

Interview with Carl Heflinger

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program

July 19, 2012, Fairbanks, Alaska

Interviewed by Janis Kozlowski and Eileen Devinney, National Park Service
Transcribed by Professional Transcripts

This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Carl Heflinger was recorded with his permission on a digital recorder and preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and on video and preserved in HD and mpeg-4 format. The interview is on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.

The transcript has been lightly edited.

(The dictation starts out with dialogue between Janis and Eileen before the interview starts.)

0:00:00.1 Dialogue before interview begins

Janis Kozlowski:what we're saying.

Eileen Devinney: That's okay.

Janis Kozlowski: Should we put that over here.....

Eileen Devinney: Yeah, go ahead. If you want to move the papers aside and just set it right there, that should be fine. That's just audio and then this one does video and audio.

Carl Heflinger: You could put this back over here and sit down in this if you want.

Eileen Devinney: It's okay, because I have to pay attention to when we run out of tape and things like that, so I'm good.

Janis Kozlowski: You sure?

Eileen Devinney: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Eileen Devinney: You should be good to go.

Janis Kozlowski: Ready?

Eileen Devinney: Mm-hmm.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

0:00:37.8 Introduction to interview

Janis Kozlowski: So, today is July 19, 2012, and we're at the Pioneer Home in Fairbanks. I'm Janis Kozlowski with the National Parks Service and Eileen Devinney is also here with the National Parks Service. We're talking with Carl Heflinger. Mr. Heflinger, is it okay if we videotape you today?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, it's okay.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, great. So, could you tell me, did you grow up in Alaska or -- or somewhere else in the United States?

Carl Heflinger: Western Washington. I grew up in Western Washington, came to Alaska in 1932, so I guess I was 20 years old when I came here.

Janis Kozlowski: And what made you come up to Alaska?

0:01:23.5 Moving to Alaska in 1932

Carl Heflinger: We had a Depression and it started about in '29. They had a stock market crash and then it developed into an extended Depression. The Depression lasted until World War II; practically all of the '30s so it was pretty hard to get work in the States.

Janis Kozlowski: So, were there jobs in Alaska at the time?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, the -- at the time that I came up here, the Fairbanks Exploration Company was building dredges and there was -- things were pretty good up here.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. So you actually came to Fairbanks at the -- when you came to Alaska?

Carl Heflinger: No. No, I spent two or three years in Anchorage before I came to Fairbanks.

Janis Kozlowski: What kind of work did you do in Anchorage?

0:02:33.5 Working in Anchorage cutting wood

Carl Heflinger: I started to work for nothing for a while, just kind of to get my food, with a fellow who sold wood and then I got a job for a couple months and I bought a bunch of tools from Sears and Roebuck and, in fact, I spent all the money I made on that two-month job on tools. Then, after I got the tools, I bought an old Ford truck and..... I had -- before I left the States I had a 1925 Ford Coupe that was in real good condition and after I got the tools I called a friend of mine named Harry and I told him if he'd get me a 4-foot circular saw and an arbor I'd give him that Ford. So, he took me up on it. He sent me that and then I used my tools to build a -- a saw -- a circular saw, and I started sawing wood for people in Anchorage. They -- they got the wood in long lengths from the woodcutters. Then they needed somebody to saw it into lengths that they could put in their stove, so I did pretty good sawing wood.

0:04:32.7 Taking a freight train to Fairbanks to go into the mining business

Carl Heflinger: I made pretty good money and after I got -- I thought I was rich enough, I figured I'd go to Fairbanks and get in the mining business, so I -- I even bought a ticket to get to Fairbanks. When I came from Seward to Anchorage, I got on a freight train and somebody had a nice new sedan on one of the flat cars. I got in there and sat in that sedan and rode to Anchorage from Seward just like a king (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: Nice and warm and comfortable. So, that's the way I got to Anchorage, but I was rich enough by the time I got through with sawing wood in Anchorage that I could -- I bought a ticket even to go to Fairbanks.

Janis Kozlowski: A train ticket?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, I rode in those cars just like everybody else.

Janis Kozlowski: Were they fancy trains?

Carl Heflinger: In those days it took two days to get to Fairbanks. We came to - to Curry and stayed all night at Curry and then the next day we went on to Fairbanks. That's the way all the scheduled -- the trains were scheduled those days.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you stay at a hotel in Curry or on the train?

Carl Heflinger: No, in a hotel.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: They had a regular hotel there for that purpose. I don't know where it -- what's there now, but that's what the place was called, Curry. Now I guess they go all the way through with the train and don't stop any place.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. So what did you find when you arrived in Fairbanks?

0:06:50.7 Mining in Fairbanks

Carl Heflinger: Oh, I found a guy who mined and I worked for him and he couldn't pay me. He was a good guy though, and one day he said that there's a claim on 9 below. He said since I can't pay you, we'll go in half and stake it. So we staked the claim and I started prospecting on it. I worked all one winter climbing the ladder and I sluiced my dump and I had 35 dollars for my winter's work. Then I went to work over at Fairbanks Creek and made some more money and went back and I sunk another hole. I had some good pay. The F. E. Company was just moving in below me and they didn't want me -- I drift mined one winter there. I was going to go and sink another hole and drift mine and keep on, and they didn't want me there because they were going to mine below me, so they bought me out.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that profitable for you?

Carl Heflinger: Well, it was okay. I -- I was able then to buy into a mining company that was mining on the surface with machinery and I bought into that company and from then on I kept mining with machinery.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you -- did you grow up learning about mining, or was this kind of a -- a new endeavor for you?

0:09:08.2 Growing up in the coal mining town of Durham, Washington

Carl Heflinger: I was born in a -- in a company town called Durham. It was just like the one Ernie Ford sings about. The company store and all that. That was the..... Company owned everything.

Janis Kozlowski: Yep. Give your pay to the company store.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, my dad was a coal miner.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: And Durham was a coal mine.

Janis Kozlowski: So you had an idea what you were doing. You had an idea about mining then. You had grown up around mining operations.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. That's the -- that was my only thing I wanted to do.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

0:10:07.6 Youth had to work during the Depression

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. And in those days things weren't very good, especially in the 1930s. It was hard to get work. I became a high school dropout of course; went to work instead of going to school. There was no money anyway.

Janis Kozlowski: It was more important to eat than be educated, right?

Carl Heflinger: Well, it was then anyway.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: The schools I went to were inhabited by kids that would start chewing tobacco when they were in the 5th grade and when they'd get in the 6th grade they'd go to the logging camps and go to work in the logging camps.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that's awfully young.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, a 6th-grade education was about the average for the boys, and.....

Janis Kozlowski: So, did you start working that young also?

Carl Heflinger: I started working when I was 15, in a saw mill. That was before the Great Depression. We -- they -- we were getting paid \$3.60 a day, and after the Depression set in they were hiring people for 50 cents a day and that's when I pulled out and came to Alaska.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. The wages were better in Alaska? There were maybe more jobs and the wages were higher?

Carl Heflinger: There was -- well, there were better conditions, yeah. That was when the mining companies were building their dredges and everything. It was pretty good in Alaska at that time.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. So, did you -- you kept mining for a while and then -- then what -- what happened? Did you end up -- do I understand that you went into military service at some point?

Carl Heflinger: What?

Janis Kozlowski: Did you go into the military at -- at one point?

0:12:31.6 Enlisting in the Air Force in 1942

Carl Heflinger: Well, yeah. It was -- I went -- I enlisted in the Air Force and in '52 -- in '42.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: And I spent three-and-a-half years in the service.

Janis Kozlowski: What did -- what did you do in the military? What was your role?

0:13:05.9 Working on the Russian Lend-Lease planes

Carl Heflinger: The first year I was in the military I worked on the Russian Lend-Lease planes.

Janis Kozlowski: Out of Fairbanks?

Carl Heflinger: Uh-huh.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, they were delivered here by civilian pilots from Great Falls, Montana, and we gave them an inspection here before the Soviet military picked them up here and flew them over to Siberia.

Janis Kozlowski: So your job was as like an aircraft mechanic, to check the airplane over?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, but mostly my work was laying underneath them and tightening up leaky hoses and stuff (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) Did you see some interesting airplanes come through?

Carl Heflinger: Well, we had -- we worked on B-25s and P-39s and -- and A-20s. A-20s were light bombers and B-25s were bombers. P-38s were fighter planes. I worked on those at night for ten months.

Janis Kozlowski: Did -- did you see the pilots that brought the planes in or see the Russian pilots that took them?

0:14:40.3 Starting the planes with the battery carts

Carl Heflinger: Every morning we had to wheel the planes out on the apron and we -- each mechanic had two planes that he had to energize with a battery car. The Colonel stood up in front of the hangar doors, even in 50 below weather with his ears sticking out, his Colonel's mink hat on, and he watched the flights take off. It was kind of a hectic situation when we sent those flights off. We each had a battery cart and we -- we had -- were assigned a plane to energize and we'd energize one and then energize the other, and those guys would -- we'd energize one then they'd start the engine and then somehow he would goose the engine pretty good and they didn't have very good seals for the struts, and now and then in the cold weather the -- they'd goose those engines and the struts would break through and then the nose would go down and then take about that much of the end of the props off.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Carl Heflinger: That would happen every now and then. That would make an awful clatter.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) And you probably couldn't talk to the Russian pilots to avoid that.....

Carl Heflinger: No, oh no. No, no, no.

Janis Kozlowski: So they didn't -- didn't know better.

Carl Heflinger: No, we didn't talk to them at all. Unh-hunh. No, they -- they just took those planes and flew them over to Siberia.

Janis Kozlowski: Did some of them get off the ground and then crash?

0:16:49.0 Hazards of the belly tank

Carl Heflinger: Well, every one of them carried a 50-gallon belly tank made out of duct tape and fiber and we had a -- we had to take that down every time we went to work on the -- the inner part of the plane, and when we put them back up there was a tube that stuck up out of the belly tank and then we had a hole we had to get that tube in and sometimes the tube would bend and you'd put it up there and you didn't know it, and then when they flew, they'd land in the Bering Sea.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: Because they -- they -- you couldn't tell whether it was properly installed or not.

Janis Kozlowski: Did that happen very often?

Carl Heflinger: No, not very often, but it did happen.

Janis Kozlowski: Because that's a long, cold swim (laughter).

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, I guess they just went to the bottom.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Eileen Devinney: So they didn't stop on the way? They just flew from Fairbanks to Russia? Did they have a.....

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, they -- they had a field at Nome.....

Eileen Devinney: Okay.

Carl Heflinger:where they could land in an emergency, and one at Galena. So, as far as we were concerned, they had pretty good landings, but I don't know what they did in Siberia.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. When the planes came in to Fairbanks, did some -
- were some of them flown in from Great Falls by women pilots?

0:18:40.9 Women pilots in Fairbanks

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah, there were two of our famous women here. I guess one of them might be alive yet. That was Julia Hunter and Evelyn.....

Janis Kozlowski: Wood?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah. That was the two that I know that flew planes up here.

Janis Kozlowski: That was a rarity at the time, wasn't it, seeing women pilots?

Carl Heflinger: Mmmm, yeah, I guess it was at the time of Amelia Earhart and some of those famous pilots.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: Women always, as far as I know, were always interested in aviation. No reason why they couldn't fly a plane just as well as a man.

Janis Kozlowski: I think so too (laughter). When the planes came in -- in from Great Falls, you said you had to check them out before they went on. Did you see any particular problems that stood out when they showed up? Did certain airplanes have, you know, common problems with them?

0:20:03.9 Coolant used in the planes

Carl Heflinger: No, not really. They all -- all had Rolls Royce 12-cylinder engines in them and they were cooled with coolant. That's before any of us ever had antifreeze. They were all cooled with antifreeze. It was clear. Ethylene glycol is what they had in the engines and mostly the -- they didn't have very good -- they didn't have very good hoses. There was mostly rubber and when it

got cold the hoses would get stiff and leak, and then we'd have to tighten them up. After a while they got neoprene and the neoprene was then the whole equipment. Rubber would shrink and then leak. That's mostly what we had to do. And that's where we ran into the problem with the 50-gallon reserve tank that we had to take down and put back up again.

Janis Kozlowski: Was part of your job to do any kind of winterization of the airplane?

Carl Heflinger: Well, it was winterized as far as the engine was concerned with ethylene glycol and otherwise, no, as far as I know. There was nothing else done. They -- they had their oil or whatever they wanted to use. It wasn't very good those days, but they just had to keep it warm.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: When the planes came in, they didn't stay in Fairbanks; only about one night. We all worked at night and got them ready and put them out on the flight apron and they took them away the next day.

Janis Kozlowski: So, you saw a lot of planes come through?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, oh yeah. I don't know..... I think I had it written in here how many went through.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, are you in -- you're in this book?

0:22:41.9 Participating in the book, Uncle Sam Wants You

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. It's a book called, Uncle Sam Wants You, and it's about all of the local boys where I was raised and what they did when they got in the service.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I want to get one of those. Do you -- do you think they have them at the bookstore or do you have to get them in your local hometown? 1999.

Carl Heflinger: I don't..... Well, they're at the Renton Historical Society.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Carl Heflinger: So..... And the book is by Barbara Nilson, I guess.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Carl Heflinger: I don't know. You can read what it says there.

Janis Kozlowski: Nilson. Okay. Okay, I can track that down.

Carl Heflinger: I don't know if they'd have any more..... This lady came around and interviewed us all, but I think I have in here how many planes we -- we put over. The American pilots delivered an estimated 7000 to 7500 planes directly from the lower 48 factories to the Russians, who had to approve the planes before they were flown to Siberia. It was considered a great honor for a Russian pilot to come to America and fly the planes back to his homeland and generally things went well. Well, I -- that's about all I've got on that.

Eileen Devinney: I imagine it was seven days a week people working all the time taking care of those planes.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, well we were -- for quite a while we were in a war zone and we had to work seven days a week.

Janis Kozlowski: Is this -- is this fellow here -- is that your brother, or is he any relation?

0:25:38.2 The Heflinger brothers in the military

Carl Heflinger: That's my brother, Harold.

Janis Kozlowski: So he worked on the highway while you were in Fairbanks?

Carl Heflinger: He worked on the highway when he was in the Army.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Carl Heflinger: And this poor fellow is my brother, Arthur. He -- we were all here in Fairbanks when we enlisted and Arthur paid his way out to the States, so he didn't want to serve here. They made us serve here because we -- we were able -- we were used to the cold and we were able to adapt to it and help them out, but Arthur paid his way outside and they sent him to Texas and -- and trained him in Texas and then they shipped him to the Aleutian Islands (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: (Laughter.) Umnak.

Janis Kozlowski: I bet he wasn't happy about that (laughter)!

Carl Heflinger: Then the poor guy had to serve there all the rest of the war.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right? What did he do at Umnak?

Carl Heflinger: Hmm?

Janis Kozlowski: What did he do at Umnak?

Carl Heflinger: I don't know. He said the wind blew his -- the top off of his mess hall one time when they were eating.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) So all three -- three boys served in the World War II?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: In Alaska?

Carl Heflinger: Uh, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Or Canada maybe.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, Arthur of course, against his will.

Janis Kozlowski: And they must have moved after -- after the war was over, and you stayed and they left.

0:27:32.3 Arthur Heflinger married a woman from the Philippines

Carl Heflinger: Uh, no. Arthur stayed here for years and when he got old, well, it was 60 or so, he met up with some Filipino guys and they got him to marry a 20-year -- 21-year-old virgin. (Laughter.) I guess one of their cousins or something (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: Anyway, the damn fool, he married her and he got her over from the Philippines and -- and as soon as -- she got pregnant, but as soon as she got her citizenship she dumped him.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Carl Heflinger: And -- but the girl that was born, she was pretty little thing. She stayed more or less with Arthur than with her mother. She turned out good.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm. So did you say you worked just ten months on the Lend-Lease program?

Carl Heflinger: Mm-hmm.

Janis Kozlowski: And then -- then what did you do?

0:28:50.3 Working in the fuel service business

Carl Heflinger: Oh, I went to -- I-- got appointed to be a crew chief on an L-5 airplane and -- and it was wrecked over by Blair Lake and I kept sitting around waiting for -- to do something about the airplane and this was -- in fact, I was put in the search and rescue squadron and we had a guy named Colonel -- Major Ragle, called him Whispering Joe. I was sitting around, sitting around. I never was very good at sitting around, and I went to Joe and I told him I'd like to get transferred outside. The next thing I knew I was in the fuel service business taking care of fuel trucks that fueled the airplanes and that's where I had to stay.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that here in Fairbanks?

Carl Heflinger: Mm-hmm. Yeah, when -- all -- pretty near all of us old timers in Fairbanks had to stay here.

Janis Kozlowski: So they just found a different job for you, but not a new location.

Carl Heflinger: They made us stay here.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. He transferred me over to the fuel service and -- and then I got transferred into the ferry command after that.

Janis Kozlowski: What was the ferry command?

Carl Heflinger: They were the people who ferried these planes up for the Russians and everything.

Janis Kozlowski: So what -- what did you do then?

Carl Heflinger: Well, that's when I worked on those planes at night.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, that's when you were inspecting them and.....

Carl Heflinger: I got it backwards. I was transferred to the ferry command after that.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Carl Heflinger: Then I had to work -- worked in fuel service. That's where we fueled up the airplanes and did all the mechanic work on the tankers that haul the fuel to the airplanes.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

0:31:23.6 Going to Great Falls to be discharged

Carl Heflinger: That's where I ended up I guess. I think I ended up in Great Falls. After the war was over they shipped all of us outside. They wouldn't discharge us here.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: I don't know why they did that. They just -- they -- they said here you guys got to serve at home and -- and everything and now we're going to just get rid of you out of here. And we didn't serve at home because we -- we had any choice, but anyway that's the way they felt, like we were given a great privilege by serving at home.

Janis Kozlowski: So they sent you to Great Falls, discharged you?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, that was out of the -- what they -- out of the wing -- what they called the wing. Great Falls..... I ultimately was shipped to Portland Army Air Base and discharged.

Janis Kozlowski: And then did they leave you there and you had to find your way back home, or did they pay for your way?

Carl Heflinger: No, I paid my own way back.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) That's the darndest thing, isn't it?

Carl Heflinger: Well, it was something to do with because I served in Alaska. I wasn't allowed transportation home.

Eileen Devinney: I think Bob Ingram said that you couldn't be discharged in Alaska. You had -- in the territory. You had to go back to the States to be discharged. That's what he said.

Carl Heflinger: I think that's the way it was.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, that's funny that you had to -- had to get your way back home when you'd been here.....

Eileen Devinney: The whole time.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski:to start with.

Carl Heflinger: That's the way it was.

Janis Kozlowski: So, you ended up -- you came back to Fairbanks then after your discharge?

Carl Heflinger: Mm-hmm.

Janis Kozlowski: And then -- then what did you do? Did you go back in to mining?

0:33:37.9 Returning to mining after being discharged

Carl Heflinger: Well, yeah, I already -- already owned my share in the mining company and went back to mining again.

Janis Kozlowski: Which mining company was that?

Carl Heflinger: This one we called it Fish Creek Mining Company. That was just a little dinky company. You'd never find anything about it.

Janis Kozlowski: Really?

Carl Heflinger: From there on I -- I got acquainted with Chuck Herbert. Chuck was an engineer and he got me a lease with Livengood Placers. We had about 365 claims I took care of and I mined on 2 and 2A, and 4, and 5, and 6, and I -- I found some pretty good pay. I think you can see one of my cleanups out on the wall outside the door.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, outside the door?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, I mined there on Livengood for a long time, until 1998.

Janis Kozlowski: So you stuck with it for a long time?

Carl Heflinger: Oh, yeah, it was my profession.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, I bet you wish you had -- do you still have mine shares? With gold being so high I bet -- bet you wish you did anyway, right?

Carl Heflinger: No, I don't have..... I never bought any mining shares. They're no good. They don't -- they don't pay you anything.

Janis Kozlowski: They don't?

Carl Heflinger: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh (laughter.)

0:35:47.1 Meeting and marrying his wife in 1944

Carl Heflinger: (Laughter.) I got married when I was in the Army.

Janis Kozlowski: Where did you meet your wife?

Carl Heflinger: I -- she was an engineer working for the engineers. She -- she came from San Francisco to Edmonton and she worked for Colonel Clifford when they were building the Alcan Highway, and she got transferred while still working in the engineers. She got transferred to Skagway and then she got transferred to

Fairbanks. I met her in Fairbanks. That was in '44. I was a staff sergeant and we got married in '44. I was still in the service.

Janis Kozlowski: She obviously liked it here too?

Carl Heflinger: Hmm?

Janis Kozlowski: She obviously like it here too and wanted to stay?

Carl Heflinger: Dorothy, after we got married and we got kind of halfway well to do, I told her we'd go and live in the States in the wintertime and mine up here in the summer and she wouldn't do it.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter). She just wanted to stay here. Did you have kids?

0:37:29.3 Mr. and Mrs. Heflinger's family

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, we had four. They're up there.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: That's in '72.

Janis Kozlowski: That's a good-looking bunch of kids.

Carl Heflinger: They all turned out good.

Janis Kozlowski: Do any of them live here?

Carl Heflinger: Hmm?

Janis Kozlowski: Do they -- do any of your kids live in Fairbanks?

Carl Heflinger: Two of them. David and Fred are here. Maryanne and Bruce are out in the States. Bruce ended up to be a scholar. He got a PhD from MIT.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh my gosh! Must've raised those kids right. They were -- they were successful.

Carl Heflinger: He was awful smart. The rest of the kids weren't quite as smart.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) He took after you, right? (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: We -- we put them all through college.

Janis Kozlowski: You must've seen a lot of changes in Alaska over the time that you've lived here?

Carl Heflinger: Hmm?

Janis Kozlowski: You must've seen a lot of changes in Alaska over the time you've lived here.

0:39:02.8 Changes in Fairbanks over the years

Carl Heflinger: When I first came here, Fairbanks was wide open, gambling 24 hours a day. Then dusty streets and sidewalk -- plank sidewalks. And they -- they did that until the war, and then they shut that gambling down when the soldiers came.

Janis Kozlowski: So the -- the military really changed the town.

Carl Heflinger: Yes, they changed it radically.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. Was that -- was that good?

Carl Heflinger: I didn't think so at the time (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: We were having too much fun (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: Did they impose a lot of rules on the town?

Carl Heflinger: I don't think they imposed them. I just think that the town got together with the military and they did whatever they thought was needed, and one of the things they thought was needed was that gambling, I guess, that stopped.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: And I think the -- I think they got rid of the whores. They had them all on 4th Avenue. There were in little cabins and they really didn't get rid of them. I guess they just spread them all over town.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: That's the one thing that happened when the military came in.

Janis Kozlowski: You know, while you were up here in Fairbanks there was -- the Japanese had invaded a couple of the Aleutian Islands and they bombed Dutch Harbor. Did you know much about that when you were here?

0:41:15.1 Fairbanks as a war zone

Carl Heflinger: Well, yeah, we knew all about it. Mm-hmm.

Janis Kozlowski: Did -- was that -- were people frightened about that? Were they worried that there would be a greater invasion?

Carl Heflinger: Well, they thought maybe they might, so they put us under -- they put us in a war zone. We had to have a shade, we had to have blackouts and everything for a while. Well, they thought maybe that since the Japanese had landed on Attu, I think, and Kiska, anyway on a couple of islands, that they might try to invade Alaska as a stepping stone to the States and so they put us in a war zone for a while until they got rid of the Japanese.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: That wasn't much of a hazard or bother -- it didn't bother us much I guess.

Janis Kozlowski: You didn't feel like you were really unsafe in Fairbanks.

Carl Heflinger: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Of course, they issued us all rifles and everything. We had to be marching a little more. (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) Was there -- is there anything else that you remember about -- or that you think about Alaska over the years that -- any

stories or remembrances about things that have happened in the state that were important to you?

0:43:06.9 The importance of having good land to mine

Carl Heflinger: Well, there's quite a few things that are kind of important to me. Getting a good piece of land to mine on was important. I had enough land to mine until '98 when I was ready to retire. How old was I..... I guess I was about 88 or 87 or something when I retired.

Janis Kozlowski: So you worked really late in life?

Carl Heflinger: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I seem to keep living.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) Well, you seem like you're in really good shape.

Carl Heflinger: Well, I don't feel like I want to die or that. I'm pretty good from my waist up. I haven't got very good legs. I've been injured in industrial accidents two or three times.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so it comes back to haunt you later on.

Carl Heflinger: Oh, the whole leg is mangled.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, you're still walking though right? Just maybe slowly?

Carl Heflinger: I have to use this.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: I have to use the walker. I couldn't do very well even with a cane. The last time I fell off the drag line I -- I tore up all the ligaments in my leg. I must've landed on the tracks. I fainted when I was running the drag line. When my sister died it was such a shock to me that I fainted.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Did -- did she die unexpectedly?

Carl Heflinger: Not really, but that was the first one in the family to go.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: I guess that just shook me up.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you end up in the hospital with your leg?

Carl Heflinger: No, I -- when I woke up I just got up and kept on doing what I was doing.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Eileen Devinney: When you were out at Livengood were there a lot of other miners out there at the time?

0:45:58.6 Mining at Livengood

Carl Heflinger: Oh, at first there were some miners on Amy Creek and Gertrude and, Lucky, yeah there were about three other outfits there. Wells was mining on Amy Creek. Wells is the fellow who married a young -- he had the -- had the GMC agency -- General Motors agency, and let's see, I guess he got a divorce from his wife -- from his first wife, and then he married a young thing about 21 years old. Some way or another you probably heard about this. She -- I think they were dealing in dope and she went to -- wait a minute, what happened now..... Now, I can't remember what all happened.

Eileen Devinney: Not good, it sounds like.

Carl Heflinger: Uh-huh.

Janis Kozlowski: No.

Carl Heflinger: He went to Los Angeles and committed suicide.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Eileen Devinney: Was it a -- kind of a community, or did people kind of keep to themselves when you were working out there? I mean, did you feel like you could rely on those other people or.....

Carl Heflinger: When we were at the mine we all fraternized.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, we'd all get together. As far as my mind was concerned, we never had any feuds or anything.

Janis Kozlowski: How big -- did you work by yourself, or did you have a crew of people?

0:48:23.7 Boys of the family worked at the mine

Carl Heflinger: Well, I had crews of people. I had three boys who grew up and they went to high school and they worked for me in the summer, and went to college and they worked for me in the summer, so I had a captive -- a captive crew.....

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger:that I could rely on. Then I always hired one or two other people if I needed them. The boys all used their money to go through college, so we had a pretty good thing going of it.

Janis Kozlowski: Did any of them become miners themselves? Or any related?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, my oldest son, he's the only one who went to Fairbanks, to the University of Alaska. He mined. He took a -- he had a Masters in Mining Engineering. The other boys took up electrical engineering. My David is the electrical engineer for the college right now, and Bruce is retired. He worked for Hewlett-Packard for -- forever.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: Then he retired at (laughter) when he was still at kid as far as I'm concerned.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: Before you probably (laughter).

Carl Heflinger: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) So, did you see a lot of changes in the mining industry over the years?

0:50:20.3 The mining process

Carl Heflinger: Well, only from the drift mining to what we call open cut mining. At first, everybody would get a lay of -- what we called a lay or a lease from mine claim owners and we'd sink a hole and drift mine in the wintertime, take out a dump and then sluice it in the summer, and then try to get a job from some open cut people in the summertime, so there was a lot of that that went on in the early days.

Eileen Devinney: And you -- did you sink steam points then to mount the.....

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, with steam points. We'd sink a hole down to bedrock and then drive tunnels both ways and then thaw the ground with steam points and hoist it -- wheel it to a bucket and then they'd -- we had a steam boiler and steam hoist and they'd -- they'd have an engineer who would hoist the dirt when the wheelers wheeled it to the -- the bucket and dumped it in, usually five wheelbarrows at a time. It was nice work in the wintertime when it was 50 below. We went down there and it was just barely freezing, about 32.

Eileen Devinney: And then they sluiced that pile in the summertime?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Eileen Devinney: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, we used to get credit all the -- all winter from the MG Company (laughter).

Eileen Devinney: (Laughter) I hadn't thought about that.

Carl Heflinger: Then we'd sluice our dump in the spring and pay the bills. Usually the way we worked was what we'd call on bedrock, and that meant that the -- all of the wheelers, all of the workers, would share the -- what was left over after the expenses. You didn't -- you didn't pay them by the hour or anything. You paid them by what -- in other words you divided it all up at the end of the year, whether you owned the ground or not. If it was good, the guys did good, and if it was bad, they didn't do so good. That was all, I guess, fair enough, because they didn't -- they weren't slaves. They weren't forced to work there.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: But a lot of the work was done that way.

Eileen Devinney: So you were kind of gambling even then?

Carl Heflinger: Mm-hmm.

Eileen Devinney: You would hope that it would turn out well, but you never knew.

Carl Heflinger: Oh yeah, it was all a gamble.

Eileen Devinney: That's the business, yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. But you got used to that and you didn't worry about anything.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) Did your wife worry? Was she worried about each year whether there was going to be money coming in?

0:54:04.0 Mrs. Heflinger returning to work after the kids grew up

Carl Heflinger: No. She didn't want to know anything about money.

Janis Kozlowski: She just thought you'd take care of things?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, I used to try to talk to her once in a while and she didn't want to listen even.

Janis Kozlowski: Maybe life was better just -- just having faith in her husband that he would bring home the money.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, that's all it seemed -- it didn't seem to bother her any.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: She took care of the kids. Actually, she -- when the kids grew up, she went back to work again.

Janis Kozlowski: Really? What did she do then, continue with her engineering?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. She went back to work for the engineers. Actually, she worked for the Army Finance Department, and they -- people around there, they thought that it was kind of awful. She didn't need to work, and there she was.

Nobody could get her to quit. It ended up that once she retired she got government insurance for me and her both.

Janis Kozlowski: That was worth it, right?

Carl Heflinger: I never have to pay a cent for medical.

Janis Kozlowski: That's great! That's really good.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, she -- Medicare pays some of it and that government insurance pays the rest of it every time.

Janis Kozlowski: That's great. Eileen, do you have any other questions about mining? You're more knowledgeable about that.

0:55:54.5 Eileen and Mr. Heflinger discuss mining the Hammond River

Eileen Devinney: I just worked a little bit years ago along the pipeline road and we talked to people who mined the Hammond River and.....

Carl Heflinger: Oh!

Eileen Devinney:around Wiseman and places like that, so I just know a little from that work.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, I always wanted to go and try the Hammond River.

Eileen Devinney: I think it was the Munjars, was one family that was mining at the time. This was in the late '80s, so..... Sam Munjar and O. J. Giles, I think was the other guy.

Carl Heflinger: The ground was wet there. It was -- there was some rich ground there. It's still there too.

Eileen Devinney: Yeah, and there were people who got claims to go back through the tailings, so they had big operations and then these were just like a couple who would go through the tailings and find things, so.....

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, Guy Rivers always wanted me to go in with him there to sink a hole but I didn't like the idea of that wet ground.

Eileen Devinney: Well, in Livengood if it was doing well, it's closer to town. It was probably a lot easier to get equipment to and, yeah.

0:57:10.9 The story of the Lost Norwegian

Carl Heflinger: Me and Guy went..... We went to look where we called the Lost Norwegian once. The story goes that in 1900 a Norwegian and his two nephews were floating down the river from Dawson and they made a pile of money in Dawson, and when they got to Nulato there were two men and a woman -- I think the woman was a hooker -- and they told these guys that they had struck it -- some good pay on Midas Creek, and they lured them up there and they built a cabin. They went up there -- they prospected one winter, but in the spring these guys, they found a ledge up there about 20 miles up from the confluence of Midas Creek and then they had a big fight. I guess the people who got them to go up there tried to kill them.....

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger:and I think one guy got killed and another got a broken leg and -- and -- another one or two of them got put in jail.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: Then, they found that ledge up there and.....

Janis Kozlowski: Did we run out?

Eileen Devinney: Yeah, but that's still recording. Sorry. It won't give it up.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, there it goes.

Eileen Devinney: It's always when you get to a good story. Okay.

Carl Heflinger: Well, they -- they -- they found that ledge sticking up out of a dry creek bed about 20 miles from the mouth of Midas Creek. It isn't called Midas now; it's another name for it that offhand I can't remember. Anyway, after the big fight and everything they -- everybody left there and this Norwegian went outside and was living in Oregon and he wrote Eddie Mueller a letter in Nulato and told Eddie about this ledge, and he turned the -- he -- he sent a map and everything showing where this ledge was sticking out of the dry bed and Mueller turned the thing over to Doc LaRue, and Doc LaRue was known as the flying dentist. I don't know if you ever heard of him.

1:00:51.0 Going with Guy Rivers to find the Lost Norwegian

Carl Heflinger: Doc LaRue was a drunkard so he never got anything done with it and he turned the maps and everything over to Guy Rivers and Guy got a hold of me and he wanted to go up there and find it, so we tried. It was sort of a jinx. We tried two or three times and every time we'd fly to Galena and then from Galena we had to hire a smaller plane to go over there and we'd be in a snowstorm or something.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: But anyway, finally, Guy and I -- Guy was flying an Apache -- a two-engine Apache, and we flew into Galena. They had a pretty good airport there, and then Guy got Willie Foster to fly over from Nome and he had a Super Cub and he hauled me in there and we flew around the squaw sticks until we could find a place to land and we landed and then we made an airport by tearing down these little squaw poles that -- they were all rotten and we -- we tore a bunch of those down and then -- and Willie went back and got Guy and it was raining sideways and.....(laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) What are we doing here?! (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: Anyway, we tried to find that ledge and we couldn't find it, so it's still there waiting for you.

Janis Kozlowski: Nobody ever did?

Carl Heflinger: No. (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: Come on, Eileen, let's go (laughter).

Eileen Devinney: Get in the truck (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, I can give you the map and..... (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, it's supposed to be sticking up right out of the dry gulch, but we couldn't find anything. We only tried once. It gets to be kind of a precarious operation landing in no landing field.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. Yep, dangerous. Sounds like.....

Carl Heflinger: So we always call that the Lost Norwegian.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: I never could talk anybody else to go in there.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: Do you think it is really somewhere; they weren't making it up?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, I think that to start with I think the Norwegian found it all right. See, he wrote from the States and he sent a map and everything. I've got the map and everything here.

Eileen Devinney: Hmm.

Janis Kozlowski: It sounds like you met some interesting characters since you've lived up here. Can you think of any others that -- other people that made an impression on you?

Carl Heflinger: Made an impression on me..... I just can't answer that. I don't know.

Janis Kozlowski: Did -- did you have any partners or did you pretty -- did you work the claims yourself fairly independently?

1:04:34.5 Chuck Herbert was a good friend

Carl Heflinger: Well, we were in partnership with Fisher Mining Company and then later on I had my boys and I didn't need anybody.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: I had a good friend who took care of me and found all the ground for me.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: It was Chuck Herbert.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, he's the one you met early on, right?

Carl Heflinger: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Uh-huh. He wasn't in the service with you though?

Carl Heflinger: No.

Janis Kozlowski: You met him after?

Carl Heflinger: I knew him before the war and after. Chuck was in the Seabees. He was a real well-known engineer. He was a mining engineer. He was married to Sally and -- and they got a divorce, and Sally married Martin of the Reed and Martin Corporation. They built the Northward Building.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Carl Heflinger: And then Martin moved to Hawaii and built high rises there.

Eileen Devinney: Oh, really?

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah.

Eileen Devinney: Was Chuck ever up towards Wiseman? Did he work up that way at all?

Carl Heflinger: Who?

Eileen Devinney: Chuck Norbert. Did he work up further north from Livengood, like up near Wiseman?

Carl Heflinger: Chuck Herbert?

Eileen Devinney: Yeah, Herbert.

Carl Heflinger: He was an engineer and he -- he was a partner in Jack Wade.

Eileen Devinney: Oh, okay.

Carl Heflinger: Jack Wade propositioned for years. They -- they made a lot of money there at Jack Wade.

Eileen Devinney: Dredge mining?

Carl Heflinger: No, they were open cutting.

Eileen Devinney: Oh, they were.

Carl Heflinger: That was Smitty and Elinger and Parker and Herbert.

Eileen Devinney: Hmm.

Carl Heflinger: They -- they mined there. That was pretty rich ground.

Eileen Devinney: Mm-hmm.

Carl Heflinger: They were the first miners who mined with equipment. Before that it was all hand mining. They found a lot of gold there.

Eileen Devinney: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Chuck was a mining engineer and he dealt in hard rock too. He staked the Pardner Hill group in Bornite.

Eileen Devinney: Oh, out off the Kobuk?

Carl Heflinger: Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah, he was -- he ran all around the country. He was in prospecting up there where Conoco has a zinc.....

Eileen Devinney: Oh, at Red Dog?

Carl Heflinger:a big zinc mine. He was looking at that.

Eileen Devinney: Mmm.

Carl Heflinger: One time when the plane wrecked and his son pulled him out of the plane unconscious.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Carl Heflinger: He -- He -- He did quite a bit of -- quite a few things that..... I don't know if you fellows -- I guess you'd never heard of him, did you?

Janis Kozlowski: No. No I haven't. Have you?

Eileen Devinney: No, I was thinking of someone else's name, so that's why I'd asked, but, yeah Bornite is -- they're working on that now.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah, they're back there again.

Eileen Devinney: Yeah.

Carl Heflinger: Yeah. Yeah, it was deep and well -- well Chuck -- I made \$6000 out of that deal because he took us all in as partners.....

Eileen Devinney: Oh.

Carl Heflinger:and he sold the ground to copper -- Kennecott and gave us all our shares.

Janis Kozlowski: Is Chuck still around?

Carl Heflinger: Um, I'm trying to..... I think he died. That escapes me. I probably will remember that tomorrow or next day. I think he is -- has passed away. He was older than me. I think he was born in '08 -- 1908 or 1909.

1:09:35.2 Closing the interview and thanking Mr. Heflinger

Janis Kozlowski: Well, we've kept you for more than an hour now, so I think we'll close the interview. I wanted to thank you for giving us an opportunity to talk with you today. It's been a real pleasure to hear your stories and.....

Carl Heflinger: Maybe you could take a whack at the Lost Norwegian.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: Yeah. Yeah, let's take a picture of the map (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, where's the map? Let's take a picture (laughter).

Eileen Devinney: (Laughter.)

Carl Heflinger: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: Thank -- thank you very much, Mr. Heflinger.

Carl Heflinger: I wish somebody would go and find that.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Eileen Devinney: I -- I've heard stories like that. I don't think I've heard that specific story, but I have heard stories kind of like that; a lot of stories of people turning on each other out in nowhere, you know, and sometimes even killing a partner or what have you.

Carl Heflinger: That -- the other side.....

End of interview at 1:10:30.0