

KENNECOTT KIDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

BUD SELTENREICH

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Interview Conducted By

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Logan Hovis interviewing Bud Seltenreich. Toward the end of the interview Bud's brother Fred joined in the discussion.

(tape 1, side 1)

Hovis: For the record, your name is?

Seltenreich: Bud Seltenreich.

Hovis: How old are you?

Seltenreich: Seventy-five.

Hovis: Seventy-five. Where were you born?

Seltenreich: The hospital here at Kennecott, 1915.

Hovis: 1915.

Seltenreich: February 15.

Hovis: Your father, I assume, worked here at the mine?

Seltenreich: No. He worked in McCarthy. He done many things, he was a cook and he did cooking here and there and eventually he started his own restaurant there and had a restaurant in McCarthy for a number of years, including my mother who was a cook also. She was recognized as a professional cook. She came from Norway originally and she worked as an apprentice cook, as they used to be in the old days over there, for some of the rich people and she travelled across in the winter and worked with those people that were down there vacationing or enjoying the winter weather, rather than in Norway. They came to the United States when she was a very young girl and met my father in Seattle. She was working for the railroad and he was also working for the railroad as a cook on the dining cars.

Hovis: Which railroad was that?

Seltenreich: I think that was the Northwestern. Ran from - I think it ran from Minnesota across the northern part of the states to Seattle.

Hovis: How did your parents come to McCarthy?

Seltenreich: Well in 1913 - I think they came about 1912 or 1913. The railroad had just opened. They had a Shushanna [Chisana] Stampede. You may have heard about it.

Hovis: Yes, I have.

Seltenreich: And that's what brought them up. And of course McCarthy was the - Shushanna junction was the title. That's where the plate and all the stuff going to Shushanna came in, through McCarthy, and was taken over by pack horses and (?) and horses in winter sleighs and pack horses in the summer. They opened up the mining camps over in Shushanna. So it was kind of a second gold rush like the Klondike and it didn't pan out as rich as the Klondike, but it was a little rich and as the Kennecott mine was going, there was lots of mines going, and the Banquet mine out there on (?) river and the Chititu mine and the Green Butte mine up McCarthy Creek and Motherlode mine (?) down there in McCarthy (?) Motherlode mine and all those activities. So they stayed and they operated their laundry for a while and (?) as well as opened their own restaurant in a few years. So they always worked in and around McCarthy. And so did I as a young fellow and so did my brothers, two brothers, Fred and Ted. You met Fred, he's here.

Hovis: Um humm.

Seltenreich: That's about the extent of my activity. I stayed in McCarthy and went to school in McCarthy. I didn't leave McCarthy until I was 18, and then only temporarily cause I was working for Gillam Airlines where I finished in Copper Center at that time and (?) lines and I went to work for them as a mechanic. I worked for them for a number of years, off and on. I worked with the Road Commission in the summer as a heavy duty equipment operator, tractors and graders and that sort of thing and gravel trucks, graveling road and that sort of thing. Part of that time I had worked in the McCarthy Garage. You may have seen some photographs of that there in the McCarthy Garage. I kind of grew up in that garage and that's where I got my mechanical experience in that. And so I was well qualified to work when I was 16, 17 years old, driving and operating heavy duty equipment. And so I did that in the summer and I worked on the airplanes in the winter, because there was no

other work in the winter except here at the mine. So I decided the airplane business would be good because it provided year around work. And I didn't enjoy that working in the summer and making that money to live on in the winter and come back to zero next spring. You get no place, you're just going in a circle (?). So that's why I took up the airplane business because that was a coming industry in Alaska. It was replacing the dog team and the horses and the transportation of past years as well as (?). So that way I got into the aviation business and I've been in it ever since. It started about 1930. My two brothers and I bought an airplane in 1930 from the Swallow Airplane Company in Wichita and had it sent to Valdez. And we went down there to Valdez and put it together with some help of some aviation people that were there. There was a couple of other people around Valdez that were pilots and had airplanes and were qualified to do that sort of work and then we had one of them fly it back to McCarthy. So we had one of the first airplanes based in McCarthy at that time.

Hovis: Where was the landing strip at that time?

Seltenreich: It was up on the hill there across McCarthy Creek and up on that bench up on top. That's still there, in fact, I use it. I have a hanger up there that I keep my equipment in. I've got some equipment up there, a (?) and a tractor and some stuff like that to use out on the homestead. See, my folks had a homestead out on the Nizina, nine miles out of town, and they farmed that also as a commercial venture for several years back in the '20s.

Hovis: What did they raise?

Seltenreich: They raised hay for the horses and potatoes and vegetables of all kinds. They had chickens, so we had eggs to sell to the miners and we had cows and we had milk and we raised a few kids for a toy. So it was an on-going proposition. We raised fruit, strawberries and stuff like that and made our living doing that for a while. And then in later years, as I say, they had a restaurant in McCarthy (?).

Hovis: Did they sell directly to the company or to the individual (?).

Seltenreich: They sold mostly to individuals, because the company here at the mine had their own dairy here and they shipped most of there stuff in, so they had a on-going contract with Seattle to supply their stuff. They couldn't just cut that off and buy separately. So it didn't have a very good market here at the mine as such, but the people around McCarthy - you know, there was quite a few people in that area, plus the gold mines out in the Nizina area and that sort of thing. They never had a market for those things (?).

Hovis: Did you ever get directly involved in mining, either placer mining or up here or (??)?

Seltenreich: I worked one summer at the Banquet mine. They were putting in a new pipeline and I worked on job as a compressor operator, running the compressors for the hard rock jackhammers and stuff like that. I did that for one summer. But as I said, I worked construction jobs. Any place they had machines working they needed somebody to run the machines who could maintain and handle them at the same time, which was a first in those days, because they didn't have shocks and gloves as available. They had to do it out in the field, wherever it would break down, that's where you fixed it.

Hovis: What was the source of power to run the compressors?

Seltenreich: Oh, gasoline engines.

Hovis: Up on Dan Creek I've seen a compressor that's hooked up to a punt and wheel.

Seltenreich: Yeh. They had electric power, - they had a hydroelectric plant up there at Dan Creek, a good one. It supplied the camp with electricity and so forth. But up on the site and off the valley where we were putting in the pipeline, they didn't have any electricity there. We handled it with gasoline engines. So that's how I got kind of started in this aviation business was through my work with heavy duty equipment in the machine shops and various places (?) shops and (?) shops around McCarthy. (inaudible) so I converted that into the aviation business and worked for Gillam Airlines for a few years as a mechanic on their airplanes and then moved to Anchorage in '36. My brother Fred, he and I, had a shop there in

Anchorage at Merrill Field, airplane shop, for a year or two. Then I worked for Star Airlines for a year or so. That's now Alaska Airlines. Then I went south to go to the university at night school and took up engineering, aeronautical engineering. I worked down at Ryan Aircraft factory in San Diego as a welding inspector on the contract assemblies in '38 or '39, somewhere in there, '39 yeh. They were just getting a lot of contract in to build subassemblies for the military airplanes that were being built by Douglas, Air Lockheed and Consolidated, so there was a lot of subassemblies being built by them, welded assemblies. I was an expert welder, so it didn't take long for them to hire me. I was inspector for a short time and pretty soon I was a super., inspector of the welding department. Spent a year at that, got tired of that monotonous factory work, couldn't stand that, came back to Alaska. Flew a Time Motor Ford, I had my pilot's license, flew a Time Motor Ford as copilot out of Anchorage doing trading at the mining camps over on the (?) one summer. Then that fall I went to work for Pan American Airlines as a (?) in Fairbanks. They had their main maintenance base in Alaska Division in Fairbanks at that time. We had about 80 mechanics working. They would work three shifts, open 24 hours a day in the maintenance department. They had six to eight airplanes based there and multiengined airplanes, Lockheed 10s as those guys define them. They operated a scheduled service between Fairbanks, Nome and Bethel and Fairbanks, Whitehorse and Juneau.

Hovis: Um humm.

Seltenreich: At that time Pan American was still running their big boats and they would run one of their boats to Seattle to Juneau and then the Lockheed 10s would pick up the passengers and take them to Whitehorse and Fairbanks. And then in later years, a year or so later, they cut out the boats and they started running Lockheed (?) direct from Seattle to Juneau from Whitehorse to Fairbanks. But we still had the main maintenance base in Fairbanks.

Hovis: When you first brought your airplane in here to McCarthy, was the business as lucrative as you thought it might have been?

Seltenreich: We didn't bring it in for business, we brought it in for our own education and to learn to fly. We

got our flying experience with that airplane. My brother, Ted the older one, he had taken lessons from Gillam who had been flying here since about '29. He used to come in here with an (?). My brother would take a lesson from him when he had an overnight stay. So he got his license and he used the airplane just for that purpose. We didn't plan to use it commercially, but really that time of an airplane it could be used too successfully. Got some good pictures of it in my album right here, of the airplane. Then I went to Fairbanks with Pan American. I was there about a year as a mechanic for them and then they needed a Chief Mechanic down in Juneau at the overnight base there and I went down there for a year and did that and then came back to Fairbanks. They were moving some of their people down to San Francisco. So they moved the supervisory people down there and they put me in charge of the Fairbanks base. I was the Chief Mechanic at the Alaska Division of Pan American Airlines for about eight years in Fairbanks. While I was doing that, I started my own flying business. I started a flying school and a charter business and I was gonna do that just as a kind of a hobby. Something to keep me busy during the week-ends, because I only worked five days a week at Pan American. I was used to working seven days a week, ten hours a day (?) working five days a week. I wanted something else to do and I did it more as a hobby than a business. But it got such a demand for the services that I eventually ended up with seventeen airplanes and I was still working for Pan American. Then Pan American was gonna move their main maintenance base to Seattle and I said, "well, I can't go, I'm too busy." So I quit Pan American and ran my business in Fairbanks. I was making twice as much money running my flying service as a hobby than I was working for Pan American. But I was getting tired of working sixteen hours a day and so I quit and I sold my business to my brother, Fred, and the Chief Pilot I had, a fellow by the name of Morey Evans. He's still around the country. He's retired now, of course, he lives in Anchorage. (?) successful for a number of years. In the meantime, I took a year off and just did nothing and figured out what I should do. I was still pretty young - I was still in my early thirties. So I said, well, I guess I better not retire, the money isn't gonna last long enough. So I applied for a job at (?) as an instructor. I thought I'd

do that for a few years just to, you know, just for the fun of it. So I was a Scheduled Airline Inspector for a few years. And I thought - well, nothing else came up that interested me and I stayed in that for a few years and another few years and pretty soon I got to the point of no return. I couldn't quit that and start some place else and build up an adequate retirement and all that sort of thing. So I got stuck with it, I got to the point of no return, so I stayed there for 32 years as an inspector. Jim Barrow's department, now is a Chief (?) as a Chief in Washington of the entire United States (?). And that's about my career and that is, it was pretty busy and varied and I still have my pilot's license. I still (?) an airplane for my own amusement and pleasure and I still do some aviation (?). More than I want to, I can't get enough time for myself. But I always have a chance to change that. Maybe someday I'll retire and stay retired.

Hovis: Did you come back to McCarthy frequently while you were flying around while outside and what have you?

Seltenreich: Oh, yes. I used to come back and check once a year at least and spend a week or so with a friend. I have lots of friends up here that are still living here and I used to come up and visit. Then, of course, we still have our homestead out there, 320 acres over there on the Nizina. My brother and I built a little airport on it so we could fly in there and land there. And, of course, there is a road out there to McCarthy and you can drive out there, not very good any more but it (?) but we still drive it.

Hovis: Are there still buildings on the homestead?

Seltenreich: No, the buildings all fell down and we haven't built any new ones, but other people have (?). We subdivided some of it and sold off about ten acres here and there. It's real nice, there's one real nice building on it that's owned by a fellow by the name of Hanna. A log cabin, with a large upstairs, with a living room, fireplace, kitchen, a den for his trophies and his - there is kind of a hobby shop inside it and his guns and his equipment to work on the reloading equipment and all that sort of stuff. Plus, he's got a big garage built there for his equipment and shop (?).

There is another fellow building out there who's got a pretty nice place too. He hasn't got it finished yet (?) Bay. So I have enough to keep me busy just playing around with my own stuff and that's what I would like to be doing, working towards that end, so when I get old I can just (?).

Hovis: You said, before we turned the tape recorder on, that you worked for a little bit up here at Kennecott.

Seltenreich: Yeh, I worked in the laundry one summer for a few months, mangling the sheets. I was a sheet mangler. I mean the mangling of the big sheets that they had in the hospital there. I used to run them through the Mangle and fold them and package them.

Hovis: Who was your boss in the laundry?

Seltenreich: A fellow by the name of Morris. That's all I know him by. He was a Jap. They had Japanese cooks here and Japanese owned the laundry. I don't like to use the slang word for publication, but they called him (?) the Jap.

Hovis: When you were talking to him, would you call him that?

Seltenreich: Well, I probably did I imagine so. He was a fine person. A pleasant person to work for, had a good sense of humor. He was not old, a rather young fellow.

Hovis: Were there a lot of Japanese here?

Seltenreich: All the cooks were in the bunkhouses, not the bunkhouses, what do you call them - anyway, eating places. Yeh, they had several big, right down here at this place, they had a mess hall. yeh, big mess hall.

Hovis: I've noticed that there are two Japanese graves down in the cemetery.

Seltenreich: Is that so?

Hovis: And one of them has - I haven't been down there for a while but I think it's the largest monument down there.

Seltenreich: Oh, yeh. I haven't been down there to see that. I don't know what ever happened to Morey, whether he stayed here and died here or whether he left here when the camp closed down. See, I left here around '33, '32, '34. I was in and out but I left here permanently in '35, more or less.

Hovis: Was McCarthy still quite the blooming town in '35?

Seltenreich: Oh, yes. Yeh, it was.

Hovis: How quickly did it wind down after the mine closed?

Seltenreich: Well, about five years. It was still pretty active for five years after that. But the war is what closed it down. When the war came along, the mines all shut down, the placer mines. They couldn't get equipment or supplies anymore because everything was required to go to the war effort and nothing for mining, nonstrategic materials, which gold was not considered strategic as far as the war effort goes. This mine, of course, was going during World War I and it was very important for the war effort in World War I. So that's about the extent of my activity here at McCarthy.

Hovis: Was there a doctor in McCarthy or did everybody in town come up here to use the hospital?

Seltenreich: No, they used the hospital here in Kennecott.

Hovis: The people from McCarthy would be charged for the services?

Seltenreich: Yes, that's right. I spent a couple of months up here. I had a ruptured appendix back in 1925 and that was a pretty serious business in those days, because they didn't have penicillin. You know what penicillin is.

Hovis: Yes.

Seltenreich: And when you get an infection like you get from a ruptured appendix, which is peritonitis, it is a very difficult proposition to cure. The doctor here was very resourceful. He finally developed a plan - it wasn't looking too good and he had to operate again. He took all my intestines out, put them in a dish pan in mercurochrome and then through them back in and, you know, it worked. Probably it took about six months, I had drain

tubes in my stomach and I was a couple of months in the hospital and for about six months after that I had to come up to Kennecott about every three or four days and have the drain tubes changed.

Hovis: Um humm.

Seltenreich: Used to ride the train up and down. I got pretty well acquainted with the engineers. Even against the laws and the rules they had in the train, they let me ride in the engine and knock the engines. That was lots of fun, running the big steam engine. So I had a pretty interesting life, it wasn't boring at all. There was always something to do and always kept me busy. Like - well, when I was in McCarthy as a kid - Not, you know, going to school in the younger years (?) 12 years old I was in jobs. I had a water business. In the winter they didn't have any water so I had a little Chevrolet that I made into a pickup, you know, I converted it into a pickup and I used to haul water to the various businesses and fill their holding tanks, 10 cents a bucket or 12 buckets for a dollar, five gallon cans. It made a little jingle in my pocket all the time. I always had a jingle in my pocket.

Hovis: Where would you get the water?

Seltenreich: Out of the creek, just drive down to the creek and fill the buckets. There were creeks down there between McCarthy and the railroad (?) some clear water creeks that were not contaminated. I supplied water to the restaurants and the hotel and some of the private residents that didn't want to carry their own water up from the creek. Kept me pretty busy, plus chopping kindling for the girls down on the line so they could start their fires in the morning. And they always tipped good, you know, they were good tipppers. When I was fifteen my brothers and I had enough money to buy an airplane.

Hovis: How were the girls treated there? You mentioned the girls down the line.

Seltenreich: Oh, they were treated very respectfully. They weren't invited uptown too much, to associate with the regular people, but they would come up once in a while if they didn't make too big a habit of it. They would run very respected. The doctor from

Kennecott would go down there, of course, and check them up physically. I don't recall how often, whether it was twice a month or once a month. They kept them in good shape. But you see, up here where they had just only a few of the administrative people had their wives and families the rest of the people up here were all single. So they had to go down to McCarthy and have their recreation (inaudible) prejudiced so against, you know. They had a few drinks and had a beer or whiskey or whatever they wanted, moonshine as they called it in those days, prohibition days. There was a lot of work (?). People got busy, we cut a lot of wood and sawed a lot of wood and delivered a lot of wood with trucks. My brother and I, Fred, we did a lot of that. My brother, Ted, he worked in the grocery store most of the time. He used to work for (?) Company in the grocery store. So we all worked all the time, you know, from the time we was 12, 13 years old we had jobs of one kind or another and was able to make pretty good money around there. There was lots of money around there. We didn't have a depression is what I'm trying to say (?) during the depression days. We had it pretty good, you know, and everything was up-to-date, (?) had every convenience (?) and we didn't suffer at all. In fact, the matter is I think we had better conditions in McCarthy in those days than I had since I left McCarthy.

Hovis: Did anybody in McCarthy make the moonshine?

Seltenreich: Oh, yes. They didn't make it right in town, there was various places out of town. They had little camps out of town where they made the moonshine.

Hovis: Was there any law enforcement officers in McCarthy?

Seltenreich: Yeh, we had a jail there and there was a marshal there. He didn't pay too much attention to that. That was part of the game. The only ones that paid attention to it - they had - in those days during prohibition days, they had prohibition agents and they would travel around and make a nuisance of themselves. But you see, it wasn't very easy for them to get here because they had to come on the train. When they came around the corner, there's a corner down there this side of Long Lake, where they come around the corner you could see the train coming and the engineers would puff out the black smoke, meaning they had some

questionable people on board - that they might want to clear out the town and haul all the stuff out and pass it out of town. Toss out the liquor. I remember - I used to drive a truck. I was only 12 or 13 years old but used to drive a little pickup truck, hauling wood and that sort of thing, you know. So apparently someone says - they seen me hauling stuff. I think he thought I was hauling stuff out of town to hide it from the prohibition agency. So a prohibition agent stopped the car. (?) I don't know what they were trying to find out what I was doing. I didn't give them any satisfaction, I was pretty tight mouthed, I didn't do a lot of talking about my activities hauling booze out of town.

Hovis: Did you ever go up to the Motherlode mine or the Green Butte mine when it was running?

Seltenreich: I've been there a couple of times just for a visit with a friend, an associate of the fact. Johnny Barrett was one of the owners, you know, he discovered the Green Butte mine. His son is here in town, did you see him?

Hovis: Not yet. I've not talked to him yet.

Seltenreich: (?) he went to school here also. Yeh, I was a pretty good friend of Johnny Barrett, because we were kind of in business together. He was kind of an entrepreneur. He was into everything. He sold life insurance, he had the water system in town and he sold lots and he did this, that and the other thing. Plus, he was one of the administrators and managers of Green Butte mine.

Hovis: Everybody, it sounds like, had more than one job.

Seltenreich: Oh, yeh. It was a busy place. So anyway, he had a water system there. He had a couple of water tanks up on stilts, high above anything else in town. And he had what you call a round down in the creek, he had a couple of them down there pumping into those tanks. When he was up at the mine trying to do his business up there, well, then it was my job to see that those rounds didn't stop working. As I say, I was kind of in the water business with him in the summer, and they didn't run in the winter because they'd freeze up and then (?) pipes ran underground. They were just underground enough...

(tape 1, side 2)

(?) There is a good road up there. That was one of the better roads around here, was that road up to the Green Butte Motherlode Mine. They built a fine road up there.

Hovis: The Motherlode Company built that road?

Seltenreich: Well, I'm not sure they built it. I think the Motherlode probably did most of the building of the road but the Green Butte Mine was probably involved too, because they had trucks to haul their ore out with and so did the Motherlode, with big White trucks - not a white color but made by the White Motor Company. They hauled the ore out of the Motherlode Mine so they used the road in combination. The only time I went up there was just for recreation, something to do, you know. Ride up with somebody or drive up with somebody.

Hovis: I'm curious. You talked about the girls in McCarthy and the bootleg liquor and what have you. Were there any preachers in McCarthy?

Seltenreich: No, no there wasn't. One would come up from Cordova about once a month or so and give a sermon. Reverend Bingle. I remember his name. He had a church there in Cordova and he would come up and talk to us and try to save us sinners a little bit. He did a pretty good job of it. I didn't turn out too bad, I didn't get in jail ever (?).

Hovis: That's a certain mark of distinction.

Seltenreich: So he had some success, I would say. Reverend Bingle, was a nice guy.

Hovis: Would he come up to the mine as well?

Seltenreich: I don't know if he did or not. Probably did, I'm sure he did, yeh, very likely did. He probably come up here and held services, I'm sure. So we got a little religion along the way, enough to keep us out of jail I should say. Oh, yeh, in addition to the other jobs I had, I used to drive taxi. We had lots of taxi cabs. We had lots of cars in McCarthy, mostly used for businesses, there was very few personal cars. I had one, I had a 1922 Chevrolet, I guess it was. He couldn't keep it running, he was continually stripping it

and he got so mad at the car he says, I'll give you this car. He give it to me. It was a 1922 Chevrolet touring car and he had the rear end stripped out of it. So I had enough money and I sent down to Seattle and I bought a complete unit. (?) rear end and the whole works. It cost me a hundred and some dollars. That was a lot of money in those days, I guess.

Hovis: It would be.

Seltenreich: Sent it up, put that in there and that car served me well, I never had any trouble with it. But the Chevrolets were bad cars. They had the (?) clutch and they suck in that clutch and the car would jump about a foot, you know, unless you was very clever with it, you could do it right and I had my trouble doing it but it didn't take me long to learn how to handle that. They had jumped that thing around so much - you see, the other guy jumped it around so much he stripped the gears out of it.

Hovis: You used it as a taxi cab as well as...

Seltenreich: No, I used it just for hauling water. I made a pickup out of it and used it for my water business. But I did drive taxi for some of the other outfits that had the taxi service at the McCarthy Garage. There were two outfits in there. Fred did the same thing. He drove for one of those outfits and I did for the other. We used to get \$5.00 for a trip to Kennecott, whether it was one person or a full load. And the driver - I'd get \$2.00 and the owner would get three. And I did it with dog teams in the winter. There's a picture in my album in there about the dog team coming up the track here in the winter because the road wouldn't stay open. So when it was closed we went by dog team and I'd come up the railroad track because there wasn't any trains -one a day (?) so we didn't get in trouble with the railroad. Sometimes only one in a couple of days, so we used the railroad track quite a bit and nobody objected to it. Running the dog teams up that was a much better way than coming up the road in the winter.

Hovis: When you were driving the taxi, who were your main customers, the miners?

Seltenreich: The miners, yeh. Yeh, they'd come down and get drunk and all kicked out of shape and had to get back to work.

Hovis: Would you take them all the way up to the mines up on the ridge?

Seltenreich: No, just as far as the camp, as far as it could go. You couldn't get up there. You couldn't get any further than the store down there. I'd let them out at the store.

Hovis: Would you ever do any business at the store up there?

Seltenreich: Oh, yes. I used to buy things there. It was cheaper up here. They didn't object to that, they'd sell to everybody.

Hovis: And you didn't have to use the scrip?

Seltenreich: No, they took cash. We used to come out here for the movies quite a bit. We used to have movies in McCarthy years ago when the pipeline was running here. That shut down in 1918, Motherlode Pipeline. Then we didn't have any movies anymore down here so we had to come up here to the movies and see Tom Mix and Rin Tin Tin and Reginald (?) and all those old time movies.

Hovis: Was there usually a good crowd for the movies?

Seltenreich: Oh yeh, a full house most of the time, not from McCarthy but from the camp here. But we'd come up.

Hovis: Anything else you would like to say, particularly in relationship to McCarthy and Kennecott?

Seltenreich: No, I can't really tell you much more about it than that, other than it was an interesting thing. We wasn't bored, didn't have any trouble with having to smoke pot or shoot cocaine or anything like that to keep entertained. Even though McCarthy was (?) as a gambling, bootlegging, whorehouse town, it never dawned on me to follow that (?). (?) in running a respectable business most of my life, I had no interest in it. I had seen that other and (?) and I knew there was money in it, but I wasn't interested in money so much as I was interested in doing what I like to do.

Hovis: Did you know many of the people that are here at this reunion when you were a child?

Seltenreich: Oh yes, quite a number of them. Quite a number that I hadn't seen since they left here and I left here. I haven't seen them since that time. Didn't even know where they lived, didn't even know they were around yet.

Hovis: Do any of them stand out particularly in your memory? Any of them that perhaps you worked with?

Seltenreich: Oh yeh, Oscar. Oscar Watsjold, the big fellow here that had the store. They came over from Norway and they went to school in McCarthy and they couldn't speak English at that time. They learned English and went to school at the same time. Watsjold and I worked together at the road commission camp, building the road from the Nizina over the Chitina River. So we had quite a bit of associations together and (?). Of course I've seen him a number of times since because he's been living in Seward and he had a brother, John, that lived in Anchorage. He still has a brother, John, that lives in Anchorage I should say.

Hovis: When you were working for the road commission on the Nizina road, did you have anything to do with building the bridge?

Seltenreich: No, that was built in 1924 and I was a little young for working (?), except we did have some business with them, my folks did, from the viewpoint that when they put those concrete piers in, they had trouble finding enough gravel and sand that was pure enough to make substantial concrete. All that stuff down in the river has got too much mica in it and that weakens the concrete. So up there on the homestead, right next to the house where they lived, there was a bank there of sand and it was pure sand. So they came out there with their wagons and they hauled the sand from there down to the camp where they were putting the piers in for the spans that went across the river. So I had business with them in that regard and my dad worked for them running the steam bars for the power grinder. So he worked on there and I used to go down there and get a good meal once in a while. I was always welcome down there. They had a nice camp down there. It was only a mile walk from where we lived up there on the homestead down to where they camped.

Hovis: Where was the camp? On which side of the river?

Seltenreich: It was on this side, on the McCarthy side. It was right down - are you familiar with - you see that building built out of planks that's down there?

Hovis: Yes.

Seltenreich: That's ours. We built that. My dad built that off planks that came off of the first bridge that was put in the Nizina upriver from that bridge. They put in a bridge there that lasted one season and the river washed it out and those planks were scattered from here to breakfast all over the (?) and they took the horses down and drug them up and built that building out of them.

Hovis: Was the earlier bridge closer to May Creek?

Seltenreich: Yeh. It was practically directly across from May Creek. It was across from where that road goes down to the river. It was an old wagon road they used to use to freight on years ago. They would cross the river down there by a place called Shorty Grimm's homestead. It was upriver from our homestead. That's where the bridge went across, just above his place that bridge went across. It was all piling and, of course, when high water came that was the end of it.

Hovis: Was there a road house at May Creek at that time?

Seltenreich: Yeh.

Hovis: Did you know the people there?

Seltenreich: Yeh. Jenny Brown took care of that road house. Tess Murray married Jenny Brown. Tess Holmes. I don't know what her maiden name was. I remember her by Mrs. Brown at first, then she married Murray and then it was Mrs. Murray and then after Murray died she married Walter Holmes. So I knew her ever since - well, I guess since I've been (?).

Hovis: Where was the road house? Anywhere near where Al Gagnon has his place?

Seltenreich: Yeh. Just upstream from Al Gagnon's place. Practically on the same level. Well just - the road from the airport run down to his place, down

to that - no, it was further down - (?) a fellow there - Walter Holmes had his place - yeh, I guess Gagnon bought Walter Holmes' place there. But the road house was farther down the pit. It was on that same pit but it was farther down towards the river. They had a fine road house down there. A nice building.

Hovis: A log building?

Seltenreich: Yeh, I think it was log. I'm sure it must have been log.

Hovis: Two stories?

Seltenreich: Two story, yeh. Rooms upstairs, had a horse barn. You know, in those days every place had a horse barn, because everybody had horses. You had to have a place for the horses to stay. I've been there quite a few times.

Hovis: Perhaps you can help me with a few other little bits of information on the May Creek area. Was the mail cabin always where it is now, down there on the - I guess it's the east end of the runway, or the south end?

Seltenreich: Oh no, there was no runway. That runway was built in - Oscar and Leonard Brenwick, two kids I went to school with, Leonard died since - they were working for the road commission, that's after I left, it must have been in '39, '37, they built that runway. There was no mail boxes of any kind in those days. They didn't have mail boxes. I don't know what they (?). So the roadhouse there and the one at Spruce Point and then it went over the summit to the White River, the next roadhouse is. They had them about every 20 miles.

Hovis: Was there a roadhouse on Peavine Bar going up the Chitastone?

Seltenreich: No. The only thing that was on Peavine Bar - let's see, when the Bremner Mining Company started freighting - you should talk to Fred about that, he freighted in there with the tractors in I think as late as '37, '38 maybe, over that road that crossed from Nizina to the Chitina and then to the Jiggs Bar. Jiggs Bar, that's where it was. I think they crossed at Jiggs Bar, yeh, they did. They crossed down there and then went up the other side after (?).

Hovis: Did you ever go up to Chititu camp and Nizina up on Chititu Creek?

Seltenreich: Yeh. I've been to Chititu. I was pretty good friends with Charlie Kramer, the guy that owned it. Used to go out and visit him once in a while, maybe once in the summer, couple of times during the summer. Cause I'd be driving out there hauling freight. I did that too. I ran, you know, the Model-T trucks. I used to drive one out there. The guy that had the Golden Hotel, he had a taxi/truck service. I used to drive his Model-T truck and once in a while I'd make a trip out there with some of the freight. We didn't go right up to Chititu at that time, we stopped short of there and they came down with the horses. They always used horses to come down and pick up their freight. Sometimes I would ride up on the horses just to have lunch with them. If there was a free meal around I'd want to get in on it.

Hovis: Did you know, I think it was George Powell's father? And he mined up there on Rex Creek?

Seltenreich: Yeh. But I'm not sure what creek he mined on, whether it was Rex Creek or - I guess it was Rex Creek. I guess where he had his mine. He got killed in a cave-in there. Yeh, I knew him, he had a blacksmith shop. He had that blacksmith shop down there right across the street from the Motherlode power house. And, of course, I got involved in that too. At least he would let me turn the crank at the forge (?) horseshoes (?). (?) in the blacksmith shop. I used to work in that blacksmith shop on and off doing little chores for myself. He had equipment there that I could use, drill presses and things like that for drilling holes. I didn't do much horse shoeing but I got involved (?) and I know how to do it anyway. Got involved that much.

Hovis. How about Shushanna, were you up there any?

Seltenreich: No, never went to Shushanna, other than later years I've gone in there quite a bit off and on. I went over to the (?) when Steve Bremner and his brother were staking the ground out, I walked over there with them one time. Went down to Long Lake on the section speeder and then I went down to the river - a fellow by the name of Bill Berry, he was a pretty good friend of mine that ran boats. And he had a boat in there that would cross the river,

the Chitina River. We took the boat across and then walked up to the Bremner mine, it was staked, and I helped them stake some claims up there at the site of the Bremner mine.

Hovis: Staking up on the mountainside must have been touchy business.

Seltenreich: Naw, it wasn't. It wasn't very steep there. We piled up monuments, put up rocks for monuments and stuff. I was up there about four or five days with them one time. And then I learned later - then I said, "what the hell ever happened to my Chevrolet car." Well, someone said they sent it over to the Bremner. They had taken it over there. And then in one of my Chevrolets - I had two Chevrolets, actually, I had two Chevrolets and I rebuilt the engine on one of them. I made a super, super engine out of it. I put aluminum alloy pistons in it and spent the winter working on it. I says, "what the hell ever happened to my Chevrolet engine." "Well," someone says, "they're running the tram with it over at the Bremner mine, that's the last we've seen of it." So I guess that's what happened to my Chevrolet car, my Chevrolet engine, it ended up over at the Bremner mine.

Hovis: There's an old Chevrolet up at Calamity Gulch too. Up off (?).

Seltenreich: Oh, I bet that - see, my brother, Ted, my older brother, him and a fellow by the name of Clock put in a hydraulic system up there, up on Calamity. That was after I left here. I'd been gone a long time and that was '38 maybe '39 they was doing that. And I bet that's my Chevy. Is there a whole car up there?

Hovis: Whole car up there.

Seltenreich: Is it a pickup?

Hovis: It's a pickup and its got cleats on the back tires.

Seltenreich: Well, they might have put those on it to get up there. But that's my Chevrolet pickup. That's where my other pickup went. I think that was a 1919 model. It was a 490 instead of a Superior. One of them was a Superior. That was a deluxe

model that had a California top on it. One of those that was a touring car that was converted to a sedan by putting side windows, permanent side windows in that inside curtains. And then that 490 model, that was a cheap model. That other is the pickup I had. It was an older model than the car I had. That's where they went to. I'll be darned.

Hovis: There's quite a bit of (?) up there.

Seltenreich: Well, I thought if I went up there I'd have a car to run around in. So anyway, they mined one season. It took them three years to get that setup going up there and they must have put in quite a bit of equipment up there. Cause they got it all built up and they mined one season and I think they took out - I figure probably about a couple of hundred dollars. They cleaned up a couple hundred dollars. So then my brother came over to Fairbanks. I was in Fairbanks at that time and that was in the '40s, probably 1940 I guess. He drove a Model-A over there that he had here. I don't know if it was a Model-A pickup or a Model-A car, I can't remember what it was. Then he went to work as a mechanic for Pan American. Cause I was a superintendent so it wasn't hard for him to get a job.

Hovis: That would help, yes.

Seltenreich: So he got a job as a mechanic for Pan American. And Fred worked for Pan American too, for a year, until he got in a row with the superintendent and said the hell with you and left. I was telling about Ted was working in there (inaudible). I told him about Ted (?) for the girls on the line so they could (inaudible) and all that sort of thing (inaudible). Well anyway, Ted worked for Pan American, my older brother, and then he worked as a mechanic and then he was substituting as a plug mechanic. We used to put plug mechanics on the airplanes to Nome because they didn't have any maintenance people based at Nome. So he was on there as a temporary plug mechanic. That was in '42, wasn't it? Was it '42? They were coming out of Nome in a white out condition and they ran into the top of a mountain and he got killed on that flight. Everybody got killed on that. It was a Pilgrim, they was flying a Pilgrim (?). What was I starting to say?

Hovis: We were talking about Chititu, but (?).

Seltenreich: (inaudible) he said that Chevrolet pickup of mine was up there.

Seltenreich,F: I thought it was over (?).

Seltenreich: Well, they was using (?) too.

Seltenreich,F: (?) been there because they had it up on the hill there and (?).

Seltenreich: They said the engine was, they used it on the tram.

Seltenreich,F: Yeh, we put the engine and used it on the tram from the - where the tram come down.

Seltenreich: Oh, you did.

Seltenreich,F: Yeh, and then run over to the miller. It was about a couple thousand feet.

Seltenreich: (?) used my engine?

Seltenreich,F: I didn't use it. You got to get a hold of Lee Kramer or - but you got to leave this world before you see them.

Seltenreich: Well, I'll take it up with them later.

Seltenreich,F: Yeh, when you get up there. But you're not going up there, you're going down that way with the rest of the people. (inaudible) just like the other day, some guy was talking to me an I says, "oh, yeh, I'm a well (?)." He said, "how deep do you go?" And I said, "well, the well is 73 feet deep with 30 feet of dry (?) and 30 feet of clay and they hit another gravel bunch and was down there about 30 to 40 feet in that gravel." "Well," he says, "how deep is the gravel?" And I said, "it goes clear to hell if there is such a place." "It's there all right," he says.

Seltenreich: So anyway, that's where my pickup is, up there on Calamity. How was that torn out of there?

Seltenreich,F: Well, I thought that - see (?) engine, the only one in the world.

Seltenreich: Yeh, right.

Seltenreich,F: And the transmission, somebody told me they took it out there to run their drag line, you know, they have a (?) at Calamity Gulch.

Seltenreich: At Calamity?

Hovis: Yeh, I've seen that engine out there.

Seltenreich,F: Well, the transmission, I don't know what engine they used. It's a three speed transmission, same as the standard transmission but it went on an old Model-T, an old Model-T. It had bands, you know. So I have a complete engine with everything - maybe (?) the transmission (?).

Seltenreich: I don't know (?) give it to me, it's yours anyway.

Seltenreich,F: I got the engine down in Gary Green's place, It was an old Model-T with a three speed transmission, a regular (?) transmission but got the old bands to it.

Hovis: There is a gasoline motor mounted on the winch out there. It's a three dumb winch.

Seltenreich,F: And they had a transmission on the back of the engine?

Seltenreich: Well, of course if they used a Chevrolet engine that (?) you know.

Seltenreich,F: No, they didn't use that. The Chevrolet car is in one piece. They didn't touch that.

Hovis: The car is just sitting there rotting away.

Seltenreich,F: It's the pickup.

Seltenreich: That's the pickup I used to haul water with.

Seltenreich,F: And I don't know (?) engine. Any Model-T engine, if they had another Model-T engine.

Seltenreich: Oh, sure. There were several around.

Seltenreich,F: About the only thing I'm missing on that (?).

Seltenreich: I'd love to give you that back if you want it.

Seltenreich,F: I think what's his name claims it, Edwards.

Seltenreich: Edwards? What has he ever got up there?

Seltenreich,F: He said he restaked it when it ran out and no (?) was on it. I understand that he owns it. In fact, (?) sent his boy up there (?).

Seltenreich: Oh, I see. Oh, is that so.

Seltenreich,F: But nowadays, of course, I don't think (?) is doing anything. (?) signing the papers down in the (?).

Hovis: I think that's what is happening.

Seltenreich,F: Unless you catch him at it, how are you gonna prove it? You have to catch him to prove it. But anyway, that's a long walk up there (?).

Seltenreich: They haul it down from there by helicopter, probably.

Seltenreich,F: I been trying to talk Joe into (?) he can't get away anymore. When he had lots of time to get away he didn't have the helicopter and now he's got the helicopter and he can't in no way have time to use it. And he is going to fly over the Bremner one day and take a look at that junk there too.

Seltenreich: Well, who owns that Bremner stuff?

Seltenreich,F: Some guy with BLM claims he owns it.

Seltenreich: Does the Park Service own it?

Hovis: No.

Seltenreich,F: I was in Chitina one time and the guy from BLM come in there and hired Art Knutson to fly over in the Super Cub and I talked to him and he said that he owned it, he had stock in it - and some way he went through the courts and got it and he owns it.

Seltenreich: Oh, yeh. You've got stock in it too.

Seltenreich,F: My wife thought she married a very wealthy man cause I had a suitcase full of beautiful stocks certificates. I had this for three or four years and she said, "well, what are you going to do with all that stock in the suitcase?" And I said, "well, it's worthless." "Oh, I thought you were wealthy," she says. So she burned it and I could have made money by selling it. (inaudible) my

mother had some of it too, and I don't know what happened to that.

Seltenreich: I think I have 13 shares or something. Stock certificates.

Hovis: That is something.

Seltenreich: Where are you based?

Hovis: I'm based in Anchorage.

Seltenreich: Oh, are you? Oh, I see.

Seltenreich,F: You're with the Park Service?

Hovis: Yes, I am.

Seltenreich,F: Been with it long?

Hovis: I've worked for them during the summers for the last five years then decided (?) to keep me on in the winter now. I'm not a permanent employee, I'm a seasonal.

Seltenreich,F: Is that machine on there?

Hovis: Yes it is.

Seltenreich: At one time in your life you made an honest living, huh?

Hovis: For 15 years I worked in the mines.

Seltenreich: Where?

Hovis: In British Columbia.

Seltenreich: Oh, I see.
(end of tape and interview)