

KENNECOTT KIDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

JAMES MCGAVOCK

AND

JEAN MCGAVOCK LAMB

JUNE 17, 1990 KENNECOTT, ALASKA

Interview Conducted By

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(tape 1, side 1)

Kennicott Glacier Lodge, Kennecott, Alaska, June 17, 1990. Oral history interview with James McGavock and Jean McGavock Lamb, brother and sister, who grew up in Kennecott, Alaska when the mill and mines were in operation. They are presently in Kennecott for the Kennecott Kids Reunion conducted at the Kennicott Glacier Lodge. The interview is being conducted by Ann Kain for the National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office.

Kain: How old were you when you were here at Kennecott?

McGavock: Well, I was probably brought here when I was just a few months old.

Kain: How long did you stay?

McGavock: I stayed until I was [almost 13] years old.

Kain: And the years?

McGavock: That was from 1924 till 1937.

Kain: You left before the mine closed.

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: The year before.

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: Where did you come here from?

McGavock: Well, of course, I was born in Seattle.

Kain: Was your father in mining there?

McGavock: No. He had worked at the Bremerton navy yard when some magnetic thing drew him to Alaska.

Kain: He wanted to come to Alaska so they came up here and this was an available job so . . .

McGavock: I suppose it sounded promising. This was probably the end of the rainbow.

Lamb: [And] the times were bad down below.

Kain: When you left here did he stay in mining or...

McGavock: Yes, he tried to (?).

Kain: What exactly was it he did?

McGavock: He was the master mechanic here.

Kain: Running all the machinery and...

McGavock: Responsible for a crew of men and responsible for keeping all of the machinery running and maintained both here at the camp and at the four mines.

Kain: Would he ride up on the tram to maintain the stuff up there at the mines?

McGavock: Oh, yes.

Kain: And Jean, your age when you were here and the years you were here?

Lamb: Well, I think I was brought up from Seattle, where I was born, at six weeks and lived here until 1937. Probably the late spring or early summer of 1937.

Kain: When you came up here, it was, for your dad, the ultimate to come to Alaska. He planned to stay.

McGavock: Umm.

Kain: When you left, where did you go?

McGavock: We settled in Denver, Colorado because that was my father's home. That was where he was born. [The family home was there and so was his sister.]

Kain: Why, if Alaska was his ultimate dream, he had enough of it and decided to leave then or...

McGavock: There was probably, literally, nothing else in Alaska at the time. [Mother wanted to leave.]

Kain: Nothing else for him to do.

Lamb: Well, nothing to support a family. He could have gone off and placer mined on Dan Creek or done things like that in other areas but to support a larger family - and I imagine there was some pressure from my mother to get outside where hopefully she thought things were better.

Kain: I understand you have some patented claims.

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: Up here or on Dan Creek?

McGavock: No, out on Chititu, at Rex Creek.

Kain: At Rex Creek. So did your dad work those claims when you were here?

McGavock: Very little, very little. Actually, as I recall those claims, a fellow by the name of [Chick] Nelson gave those patented placer claims out there on the [Cole] Bench to my mother and George Powell's mother. But to my knowledge very little was ever done with them. I think my father was waiting for the Chititu Mining Company to complete their operations before my father began his.

Kain: Why did you leave here and go to Denver a year before the mine closed? Did your father see an end coming to this?

McGavock: Oh, yes, I'm sure he saw the end, yes.

Kain: Decided to get out when he had other opportunities.

McGavock: Well, he thought well, I better go and start looking.

Kain: How was the adjustment for you kids when you went out?

McGavock: It was somewhat difficult going from the school here to the big schools outside. And, of course, we were isolated here. We never had any childhood diseases that children go through outside, since it's...

Lamb: Yes, I forgot about that.

McGavock: The measles, the mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough, etc.

Kain: Did you get all those things when you went out?

Lamb: We got - well, we never got the whooping cough as I recall, but we did get the measles - I don't think we got the mumps. They're harder to get. Chicken pox definitely came. I think that isolation of my childhood was responsible for my getting polio later on.

Kain: How old were you when you got polio?

Lamb: Twenty-six.

Kain: Twenty-six?

Lamb: But I think the fact that I had not enjoyed the usual exposure, because of the isolated life we lived up here and the cold, I don't know.

Kain: You were more susceptible.

Lamb: Yes, and I didn't have the kind of immunity that maybe the children outside had. But (?).

Kain: That's interesting.

McGavock: We were so isolated here - well, we could brag that we never got a cold in the winter time. There were no viruses or anything like that, no influenza.

Lamb: And I think the [nasty] Spanish flu hit Cordova in 1918. They closed the camp, I mean they closed off the camp, they further isolated the camp.

Kain: I understand that during a flu epidemic they opened up what they called a detention building or a detention camp as a quarantine location so they couldn't get back into camp and bring all that in.

Lamb: Something like that would desolate a community.

Kain: Yes. That was a real controlled situation, from what I understand. So socially - you had difficulty in school - adjusting to it?

Lamb: Well [certainly] to come from a one room schoolhouse to the Denver public school system was a shock.

Kain: But as far as - academically were you up to snuff with everyone else?

Lamb: Academically I think we were behind and it took a while to catch up. I think there is always a social [problem] and some do better with it than others. Yes, I'm sure.

Kain: Being slightly behind academically compounded with the social...

Lamb: What girls wear and how they behave and how - maybe girls feel it more than boys, but I think a teenager would feel it more than someone my age.

Kain: How long did it take you to get through that do you think?

Lamb: I don't think it took me more than a year.

Kain: How about you Jim?

McGavock: I don't think it took more than a year.

Kain: So you both made the adjustment within a years time?

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: That's an interesting thing that cropped up, you know, I've heard several people say that that was a problem, making a social adjustment when they left here, because it was an isolated community.... Did you travel around much while you were here?

Lamb: Well, we probably did more than others.

McGavock: (inaudible)

Kain: Well, that's (?).

Lamb: Dad had the only privately owned automobile in camp.

Kain: Right.

Lamb: That permitted us to maybe take Sunday drives or Dad would go down to McCarthy and take Jim along (?). It was strictly local and you can imagine what the road system such as it was.

Kain: Not a whole lot better than it is today.

Lamb: Well, it was better than it is today.

Kain: It was better than it is today?

Lamb: You could cross McCarthy Creek for one thing.

Kain: Yes.

McGavock: And drive out the Nizina Road and cross the Nizina River and actually get to Chititu and Dan Creek. And out of McCarthy you could drive up to Green Butte.

Lamb: And Baultoff Lake and do some fishing.

McGavock: Well, (?).

Kain: On the weekends you'd go out for (?) of fishing?

Lamb: Yes. Um humm.

Kain: Did you go camping at all over an extended period of time?

McGavock: No.

Lamb: I don't remember, except for that trip we took to Valdez, which of course was different.

McGavock: That wasn't what you'd call camping.

Lamb: No, that was in a lodge and hotel.

Kain: So, for the most part, your day trips you'd go out picnicking and go fishing and...

Lamb: Yes. Dad would go out hunting, I imagine, and be gone for [days]. No, we didn't do it.

Kain: Did you ever go outside, to the lower 48?

Lamb: I think we probably did more than some. Do you suppose it was as often as every other year or maybe ever two or three years?

McGavock: I just can't remember.

Lamb: I can remember a number of trips.

McGavock: I'm sure there were more trips than when we were born.

Kain: I see.

Lamb: I remember because I got seasick.

Kain: You don't remember how many times you went out then?

McGavock: I can't remember, really.

Kain: But you do remember going outside on several different occasions. And where did you go when you went?

Lamb: We went to Seattle and Mother's family lived in [Roslyn], which is just a hundred miles about east of [Seattle], so we went down to her family.

Kain: What about - you went to Valdez one time, did you ever go to Cordova at all on the train?

Lamb: Well yes, cause we had to, to go to Seattle. We would have to go to Cordova.

Kain: Cordova was enroute to the Lower Forty-eight.

Lamb: Was en route, um humm.

Kain: You didn't go to Cordova to shop or anything like that?

Lamb: No, I don't think - we certainly didn't. We'd go there on the way "Outside" or coming back.

McGavock: The one trip we made that you probably wouldn't call a local trip was [when] a man by the name of Carl Whittam was running Nabesna mine and he needed help mechanically so my father was given time off from his job here to go to Chitina where we rented a car. He took his family with him and we drove out the Richardson Highway and on to Nabesna where we spent about a week there living in a tent. Of course it had a wood floor. After he did all he could there for [Carl Whittam] we went to Valdez. And then back to Chitina. Of course we went by speeder on the railroad from [Kennecott] to Chitina.

Lamb: Cause we couldn't get there by the road.

Kain: So the train - did you ride (?) I mean to just go for a day or anything like that?

Lamb: No, but you had an adventure.

Kain: Did you stowaway on a train?

McGavock: No, no. That was (?).

Lamb: (inaudible)



McGavock: Do you want to hear that now? [The Wild Train Ride?]

Kain: Oh, yes.

McGavock: [The camp had been closed down for two or three years in the early 1930s. They decided to resume operations in 1935. The Company kept a train crew at Kennecott all winter while the railroad was closed down from Dec. to June, to move loaded ore cars to a siding near McCarthy and return some empties every two or three weeks. They would fill cars here at Kennecott in the sacking shed. They would stack the sacks up on the flat cars. When all the cars were loaded, they would take the full ones down to McCarthy and bring a few empties back. The engineer (Art Holt) seemed to think I was a nice kid and he would always beckon me to climb up in the cab while he switched the cars at Kennecott. One day he asked, "would you like to ride down to McCarthy with me tomorrow?" I said "sure". So when the time came I could hardly wait. It was a surprise to me that there were several women and children going along too, because there was limited room in the cab of a steam locomotive. There we were, we started out, going down the hill from camp. There is somewhat of a grade between Kennecott and McCarthy, and for some reason the brakes didn't work on the ore cars. Wow! Soon we were going 70 or 80 miles an hour. McCarthy just went by like a blur. There was a big long trestle at McCarthy that crossed the two forks of the Kennecott River, and we zipped across it. All the time we were plowing about two feet of snow. There is an upgrade after you get to the other side just near the Iverson farm and it slowed us down and we stopped. Backed up to the siding and dumped the ore cars, and picked up the empties and went back to McCarthy. The women were scared to death. They wouldn't ride the locomotive back with the engineer and crew. I thought the ride was kinda neat. I wasn't scared at all and they certainly gave some thought to throwing us children off in the snow banks on the way down, but they didn't do it.]

Lamb: The tail end of that story - he hadn't had permission to go.

McGavock: I didn't have permission to go. I guess I had not asked permission to go because I felt, well, I'd probably get a no.

Kain: So you'd rather go without permission.

McGavock: I tell you, of course, you know. A camp like this, why it wasn't long before that experience - everyone knew about it. Everybody learned about that through the mukluk telegraph (?). Well, I certainly was chastised for not asking permission because, you know, as I recall my father's attitude was boy, you're to be seen and not heard. I can remember him one time looking at me at the dinner table up there in the cottage and saying, "boy, you go down to Julius in the bunkhouse and get a haircut before you come to this dinner table again."

Kain: That sounds like in the early 60s with the long hair.

McGavock: Well, I wasn't that way, there was no long hair back in the '30s. It was just a case of if you let your short hair just get a little bit long why it didn't look very good at all to your elders.

Kain: That's right, you get it cut. Where did you live when you were here?

McGavock: We lived up on the hill. Up on the hill east of here is seven cottages, three in one group and four in the other. In the group of four, the southernmost cottage, number 19, is where we lived.

Kain: Number 19. Now that had indoor plumbing?

McGavock: Yes. That had indoor plumbing.

Kain: Was that the only house you lived in when you were here?

McGavock: No, no. In 1932 when they decided to close down pretty much and just keep a caretaker for us, they decided we're not even gonna pump steam up on the hill. So, we had to move down on the tracks north of the powerhouse.

Kain: I see.

McGavock: So we were there - I don't remember whether it was a year or two.

Lamb: I have a lot of trouble remembering that period. I remember that we lived there and I think it was

more than a year, but I wouldn't necessarily have had an understanding of what happened at that time. I just don't even remember the interior of the house very well, for some reason. The thing I remember about that house, like all the houses of course, [down] underneath were all these pipes, crawl space down there. There were mice. Jim and I used to go down there and catch mice with these sticks, until I got very tender about those poor little mousies meeting their demise down there. Besides, that wasn't too much fun. Strangely enough, that's the only thing I remember about that house.

Kain: The first house - when you came to Kennecott you lived...

Lamb: We lived up on the hill.

Kain: You didn't live in any of the apartments here or...

Lamb: No, no.

Kain: So, there was no waiting list for houses when you got here?

Lamb: Well, there may have been, because I think when Mother and Dad were first married in 1922 that they spent some months living in the staff house. So they certainly didn't move into number 19 immediately upon their marriage.

Kain: Your parents were here before the two of you were born?

Lamb: Oh, yes.

Kain: Did they meet here?

Lamb: And before they were married. They met here.

Kain: They met here and married here.

Lamb: They married in Cordova, but they met here. They eloped I think.

McGavock: [They had to go to Cordova to get married. No one in Kennecott or McCarthy could do it.]

Kain: Did both of your parents leave, or did your mother just go out to have you children?

Lamb: Mother, just Mother.

Kain: She went out and had you (?) and brought you back.

Lamb: And brought us back.

Kain: I see.

Lamb: And Dad stayed up here. Jim and I...

Kain: So you didn't come up as a family.

Lamb: No.

Kain: They came up as two singles.

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: And your mother, what did she do up here?

Lamb: She was a Registered Nurse.

Kain: And did she continue nursing after she was married?

Lamb: No, I don't think so.

Kain: Didn't nurse at all. Even before you children were born?

Lamb: No, I don't think so.

Kain: She stopped nursing as soon as they were married.

Lamb: Well, you see, by the time they were married - when she came back - of course, I guess I have to explain. She came up, we think in 1918, she was definitely here in 1919. She suffered some sort of an accident here from a patient with the DTs, presumably. He struck her in the breast and it necessitated her going outside where eventually she had surgery.

Kain: I see.

Lamb: And then I don't think she came back perhaps until 1922. She was visiting with friends here and she and Dad decided to get married. Of course, they had met before.

Kain: You mentioned a patient with DTs, referring to alcohol?

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: Was alcohol a problem here do you think?  
Alcoholism?

Lamb: It wasn't allowed in camp, except people had private access to it, a bottle of whatever. But I'm sure it wasn't allowed at the mine. If a miner wanted [booze], he had to get his time off and get to McCarthy.

McGavock: Well, they took their time and normally what happened at the mines was on pay day why there would be poker games up there and maybe one individual or two would end up with all the money and then those who ended up with all the money went to McCarthy for wine, women and song and when it was all over, they came back and went to work. The company decided well, this is the best arrangement, you can't have these miners, these workers, going on to Chitina or Cordova or even Seattle...

Lamb: And never coming back.

Kain: Right.

McGavock: And never coming back or maybe it would be a long time before they did come back. Just let them go down to McCarthy and have their fling and they'll straggle back and go to work.

Kain: Yes, they don't have to worry about them leaving and they don't have to worry about them having the alcohol and so forth here at camp.

McGavock: After they've blown all their money in McCarthy on wine, women and song, why they couldn't afford to go outside.

Kain: Right.

McGavock: There was no other alternative than to come back to work.

Kain: That's an interesting...

Lamb: There was no liquor publicly available at Kennecott.

Kain: Right.

Lamb: I'm sure there were private stocks.

Kain: How many other nurses were there?

Lamb: I'm not too sure about that, but I know when Mother came up in 1919 there would always be at least one or two other nurses in the pictures.

McGavock: I think generally there were three nurses.

Kain: And doctors?

McGavock: Just one doctor.

Kain: And did he do - was everything performed at the hospital, surgeries and everything else?

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: We already talked about childhood diseases and there pretty much were none here. What about other injuries and so forth?

McGavock: [I fell off a ladder and broke my arm and the doctor X-rayed it and set it. Then on another occasion, one Saturday, I'd been eating one of those real nutty candy bars previously and I came down with a real belly ache. I was dragging around and kind of complaining and my mother - I think she had to have the doctor come to the house.] I was kind of going down hill and well, by evening [the doctor] diagnosed it as appendicitis. [It was evening] by the time he decided that I had to go to the hospital. This was in the month of January - I remember the doctor - he made two or three trips up the hill and he was complaining. His lungs were getting frosted puffing up the hill just to check me.

Lamb: Just to check this little kid.

McGavock: [My father made a phone call and had the company truck] come up and take me down [to the hospital]. My father didn't like the doctor. He felt the doctor drank too much and he didn't want the doctor to operate on me.

Kain: That's understandable.

McGavock: Eventually he relented, even before they could perform the operation they only had two nurses so

they had to call for another one from McCarthy who had been an RN. She had to be brought up by dog team and sometime in the wee hours of the morning they started [operating on me].

Kain: So you had an appendectomy.

McGavock: [Yes.]

Lamb: (inaudible)

McGavock: When I woke up in the morning, well they even had [the appendix] on a stand beside the bed in a bottle of formaldehyde (?) a souvenir.

Lamb: I don't think Jim enjoyed the good health that I did, because I also remember he had his tonsils out and remember seeing you eat tons of tapioca pudding.

Kain: You think most of the work done in the hospital was mainly on injuries?

Lamb: Probably [work related] type injuries and things like that.

Kain: Now did you pay for the doctor?

McGavock: Oh, yes. I remember, I guess my father was charged about \$300 for that appendectomy and he about went through the roof. He was going to run Doc Toohey right out of town. Why, that was just way out of line.

Kain: So you paid for your medical services?

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: And the doctor, did he have a set rate do you know?

McGavock: I have no idea just what he had, but I do know after my dad made a fuss, Doc Toohey adjusted his fee.

Kain: Were people ever sent out of Kennecott for medical?

Lamb: I wouldn't be surprised if they were. Either that or the patients, if they were able, felt that they would rather go out. In the case of my mother's

going out for delivery. I don't think she had a lot of...

Kain: She chose to have you children "Outside" rather than here at Kennecott.

McGavock: But I'm sure there were some cases that could not be handled at this hospital. In fact, I remember someone in management being sent here back in the '30s and he came from Braden, Chile where Kennecott had an operation. And apparently he wasn't in too good of health and his health deteriorated after he got here. I can remember the superintendent and a manager coming up to our cottage one night and talking to my father and he said, "we got to get an airplane in here and get him out." And of course, my father had a ham radio and he could talk to Chitina or Cordova. So they got pilot, Harold Gillam, to come in with his plane, the "Pilgrim" and take some seats out so they could get a stretcher in there on the floor and took this poor guy down on a flat car with a speeder to McCarthy and put him on an [open] truck and [hauled him] up to the airstrip and [flew] him out [to Cordova and the next steamship for Seattle].

Kain: What about a dentist? Was there a dentist here?

McGavock: A dentist here just part time, just intermittently, just once in a while. The staff house annex had a dental office where there was a dental chair, but I see the dental chair sitting down in a McCarthy saloon [now].

Kain: Were there any other sources of medical assistance other than the hospital? McCarthy, was there a doctor in McCarthy?

McGavock: No.

Kain: No. So did the people in McCarthy come here?

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: Okay, I think we'll call it a good stopping spot right here while this is blinking and then we'll turn it over.



(tape 1, side 2)

Kain: We were talking a little bit about housing and so forth, did you have a garden?

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: A vegetable garden?

Lamb: A vegetable garden.

Kain: And who did the gardening?

Lamb: Was it prepared, did somebody prepare it for us, or did Dad do it or...

McGavock: I don't remember.

Lamb: We don't remember things like that and I can't particularly remember what was grown. I do know that I have an aversion to canned vegetables. I don't like any vegetables because of my Kennecott years.

Kain: None at all, not even fresh?

Lamb: Well, I guess [they are] a lot more palatable of course, but there was something about all those things I [ate] canned that [were] hard on me for some reason. I suppose the produce was the one thing that I would think of as negatively, although people had gardens here and during the winter time we had to do well on canned vegetables.

Kain: Did you have chores that you did around the house?

Lamb: I'm sure we did. Mother had to keep us busy somehow. Well, I know Jim chopped wood, I remember that. Mother would keep me busy in the kitchen, cooking the usual things and learning to embroider tea towels and things like that.

Kain: How about your father, was he pretty involved in work at home on his days off or...

McGavock: He pretty well busied himself with things outside the home, I would say. [There were no days off. Work everyday except 4th of July and Christmas.]

Kain: Yes.

McGavock: His job kept him pretty well tied up. Although, he was in touch with his job just through the telephone at home, which could tie him in with the mines.

Kain: Because of his position as [master mechanic] he needed to be on call to make sure things continued to run.

McGavock: Um humm. And then he established his ham radio station, which at first transmitted with Morse Code and then later on he upgraded it to voice. He did get pretty involved with that.

Kain: Did the two of you share a room or did they have you in different rooms?

Lamb: There were only two bedrooms in the upstairs of the cottages. Jim and I had the back bedroom and he had his bed against the back wall, toward the mountain, and I had mine on the front wall by the staircase and he used to make it pretty hard for me to go to sleep and [teased me a lot.] He...

Kain: And what about the heat upstairs?

Lamb: Steam heat.

Kain: There was steam heat upstairs as well.

Lamb: Well, it was certainly warm enough, but warm air rises. I don't actually remember the radiator in the room but it must have...

McGavock: I can't remember whether there was just a steam radiator in the bathroom and none in the bedroom or whether they put them in the bedrooms too.

Lamb: And I can't remember being particularly cold, there was no dash for the kitchen stove in the morning or something like that. It was comfortable.

Kain: What kind of stove for cooking?

Lamb: Wood stove.

McGavock: Probably an old [Monarch] wood stove.

Kain: And you helped your mother in the kitchen some? Did she cook differently in the summer? Did she barbecue, cook anything outside?

McGavock: No.

Lamb: I don't even remember using the word barbecue. We picnicked, you know, on these little tiny trips we took and things like that. But I don't remember her cooking differently. She was a good cook and she had access to I think quality meat [we/she] went to the meat market. We got good meat, well aged. [They don't] do it anymore.

McGavock: Well everyone did, because it cost so much to ship everything in that they only shipped the very best meat up here.

Kain: Did you pay a lot for that?

McGavock: I could not say.

Lamb: I imagine that we paid a fair amount for everything. We probably did.

Kain: Did you pay a tax for things?

Lamb: We had scrip.

McGavock: Um humm, what we got was scrip.

Kain: So on payday you traded in some of your money for scrip and then made your purchases that way.

Lamb: We also ate a lot of spruce hen and [game]. Tell her about that.

McGavock: Yes, in the fall we'd go out...

Kain: Go out hunting?

McGavock: ...and hunt for spruce hens.

Kain: Did you buy everything at the store, I mean, (?). What about clothing and furniture?

McGavock: Furniture - probably we bought very little, if anything. When it came to clothing, that pretty much was ordered from a mail order house like Sears Roebuck.

Kain: So clothing was pretty much ordered from "Outside."

Lamb: And of course, we had grandparents and aunts and uncles out side and I think they kept us well

supplied with gift clothing and toys. We never lacked for...

Kain: What about the miners? Did they have to order stuff out or did the company supply them with coveralls and cold weather (?)?

Lamb: No, I don't know that, but I rather suppose that if they did, they certainly paid for part of it out of their wages.

McGavock: I'm sure they did. The company store down here offered a number of things. They sold shoes and some clothes and I suppose it was primarily work clothes.

Lamb: What we children wore all summer, you know, was a pair of overalls. You know, the kind that...

Kain: Yes, bib overalls.

Lamb: Bib overalls, yes. And Mother did have a washing machine and I suppose those overalls went in the washing machine once a week.

Kain: Was it an electric washing machine?

Lamb: I'm sure it was.

McGavock: Yes.

Lamb: Was it? Was it battery?

McGavock: It was Savage electric washing machine.

Kain: A wringer, an electric wringer type or...

Lamb: (inaudible)

McGavock: Yes it did and I don't recall now whether it had a wringer or not. But it was a pretty old one.

Lamb: But I can remember it was out there in that shed, wasn't it, that's gone now?

McGavock: No, they used to keep it in the back kitchen and then wheel it in the kitchen to fill it and the way it was arranged, why, the cage in it swiveled so that it would tumble vertically to wash and then you turned it and it would spin when you wanted to get to a kind of a spinning cycle.

Kain: But it wasn't like the old Maytags?

Lamb: No.

McGavock: No.

Kain: Now, where did she get it? Did she order that from somewhere, or was it...

McGavock: I have no idea where that came from.

Kain: Where did your furniture come from?

McGavock: I don't know.

Lamb: Here. Well, don't you suppose that this was probably made here? All these same tables that you find in the cottages were probably made in [Kennecott].

McGavock: I think that is very likely.

Lamb: And all those captain chairs, they're all so much alike.

Kain: So the clothing you would order out, food you pretty much got here or grew yourself or hunted.

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: All the furniture was probably company owned then?

Lamb: Or company rented out or, not rented out so much - I heard somebody talk about the fact that they turned their furniture in when they left and got a certain percentage off of their payment back. So I'm not really sure how...

Kain: Then a kind of rental idea.

Lamb: I really don't know, that's my conjecture.

Kain: When you were talking about your mother working, I assume she lived in the staff house.

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: She was single and your father lived there as well.

McGavock: He lived in the staff house [annex].

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: Then you said something about when they married they live in there?

Lamb: In the staff house.

Kain: There was some married persons accommodations in there?

Lamb: Apparently there was, yes.

Kain: You were both pretty young when you left, so you didn't ever work here at all.

Lamb: No.

Kain: You were telling about your father being on call basically, because of his job. Do you remember any problems with labor management teams or, ah, did you talk about those things at home?

McGavock: He didn't talk about those kinds of things. I think if there were any labor problems, they were probably handled by someone higher in management, like the superintendent or manager.

Kain: What about people under him?

McGavock: Not any problems that I recall. I think most of the people that worked for him had mechanical experience or were good electricians and they seemed to be happy. In fact, the people who had the highest wage rate were mechanics and machinists. They made more money, as I recall, than miners did.

Kain: Skilled labor.

Lamb: Yes, yes.

Kain: What about school? You both attended school here.

McGavock: Yes.

Kain: One room school?

McGavock: It was a two room school, but while we attended, in the '30s, for the most part, they only utilized the one room.

Lamb: I only remember the one room.

Kain: What grades were you when you left?

Lamb: I - yes, first through third.

McGavock: I think I - was it the seventh or the eighth [when we left].

Kain: Could you have gone on if you had stayed?

McGavock: No. Beyond the eighth grade? No, I could not have.

Kain: So that would have been another consideration about it being time to pack up and move out to the lower 48.

Lamb: Um humm.

Kain: How many kids were in the classes? Do you remember?

McGavock: The last several years why, it was no more than five, six or seven. In fact in my case, from the first grade through the seventh grade I was all by myself. There was no one else in the grade [I was in].

Lamb: And I had one class[mate].

Kain: How many kids were in the building when school was in session, do you have any idea?

McGavock: No more than five, six or seven. I remember one year there were only about five.

Lamb: For some reason I think that last year I went that there might have been eight, cause there were three Morrises, a Watsjold and [Catherine] Howard and Jimmy McGavock and Jean [McGavock] and [Billy] Humphreys. That would add up to about eight.

McGavock: I'm sure it was under nine or ten.

Kain: Just one teacher?

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: Were there any other - did they offer any education for adults?

McGavock: Not that I know of.

Lamb: It seems to me, you know, communitywise other things went on. There was a reading club and they had some kind of a library and who knows what else they might have done. We just didn't take much notice of that as children.

Kain: Was there quite a social life here? Was that mainly tied to the school or did the school sponsor things, picnics and so forth?

Lamb: I would think the school would be basically the center of - well, certainly, for people with children. I know that there was a group that played bridge, or maybe they all did. They had some library and some kind of a reading club. I suppose it depended on who was here at the time and how much interest they had for community involvement.

Kain: We're talking about the adults' social activities, playing bridge and reading club and what not. Were the single adults included in the group as well as married?

Lamb: I imagine so, because certainly Nell McCann, who was single but she came up here, I presume was included to some extent.

Kain: Were there a lot of goings back and forth like you going over to another person's house for dinner and that type of thing?

Lamb: I don't remember going out to dinner so much, but I remember people coming after dinner.

Kain: After dinner, for the evening?

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: Just talking or playing cards or...

Lamb: Yes, they did that.

Kain: They'd come over for a visit.

Lamb: Um humm.

Kain: We already talked about what you did recreationwise. I've heard that there was a ball team that played with McCarthy.

Lamb: Yes.



Kain: Were kids included in that at all?

Lamb: No.

Kain: It was just strictly adults.

Lamb: Kids watched.

Kain: Did the women play on the team?

McGavock: No.

Kain: No?

McGavock: Also on the ball diamond in the winter time, the company created an ice skating rink.

Lamb: That was nice.

McGavock: There were provisions there for skating at night, artificial lighting, and they kept it cleared of snow and they'd even flood it with water to make it smooth if necessary. That was another social thing for people that liked to ice skate. There were a number of people here that were, Scandinavian or Danish.

Lamb: They were good skaters.

Kain: Were there a lot of people with different ethnic backgrounds?

McGavock: Oh, yes.

Kain: I'm not referring to, you know, the American melting pot (?) but someone that had come immediately from Europe.

McGavock: Oh, yes.

Kain: Quite a number of them.

Lamb: Particularly from Scandinavia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

Kain: And Switzerland? The Scandinavians and so forth, were they the miners, or tower workers or mill workers or...

McGavock: They were miners and some of them were utilized in the [yard gang and sacking shed] and in the (?) plant.

Kain: So they were just - they were scattered among the different rankings, social rankings and job - white collar just as much as anybody else. What about - did the men from the mines come down and recreate with you people at all?

McGavock: No, no, they did not. They, as a rule, passed right through and made a beeline for McCarthy.

Kain: Okay, so you didn't...

Lamb: So we really had no contact as children.

Kain: Your social life here included those living here.

Lamb: Here.

Kain: The people up in the mines - you dealt with people that - or did things with people from the mill, flotation plant, hospital, power plant. There was very little contact with the miners at the mine. They just came down and passed on through and passed on through going back up, huh. When you left here, did you keep in touch with other people from Kennecott?

Lamb: Well, I've stayed in touch with - I'm sure my parents did. You know, throughout their lives, although it lessened as the years went by, but maintained contact.

McGavock: There was a tradition to always exchange Christmas cards and write a letter or note along with that. And if any former Kennecott person or Alaskan person knew you were living in Kookoomongo why, they generally made an effort to look you up and visit with you.

Kain: When they were passing through.

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: Have you been up here since you left?

McGavock: Yes, in '83.

Kain: I mean aside from...

Lamb: Yes.

Kain: So '83, was that the first time you had come back?

Lamb: That was the first time.

Kain: And this is the second time back.

Lamb: This is Jim's second time, but it is my third.

Kain: Oh.

Lamb: I made the trip in '86.

Kain: Oh, you were here in '86. And how did you find it?

Lamb: Well, pretty much as we expected. You know, we have always been alert for Kennecott news and history and occasionally we'd see things in the National Geographic. Of course, we are ardent subscribers to the Alaska Magazine and the Alaska Geographic and I think we were prepared to see what we saw. And frankly, surprised to some extent that it is in as good condition as it is.

Kain: Yes, yes.

Lamb: It's just that we lament that they ever started to take it apart.

Kain: One other thing I was thinking of when you mentioned the Christmas cards. What did you do on holidays while here?

McGavock: Well, there were only two holidays that workers got off, and I'm sure it was without pay, [they were the] Fourth of July and Christmas. Now, on Christmas Eve the school always put on a play or a program in the social hall and then after that Santa Claus distributed the gifts that the company provided.

Kain: What kind of gifts did you get from your parents?

Lamb: It's hard for me to segregate it out, you know, what I got from whom. Can you remember the company gift?

McGavock: I really can't.

Lamb: Were the roller skates the company gift? Or something like that. That beautiful doll I got was from Grandmother Scobie and George, but apparently, you know, gifts were given like that. It is hard for me to separate out who gave what.

Not much ta-do was made about it. I guess we were in the reception mode.

Kain: What about the Fourth of July, was it a big celebration? Fireworks and...

McGavock: No fireworks that I ever recall. The big event was the baseball game.

Kain: The Fourth of July baseball game.

Lamb: Yes, the baseball game, and for kids the races.

McGavock: I don't even remember whether they had a picnic or anything like that on the Fourth of July.

Lamb: They don't.

Kain: There were races and baseball games and that's pretty much all you remember.

Lamb: And I don't remember if they provided food or anything. I remember a big washtub of strawberry ice cream provided for some school function. And I think I remember it because I don't recall we ate strawberry ice cream at home. We had a lot of homemade ice cream but strawberry was something different from (?). A washtub, you know, I mean...

Kain: Mounds, huh?

Lamb: Mounds of this strawberry stuff, I never forgot it.

Kain: There were just you two children and your parents?

Lamb: Yes. And a dog.

Kain: Jim mentioned heading down to the cemetery shortly, and I was wondering if you had any relatives buried there?

Lamb: No, no.

Kain: Do you recall anyone dying here at Kennecott, just an acquaintance or...?

Lamb: I don't, but I bet Jim does.

Kain: What were the procedures?

McGavock:

I really didn't know the man that well, but he did work here in camp. I believe it was in the summer time and he went to McCarthy. Workers generally walked to McCarthy and had their fun and whatever and then had to walk back. Walking back, he was into his cups and an ore train was coming down and he was laying on the tracks, probably passed out and he got [run over] by the train and he lost both legs. And the train crew notified Kennecott about the accident when they got into McCarthy they sent a company truck down to pick him up, he was dead. No one knew who it was until the truck got back - my electrician friend said, he jumped up on the truck and took the tarp off and it was so-and-so and he was gonna be our pitcher for the next baseball game. Well, they took him over to the company hospital. I knew nothing of this at the time. Generally, I had my ear to the ground and didn't miss anything, but (?) the superintendent called my father [at home]. When he would leave the house, I'd either go with him or trail along behind. He informed me that I wasn't to come. So I watched him and he went down to the bunk house and got several men and walked over to the hospital and they came out carrying a stretcher, covered, and took it to the carpenter shop. I knew that Chris Jensen, who was the chief carpenter always kept several coffins there. He had made them, these were not just an ordinary wooden box. Anyway, that worker was buried in the Kennecott cemetery. No relative could afford to have him shipped outside for burial.

Kain:

Did they conduct a funeral service?

McGavock:

I don't [know], it was probably just a grave side service because we didn't have any clergy or church.

Lamb:

Just visiting people coming up.

Kain:

You had a visiting minister that would come occasionally and that's the only time there were services?

Lamb:

Um humm.

Kain:

You don't recall any other funeral or anything like that?

McGavock:

No, I don't.

Kain: That's interesting. The two of you are just going to walk down to the cemetery just to look, huh?

McGavock: Just to look. I had heard that Rich [Kirkwood] has maintained it, you know. It's right on the edge of the glacier. I think, I'm not certain, but George Powell was at Kennecott. He is here. His father was killed here and he is either buried in the Kennecott cemetery or the McCarthy cemetery. George has never talked about it.

Kain: Do you know what happened to his father?

McGavock: Then of course his mother remarried. I believe it was an accident.

Lamb: I gather that it was an accident, but I don't know if it was a mine accident or a mill accident here.

Kain: You don't know where he worked?

McGavock: No, I don't.

Lamb: He doesn't seem to talk about it.

Kain: Well, I think that pretty much covers what I was hoping to cover.

Lamb: Well, good.

Kain: And I appreciate your giving us the time and information and, like I said, these tapes will be made available for anyone from the UAF Archives. Thank you very much.

(end of interview)