

KENNECOTT KIDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
MAIL OUT INTERVIEW

SHEILA DOUGLASS RISTINE

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. NAME:
Sheila Douglass Ristine
2. CURRENT AGE:
68
3. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:
August 18, 1922 Kennecott, Alaska
4. WHAT IS YOUR FAMILIES NATIONAL ORIGIN?
Father Scotch descent and Mother Irish
5. WHAT OCCUPATIONS HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN MOST OF YOUR LIFE?
Retailing
6. IMMEDIATE FAMILY NAMES:

FATHER William Crawford Douglass
MOTHER Mabel Dixon Douglass
SISTERS Jean Douglass Girard and Nancy Douglass Colbert
BROTHERS William Dixon Douglass
OTHERS LIVING WITH YOU WHILE IN KENNECOTT:
Retta Hallet
7. WHERE DID YOU LIVE BEFORE MOVING TO KENNECOTT?
I was born in Kennecott
8. WHAT OCCUPATION WAS YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED IN BEFORE MOVING TO KENNECOTT?
Father was a Mining Engineer. Mother was a Registered Nurse

9. WHY DID YOU/YOUR FAMILY MOVE TO KENNECOTT AND HOW WAS THE MOVE MADE?

Father was hired by Kennecott Copper Corp.

10. WHAT YEARS DID YOU LIVE IN KENNECOTT AND WHAT WAS YOUR AGE AT THE TIME?

From birth until about 7 - 1922-1929

11. WHAT ROLE DID YOU PLAY IN THE KENNECOTT COMMUNITY?

Small child

A. WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S ROLE/OCCUPATION?

I believe he was a Shift Boss when he went there and then became Assistant Manager

B. WHAT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S ROLE/OCCUPATION?

Housewife-homemaker

12. WHY DID YOU LEAVE KENNECOTT?

Father took another job with a Copper Company

13. WHERE DID YOUR FAMILY GO UPON LEAVING KENNECOTT?

Kimberley Nevada

14. WHAT OCCUPATION DID YOUR FAMILY BECOME INVOLVED IN AFTER LEAVING KENNECOTT?

Remained in Mining Engineering although switched to gold from copper

12. WHO, FROM KENNECOTT, HAVE YOU KEPT IN TOUCH WITH OVER THE YEARS?

I have kept in touch with noone. My father(now deceased) and my stepmother have exchanged Christmas Cards & notes with Emily Peterson, wife of one of the Kennecott doctors for many years. They also kept in touch with others but I have not heard of others in recent years.

13. DID YOU ENCOUNTER PEOPLE YOU KNEW FROM KENNECOTT AT OTHER MINING TOWNS OR MINES?

I do not remember any

IF YES, WHO AND WHERE?

II. HOUSING

1. WHERE DID YOU LIVE WHILE IN KENNECOTT?

In one of the staff cottages fairly near to the canyon and to the hospital as I recall

2. LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS:

- A. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR HOUSE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO COVER THE NUMBER AND TYPES OF ROOMS, FLOOR AND WALL COVERINGS, SOURCE OF HEAT, POWER OR LIGHT, PLUMBING, HOUSING COSTS, ETC. (anything you recall will be helpful).

I do not remember much about our house except it was one storey I think and kind of rambling. And I think it was white with green trim

- B. WHAT HOUSEHOLD ITEMS DID YOU BRING WITH YOU AND WHICH ONES DID YOU ACQUIRE AT KENNECOTT?

I do not know

C. WHAT ITEMS DID YOU TAKE WITH YOU WHEN YOU LEFT KENNECOTT?

I do not remember

D. DID THE COMPANY PAY TO MOVE YOU TO OR FROM KENNECOTT?

I do not know

3. WHAT TYPES OF ACCOMMODATIONS WERE AVAILABLE FOR SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN?

There were bunkhouses for the men. I think the only woman would have been the school teacher and I do not know where she lived.

III. DAILY LIFE

1. WAS YOUR FAMILY A "TYPICAL" FAMILY IN KENNECOTT?
IN WHAT WAYS?

I do not know

2. HOW WAS THE HOUSEHOLD WORK DIVIDED AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS?

I do not remember

3. WHAT CHORES WERE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY?

I do not remember any

4. IF YOUR FAMILY MAINTAINED A GARDEN, WHAT WAS GROWN AND HOW WAS IT PRESERVED?

I do not remember

5. WHAT TYPE OF COOKING STOVE WAS USED?

I do not know

6. WHAT TYPES OF ITEMS WERE AVAILABLE AT THE COMPANY STORE,
INCLUDING FOOD AND CLOTHING?

I do not remember about food. I believe most of our clothing came from Seattle, and I think they probably just had very basic work clothing needs.

They must have had appliances because one year when the ship bringing our Xmas presents sank Jean received a waffle iron for Xmas which would have had to come from there.

7. WHAT ITEMS WERE NOT AVAILABLE IN KENNECOTT?

Some of our clothing came from the Personal Shopper at Bests in Seattle. Mother would draw pictures of our feet so they would be able to know size. I also think perhaps we got our "shoepacs" from L.L. Bean. We had animal skin parkas (we always called them "Parkeys" and I don't know where we got them but locally I believe.

A. HOW DID YOU OBTAIN THESE UNAVAILABLE ITEMS?

See above

8. IN WHAT WAY WAS THE RAILROAD IMPORTANT TO YOUR LIFE AS A RESIDENT OF KENNECOTT?

There was only the boat from Seattle to Alaska and then the train to get any supplies. I don't know how far the train came up but they used "speeders" on the tracks to go to McCarthy. They were Ford (either model A or T) autos with the tires off them which ran on the tracks.

None of us had ever been in an automobile when we moved to Seattle.

IV. HEALTH

1. WHICH DOCTORS AND NURSES DO YOU REMEMBER FROM KENNECOTT?

Dr. Peterson and his wife Emily

2. HOW OFTEN AND FOR WHAT DID YOU AND YOUR FAMILY USE THE HOSPITAL?

I don't remember

3. WHICH CHILDHOOD DISEASES DID YOU HAVE AND DID YOU HAVE THEM WHILE LIVING IN KENNECOTT?

I do not think we had any since after we moved "outside" all four of us got them all

4. HOW WERE MAJOR AND MINOR ILLNESSES AND INJURIES HANDLED?

I don't remember

5. OTHER THAN KENNECOTT, WHAT HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WERE AVAILABLE IN THE REGION, INCLUDING MCCARTHY, CHITINA, CORDOVA AND VALDEZ?

I don't remember

6. DID PEOPLE FROM THESE OTHER TOWNS COME TO KENNECOTT FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND DID PEOPLE FROM KENNECOTT GO ELSEWHERE FOR TREATMENT?

I think that for anything serious people went to Seattle and I remember the name Virginia Mason from way back

V. WORK AND LABOR

1. DID YOU EVER WORK FOR KENNECOTT COPPER CORPORATION AND IF SO, WHAT JOBS DID YOU HOLD?

No

2. PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY JOB AT KENNECOTT WITH WHICH YOU WERE AT ALL FAMILIAR, CONSIDERING DUTIES, PROCESSES, MACHINERY, AND WAGES.

Not any

3. WERE YOU EVER AWARE OF ANY LABOR/MANAGEMENT DISPUTES? PLEASE DESCRIBE.

No

4. WERE YOU AWARE OF CERTAIN NATIONALITIES OR ETHNIC GROUPS PREDOMINATING IN SPECIFIC JOBS? WHICH JOBS?

All of the cooks in the Bunkhouse Mess Halls were Chinese.

VI. SCHOOL

1. WHAT YEARS AND GRADES DID YOU ATTEND KENNECOTT SCHOOL?

First I guess.

2. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR SCHOOL EXPERIENCE NOTING AVERAGE CLASS SIZE, NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY TEACHER IN PARTICULAR?

I don't remember

3. DID YOU FEEL EDUCATIONALLY PREPARED UPON LEAVING KENNECOTT SCHOOL, WHY OR WHY NOT?

I don't remember

4. WHAT TYPES OF ADULT EDUCATION WERE PROVIDED?

I don't know - would imagine none

VI. SOCIAL LIFE AND RECREATION

1. WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DID YOU ENGAGE IN WHILE AT KENNECOTT? (dances, parties, etc.)

I remember hockey games

2. WERE THESE ACTIVITIES PRIVATE, COMPANY OR SCHOOL SPONSORED?

I don't know

3. WITH WHOM DID YOUR FAMILY SOCIALIZE (examples: mine workers, mill workers, administrative staff members, families with children in your age group, single people, married couples with no children)?

I don't remember but I imagine administrative staff members

4. HOW DID SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN FIT INTO THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION?

I remember vaguely that the school teachers were always young single women and that they used to get married frequently to the many available men. There were very few single women. I do not remember much about the single men but I believe that they lived in bunkhouses at the different mines and were not around the town much

5. WHAT TYPES OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WERE AVAILABLE TO THE RESIDENTS OF KENNECOTT?

Hockey in the winter

We used to have picnics in summer and used to go to Lake Ileana swimming.

There may have been dances etc. - I don't really remember

We all skated - I remember learning on "double runners" and I believe the rink was lighted so we could skate and have hockey in the evenings.

There was a Christmas Party for the children I think - with Santa Claus (played by a gentleman named Jack Conway according to my older sister and brother). I think that might have been a Company Party.

My brother Bill had a trap line and I remember a straggly ermine skin which he had around for many years.

Dad was a hunter - wild sheep, goats and bear. I believe he shot the 12th largest wild sheep in the world according to someone's (?) record. We had two sheep heads and a goat head which ended up in the Ely Hotel in Nevada. We also had a black bear rug complete with head, teeth etc. Bill and Jean were taught to shoot when they were very young and both of them had 22's.

Retta Hallet went to McCarthy every Wednesday for a piano lesson. I think she went on horseback. We always had "McCarthy Salad" on Wednesdays (shredded cabbage & apples). My mother did not like to cook while Retta loved to. However they made lots of wild currant jelly - I remember the dripping jelly bags and that the jelly served for company had to be completely clear and sparkly.

Retta was a Registered Nurse also - she and my mother had been in training together. She came to Kennecott to be with my mother when Bill was born and was with us, except for a brief period, until she died in Nevada. I believe she became engaged after she came to Kennecott and her fiancée was killed in a rockside in one of the mines.

VII. OTHER INFORMATION

1. DID YOU TRAVEL AT ALL WHILE LIVING IN KENNECOTT?

I think we went to Seattle once - on leave or furlough - we had a cottage on Lake Washington in Medina

A. DID YOU TRAVEL LOCALLY, HOW OFTEN, FOR WHAT PURPOSE AND WHAT WAS THE METHOD OF TRAVEL?

Not often. By "speeder" mentioned above to get to McCarthy I think. I don't remember how we got to Lake Illeamna for instance.

B. DID YOU MAKE TRIPS TO THE CONTINENTAL U.S. HOW OFTEN, FOR WHAT PURPOSE AND WHAT WAS THE METHOD OF TRAVEL?

I think to Seattle once on leave. By "speeder" to McCarthy then by train to Cordova (I think) and by steamer to Seattle

2. WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KENNECOTT AND MCCARTHY?

I don't know

3. IS THERE ANY TOPIC OMITTED ABOVE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

No

I remember that there were dog teams chained at certain places. And when people brought dogs up from the States they were frequently killed by the malamutes and huskies.