



Pam and David Pingree

Transcript of an Oral History
Conducted by
Anjuli Grantham
at
Quartz Creek Lodge, Alaska
On June 20, 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

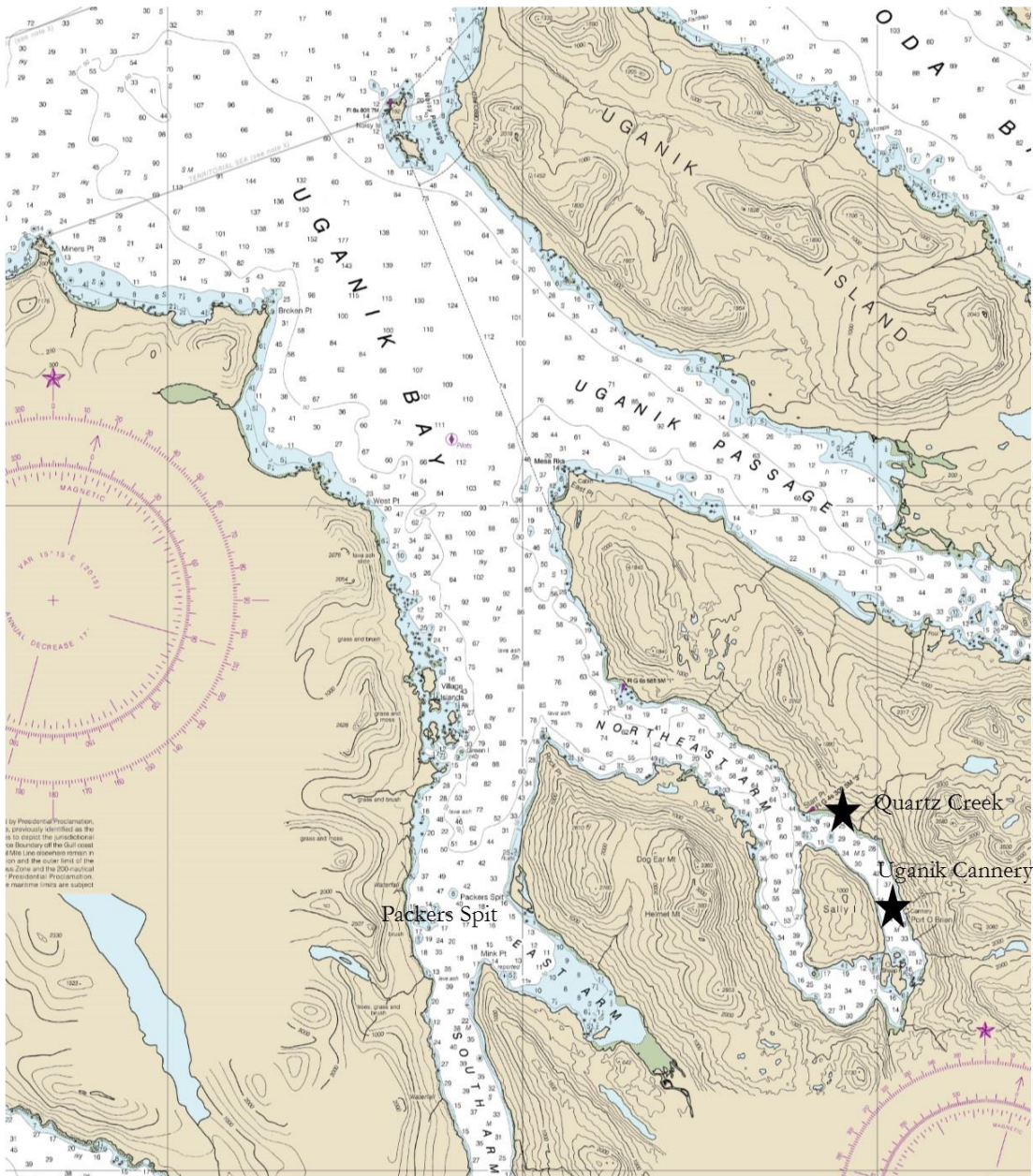
After the initial transcription was completed, a second transcriber performed an audit/edit by listening to the oral history recording and verifying the transcription. The interview subject then had the opportunity to add or retract information. The following transcript is the resulting document. Editing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

Citation

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Cover Photo: Pam Pingree and Dave Pingree, at Quartz Creek Lodge on June 20, 2015. Photographed by Breanna Peterson for West Side Stories. P-1000-5-341.



Select locations within Uganik Bay mentioned in the interview.

Oral History of Pam and David Pingree

AG: Okay it is June, 20, 2015. I am sitting here with Pam and David Pingree. What do you call your lodge again?

DP: Quartz Creek Lodge.

AG: Quartz Creek Lodge. I always hear people referring to it as the Pingrees. [*laughter*] To begin with, maybe, Pam, when and where were you born?

PP: Right in Kodiak, in 1959. Good old Griffin Memorial Hospital.

AG: What did your parents do?

PP: My dad was a mechanic and my mom was a housewife.

AG: A mechanic for, at an auto shop?

PP: Yeah, Kodiak Motors and then there was Russel Wright who was out where the city is now, for years he worked out there.

AG: What's your maiden name?

PP: Clymer.

AG: And how do you spell that?

PP: C-L-Y-M-E-R.

AG: And what brought your folks to Kodiak?

PP: The service, actually construction first of the Navy Base, and then my dad was in the service out in Shemya following.

DP: And that was in World War II.

PP: For World War II, right.

AG: And why did they settle in Kodiak after the war?

PP: Because it was the wild west. That's what I think. It was a hard-working, drinking man's town.

AG: And would that characterize your father?

PP: Ah yeah, yes. [*Laughter*]

AG: So, that's so interesting that you've been in Kodiak for all these years. So tell me about growing up in Kodiak. What was it like to be a child in the 60s in town?

PP: Well we did live in town, we lived in the Aleutian homes mostly. It was very quiet. Kodiak was just very quiet. You know nothing was paved, it was all gravel and dust and kids just played. You just made your own fun, I don't know. It was quiet.

AG: And when was it that you first became acquainted with the west side?

PP: 1981 I think. Eighty or 81, when the local fishermen formed their co-op and Hilder Olsen offered me the job in the office out here. So I came out and I got to see that there was more going on the island than I ever knew.

AG: What did you know of the west side before coming out here?

PP: Absolutely nothing. I didn't realized people fished around here, I really didn't know anything about it.

AG: So what was the cannery called when it was the fishermen's co-op?

PP: Kodiak Alaskan Seafoods Incorporated. K-A-S-I.

AG: Could you maybe tell me a bit about that since I know very little about the operation. Do you know, was it purchased after NEFCO, or how did it all come about?

PP: I think it was following bankruptcy if I remember correctly.

DP: Yeah. Yeah.

PP: And a group of local fishermen banded together and formed the co-op with the idea of hiring locally. So that was the whole idea, to hire local help rather than bring in everybody from, you know, down south. But it didn't really work very well. Because you have down time and people would want to go to town. So, you know, family, friends. So you saw the other side of the idea that local hire sounded really good.

AG: Who was involved, who were some of the owners?

PP: Jim and DeeDie Pearson and Ollie Harder, Ron and Fayette Jolin, Leonard Music, Danny and Hilder Olsen. Oh gosh.

DP: There was lot of people.

PP: There were a lot, there was like thirty — I think it was a group of at least thirty fishermen.

AG: And they all contributed some amount of money to purchase the old NEFCO plant, huh?

PP: [Yes]

AG: What was the condition of the plant when you came out in 80?

PP: It was in pretty good shape, I didn't think it was in too bad of shape. The equipment, I worked in the office, was very old, but, you know, we made it work. We just kind of cleaned things up and put it to work.

AG: How did it work with the fishermen? Was it that the fishermen owners fished for the cannery or did you have others?

PP: Yeah, yeah, they had other people fishing for them too — the tenders — they had the same whole operation going with the tenders. I think that they wanted the fishermen to deliver, you know...

DP: Exclusively to them.

PP: Exclusively, yes, to the cannery here but it didn't work because some of them needed to know they were going to make money so they did actually sell to others, some of them did. But that was the idea was to try and keep all the money here and process your own fish and just get your head above water.

AG: What did you do in the office?



Uganik Cannery in September, 2015. P-1000-8-168.

PP: I just took care of all the fishing accounts and pretty much the whole thing, ran it. I had hired Geneva Hartman to come and work with me in the office there. So there was a store to take care of and the fuel dock and just all of the accounting for all of that, and the fish tickets and just everything. And payroll. So she did the payroll, I took care of the fishing accounts.

AG: Tell me of your first impressions of Uganik and of the cannery.

PP: Oh I loved it. I just fell in love with it out here. Really did. Got to meet, you know, lots of really nice people, and traveled around, went over to Mush Bay and met Jeanne Shepard and I just couldn't believe somebody could make all of that gardening and this beautiful little lifestyle out in the middle of nowhere and I knew then that that's what I wanted for myself someday. But I really enjoyed all the fishing activity in here, I never been really that involved in fishing before and it was just really fun. A whole new life.

AG: Could you maybe describe the cannery?

PP: *Laughter* Oh. It was busy. You know the cans, they brought in the cans were flattened and they had to be reformed. So you go through this very noisy machine to pop them open and had to have the bottoms put on and then the lids and all the fish. *Laughter*.

DP: It was like a whole city. Because people were living there, it's, 170 people. You get all these different personalities jammed into one [place], at that time it was almost all college children too, or kids, not children. Kids that would come up to work so canneries, remote canneries, were crazy. They were like floating processors on a beach.

PP: Oh it was, yeah it was very busy.

AG: So when it was, did you call it KASI? Is that what you called it, KASI?

PP: Ya, KASI.

AG: When KASI operated how did they do their recruiting? Was it just word of mouth or what do you know of that?

PP: I think mostly they went through the job employment, Kodiak employment center, to try and keep the local hire philosophy going. I remember they brought in like the machinists, they had a whole crew that had been coming for years, they tried to get lots of the old employees back which was really excellent because they all knew the ins and outs and how everything ran. The mechanics of it all especially — hooking up water lines and the beach gang was really important to have the same, just the knowledge there of how to hook everything up, that's a huge water line. And they had, oh the port engineer, you know. There was a lot going on. They had to fabricate a lot of equipment, pieces for the fishing boats and the set net sites. There was a lot going on there. It is, it's like a consolidated little city.

AG: Who was the superintendent?

PP: Oh, Lance, oh, Lance Gilkey was his last name.

AG: So at this point Ivan Fox was no longer involved?

PP: No, and the next year Blake Kaneer was in charge. So he was a local man, he'd been in Kodiak for years, Blake had. Yeah.

AG: Well, okay since we've made it to this far, I should probably ask you, as well, David — when and where were you born?

DP: Newbureyport, Massachusetts.

AG: Okay, and what is it that brought you to Alaska?

DP: I always wanted to come to Alaska so I joined the Coast Guard to come up here.

AG: Oh.

DP: Because I didn't know anybody, anything and that's where I got my start. Came here and stayed.

AG: So specifically you joined the Coast Guard to make it to Alaska?

DP: Yes.

AG: That's so interesting.

DP: Yes [*laughter*]

AG: And were you first stationed in Kodiak?

DP: Yes, I spent two years here and two years in the Pribilofs at the Loran Station.

AG: When was it that you arrived in Kodiak?

DP: 1980.

AG: 1980?

DP: Spring of '80.

AG: Could you describe Kodiak when you arrived?

DP: Well, when I stepped off the plane I knew I'd never leave, and it was foggy. [*Laughter*] I knew when we were in Kodiak when the front wheels hit the runway. But it was just, I loved it here. Never left.

AG: What about it?

DP: As in? What about — Just the whole thing. Once the sun came, or it cleared up enough to see, it was just paradise. There were fish in all the rivers and I love to fish and just hardly anybody here, proportionally to where I grew up just north of Boston it was pretty unpopulated. And everything I liked was here. And I'd worked all over the state and I always keep coming back to Kodiak. I just like it here.

AG: Was it a challenging adjustment to enter the military?

DP: Oh, seriously for me. Seriously I was not military minded. I had worked five years for a profit-making business — carpenter. And I went into the military where profit making is not [*chuckles*] high on their list. So yeah that was a serious adjustment. Actually it was never an adjustment because it never happened. I was in trouble a lot.

AG: And what was your task, like what was your job?

DP: Damage control man. I was a welder, pipefitter, carpenter — tradesman basically.

AG: So whatever had to happen-

DP: Broke

AG: Whatever broke —

DP: Yeah, I worked at the carpenter shop on the base here for a long time, well for most of the time I was here. Worked with a locksmith and then I went to the Pribilofs and I did everything out there.

AG: Tell me about the Pribilofs. How was it to arrive there and spend two years so remote?

DP: I liked it out there. I didn't need people to make me happy so I had a ball. It was great.

AG: What would you do in your spare time?

DP: Hop on my four wheeler and, or I had a three wheeler at that time, cruise the island, I had a skiff out there. I was halibut fishing and during the summers duck hunting and they had a reindeer herd, go hunting during the winter. I just, I had fun.

AG: Were you a sportsman back in Massachusetts?

DP: Yeah.

AG: What sort of stuff did you do? Were you a hunter/ fisherman?

DP: Yeah. I actually trapped back there and I fished my whole life back there, not just sport fishing but commercially. I was out a lot.

AG: What fisheries did you participate in, in Massachusetts?

DP: Codfish and Striped Bass. How do you say that? Striper fishing? That was mostly what I did.

AG: And then you kind of supplemented that work with carpentry or how did that work?

DP: Yeah, I'd fish nights for stripers and I'd work with a builder during the day back there.

AG: Could you maybe compare what it was like to be at an east coast commercial fishing port and then to arrive in Kodiak?

DP: It was lot bigger here, a lot more commercialized. Where I was was really small, there weren't that many boats, like most of what I did was out of skiffs. Just small boats. But there were probably only 15 boats in the river I was in. North of there and south of there, Gloucester was just south, that was a lot bigger. But we never went down that way, that way seemed like a long way to go. So most of it was, like for striper fishing it was all rod and reel. It was fun.

AG: And that was commercial?

DP: Yeah you could sell them all.

AG: Who would you sell them to?

DP: There was a lot of local little buyers. There was one right where I kept my boat in this little basin that was a little small guy that bought and sold fish right there.

AG: So more like a mom and pop —

DP: Yeah it was a serious mom and pop, he didn't deal with much product but he'd truck them to Boston or run them in himself to the market or the auction to sell them there.

AG: So after two years in the Pribilofs what happened?

DP: I came back here.

AG: Did you reenlist?

DP: No. No. No. I was done. [*Chuckles*] I knew everybody I needed to know and I was well established and so I just came back here and I fished mostly salmon, fished herring, fished halibut, fished all kinds. All right around the island here.

AG: What were some of the boats that you fished on?

DP: Oh the *Kristie*, a little small salmon boat. The *Laura* was a steel boat that sunk.

PP: The *Melanie*.

DP: That was later, yeah, the *Melanie*, the *Fayette*, I'm trying to think, the *Trojan*, and God there was a lot. The *Lynx*, when it was the old *Fayette*.

AG: When was it that you first came to the west side?

DP: 1983. I was salmon fishing over here. Or we were salmon fishing all over the island 83'/84'.

AG: What do you remember of coming out here for the first time?

DP: Oh I loved it on the west side. West side, south end, west side, was just great. The more we could spend there the better off it was.

AG: What about it was special for you?

DP: I liked the terrain. North end's just all trees and I don't know, I like more open country. And the terrain, I liked the terrain, the big mountains. It's just, just nice. We spent a lot of time on the south end. I really like the south end. Just the tundra down there. That's cool country.

AG: Was it similar to the Pribilofs?

DP: Yeah, actually very similar. Except the hills were a lot higher on the island here down there. There's no brush out there. None.

AG: When was it that you two met?

DP: 1985/'86. Yep.

PP: '85.

DP: '85.

AG: In town?

DP: Yes. We met in town. I can't remember exactly when. [*Laughing*]

PP: That's okay.

DP: It was getting too long ago. But we were married in 1986.

AG: So how long did KASI hold it together?

PP: Two years, I'm pretty sure it was just two years.

DP: Yeah because right at that time, like the second year they were into it, they had the botulism, the guy died in England, wasn't it England?

PP: That's right.

DP: England. There was a big botulism scare and you could hardly give salmon away. That was a major collapse. And anybody trying to start out, all the canneries had their A list and B list and if you weren't on the A list you couldn't give fish to anybody. Or they only bought fish from certain fishermen and — it was a tough time to be in the business.

AG: What did it take to be on the A list?

DP: You had to be faithful to them for a long time. Or an extremely good fisherman. They'd always make room for someone who was really good.

AG: And did you fit on this list?

DP: Oh no. I was just fishing for other people. *[Laughing]* Later on I was but the boat I was on at that time, we could always sell our fish, but it was, it was tough.

PP: They had cash buyers out there then, too. They would have people out there buying with cash.

DP: Yeah, with cash.

AG: Could you tell me more about this? How did that work?

PP: It was just like a tender set up out there and they'd have a big sign that said cash. So you could go get cash for your fish right on the spot.

DP: Right on the spot.

PP: So that was a lot of competition for the cannery, too.

AG: Oh yeah, and that was when KASI was operating?

DP: Oh yeah.

AG: What would you do to keep your fishermen loyal?

PP: Oh I don't remember. They must have offered them bonuses I would guess. I don't really remember that.

DP: There was a lot of people that used those cash buyers. A lot of people. They were right there. Usually off to the side, way off to the side.

Unkown: I was going to say, just around the corner where nobody could see them.

AG: What was the talk on the dock in '80/'81 out in Uganik?

PP: Oh jeez. I am not, I don't know.



Uganik Cannery. P-1000-8-178.

AG: Were people really aware of the botulism scare when it happened? I mean did news hit quickly that that was going to have a major impact or what was that like?

PP: You know I really don't recall, I don't recall that at all.

DP: I can't remember. I just remember that it happened and you couldn't hardly give fish away.

PP: I can't even remember if it was a really good run — it doesn't seem to me like that was a really good year for fishing.

DP: No, it wasn't.

PP: Because the year before had been alright but I don't think that was a really good year.

AG: And when was it that it all came to an end for KASI?

PP: I think at the end of that season.

AG: Was that '82?

DP: I think it was '84.

PP: It might have been.

DP: I think it was 1984, to be honest, because we came out here '87.

PP: No Cook Inlet had operated in between there, in the interim.

DP: They bought it when we were caretakers. That's when Cook Inlet bought it.

PP: Ohh. Yeah.

DP: Because it sat two years, because Lou Tussy was before us and he had been there full time.

PP: Yeah, I'm too foggy on it.

DP: It was like 1984. I think, '85?

AG: When KASI sold?

DP: They went into bankruptcy. They were in bankruptcy court trying to settle all that stuff.

PP: Yeah, you're right. Because we came out to care take after we got married. We weren't married when I was, I didn't even know David when I worked out here the first time. So, yeah, we came —

DP: Spring of '87.

PP: Spring of '87 so KASI had, right, just filed bankruptcy the year before, or two years before.

DP: Two years before.

PP: Must have been '84.

DP: Lou Tussy was before us and he was here the whole time.

PP: Yup, you're right.

DP: So that would have put it, yeah, like the last year they operated was '84. Would be my, counting on my fingers.

AG: And you worked from 1980 to '84 each summer out here?

PP: No, I just worked two summers. I really have to look back at the years to see, I don't remember exactly but it had to be those years I guess.

AG: Oh, that's fine. What did you do in the winter?

PP: The one year I traveled. I just used all my earnings here and I went traveling, I went to New Zealand. And the next year I went down to the states and drove the west coast and went and visited family in California and just went and had fun, mostly, and then came back. Went back to work.

AG: And in town, did you work in town at all?

PP: Yeah, I worked for Swiftsure and then I worked for All Alaskan Seafoods in the office and Kodiak Western.

AG: So was All Alaskan the model that they were trying to aspire to out here? This kind of idea of Alaskan ownership?

PP: You know I never really talked to anybody about why they formed that. I just always figured it was because they just thought that you'd eliminate the big name and you'd keep more of the money in the fishermen's pockets, you're working for yourself more. The independent idea of being a fishermen and all working together. It was a really good idea, it just wasn't the right time.

DP: They tried it at Zachar Bay too, as I recall. I'm pretty sure that Zachar Bay was in it for awhile, the cannery was another corporate, or conglomerate of fishermen that bought that and it went under too.

PP: Yeah I really think it was the botulism and just the poor run that second year that really had everything to do with it.

AG: And so you two were married and then soon after became watchmen out here?

DP: Yep.

AG: And was it the cannery or the herring plant?

PP: The cannery. Yeah the herring plant hadn't —

DP: The house burned down the year or two before, maybe it was more than that.

PP: Yeah, yeah it was the night watchman, he had been the night watchmen at the cannery for KASI and then he took over for the watchmen at the herring plant and then there was a fire and so the house burnt and that was the end of the watchman at the herring plant.

AG: Who was that last watchman?

PP: A Merlin. I remember his name was Merlin.

DP: I can't remember his last name.

PP: I don't either.

AG: So how did you come about to be watchmen out there. What was that circumstance?

DP: You knew about it.

PP: Oh we just both really loved Uganik and I knew that the job was there and so we went and talked to Roland Jones, who had, he had been one of the co-owners too and told him we were interested. And the gentleman that was here was having health problems and so they needed a watchman. So we got to come and spend our first two years of marriage as watchmen out here. It was really fun — very quiet though after having worked there and had it be this little bustling metropolis and have it be so quiet.



Uganik Cannery. P-1000-8-193

DP: Because it was in bankruptcy court, they weren't operating it for the whole first year. And then Chugiak bought it.

PP: Yes, Chugiak, right.

DP: And then they ran it the next summer that we were here. Or, we weren't here, but.

PP: '88?

DP: '88.

AG: So tell me about that first year out there. What was it like to be at the cannery and what did you do to occupy your time?

PP: We built a sailboat. I mean, he built the sailboat, I was a little helper.

DP: We had fun.

PP: We just had a lot of fun. You know David's a carpenter so he's got this whole carpenter shop and ideas and we've never had a hard time keeping busy doing anything.

DP: We'd go travel around and at that time there was a lot of king crab and stuff and so you could go, we had crab pots and we had, just, again entertainment has never been our [problem].

PP: We went visiting because we knew everybody already so it wasn't like you were the new guy on the block. We fished, we went fishing; we just did all kinds of fun stuff. You had to be down there on mail day because the mail plane was still coming. I don't remember if they were coming twice in the summer back then. It seems like it was just once a week. Yeah, we had chickens, and set up a little homestead of sorts.

AG: Who were some of your neighbors at that time?

PP: Jeanne Shepard, and Dave Schuckman, and the Lindbergs and the Rittenhouses. Edson [Fadaoff], Ron [Dunlap].

DP: Ronnie and Justine.

PP: Oh yeah, Ronnie and Justine were out. Fadaoff, Ronnie Fadaoff and Justine.

DP: Those were all winter people.

PP: Yeah, those were year-round.

DP: Actually, Edson came later. Edson wasn't here.

AG: So a lot of the same people that are still out here.

DP: Are still here! Yes. There's a lot.

PP: I think David [Little] and Lisa [Frederic] came later, too. It was later — pretty sure it was later.

DP: Yeah because it seemed like Daniel Boone [Reed] had just split up that property over there. It was. Yep.

AG: Any unexpected visitors in the winter that came out of the fog?

PP: Coyote Bowers did once. [*Laughing*]

DP: Yeah, Coyote did. The *Ursa Major*, the old one, Danny was doing a winter bird count and they got weathered in and Walt and Sue Cunningham from Bare Island, the Bare Island up by Spruce Island. And we had a ball with those guys.

PP: Yeah they were volunteering so they were doing the bird count, right?

DP: Yeah, they got weathered in for I don't know how long and we just had a ball with those guys.

PP: That was a lot of fun.

AG: Didn't Pagook come out?

DP: Pagook came out one time.

PP: Oh yes, Nolan Anderson. The next building out here on this side of the bay.

DP: Abandoned.

PP: Nolan Anderson. He has —

DP: Special use permit.

PP: Special use permit, so you're supposed to show up once a year. So I don't know how many years it had been since he'd been out but his little boat was in the warehouse at the cannery. Just in a severe state of disrepair, but he was wanting to get out to his property and, but he thought he was going to move in with us.

DP: Yeah, no. I gave him a ride.

PP: Yeah we took him out there to see his place. It was really fun to meet him. I forget he was, must have been in his 80s.

DP: Yeah, because when Jay Ballinger was the Refuge manager still. He gave me Nolan's phone number and he was 96 at that time. And Jay hasn't been there, that's 20 years, or 16 or 18 — long time ago.

AG: Wow and what did he tell you, I mean had he been out here for many years? What was his story?

DP: Oh yeah, Nolan, Pagook had been out here a long time. Oh jeez, I forget a lot of it. He was a character — scavenger. Pagook is scavenger and so he was a scavenger, he scavenged everything. But he worked at the cannery, or the herring plant, one or the other, both of them maybe. As I recall, because he was like an outboard mechanic.

PP: I don't remember much of that.

DP: You know who can tell you, John Boggs, he has the *Ambassador*.

PP: They're related.

DP: His — Annie, Pagook's wife, was John's grandmother or something like that and he was telling all kinds of Pagook stories last year when he was in here. Pagook was a character. Just a character.



Annie Anderson. P-1012-31.

AG: What about — we just went over to, around the corner there to Fred Sullivan's place. Was that before your time?

DP: That was before, he was murdered before that.

PP: Dianne Herman, across the bay, she could tell you Fred Sullivan's story. She remembers him. She knew him.

AG: Who else were

winter watchmen, kind of before your time?

PP: Ronnie and Justine Fadaoff.

DP: For ages, yeah.

AG: At Uganik?

DP: Yeah.

PP: And then there was Bob and Bernice, I think Stohl. And Jeanne over in Mush Bay knows, she knew them very well. I never met them. But she knew them well.

AG: Did you know people that actually then, beyond Pagook, who worked at the herring plant. Because it seems that that's been out of operation for decades and decades.

DP: Who can tell you that is Bill Hartman. Bill Hartman was out here as a young man.

Unknown: He knew all them too, really well.

PP: Yeah, Bill remembers when that was operating.

DP: And Bill remembers everything.

PP: He does, he has an excellent memory.

AG: So when, after the KASI bankruptcy went through and you said Chugiak purchased the cannery, what sort of condition was it in after a couple of years of not being in operation?

DP: It was pretty rough. It got hit pretty hard by local pilferers. There was a lot of stuff hauled off. But they had it running that year. They bought it, it seemed like that winter or something and they operated it the next spring. But they got most of the old people back and so again the knowledge of what happened really [helped].

AG: Were you out there at the time helping to get it ready?

PP: Yeah, yeah we were. Yes.

DP: Yeah I worked a little pre-season, I fished for Jim Pearson that summer and Pam worked in the cannery again, or the office there.

PP: Yeah getting the working knowledge of people that knew how to put it all back together I think was critical. It was really great that they, that everybody, and most of the people that would come back, like Bud Nelson was the head of the beach gang and he just knew everything about, every nut and bolt in the place, he knew where it all went and how to fix it and he always had an excellent crew. But, so many returning people, people just really loved working here. So a lot of people were so happy to come back. There's a lot of people in town even that worked here and still come out and visit. I get probably emails from maybe four or five people a year that used to work here because they must Google Uganik Bay and we come up. So, it's always to talk to them and see what year they worked here and who they know. I think Uganik, I just think it gets a little bit of everybody's heart.

AG: It seems like it. What kind of work, because, you know, you have to have these people that have the knowledge, what were these kind of tricks of the trade that were important — these skills or this knowledge that you needed in order to make sure the cannery could be in operation year after year?

PP: Oh major Mr. Fix It, Bud Nelson. He could just fix anything. He just knew how to tell the guys how to do it and you just needed a good, hard working crew.

AG: And a manager to tell them what to do?

PP: Yeah. I actually think Bud kept things running. Somebody else was certainly in charge of shipping out fish and getting it canned, but Bud kept the place running.

DP: Bud kept the plant out of the water.

PP: And they had a good electrician. He had an electrician there.

AG: Who was the superintendent at that time?

DP: Del Valentine.

PP: Del Valentine. Yes.

DP: When Chugiak bought it, Del was the plant superintendent.

PP: And Dave Weston was the foreman, the cannery foreman.

AG: And is Del Valentine still around?

PP: No he passed away several years ago.

DP: Not that long ago, yeah. But he was there for a long time though.

PP: I think his wife Mary is still — she lives in the Seattle area I think.

AG: So how was the cannery under Chugiak ownership?

PP: Oh I think they ran it real nicely. I think they did an excellent job. Del was, he was no nonsense. And after him was Wayne Kvasnikoff. Wayne worked for Cook Inlet [Processing] I guess. He was working when they closed, Cook Inlet, Ocean Beauty. Yeah. No nonsense. It was really good. I think they really helped them be a success.

AG: So what happened then? Because didn't they go bankrupt, too?

DP: It just sort of, the whole thing. Salmon prices — that was when salmon prices, again, fell completely out. I forget, at that time. It was the biggest pack they ever did, they did like 300,000 cases or more that last year and it just wasn't feasible to run, it was costing them money to produce the cases of salmon and it just wasn't feasible and it went on for so long.

PP: Oh yeah, you know, humpies were three cents a pound, you're not making any money and the warehouses are full of canned salmon because consumers are not buying canned salmon anymore. It's a thing of the past in most homes.

DP: But there was ten years of pretty rough for commercial salmon fishermen in Alaska. Things changed a lot. But it was cheaper I think to ship the fish to town.

PP: We have friends that are part of a salmon cannery and they actually did research and found that it was more feasible to ship the fish to Africa.

DP: South Africa.

PP: South Africa, and have it processed and brought back here. They would make more money doing it that way.

DP: That was at the time of three cent a pound pink salmon.

PP: It's pretty sad.

AG: So it was around, what year that Chugiak bought the cannery? Do you remember?

PP: '87? Must have been '87.

DP: We were here a full year, and then they bought it. It must have been that winter, or something like that.

PP: Yeah because we had, Del came out and visited a couple times.

AG: And then at what point did the cannery get sold again?

DP: You know, I really don't know.

PP: We moved to Chiniak and just kind of, David went back to building, and we just really kind of lost touch there.

DP: I can't remember.

PP: Let's see, Cook Inlet, we bought this property here in '99 and Cook Inlet was operating then. So Wayne Kvasnikoff was the superintendent. I really don't know what happened.

AG: So there was a twelve years or so, or an expanse of time in which you were no longer coming out here very often?

PP: Right.

DP: Yeah. Eleven years we lived in Chiniak.

AG: And was this a time of having babies?

PP: Yeah, family time. Exactly. Yup. *Laughing*

DP: Yeah and we moved back in '99. We bought this property.

AG: What is the story of this property?

DP: You know, I honestly don't know — it came from the Erskine estate in town. Frank Abena was the one that had developed it, he split it up, but he bought it from the family estate in Virginia or some place, but it was from Erskines', the Erskine that owned most of Kodiak in the 1900s, early 1900s.



Fishing for halibut in Uganik Bay in 1911 or 1912. P-968-7.

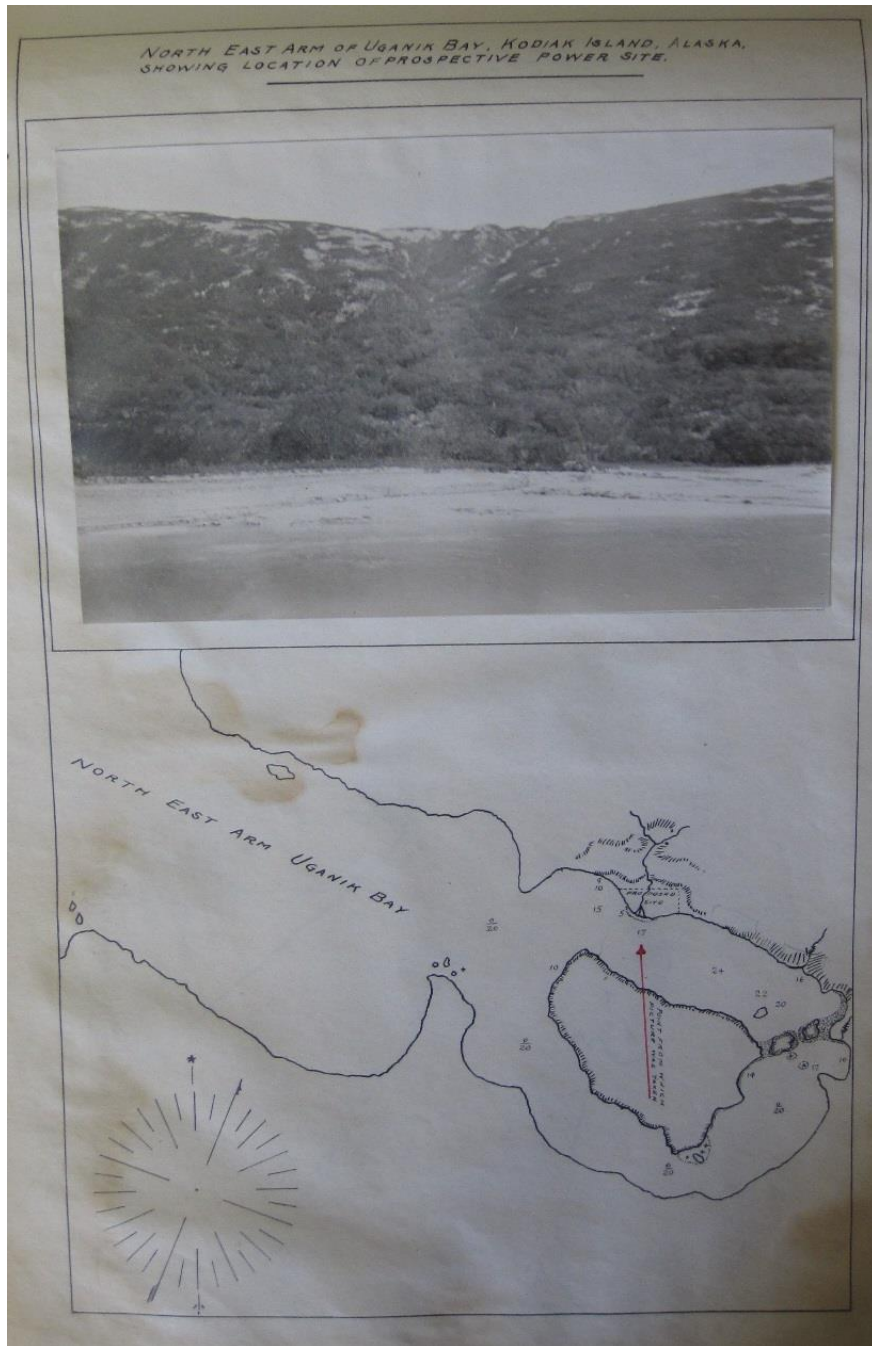
PP: Yeah I think it was one of those where you were digging through the borough records and said, oh look. That's what I've always assumed. But they're still, is Frank still around? Tim's around? One of the Abenas' is still around.

DP: Frank's still. Yeah.

PP: Yeah you know you could get ahold of him.

DP: But they had found it and he split it up and sold it when we were out here in '87, somewhere in that ballpark. But I'm assuming it has something to do with the canneries because the end lot down there is covered with trap staples and pilings and cable where they used to store trap stuff for the old fish traps. So I'm assuming, it's the only flat spot in this whole bay and that they had grabbed for storage and Erskine, he was tied up in everything. You start looking around and he was in everything and he saw it as a good place for rentals or whatever for the cannery. That would be my assumption.

PP: Yeah it'd be really fun to find out. It really would.



The Alaska Packers Association commissioned W.J. Erskine to oversee halibut prospecting trips around Kodiak Island in 1911 and 1912. The *Hunter* and *Metha Nelson* successfully fished for halibut within Uganik Bay. Erskine suggested that a cold storage plant be constructed within the Northeast Arm of Uganik, in order to freeze the halibut catch near the fishing grounds. Here is a page from Erskine's report and recommendations, which is part of the collection of the Kodiak Historical Society, 2012-17-02.

DP: Some year I want to get, I want to search out the title and see exactly when it was surveyed and when that was done.

AG: So you said in the 80s at some point it was purchased from the Erskine estate. How interesting it was that late. And then who had this before you?

DP: Frank kept this lot for himself. And then his daughter, wasn't it is daughter? They married and moved to California and him and his wife packed up and were moving to and so they were selling it. We just got done building a house for the Fields down and spent a whole year down in Uyak, building down there.

PP: And our kids loved it. That's what we, was a drawback for us — we didn't know if our kids would love being out in the middle of nowhere and they loved it. So we flew over this piece of property the 10th of December in '98 and the sun was shining on it and we said okay, that's it.

DP: That's the one.

PP: Now it is. None of our kids wanted to go back to town. They were having so much fun down there so we said, it's time.

DP: And Frank had been trying to sell it. So we ended up buying this.

PP: Yeah, and nobody's ever regretted it. The kids have all just loved living out here. It's been really fun.

AG: So, was it on Harvester or where did you build the place for the Fields?

DP: That one was at Old Uyak for Beth and Wallace.

PP: Straight across from Harvester.

AG: I haven't been out there yet but I know there's a lot of history at Old Uyak.

DP: Old Uyak is really a neat spot. That whole area is.

AG: I'm wondering do you sense a difference between kind of the community or the culture of Uyak versus Uganik?

PP: You know there's more of a community down that way, considering Larsen Bay. And I understand that there used to be a little village out here. And Bill Hartman remembers this little village that used to be across the bay. He pointed it out to us, because there's, you know how they plant the spruce trees as land marks for the old mail man. There's a large spruce tree over there. And he said-

DP: On a chart there's Uganik Village site and it's just right across the bay here. Not by the landslide, out a little bit and there's a bunch of old pilings and floatings and dilapidated stuff.

PP: And if you get out and walk around you feel the former buildings below you. You can feel pieces of plywood and where everything's fallen down and there's raspberries planted back in there.

DP: But I don't know, that's a tough question, I don't know — don't really think about that. The time I spent down there was in the winter and nobody's around.

PP: Yeah, when we're down there, the set net sites, you know they operate all summer but in the winter there were just fishing boats around. We didn't, we flew right to the beach, we didn't really go through Larsen Bay so we were pretty removed. The Franciscos were down during bear season in '98 so that was really fun, so there was, I mean there was a neighbor there. Leon and Judy were both out. That was quite fun to see them.

AG: Before you were out at the Fields and it sounds like you were eager for the opportunity to live back out in the bush. How did you decide that you could make a living doing this, being out here? How did that come to be?

DP: I guided a fair amount for Dick Rohrer too and I don't know how you'd list that other season, off-season, and so I knew you could make it work. And I was gone a fair amount every spring and fall, guiding. And then I did a couple trips during the summer for Dick. I did one whole summer bear viewing out here and it was just him and figured we could make this work, too, so I didn't have to go all the time. So that was the beginning of the idea.

AG: And how did you kind of determine the layout? Maybe describe that first year, 1999. Was there anything here?



Quartz Creek Lodge. P-1000-5-336.

DP: No, no there was nothing. It was just an alder thicket. I was doing a bear hunt, well, I'd seen the lot and I knew pretty much what I was looking at. But Paul Chervanak and I came over, we were in Viekoda doing a bear hunt, and we ran over here for a day and walked around and there was this little bench right here and I could just see it all. I could see everything, walked up, put the house here, the trail there — I just, could see it.

AG: Good thing you're a carpenter. [*Laughing*]

PP: Yes and there was a little cabin right on the creek, a little green cabin, that six business men from Anchorage owned and so we contacted one of them to see if we could stay in there initially while we started, you know, got something dry in here. So we did, we lived in that little cabin for a month and put the three cabins up and moved into one of them so it was really nice having a roof over your head and not being in a tent because Levi was just a little tiny kid, he wasn't even two yet. So it was perfect, it was really nice.

AG: And so how long did you live in the cabins before building this larger house?



Quartz Creek Lodge. P-1000-5-346.

PP: We were in here in a year, like almost a year to the day that we came out. We moved into this house, we had it all done.

AG: That is fast, did you have a crew out here?

DP: Just me — and my wife.

PP: He is really fast, I would tell everybody when they hire them they get double their money, he is very fast.

AG: Wow.

DP: We had a friend of ours, we had to go down south for a wedding in November so a friend of ours was coming out and his cousin came in from Dutch Harbor and came out and helped me for a week.

PP: Yeah, we had friends that would come for a week at a time just to come and be here and help out.

DP: And then in February, Chris came out and helped. Chris helped us for about a month and a half. Chris Kinter.

PP: Chris Kinter. We didn't really know him.

DP: I'd met him down in Zachar Bay guiding for Paul.



Gardens at Quartz Creek Lodge. P-1000-5-344.

PP: But he just flew in here one day on his little Super Cub and said, "I'd like to help." We're like, "Well we can't pay you but we'll feed you." And so he did. He was really a huge help, he and Paul Chervanak, too, were, it would have been hard to do this without them. And the cannery, the cannery operating that year, Wayne Kvasnikoff was wonderful letting us store—

DP: Ship freight. From Seattle to the cannery.

PP: Straight to the cannery, they let us.

DP: Then I could just run down and get it. That was huge.

AG: All the lumber?

DP: All the rough lumber and stuff we hauled in in the spring. Mark Majdic on his trip to Bristol Bay hauled tons.

PP: A barge load.

DP: Yeah, a barge load of stuff and we unloaded that. But all the finished stuff I didn't want laying on the beach, all came through the cannery. And Wayne was just, Wayne was really nice. I couldn't leave it there, I had to get it right out, but just being able to get it on the dock and him lowering it into the skiff for me, those guys, [it] was just a life saver.

AG: And how did you build up clients?

DP: Time. Lots of time. It takes a while to get going and the first year we had one group.

PP: We donated the first year, we just donated a trip to the Alaska Travel Agency, ATIA, and had one couple come and the next year I think David went and had to go build somewhere.

DP: I worked at Faith Farms for half the summer.

PP: And we just tried advertising and advertising.

DP: About the third year it started to come together and by the fifth year it was flying along.

PP: We were rolling.

DP: And it's never stopped.

AG: Why did you name it Quartz Creek?

DP: That's actually a joke. I've always wanted to mess around with gold panning and every quartz creek has always been a gold bonanza so I figured if I named it Quartz Creek, for the little creek over there, it was going to, the first time I had a chance I'd be rich. But, so far I haven't really had a chance and Aaron's found a couple little flakes of gold in there.

PP: Yeah our oldest son he's got this little vial with a little, maybe a quarter of an ounce in it. He's gone through a lot of rocks for that.

DP: Yeah, from all over. But, yeah we've kind of found a couple of flakes in the creek.

AG: So how does the division of labor work out here?

DP: Oh my, I don't know, everybody works.

PP: Everybody just works.

DP: Everybody does everything.

PP: You see something that needs done everybody just pitches in. The kids are all really great about that. That's been something that's really impressed a lot of our clients, is watching how our kids work, how hardworking they are.

DP: And they come and go. Beth is gone to Bristol Bay; Aaron fished in town last year. They go, they come back, they go. They'll work a season and then go somewhere else and then work.

AG: Were any of your children born out here?

DP: Faith. The last one, was born here.

AG: Were you alone for the birth?

PP: No, Kathy Short, the midwife, she grew up in Kodiak, and she didn't have any qualms at all about being out here. She was out here for like three weeks waiting for Faith to be born. It was wonderful, it was a really, really nice experience. I was very thankful that I didn't have to go spend that time sitting in town waiting — it's not the funnest thing to wait for. But yeah, Kathy was great, she delivered all of our other kids. We owe her, it's like, she's just part of the family. So it was really nice. And David's mother came and my friend Virginia Adams came. So we had lots of help, helping hands.

AG: Great, tell me about how things changed when the cannery closed.

DP: It got really quiet. During the summer when the cannery was open it was just boats back and forth.

PP: *Western Pioneer*.

DP: And then just quiet. It was a huge, and it wasn't a distraction, the boats going by, it was actually fun watching them, but it was just was kind of like the life went out of everything. And no more 25 cents ice cream. It was the cheapest ice cream on the island — 25 cents for a soft serve ice cream. So, it was a big social place down there. Big social place.

PP: Yeah and the store closed and then they quit selling fuel, for a while you could still buy fuel down there but they stopped that. So it really got quiet.

DP: Conveniences left. I mean there was certainly some conveniences for when that was operating you could go in and buy stuff and I mean it was a serious convenience — instead of a three hour skiff ride or eight hour boat ride to town.

AG: And do you still commercially fish?

DP: The kids do. I've pretty much retired.

PP: He goes along as crew actually, he really does.

DP: Yeah, I'm a slave anymore.

AG: And have you done, homeschooled all your children out here? How has that been?

PP: Oh good, really good. They all just like the lifestyle, everything about it. You incorporate a lot of life skills for the schooling, it's largely a lot of life skills. Science is easy, you get all kinds of things happening around, life forms, marine life. It's helped the girls who just are interested in the whales, got them jobs working with whale biologists. It's all been really fun. We've had a lot of really wonderful experiences. And met people from all over the world. So that's part of your education too, you learn about Japan and Ireland and places that you might not even ever have thought about, but you have guests from all over the world. It's really been a lot of fun. It's been really wonderful.

AG: And what are some of the major challenges that you've had to overcome?

PP: Generators burning up and getting parts.

DP: Logistics. Logistics are definitely the weak link. I don't know what you'd call it. But it's tough when something just dies. It takes logistics. Making it work in between. Our generator, the water pump went out and it took me a month and a half to get a water pump here. So in the meantime, we have a couple generators but still it's just, it'd be nice to talk to [someone]. We just put in a brand new turbine, hydro turbine, it lasted two hours and the alternator burnt up. So there's another one coming now, but it's, the lights are out, you know.

AG: Are you on hydro power out here?

DP: Yeah. Most of the time. I have the generator running because we were working in the shed and that's not on the hydro but everything else pretty much runs on the hydro.

AG: Well is there anything else you'd like to share before we end today? Any stories you want to share any words of wisdom about life on the west side?

DP: Yeah, it's great. I love it. It just, it definitely grows on you, once you've been here.

PP: And you have to be a Mr. Fix it to live out here. It isn't easy. We have guests that come here and think oh wow I could do that and they have no idea what David has done to make this all happen and what it requires on a daily basis, you know. You are your own garbage man and your own electrician and your own plumber and your own everything. It's a lot of work but it's real rewarding, it's very rewarding.

DP: Yup, and the neighbors help. You know everybody, someone will get on the radio "my outboard's-do you have a clue." Or, you know, and everybody will put in their two cents and "yeah that happened to me one time." So asking questions of the neighbors certainly will help. Good neighbors really makes a big difference.

AG: Well thank you so much for your time. It's so nice to be out here and to meet you.

End of Interview



Pam, Dave, and family. P-1001-07-6.