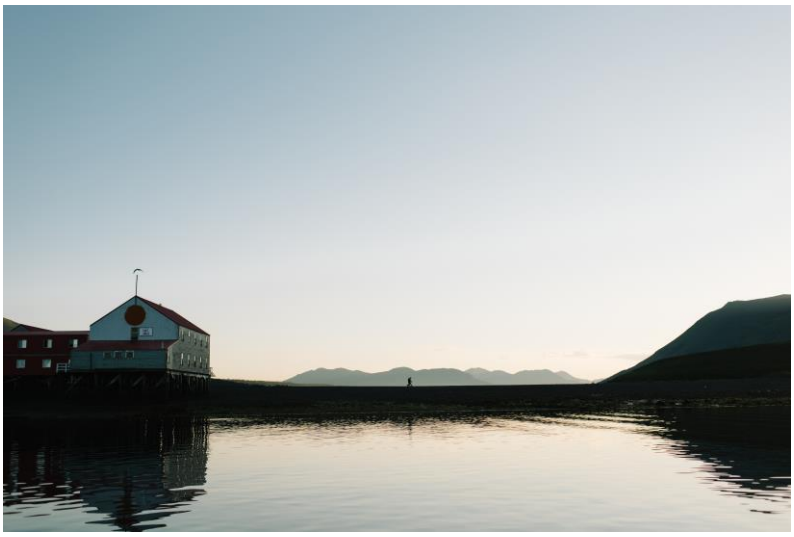
JP: Things like pulling anchors. I just put a little davit on my skiff and I pulled them that way. Everything just took a lot longer. You don't have the physical strength, so how do you do things? How do you get an anchor in the skiff? You're careful and you get your kid to hold the skiff and you pivot it in or whatever it takes.

AG: […] Did you always have nannies up until the kids were at some certain age?

JP: Um-huh. I always had a nanny. When did I quit? Well, they were young. I think Stevie was seven and David was ten, and then that would have put Erik at twelve or thirteen. So Erik was my crew, and David and Stevie ran the house. That was this little red house. They had morning chores. Yeah, they did a great job.

AG: Tell me a day in the life of your family at that point.

JP: Erik and I would get up early and we'd go out fishing, and I always wrote a note, just a little handwritten note, to the boys in the morning, David and Stevie, just good morning, whatever, just hello, see you soon. Erik and I would go out, pick, deliver. We would be out, I don't know, two or three hours, just depending, and David and Stevie had chores. They're supposed to sweep the floors and do the breakfast dishes and those kinds of things. Then we'd come in, and depending on the fishing, we might go on a picnic that day if there was no fishing. We might turn right around and go back out again, pick the nets. In the evenings, if we weren't all too tired we would—. I still did all the cooking, so I did that, but we loved to maybe put in a movie and watch a movie. We watched Lonesome Dove, that whole series. Have you ever seen that series? Lonesome Dove? We loved that. Every summer we would watch that. It was one of our favorites. So a movie in the evening was a really something to do. The boys played a lot of Monopoly. We had a trampoline. Of course, they had four-wheelers. I would often get calls from the ladies in the village, the older ladies in the village, about my children's behavior. They were driving their four-wheelers too fast or not. I had many people helping me. I remember Alberta Aga called me one time, "I think he's dead." "Alberta?" "Yeah, I think he's dead. The four wheeler's on top of him and he's in the ditch. You better come check." (*laughing*) It was David and he had flipped his four-wheeler over, and it was on top of him and it was right outside her house, but he was fine. I got on my bicycle and pedaled on down there. Yeah, they were crazy. They tell a really funny story. We would get our canned goods in at the cannery. David and Stevie were in charge of the house, so they went down and they got the trailer, filled it up with canned goods. Of course, they were going too fast, took a turn too fast. The trailer flipped and all the canned goods and the soda pop and everything just flew out all over the road. They went to my neighbor over here, Valerie Hamilton, and said, "You have to help us. My mother is gonna kill us!" And she didn't know me (*laughing*). She didn't know I really wouldn't literally kill them. Anyway, she went out there and helped him put everything back in the trailer.



Larsen Bay. P-1000-7-500.

AG: Tell me about these pinochle tournaments.

JP: Oh, so much fun. Don't know when they got started. It got started before I got involved in that. I would always hear about it and think, "Wow, that sounds like so much fun." Then I got invited to be partner with Val Flinders, who

was the skipper on the *Lucky Pierre*, who was our tender. It involved everybody. Cannery workers and seine fishermen and setnet fishermen. We had partners and we'd have tournaments. You'd be invited to have a game, so there was that part of it, the individual games. Then we'd also take over the mess hall sometimes and have like round robin tournaments. Like you didn't really have a partner, but you had four people and you switched seats, and then the winners would get whatever, I don't know, a piece of apple pie, I don't know. It was quite fun. At one point, I think, pretty sure it was Toni Munsey, made a Pinochle flag which had the jack of diamonds and the queen of spades, which is pinochle, when you get pinochle, and you get so many points. If you championed in a game, you got the flag and you got to fly the flag. The seiners would fly it in the rigging and the setnetters sort of just had to fly it out there, their porch, or whatever. Pete Danelski, he was a player. We had some great tournaments with Pete. We would go down there, Val and I would go down there and play, and we were supposed to be fishing. I'm sure we weren't supposed to be playing pinochle for gosh darn sure. Anyway, so you'd fly the flag. It was quite an honor to get the flag.

AG: Tell me about when you got the flag.

JP: Yeah, I got it a couple of times. It was really fun. I just have a skiff, right? So I was trying to figure out how to do it. So when we're rigging, when we're laying out our nets to work on them, we put them on aluminum posts. So I took aluminum post and I put it in one of the holders on my skiff, and I secured the flag to that and I paraded around with it. It was quite fun. Quite silly and quite fun (*laughing*). Harry Dodge, too, he was a big player. He was a good player. He was a crew with Val on the *Lucky Pierre*.

AG: What other things would you do for fun out here amongst the fishermen and the cannery workers?

JP: Pinochle was great. We'd get together and go berry picking across the bay. There are some good sites like up at Alf Island. It's a great site. And over at Yatsisk's place over there in Spiridon, that was a big one. We used to have annual gatherings of the setnetters and they would be hosted. We still do that. […] I don't know if they are any different, but every year the setneters get together for a picnic and that's always good fun and good socializing. […] Mike Munsey and his wife hosted that many years over there at Munsey's Bear Camp. I'm not sure how they were doing that. I guess because of the connection with Val and Toni. That was always great fun.

AG: What about the Fourth of July?

JP: Fourth of July. That's usually when we have the setnetters' party, but it seems like fishing changed and they kept us open over the Fourth of July, so the setnetter party sort of morphed to different days.

AG: Were you ever here to participate in the cannery's celebrations?

JP: Not so much, not so much.

AG: How about the '90s? There was some pretty bad years it seems with fishing. So what is it that would sustain you, over time, even though for a long time people were selling permits for cheap. It was not necessarily a good time to be a salmon fisherman. What sustained you over time?

JP: This opportunity to be with my family. And even though it was bad, even if I came home with $10,000 in my pocket at the end of the summer that was not a bad pay day for me. I could put a new roof on, for that, in town. Again, it wasn't my only income. I had other income.

AG: And your jobs were always flexible enough so it worked out that you could here?

JP: Yeah, it was a priority. I was very fortunate. Fortunate, and you make your choices and you make it work.

AG: When was it that your sons started getting permits and participating as more than just crew?

JP: So my permit, and then their dad quit fishing and so they got that permit. So we were fishing two permits. When would that be? I forget how old my children are. So David was born in '83. Well, by 2000, we had the other permits. So 2000 backwards, I don't know, when they were in high school. When they were in high school they all had permits. They were operating the sites. Yeah, when they were in high school.

AG: When was it that they started to really take a leadership role or share a leadership role? How was that transition?

JP: Oh it's still hard. It's still quite a bit of tension just because your personalities are so different. Fifteen years ago maybe. Again, when they were in high school they just—. I mean, I obviously would help and provide guidance about where, when to order new web, what kind of pressure washers and all that. But they'd fished all that. They knew. They knew what to do. They're all really bright kids, and they're all really savvy fishermen.

AG: What were some major events that transpired? How do you mark the years when you look back on the last thirty-five years of being out here?

JP: What were big transitions? The big transition was when I stepped out of fishing all together. That was in 2005. It was just an economic thing, you know, the whole retirement carrier. How do you support yourself in retirement? That was the impetus there, so that was big. The divorce was big. You know, how do you separate that out? That was huge. There were some growing pains when I was really relying on the children and they pushed back, as kids push back, when they were in high school and they took other paths and went seining or something for the summer. Those were huge shifts in the family and then that shifted responsibility down to the younger kids. Like Erik said, "I've really had enough of this. I'm gonna go seining." And he did for two years. So those were huge. I swamped my skiff one time and that was a big sort of, you know, you almost die sort of thing.

AG: Will you tell me that story?

JP: I was out fishing. David and Stevie were in charge here and my nephew was up for the summer. We'd been doing pretty good. It was in '94. So I would let Erik sleep in one day and Ben would come with me, or vice versa. So Ben was with me, and we were picking on the north end of Amook and a big south west came up, and we were coming back. I was fishing in an aluminum skiff, but it was a flat-bottomed Laktonen design. It didn't have a well in the back. It was just a flat transom. The wind was coming up and we had a pretty good load, and I was taking on a lot more spray. I just wasn't paying attention, and I was bringing in a lot more spray. Before I knew it, I looked down and the water was over my boots. You know, the water that was coming in. Because I felt the water coming in over my boots. We swamped from the stern down, and the boat was gone. I didn't have a chance to get a radio or anything out. It went down really fast. Ben got up on the bow and I was in the water on a tote lid. We were just fortunate that Darlene Johnson, who her house can look out that way, she was always keeping an eye on everybody, and she saw our spray and then she didn't see it. So she let out an all-call to people that she thought we might be in trouble. It was all whitecap out there. They couldn't see us. It had come up pretty quick. […] I saw skiffs going out, I could see lodge skiffs going out, but they didn't see us. The *Lucky Pierre* was anchored outside at Bruin Haven

because there was a little bite in there and they are protected from the wind. I don't know if they saw us, but Joe McCormick and Mary Aga came out in their skiff and found us and pulled us in.

AG: How long had you been out for?

JP: I was probably in the water about forty-five minutes. When they got me out I was unconscious. When they got me in the bottom of their skiff I was unconscious. Ben was okay. We got to the *Lucky Pierre* and they strip you down and all that and all the other things. Monica was crewing, Monica Flinders was crewing with Val. She wrapped in the sleeping bag with me, and yeah.

AG: What happened?

Farside setnet site view of Larsen Bay Cannery. P-1000-7-506.

JP: Coast Guard came and got me to town and got in the hospital. I regained consciousness when I was in the helicopter, and so by the time I got to town my body temp was up. I was only in the hospital, not too long, because I was able to come back that evening.

AG: What do you remember about being in the water?

JP: […] Benjamin is my oldest brother's son. I remember thinking, "Oh my God, I killed the oldest nephew." My family was not going to be happy with me if I killed the oldest nephew. That's mostly what I was thinking about.

AG: Were you two talking to one another?

JP: At first I was just telling Ben, "Stay there. Whatever you do, stay there. Don't get out of there, whatever happens, stay there." Because I was really close to losing consciousness and letting go.

AG: You were just clinging the whole time?

JP: Just to the lid. It was an insulated lid.

AG: Wow.

JP: Um-huh. Yeah.

AG: How long did it take you to recover good enough to be able to go fishing?

JP: Well, I went fishing that evening when I got back. But one thing I remember about that is that I knew fear. I don't know if you've ever been afraid, I mean really. If you have, you know you have. I could hardly breathe I was so scared getting in the skiff, but I didn't want my kids to see me scared, so I just tried to operate normally. But I couldn't. I really could barely breathe. I mean, it's a very, I don't think interesting is the right word, but to be so terrified. My reference is I used to fly a lot in the villages. My work was flying. There would be some scary flights. People would get on the plane and they were terrified to be on the plane, and I never understood it. But you know, one of those experiences, you're like, "Right, okay. Settle down. Quit screaming." Or whatever. But no, it's a really true feeling of terror.

AG: How was it that you were able to overcome that?

JP: I don't know. I think time. I think time and just a lot of self-talk. […] By the next season I was okay, but pretty much through the rest of that, through August, it was very challenging for me to be in the skiff.

AG: How did your skiff survive?

AG: Well, you live in a bay like this, and my neighbor, Jim Hamilton, he doesn't fish anymore, but he— who helped him? I think one of the Yatsik's helped him. My skiff was running, was on my running line when I got home from the hospital, when I got back. It was on the running line and it was starting. They flushed it, they got my skiff back and they tied it on the running line.

AG: Good neighbors.

JP: Yep. Pretty amazing. Pretty amazing.

AG: What other stories stand out?

JP: I don't really have a lot. I do remember one time and it was probably 1993. It was a big day. It's not really a story, but I remember it was late, and I remember coming through the channel and I was so proud of myself. So proud of myself that I'd made it. And it was successful, and we made money, or we caught fish or whatever it was. I think the weather had settled down and the sun was shining, and I was so proud of myself. That was just a feeling. A story, I don't know. My dad used to come up every summer and spend a week with the boys, and that was always really special. He always worried about me 'cause he couldn't believe I was up here and living like this and doing this, and he was always worried about me. But his inheritance is what built this house. Lots of stories. There's one story, Peggy Pryor. So her son Alf was born on July 4, and Dan and Sandy Earle came over for a visit. We were all down on the beach having a fire, and Peggy comes out of the house and walking down the stairs, and she tripped and she dropped the baby. It rolled all the way down the stairs and flew on the beach. Well it wasn't a baby, it was a doll. This was Peggy's humor. I don't know if you know Peggy. Oh my gosh, she's so dark. And Sandy is such a sweetheart. She's just the sweetest person in the world, and she had thought that Peggy had dropped and killed her baby. I don't know, that's sort of a crazy story to be telling. Peggy was just cackling. She was so happy about it. And poor Sandy! I thought Sandy was going to have a heart attack (*laughing*). Oh, that's one story. Personal stories, right?

AG: Yeah, so then what does the west side mean to you?

JP: What does the west side mean to me? I am thrilled to be a part of it. I don't fit in any of the age thing. Peggy and I were close because we were all really similar in ages or experiences, but everybody else is just a little bit off. So it's a little bit different that way. Erik and Pete, Jr. and Sara and Maya and that crowd there, they're forming some relationships. So that's sort of funny for when I started. We spent a lot of time with Dan and Sandy Earle, too, but then as our families grew and that sort of separated, you know, people with children and no children, got separated out. And the Fields are of a different age range, so I'm not as connected now, but I have my own family. I am just thrilled to be part of it. And I really love my connection to the village, too.

AG: Is there anything else that you want to share?

JP: Nope (*laughing*).

AG: Well thank you very much Jane!

End of Recording

Jane Petrich with sons Steve and Erik O'Brien at Farside, 2015. P-1000-7-503.