

KENNECOTT KIDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH  
MARY ELLEN DUGGAN CLARK  
AND  
MILDRED ERICKSON REIS  
JUNE 16, 1990 KENNECOTT, ALASKA

Interview Conducted By  
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(tape 1, side 1)

This is Sande Faulkner, National Park Service, at Kennecott, Alaska, June 16, 1990, at Kennecott Kids Reunion, talking with Mary Ellen Duggan Clark and Mildred Erickson Reis.

Faulkner: Mary Ellen, if I can just have you identify who you are and the date and where you were born and where you came from, that kind of information.

Clark: I'm Mary Ellen Duggan Clark and I was born in Goldfield, Nevada. I now live in Superior, Colorado.

Faulkner: What years were you at Kennecott?

Clark: I lived in Kennecott from 1924 to 1933. And I was six years old when I came to Kennecott so that meant I went from the first grade through ninth grade here.

Faulkner: Why did your family come to Kennecott?

Clark: My father was a mining engineer and got a job in Kennecott at the mill here.

Faulkner: Did you live in another mining community before you came here?

Clark: Yes, we lived in Latouche for about four years before we came to Kennecott. Latouche is another mine operated by Kennecott Copper.

Faulkner: Where is that?

Clark: That is on an island and it's in Prince William Sound, [at the entrance to the sound].

Faulkner: How long were you at Latouche?

Clark: I was there four years, I believe. Yeh. I was quite little then.

Faulkner: Do you remember anything at all of Latouche?

Clark: Very little. I remember that they had boardwalks everywhere and the houses were up on stilts because they were so close to the water.

Faulkner: What kind of mining did they do there?

Clark: That was the same kind, copper.

Faulkner: Did your dad always work for this company?

Clark: Well, no. He had worked for a gold mining company and I think at Latouche was the first time he'd worked for Kennecott.

Faulkner: Where was he from?

Clark: He was from Indiana but he just wanted to come west so he went to school at the University of Utah and took up mining. That's how we got located in Goldfield.

Faulkner: What about your mom, where was she from?

Clark: She was from California. She went to school in California. She went through college. She wanted to teach, and California required, even then, an additional year after college for her to teach. So she went to Goldfield, Nevada to teach there right away and she met my dad there.

Faulkner: He was a mining engineer then?

Clark: Yes, he was a mining engineer, I think in milling even then. He specialized in the milling part of it.

Faulkner: So they were married and had you.

Clark: And for a while - I guess the gold mining economy wasn't too good and he lost that job. So we went back to Indiana and stayed on his father's farm there for a few months and then a position in Alaska opened up.

Faulkner: Do you know where in Indiana?

Clark: It was around Rockville. [My father was born in Ivesdale, Illinois. His family later bought the farm in Rockville, Indiana.]

Faulkner: Did you have aunts and uncles there?

Clark: Well, I had - yeh, I had two aunts that were back there then and lots of cousins. Unfortunately, I lost touch with them (?). Two first cousins on my dad's side. One of them now is in California and the other is in St. Louis, Missouri. I don't have anyone back in Indiana now.



Faulkner: How did you come up to Kennecott? You were at Latouche then came down.

Clark: Yes, we were at Latouche and took a [steamship] from Latouche over to Cordova and that's the way we came then. And at Cordova we got on the train and the train went from Cordova and stopped at Chitina overnight and we'd sleep in the hotel at Chitina and next day come on to Kennecott.

Faulkner: Did you bring all your family goods along? Do you remember packing?

Clark: I don't remember that, I was too small, but I'm sure they didn't bring very much. It was too expensive.

Faulkner: Did you have to pay your own move?

Clark: I don't know about that, I don't know just what the arrangement was.

Faulkner: Why did your dad leave Kennecott?

Clark: Well, the mine was closing down then. He knew it was gonna close down. I don't believe it had actually closed down. He was able to get a position at Climax, Colorado so he came out there.

Faulkner: Was that another mine mill situation?

Clark: Yes, it was milling but it was [molybdenum]. That was the Climax [Molybdenum] Company.

Faulkner: And how was Climax different from here?

Clark: Well, I think the main thing is that there were other towns around, we could get out of the actual camp, like go to Leadville and shop and go to a movie and things like that. It was different in that way, although at Climax they didn't have a high school there. They did have a grade school, but by that time, of course, I was almost finished high school. The last half of my senior year my sister and I went down to Leadville and boarded during the week and went to Leadville High School and then we'd get a ride on Friday afternoon, usually with some miner or someone that was going up to Climax. And then Monday morning we'd have to get a ride back again.

Faulkner: How did you travel?



Clark: Just by car. There was a good highway between Climax and Leadville.

Faulkner: When was your sister born?

Clark: She was born in ['21]. She was about two and a half years younger than I. She was born in Latouche.

Faulkner: Did they have a hospital at Latouche?

Clark: Yeh, they had a hospital.

Faulkner: Then you came over to Kennecott and you started school here?

Clark: Yes.

Faulkner: And what was the school like?

Clark: Well, it was a two room school, one teacher for each room, and on the average I'd say about 20 children overall. We felt that we got a really good education. Each teacher had to teach four grades and she reviewed the lessons of one grade and then give them an assignment, put them to working on it, and then go to the next grade and she had to keep doing that all day long, jumping from one to the other. I mentioned before that the teacher who had fifth through eighth grade was really excellent. Usually, right after lunch, she would read a little something to us from a book like the Oregon Trail or A Lantern in Her Hand, books that would give us some knowledge of history as well as a story. And on certain days she would play classical records for about 15 minutes. She'd give us a little quiz on it, just encourage us to learn the names. On Friday afternoons, after recess, we would have art and we always looked forward to that and that was fun.

Faulkner: Do you remember her name?

Clark: That was Ruth, let me think. Her maiden name was Ruth Waters when she started, she was Ruth Waters and after a few years she married Eric Danielson. I especially remember his name, because he was an assistant to my father in the mill. She did keep up teaching after she married and that was unusual for the teacher.

Faulkner: Where did the teacher live?

Clark: Well, they had a staff house and the teachers and the nurses and the office secretary lived there. There also were the single men, who were staff people lived there. They had an accountant or something like that who was single. Most of the [staff] men were married, but a few either were single or perhaps their families had gone back outside.

Faulkner: Did they share a room, kind of like two women to a room, do you remember?

Clark: I don't honestly remember now.

Reis:<sup>1</sup>

Faulkner: Did they eat in that building too?

Reis:<sup>2</sup>

Clark: No. They had another building which - they called it the mess hall, where they served meals for those people, for the staff, you know. And then the people in houses, if they wanted to, they could go down there and have a meal, you know, just pay for it. And some mothers got really tired of cooking and we could go down there, or if they were sick. My mother was in the hospital for a while and so my father took us down there to eat.

Faulkner: What was wrong with your mother?

Clark: She had appendicitis and the doctor in the hospital there operated on her, [she recovered very well].

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<sup>1</sup> There was one person to a room in the staff house-two teachers, two nurses, one and sometimes two secretaries. The first floor was a recreation area, second floor for men only, third floor for women-nicknamed "no man's land". (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>2</sup> The "private mess" was in the building called the "annex" and was for the staff. There were extra rooms for the staff (men) when the staff house was full. My father lived there when my mother and I were "outside". The buildings' first floor also housed the dental office, book club, and room where one of the ladies of the camp pasteurized the milk. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)



Faulkner: How about the house that you lived in?

Clark: Well, first we lived in a house up on the hill, one of the four houses in a group. We lived in one of them for, I imagine for four or five years, and then later we moved down to the house that was for the superintendent. My father was the mill superintendent and we moved down there and it's a house that isn't there now.

Faulkner: Was it by the hospital?

Clark: Yeh, it was by the hospital. It was near the manager's house and the house we lived in, that's the superintendent's house, and then the staff house. That staff house was three stories.

Faulkner: And single men and women staff?

Clark: Yeh, they'd have one floor for men and one for women.

Faulkner: Your father was superintendent of the mill. Did he have anyone here over him or was he boss of the whole camp?

Clark: No. There was the manager over him. Otherwise, he was the boss for everything that happened in the mill, the mill, the crusher, the leaching plant, the things that were related to the mill.

Faulkner: That was quite a job.

Clark: It was, I think it proved, you know, to be quite a job, a lot of responsibility.

Faulkner: How was it for you, to be the boss' kid?

Clark: Well, I don't think that he was that much of a boss, at least I didn't feel that way at the time. And so I don't feel that it made any difference. There were some class distinctions among the families, but the kids didn't worry about it. There were so few of us that we all played together.

Faulkner: What did you wear to school?

Clark: Well, we always wore dresses, probably a wool or a heavy - some type of heavy material. But we all wore long johns, then we wore lyle stockings over them and then heavy wool socks over them and so



either felt boots or some kind of heavy boots. You know, in this weather and the cold. When we went out to play, we wore pants.

Faulkner: Oh, you did?

Clark: Yeh, we wore - oh, bundle up, maybe a couple of pairs of pants, sweaters and coats and everything we could get our hands on.

Faulkner: How about laundry?

Clark: Well, my mother generally did our own laundry. There was a laundry here. There were some times when her back bothered her, then she would send the laundry out. Like I say, there was a laundry and they would deliver. They'd come and pick it up and do it.

Faulkner: Did your mother ever have any household help, to help with heavy cleaning or anything like that?

Clark: When we lived in the superintendent's house, she did. She had a lady come in I think once a week and do the heavy cleaning.

Faulkner: And who would that be? Would it be someone's wife, or a single lady, or someone from McCarthy?

Clark: I think it was a single lady, I'm not quite sure. Someone would, you know, maybe hear about work from some other place and come up.

Faulkner: Were there special school pageants?

Clark: Oh, yeh.

Faulkner: And programs?

Clark: Over special holidays we would put on a program. Sometimes we would have a program just at the school, if it was something during school hours. I remember our mothers were invited and we'd just do recitations and things like that. But plays for Christmas, and then at Easter it seems like we did something. But the biggest thing, of course, was Christmas and we practiced that for, oh, a long time. And each one of us would have some part in a skit or a play or a dance and we would get up on the stage and do our part. And after all the program was finished - and this was in the rec hall and they had a big Christmas tree and

after everything was finished we'd go and sit down. They had an artificial fireplace on the stage and then Santa Claus would come through the fireplace, come out and he'd have a gift for each child and a stocking with some fruit and some candy in it. And it was, oh, I guess a big occasion.

Faulkner: And then would there be a family Christmas as well?

Clark: Yes, usually the next day the families would celebrate Christmas at home. And then they had a custom of visiting each home. Usually it was just the nuclear family [living in Kennecott]. We didn't have any other relatives near, so our family would go to the family next door and visit them, then we'd go over to the next house and just visit all around and usually have a drink or two. It was really a time where we visited and then people would come to our house and it was a time to get together.

Faulkner: Did you have a special party dress?

Clark: Oh yes. My mother usually made our clothes, not all of them, but some of them. She was an excellent seamstress.

Faulkner: Do you remember one specially?

Clark: Well, I can't remember that much about them. Usually they might have a little collar with some lace on it.

Faulkner: Did you wear your hair long?

Clark: No. I wore mine in a bob (?). Most of the girls wore it short. Some of them wore it long.

Faulkner: Do you remember in your house, did your mother - the special touches that she would do - did she paint it a different color or put up curtains, to make it her own, or would there be family pictures?

Clark: I think maybe family pictures. She got one painting, a Ziegler painting - he was quite a well known Alaskan artist - and it was an oil painting. That was done, she set great store by that.



Reis:<sup>3</sup>

Faulkner: Do you still have it?

Clark: I still have that. All the rest I think were just ordinary pictures.

Faulkner: Did the company provide furniture and curtains and things or did you have to?

Clark: I'm not sure. I don't think the company provided them. I really don't know how that was arranged. I would guess that people would buy things, you know, if someone was leaving, maybe they'd buy something from them, you know, and it would kind of get passed around because it was so expensive to bring furniture from the states. I'm just guessing, but I think that's the way we got a lot of our furniture.

Faulkner: Any musical instruments?

Clark: Well, we didn't have any. Let's see. Our friends next door had a piano. There were several people in town that had pianos.

Faulkner: That's a big instrument to bring in here.

Clark: Yes, and we don't know how they even got them in there.

Faulkner: You mentioned your mom made most of your clothes. Did she buy the material from the company store or order it from somewhere?

Clark: She must have ordered it. The company store, it didn't have too much like that. They had boots and plain clothes and gloves and things like that, but I don't think they had much in the way of [women's] clothes, at least when I was there. They might have before we came, because the camp was a little bigger before we got there.

Faulkner: Now when you finished school - you were telling me before - then you had to go away to boarding school?

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<sup>3</sup> Eustace P. Ziegler was a Episcopalian minister in Cordova for many years before moving to Seattle. He was well known in Alaska and the "States". I have one of his early paintings. (Information add by Mildred Reis during editing.)



Clark: Yeh.

Faulkner: Did you have to wait then for your sister to catch up?

Clark: Well no, I guess what they did was I stayed and took ninth grade work, even though the school wasn't providing it at that time. The eighth grade teacher knew Spanish and my father taught me geometry and I don't remember - the other teacher was able to teach enough so that I had enough credits for ninth grade. Then when we went outside, my sister she was in ninth grade and I was in tenth, anyhow, she came out the same time I did.

Faulkner: And you went, you were saying, to California where your mother had relatives?

Clark: Yes, my mother had relatives and they looked around and found a good boarding school and we went there up until my senior year. I took half of my senior year at boarding school and then my father and mother came out and they went to Climax. So I finished school in Leadville.

Faulkner: How did you get to school?

Clark: In Leadville?

Faulkner: From Kennecott. Did you and your sister travel by yourselves or did your mom take you down?

Clark: Mom and Dad both took us down and they stayed in California for a while and took a little vacation and then went back.

Faulkner: Were you there year around then, or did you come back summers?

Clark: Well, in the summers, let's see, we went to my grandmother's home, because her home was there, and stayed with her during the summer and went back to the boarding school. It was a pleasant place and, you know, southern California. There were orange groves and horses to ride.

Faulkner: It must have been quite a change from Alaska then.

Clark: Oh, it was a definite change.

Faulkner: Did the kids have questions for you, about living in Alaska?

Clark: Well, not too much. They just seemed to take it in stride.

Faulkner: Do you remember if you were sick, chicken pox, measles, things like that? Did you go to the doctor here and medical things?

Clark: I don't remember being sick up here, or really sick. We went to the doctor for shots and vaccinations. And then we got a small pox vaccination and a couple of other vaccinations. But what would happen, we lived here and we weren't in contact with a lot of people. When we would go out, say to California, then my sister and I would catch something like that. One time we had measles when we were visiting my grandmother. My parents were there then too, we were little. And the next time I got mumps. I don't think my sister got mumps, somehow she escaped it. That often happened. We'd come out and catch something and (?) because we hadn't been exposed up here.

Faulkner: Did you ever go down to McCarthy?

Clark: Well, we didn't very often. At Fourth of July usually the school had a program, of course, school was out then but the teachers worked on it before school let out and they must have had somebody to carry on. We went down there one year and they had a float and a parade. We often went down there [on the Fourth]. We didn't usually go. Our parents didn't want us to go by ourselves. One time we did walk all the way down the tracks and got to McCarthy, then we got a ride back home.

Faulkner: How would you get a ride back?

Clark: Well, it just happened that someone was coming out to Kennecott.

Faulkner: In a car?

Clark: In a car, yeh.

Faulkner: Did they have hand cars to ride on the railroad?

Clark: Just the railroad company did.



Faulkner: What was the relationship between Kennecott and the railroad? Could you ride the railroad for free or depend on it for transporting things?

Clark: I don't think it was free. I imagine you had to buy a ticket. Yeh, but then we could use it anytime.

Faulkner: What about going out to Cordova?

Clark: I don't recall that we ever did. One time we went to Tonsina and we went by car. I think we went to Chitina and the highway for Valdez, [the Egerton Highway]. It was a lot of fun. We stayed a few days.

Faulkner: For a vacation?

Clark: Yeh.

Faulkner: Did you vacation at all otherwise in Alaska?

Clark: Not a vacation. We took little excursions, like a picnic, berry picking, something like that.

Faulkner: Would they be town picnics?

Clark: Sometimes there was a town or [school picnic or] sometimes just a family or a group would go. We had very few cars in Kennecott, maybe three cars that were running, because there wasn't hardly any place to go.

Faulkner: What about for fun?

Clark: Well, in the winter it was skiing, skating, sliding, things like that. Once in a while the school would have a dance, then my mother would let us go, if it were a school sponsored dance. Sometimes there was just a dance so - I don't know who sponsored it.

Faulkner: Was it for adults?

Clark: For adults. Well, some of the children went, older children went. We usually didn't, unless it was a school sponsored dance. And they had movies twice a week in the rec hall [also] and we went to movies.

Faulkner: The tennis courts - did you play tennis?



Clark: Well, my sister and I just batted the ball around a little. My parents played tennis. A lot of times in the evening they'd go out and play tennis, cause it stayed light for so long and we'd just go along and watch and chase balls and play around outside the court.

Faulkner: Did you do much hiking around the area?

Clark: Well, some. I liked hiking but as I look back on it [we did not take really long hikes].

(tape 1, side 2)

Faulkner: Side 2, interview with Mary Ellen Duggan Clark. We were talking about going hiking.

Clark: Yeh, we did go hiking. Sometimes just go out in the woods and play and build brush houses and things like that.

Faulkner: Were there a lot of bugs?

Clark: Well, at times there were and I guess we put Citronella on if we were going out in the woods, you know.

Faulkner: Well, I know one thing I did want to ask you and I didn't. Was there a public library or reading room or did the school have books?

Clark: There was a little library where we could go and borrow books.

Reis: (inaudible)<sup>4</sup>

Clark: Mildred [Erickson Reis] knows a lot more because she was older.

Faulkner: Well, I'm gonna get Mildred too.

Reis: (inaudible)

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<sup>4</sup> There was a book club, my mother belonged. They charged a few cents per book per day and at monthly meetings decided which new books to buy with the collected money. Because of the number of men in the camp it was a thriving undertaking. (Information add by Mildred Reis during editing.)

Clark: I didn't know how they worked that but I know they did have [a library].

Reis: (inaudible)

Faulkner: Well maybe, Mildred if I could interview you by yourself on tape here.

(inaudible)

Faulkner: And how many kids were in school then?

Reis: Well, in the new school we had [12]. There was only 12 (?). Do you remember?

Clark: I thought there were more than that.

Reis: I remember when I was there, it was 12 and it was always through high school. And after that there was a group of (?). There were quite a few then. (?)<sup>5</sup>

Faulkner: What year did you come here?

Reis: I was in the [second] grade. And that was in - I don't know what year - was it 1919? And stayed until I was through the [first] year of high school, then I went outside and finished school.

Faulkner: Where did you go to school?

Reis: I went to school in Seattle, [Holy Names Academy].

Faulkner: Did you have relatives there or was Seattle a place that people picked to go?

Reis: No, that was a boarding school and I enjoyed it very much. People say how about the change, was

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<sup>5</sup> I went to McCarthy school one year, to the old one-room school in Kennecott second, third and fourth. Then fifth through ninth grade in the two room school. There were only twelve children when I went there, six per room, after five left there were more because so many young children started school. I went to Seattle in 1927 to Holy Names Academy. Mrs. Nieding, the camp's General Manager's wife was leaving too, to take her daughters to Seattle to go to private day school. The Nieding girls were my "Best friends" all through my years at Kennecott, so she saw me "settled" and they came often to see me on "visitor days". (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)



it hard and it was not. [No relatives, but we had friends there and the Nieding girls were there.]

Faulkner: You started to say about the reading room - there was a committee or a group that...

Reis: Well, the ladies would take turns, or however they chose it and they'd get together and decide what books and everyone paid a fee, so much a day, for their books and they'd gather this money together and buy new ones.

So they had a lending library. In that same building, they had [a dental office. And they would bring the milk up there and one lady who lived there pasteurized the milk in a room there].

(Inaudible)

Faulkner: It was blue?

Reis: Well that's what she said. She didn't feel it was very good compared to canned milk. [My mother felt that the cows were cooped up too much to give good milk. It took me a while to get used to plain milk when I went to Seattle.]

Faulkner: Cause that's what you were used to.

Reis: Yes.

Faulkner: Where would they buy that?

Reis: (inaudible)

Faulkner: Oh, the company (?). And we were talking about what you wore to school.

Reis: I wore blouses and skirts. [Wool dresses] and I had felt shoes and I had warm underwear [which I hated because it made my ankles look lumpy].

Faulkner: Would that be hot when you were sitting in school then?

Reis: I didn't think so. They must not have kept the school room that warm. [We wore layers of clothing to remove at school.]

Clark: On this (?) too.

Reis: That was a type of heavy coat, I wore mackinaw coats.



Faulkner: Did you wear pants to play?

Reis: I wore overalls.

Faulkner: Oh, really?

Reis: (inaudible)<sup>6</sup> ...skates.

Faulkner: Were they boot skates, or did they attach to your boots?

Reis: No, they were boots. My [mother] had a beautiful pair of skates and they looked so nice and my dad made them [out of a round saw blade and attached to her boots]. [She] was very proud of them, mine were boughten but were no nicer than hers.

Faulkner: You went to Seattle from here?

Reis: (inaudible)<sup>7</sup>.

Faulkner: Why did you leave?

Reis: (inaudible).

Faulkner: Did your parents move out to Seattle?

Reis: [Well, my dad stayed at Kennecott until 1934 then he went to Bremner Mining Co., near Chitina as a Master Mechanic and he was there - they wanted someone] (inaudible).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Yes, because denim is somewhat water-proof. We didn't have water-proof clothes then. The overalls were worn over my woolen clothes. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>7</sup> I went one year to boarding school, then back to Kennecott for the summer. In the fall mother and I went to live in Seattle and I graduated from Queen Anne High School in 1930. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>8</sup> He stayed there about a year when he got sick with a ruptured appendix-he was flown to Kennecott for an operation, He nearly did not survive because of the time it took waiting for the plane to see their distress signal. He came to Seattle and stayed with us that winter to recuperate. After that he worked at the Independence Mine in Hatcher's Pass near Anchorage and mother joined him there. By this time I had finished a business course at a business school and working as a private secretary for the manager of an insurance firm in Seattle. I married in

Faulkner: (?) special you remember about this.

Reis: (inaudible)

Clark: When you got the letters, if you wanted to come back, why didn't you try to come back?

Reis: Well, I didn't know what I would have done here. I had a very happy marriage, as I said.

Faulkner: I know there is a cemetery here but when someone died here, were they usually sent home?

Reis: If they had people to send them to. But like I said, a few young men had died up in the mine and they're buried down there [in the graveyard near camp.]

Faulkner: Had you been back before that?

Reis: What?

Faulkner: Have you been back to Kennecott before now?

Reis: Yes. [1972, 1980 and 1984.]<sup>9</sup>

Faulkner: Is there a connection here?

Reis: I don't know, but (inaudible).

Faulkner: Why did you decide to come back, Mary Ellen?

Clark: Well, it just seemed very special to me. [I remember] mostly happy times being here and it was really an opportunity to see some of the people I hadn't seen for such a long, long time and thought it was a wonderful thing for [the Kennicott Glacier Lodge] and the Park Service to do. And I (?) it as home. You know, I always looked on it really as home. Even now, even though I have lived other places.

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1940. In all I worked ten years and quit to raise two children. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>9</sup> I have been to Kennecott three times since I left. Ray and I drove up two times and one time we took the ferry to Haines and drove from there. Each time we flew in from Chitina to McCarthy. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing)



Reis: My mother always used to laugh [at me when we lived in Seattle because I called Kennecott home. I still do.]

Faulkner: When you lived here, did you think of this as a permanent place to live or did you know that it would just be temporary?

Reis: We knew, in my case, I knew it was coming but I just didn't want to go. (inaudible) I can remember the last time we left here, I was on the last car of the train and I had a friend who was Greek, Mike [Kalas], and then this day I was out in the back and Dad was waving to me and I was crying because I was leaving Dad and [Mike] came up and had a great big onion and a great big bandanna handkerchief and he was crying. He was making himself cry. That was kind of cute, you know.

Faulkner: Oh, that is.

Reis: There were so many nationalities, German, Italian, all kinds, because I know Dad [got men to save stamps for my stamp collection.]<sup>10</sup>

Faulkner: Were most of the people working here then single men?

Reis: Um huh. And I was talking to my husband one time and he (inaudible)<sup>11</sup>

Faulkner: Where do you live now?

Reis: I live on [Whidbey] Island, [Washington]. [ We moved into our summer home when my husband, Ray, retired in 1972.]

Faulkner: What do you especially remember here? If you were to say, what was your favorite thing about Kennecott?

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<sup>10</sup> I had a large collection which I gave to my son when he was old enough to enjoy collecting. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>11</sup> On our first visit my husband was amazed at the facilities they had for the men in the bunkhouses. Everything for their comfort and card tables and pool tables for their amusement. Ladies never went into the bunkhouses so that was the first time I had seen them too.

Reis: (inaudible)<sup>12</sup> You could go to houses and people and visit them and you were welcome everywhere and everybody treated you very nicely. (inaudible) I'd go to Mrs. [Overguard's] house because she made beautiful Russian rye bread and go to Mrs. [Olsen's] for cookies.

Clark: I think it was sort of a feeling of security. I don't really know why, just that things just pretty much went along from day to day and no startling changes happened. You had your friends and you knew that they were your friends. You could trust people and know that they really were your friends.

Faulkner: What would happen to people who caused trouble here?

Reis: Well, it's a private company and if they behaved [in a way the company did not like they'd] be fired. And if you're fired, you have to go. You have to leave.

Faulkner: So you didn't have to have a jail.

Reis: No. If you misbehaved in Cordova you'd have to go to jail there, I don't know. [I never heard of any crimes-men would be fired but we never knew why.]

Faulkner: What about - we were talking before about Christmas. What about the men at the mines? Would they ever come down for Christmas pageants or did they live their own life up there separate from...

Reis: I don't remember them coming.

Clark: I don't remember them coming down either.

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<sup>12</sup> I enjoyed the tennis court skating rink-playing our version of baseball in the summer (using only two bases as there weren't enough kids for a team). I enjoyed the freedom of going to visit dad in the powerhouse (being told to hold my hands behind my back so I wouldn't forget and touch something and get a shock). Walking through the sacking shed and talking to "Mike the ore sacker". I learned years later that his name was Mike Kalas



Reis: They had the day off, they had the Fourth of July and Christmas off- we had a beautiful Christmas Program everybody had to do something.<sup>13</sup> No, the men must have just made their own amusement up there. They probably had a very nice Christmas dinner for them and whatever they wanted to do.

Faulkner: What was your favorite meal?

Reis: (inaudible)

Clark: I think mine was a T-bone steak and [baked potato].

Reis: [My mother was Norwegian and cooked beautiful meals. I loved her cookies and she baked her own bread. I loved her cooking but refused to eat "lute fisk".]

Faulkner: Did your mom keep a garden at all - flowers or vegetables?

Reis: My dad did.<sup>14</sup>

Faulkner: Your dad did.

Clark: My mother had flowers, [my father and mother both worked in the vegetable garden].

Reis: They both worked in the garden. They loved it. When the lettuce came up [Dad and I would eat it rolled up with a little sugar on it]. It was so good.

Faulkner: Did the animals get the garden?

Reis: We had a fence around ours (inaudible). You know they used to let the horses run (?). They had a

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<sup>13</sup> All the school children had a part in the plays and each child had a poem to recite or a skit. I was chosen to sing and nearly died of stage fright! I think all this helped me when I took music and sang solos in my church. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

<sup>14</sup> He had a garden by the house and grew cabbages and radishes, lettuce, turnips, carrots, kale and potatoes. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)

big community garden. I don't know if they had that when you were here.<sup>15</sup>

Clark: Yes, (?) and anyone who wanted could have a plot in that [garden].

(inaudible)

Faulkner: Now where did she live?

(inaudible)

Clark: I can remember a lot of times we had the school picnic out there at [John Letendre's at First Dam] at the end of the school year. [John] dug a hole in the ground and built a fire and [put in] hot rocks, put the bean pot in [the hole] left it over night. [That is the way he cooked "beanhole beans".]

Faulkner: I thank you both very much.

(end of interview)

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<sup>15</sup> The hunting guides who lived in McCarthy let their horses run between hunting seasons-one time there were 18 horses in our garden. My dad made a picket fence, the horses never returned. I believe the horses belonged to Bill Slimpert-another friend of mine. The company had a large garden just below the Bonanza tram near the mill and near National Creek. A lot of men had small gardens there. (Information added by Mildred Reis during editing.)



The following information is in addition to the interview. It was provided by Mary Ellen Duggan Clark in a letter to the interviewer.

[This particular story goes along with the xeroxed picture provided by Ms. Clark. The photograph is located in the McCarthy Museum.]

The occasion was when there was a big lay-off at Kennecott, a few years before the final shut-down. My sister and I dressed in our "good" clothes and went with my parents to the train. One by one the men who were leaving came up and shook hands with each of us as we wished them well. Many of these men had worked many years for my father and they were very close to tears. By the end of the ritual my father was choked up and close to tears also.

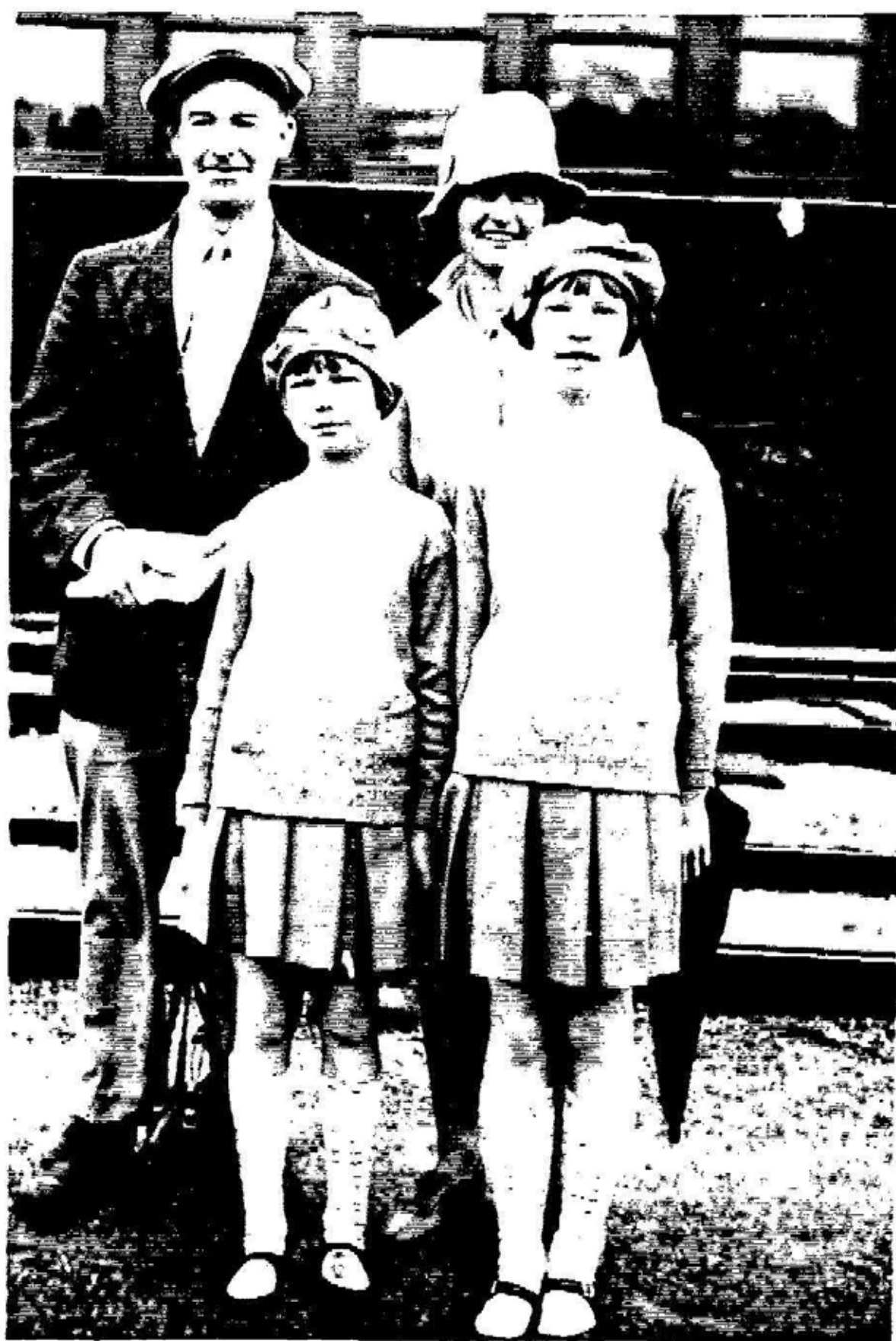
[Other additional information.]

In the same building with the library was the dairy. The barnman would bring the milk up from the barn on a two-wheeled cart that he pushed. The milk was pasteurized and bottled and taken to the store. The bottles had a narrow neck so that we could pour off the top milk for light cream. Heavy cream was not available. When we went to the states and my sister and I first had whipped cream we didn't know what it was, and didn't like it.

In the school room a corner was set aside with shelves for reading books. When we had finished our assignments we could read. We got some new books every year, and I looked forward to their arrival. Out in the hall--the big room between the two classrooms--there were long bookshelves. They contained a set of World Book Encyclopedia and the Book of Knowledge, as well as extra textbooks and supplies.

I have always heard that Kennecott students did well, and often even excelled, when they came outside to continue their education. It has been true in my own experience. I do not wish to brag, but I made Phi Beta Kappa.

One last thing--we used to have a saying about anyone who was a little touched in the head, "wacky", "He or she has missed too many boats". In other words, they had been out in the bush or away from civilization, too long. It no longer applies, with many roads and plane routes.



RAILROAD PLATFORM  
KENNECOTT, ALASKA

Donated By:  
Mary Ellen Duggan Clark

Location of Original:  
McCarthy Museum  
McCarthy, Alaska