

JAMES L. BUSEY

Interview conducted by Logan Hovis
and Geoff Bleakley

[With editing and clarification changes
made by Busey on July 29, 2000].

National Park Service

May 27, 1998

Tape #1

Side #1

Hovis: *This is Logan Hovis and Geoff Bleakley. We're here with Jim Busey.*

Busey: [Corrects pronunciation] *Boo-sey.*

Hovis: *That's my first mistake. And, it's May 27, 1998. At the Kennicott Lodge. Part of the Kennecott Kids Reunion. We're talking with Jim, who happened to have been the last school teacher here. And ... how did you happen to find your way to Kennecott, sir?*

Busey: *Well, I flew on the plane from Cordova, up here, to Kennecott, up to McCarthy.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Plane, was the first plane ride I'd ever taken. We're talking here, now, about 1937.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *When I was twenty-one years old.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... So I ... I naturally was interested and concerned about the trip, not having ever done that before.*

Hovis: *Yes.*

Busey: *In those days, of course, not nearly as many people ... went by plane. So this was a very new ...*

experience. So I sat there in the plane with my feet up, in the cockpit, about as tightly as possible ... to get them in them in the space provided with a suitcase, right down, smack in front of me.

Bleakley: [Chuckle].

Busey: *And, and they bounced around. So we got ... to McCarthy, and then I was driven up here. So that's the way I got here.*

Hovis: *Did, ah, did you have the job reserved for you when you came here.*

Busey: *Yes.*

Hovis: *Were you hired out of Seattle?*

Busey: *No; at the time Alaska was a territory, so I was hired by the Commissioner of Education, Mr. [Anthony] Karnes. When this occurred, I had thus far completed two years of college at the College of Puget Sound (now University ...) in Tacoma.*

Hovis: *Uh-hum.*

Busey: *And so, just happens I got the job. But, I guess they ... gave me the job because they, didn't have anybody else for it. And, also, they might have known they ... the mine was about to shut down. So [it] didn't make much difference who they had [laughs]. And so [chuckle] anyway ... that's the way I got it. And not one single course in ... education ...'Course they don't do any good anyway, but ... no courses in how to teach, or anything.*

Hovis: *We wouldn't comment on that!*

Busey: [Laughter].

Hovis: *Um-hum. ... Were you originally from the Seattle area?*

Busey: *I was born in Seattle.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Yes, born in Seattle, in 1916. My father, Lester Busey, had for years been a bookkeeper-superintendent*

in the Alaska salmon canneries during the summers; but in 1927, our family moved with him to a new accounting job in Ketchikan; then in 1928, to a similar position with the Morris general merchandise store in Seldovia.

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *At that time, in the beginning of the depression years, conditions in Alaska were much better than in the rest of the "states" as we called them in the territorial days.*

Hovis: *What line of work was he ...*

Busey: *He had two lines of primary work – that of bookkeeping and as a newspaper man. So, in Seldovia, in addition to the Morris mercantile business, he published the weekly Seldovia Herald, using a Chandler & Prince job press and hand-set type, which my mother and I also learned how to use in order to assist him in this new business.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Later, during 1933-1940, he became editor and publisher of the Seward Gateway, but then was driven out by fire in [1941]. After that, he joined as one of the editors of the Anchorage Times; and then, finally was one of the founders of the Anchorage News.*

Hovis: *So you got to see quite a bit of Alaska, as a child, before you came out here?*

Busey: *Oh yes. Oh yes. I had, except for going back and forth to college ... for those two years, I'd been in Alaska from 1927, to nineteen ... hundred thirty seven. Ten years ... when I got the job here in Kennecott.*

Hovis: *What 'd you think when you first stepped out of that plane, managed to find your feet 'n your luggage, 'n get on the ground?*

Busey: *Well, I, it's a little bit hard to say exactly what I'd thought, because it was not ... all that unusual by comparison with other places I had been in ...*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Mountains, and small towns. So my impressions were ... molded more by the experience I'd had already in Alaska. Mainly, not all that many people around.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *My impressions of Kennecott? There were the great mine buildings, and fantastic sorts of structures with which I was not familiar. Then there was the school with only two rooms, with only one in use at that time. Fortunately, I'd gone to a school with two rooms before that, in Seldovia – so, mechanically speaking I pretty much knew from observation how to do it.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Hovis: *Where was the one room school ... right near the bunkhouse?*

Busey: *Yes. Right now it's the best looking building in the place. We occupied the ... room which is on*

Hovis: *the right hand side as you walk in. So, it's this room. You'd just shut one room down?*

Busey: *Ah, that's right.*

Hovis: *O.K.*

Busey: *That's right. Yeah, we, occupied the ... room which is on the ... right hand side as you walk in.*

Hovis: *Um-hum. ... Where the piano and the blackboard still is?*

Busey: *That is correct. That is right; and they are still right there.*

Bleakley: *How, how long was it after you, arrived in Kennecott, or even before you came to Kennecott, that you knew that Kennecott was gonna close?*

Busey: *Well, I didn't know that at all! Nor did I know it when I left during the following spring – only later, when the news broke in the newspapers. People in Kennecott management must have known what was going to happen; but*

MY FIRST DAY IN SCHOOL



Left to right: Johnny Pytel, Frank Morris, Jim Busey, Ronald Brososky, Billy Humpheries, Tommy O'Neill, Bruce Morris. May 1938.



“At the front door of the school house...there was a key hole. The sun, when it’s...in the southern sky, in about October, will shine through that key hole. And when it shines through that key hole, on to a wall, why you get an image of the horizon...very clearly inverted. ...upside down, ...tops of the mountains...and the sky down below. (The sun)...shining in just the right angle to get the image through that key hole.”

JAMES L. BUSEY

despite the fact that I had known a lot of Kennecott people, I never heard a word about it while I was there. But, there were a few that did know it – management and so on. But the news at that time did not get around. And as far as I know, from the people with whom I have spoken with, it was not until, pretty close to October of 1938, that they really knew that this was going to happen. 'N then boom, it all happened, well after I had left in May.

[Gap in tape].

Hovis: *... even though they were taking machinery out of the power house and shipping it out then?*

Busey: *Well, this I can't ... speak to, because I wasn't here during the time. So other people who were here later than I was, would know when that began.*

Hovis: *How many kids did you have in your class?*

Busey: *There were seven.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *That is, in different, ah, ah grades. There were three from the Morris family – Frank in the tenth, Bruce in the ninth, and Lyle in the sixth grade. Others were Tommy O'Neill in the first, Ronald Brososky in second, Johnny Pytel in third, and Billy Humpheries in fourth grade.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *It was a one-room school, which means there were ways of teaching that were different from those in a regular, multi-room school. Having myself gone to school in Seldovia, where it was a two-room school, I knew something about how to do it.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *You go from pupil to pupil and talk to each about his or her lesson. If there are two or more first graders, you put them together. If only one, you put him alone; then after a little space, have someone else*

from another grade, and so on. You go to each one of these people, and talk with them about what they've been reading, and do it as quietly as you can.

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *And give them assignments, run through drills, and so on. I don't want to take a lot of your time on this, but I think that they probably get a better education this way than they do in these monstrous industrial complexes they call schools today, with thousands and thousands of anonymous people, all milling around like spooks all around the place.*

Hovis: *I have my son in a school, where 'e goes grades one and three year to get... one two and three years together, in the same classroom.*

Busey: *Is that right?*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *How does it work out for him?*

Hovis: *So far, so good.*

Busey: *That's fine. Where's that?*

Hovis: *Denali, in Anchorage.*

Busey: *Oh, I see.*

Hovis: *The older, the older kids help the younger kids.*

Busey: *I see. Somebody ought to look in to this sometime; I think that despite the individual attention in small schools, the total cost per pupil is no more than it is in these great big places, were there are monstrous administrations, huge mechanical plants, complex facilities in terms of everything else, plus enormous security problems and so on.*

Hovis: *You weren't directly employed by Kennecott, then?*

Busey: *I was employed by the Territory of Alaska, but with Kennecott being responsible for my last month's salary. Some arrangement had been made, with the territorial*

- government. So, my last month was paid by the Kennecott Corporation.
- Hovis: *Um-hum. O.K.*
- Bleakley: *So, where were you living? Physically living when you were here?*
- Busey: *In the staff house. You know where that is?*
- Bleakley: *That white one, that was ...?*
- Busey: *No, that's a hospital up there.*
- Hovis: *Behind the office over there, below the mill?*
- Busey: *Ah, right, right. It is gone now. I'd ...*
- Hovis: *It was yellow at that time?*
- Busey: *No, I think it was the regular old ... red, lead paint, ah, Kennecott color.*
- Bleakley: *Is this the one that was Nell McCann's? Was she living in there?*
- Busey: *I couldn't tell you, I don't know.*
- [Gap in tape].
- Hovis: *O.K. This ... Um, did you, could you cook for yourself if you wanted to?*
- Busey: *No! No! Just one room, a good room, but it had no cooking facilities.*
- Hovis: *Is ...*
- Busey: *Good accommodations, in every way. But, no not that ...*
- Hovis: *Stream running right outside your window?*
- Busey: *That's right. And I walked down the hill, then, to ... the school.*
- Hovis: *Um-hum. Um-hum. Did, ah ... As, as an employee of the [territory], but with Kennecott paying any, paying your room and board basically ... and your last month's wages ... did they have any say in your curriculum, and ... how you ordered your classroom?*

- Busey: *No, I never got any interference whatsoever. Just one ... one incident that would, maybe be along those lines. But, no they never interfered in any way. I could do anything I pleased ... in terms of organizing studies ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *... or ... even this, this paper ... we turned out, called "The Kennecott Star."*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *And once I did get in a little advice, from the superintendent, Mr. Richelson ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *... about that. But, it had to do with the mine. And there were other articles in there that had to do with the mine. Ah ... and those seemed to be O.K. But this ... I'd said something that, ah ... So he said to me [chuckle]. He said, ah ... ah, [Stated sardonically] "Now you just stick to your school Marmin' and lay off the mine" [laughing with Hovis]. "Stick to your school Marmin'." I couldn't help but remember that for a while [chuckle].*
- Hovis: *Well, that, probably actually stung at first, I would think.*
- Busey: *Stung that anybody would say anything different? Or, be independent, you mean?*
- Hovis: *No. That, that ...*
- Bleakley: *That he would say that to you.*
- Hovis: *That he would say that to you. As, if it was school marming.*
- Busey: *Oh, he was, he was kind of, I guess, putting me down.*
- Hovis: *Yeah.*
- Bleakley: *Yeah.*
- Busey: *Yeah. Oh sure he was. And, that ... kind of bugged me. But, it wasn't serious, and after that, why ...*

Hovis: O.K.

Busey: *he 'n I were on good terms.*

Hovis: O.K.

Bleakley: [*chuckle*].

Hovis: *How was your social life here?*

Busey: *Ah, I'm personally rather an unsociable person. And, so ... there really, basically, wasn't any [laugh]. No there really wasn't very much. We had a Christmas party ... but I was not responsible for organizing it. Some of the women in town had been accustomed to doing that - some of the mothers. So they organized that, and ... one time there was a good looking secretary who came up to work in the office. She and I took a walk out there on the trail along the glacier that heads toward Mt. Blackburn.*

Hovis: *Ummm, oh yes.*

Busey: *After about a mile or two, she remarked that it was terribly cold*



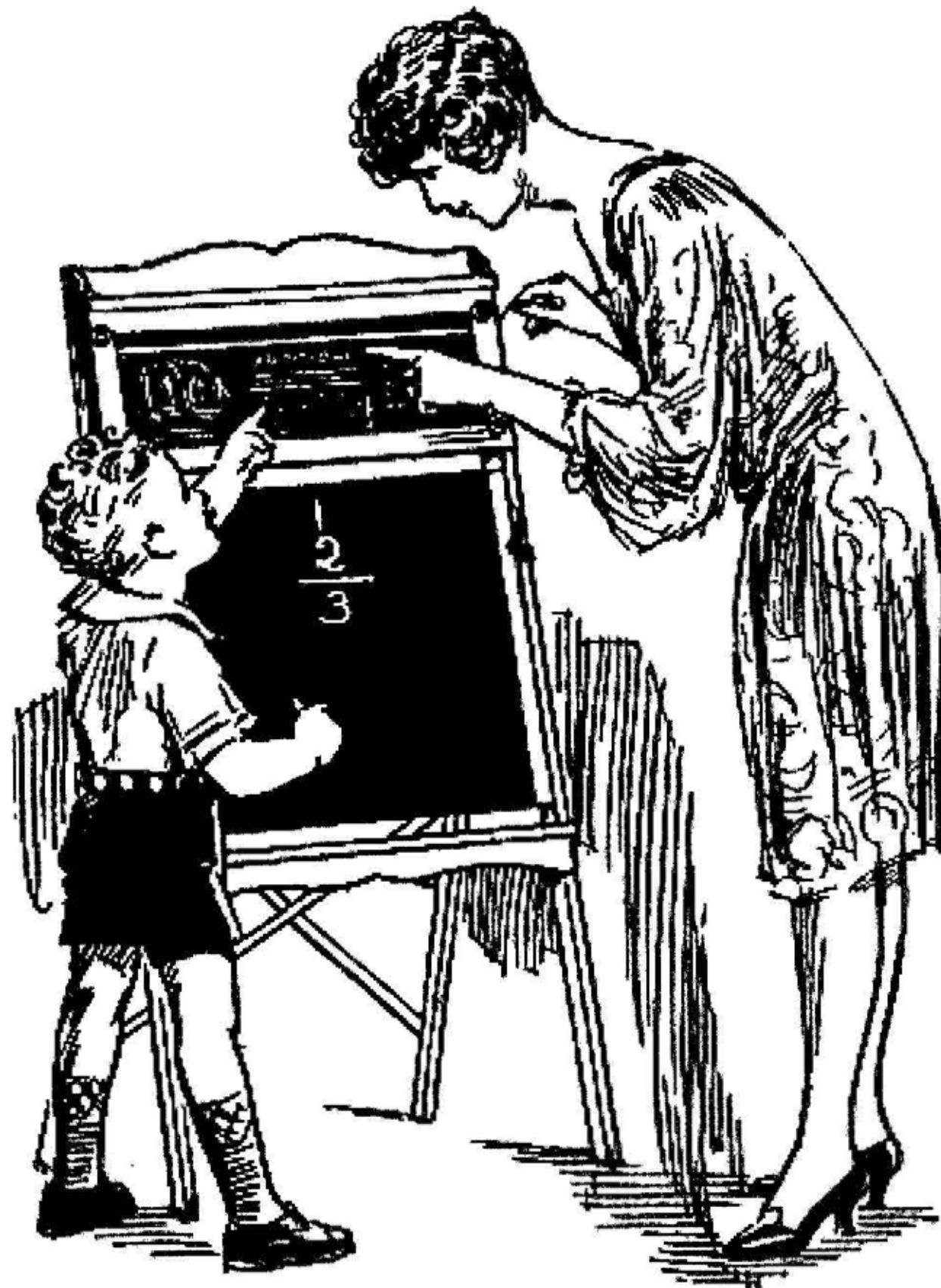
Young woman wearing glasses and hat.

- [about 35 below zero], *and asked if we could turn around and go back.*
- Bleakley: [Laughing].
- Busey: *Had a dentist that came up here. And ... wish I could remember his name. Kind of, a comical fellow. He would get off expressions to say hello to you, like 'Omnivorous!' He'd just learned that word.*
- Bleakley: [Laughing].
- Busey: *"Omnivorous" he'd say. An' then another thing he'd say ... "herbivorous!" ... And, I got friendly with him and ... two, or three people like that ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *... you know. But there were no ... no ... continuing ... special contacts, except with, the pupils, of course.*
- Hovis: *You taught five days out of the week? Or seven?*
- Busey: *Five days out of the week. Ah ...*
- Hovis: *So you, you had a ... fair amount of time to ... to look around, or ... look inward as you wish?*
- Busey: *Well [Laughing] Ah, not as much as you might think. Because, when you have to prepare the lessons, and feel conscientious about that ... you spend quite a bit of time ... reading, trying to keep one jump ahead of the pupils, in your reading. Teaching them to read ... was very difficult ... because I didn't know anything about it. Nobody had ever told me, how to do that. I never got that education. And one time I remember - this is getting off your question, but ...*
- Hovis: *That's alright.*
- Busey: *Well, there was a kid named Tommy O'Neill, in the first grade.*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *One day I found that his mother had come up to the ... school from*

McCarthy – he was from McCarthy, and she stayed to help me teach him how to read ...

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Because it was obvious I was not teaching him how to read very well [laugh with Hovis]. She'd been a teacher, and very kindly stayed around there for several days and did a good job.*



Hovis: *O.K. O.K. Fine. ... Were you, you invited into the homes of your par... your students' parents?*

Busey: *Yes, there were some. I don't recall just who. But, I remember having some, ah ... some, social activities with them. Ah, I remember a fellow named Mr. Humpheries ...*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... father of the, Bill Humpheries ... and there were some others ... who would thank me after, and they made a point of coming to thank me ... after the thing was over. I do want to go back, if I may ... I think it might be relevant to your interest, to talk about this "Kennecott Star" - so you'll know what happened there.*

Hovis and Bleakley: *Yes please do! We'd like to hear that.*

Busey: *The copies are down at the, ah, Alaska ... State Museum. In the State Library, in a newspaper*

project, where they're pulling together all these newspapers. Well, what happened there, is this is a printed paper – looked like a newspaper. Didn't look like any mimeograph or dittoed thing at all.

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *The reason was, that Jack O'Neill, who was the husband of this Mrs. O'Neill, whom I mentioned ... had a big Chandler and Price ... job press in the back of his drug store. I think that job press ... 'n this may be of some historical interest ... was used for the ... printing of that, ah McCarthy paper, of which you'll see copies in each issue of ... WSEN News ... [Wrangell-St. Elias News].*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Because the type there, is identical to the stuff that we used, in this one.*

Hovis: *O.K.*

Busey: *So, I think it had been used for that purpose and it had been in*

storage there, in the drugstore ... as I recall. As, I think Jack O'Neill said ... since 1923. In other words, they'd not ... turned out the paper since 1923. But you can look at the dates ...

Hovis: *That's about right.*

Busey: *Is it? Is it?*

Bleakley: *Yeah.*

Hovis: *Yeah.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... So anyway, why he had that, ah, gathering dust ... incidentally, also, gathering stuff that squirrels had left in the type cases.*

Hovis: *[Chuckling].*

Busey: *In the big old type cases, you know, where ...*

Hovis: *Yes.*

Busey: *... you hand-set the type.*

Bleakley: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *And so they left all kinds of things in there. So we had to get rid of that! But, anyway, ah ... So all the type cases ... and the press, which was very heavy, and very big, Mr. O'Neill somehow managed to load onto a flat car, and the engine pulled the flat car up here. And how they got it off, I just don't remember. [Chuckle] Must have been a gang of ah, men that did it. In those days, they wouldn't have pretty women doing that.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *How that happened, I'll never know. There were the two rooms in the schoolhouse ... which you, have over here behind you. ... Which is not occupied. So we put the press in there. I still don't remember how. And, ah, there's something else I want to say 'bout that schoolhouse that you may want to put on your record. Anyway, we got it in there, and then I ... told the kids ... I knew how to do this, because I had set up type for my father when he was getting out the Seldovia Herald,*

which was, much more of a newspaper. [I] was doing that for three years before he moved to Seward, Anchorage and so on. Anyway ... I knew how to set the type, 'cause I had done it for him. And, showed them how to do it. And some of them, really picked it up on it. Frank 'n Bruce Morris did ... specially. Then they would write, little items ... and put their initials down at the bottom.

Hovis: *Yes.*

Busey: *And incidentally, I have original copies at home ... and if you want to have copies, I'd be ... glad to, send you one.*

Bleakley: *Oh, I'd love to have one!*

Busey: *And if you want, afterwards we can talk about that.*

Bleakley: *Yeah.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Alright.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *So ... anyway, why ... so then they write ... some of these items ... Of course, obviously, why ... I had to write some of them. And, ah ... I put my initials "JB" under these. And so that was the way it turned out, during that year. And Frank Morris, who is here, right now, and who is one of those pupils, has told me how he remembers that ... still, and was able, not too many years ago, to help somebody else learn how to use one of those things, because, the occasion arose for that to happen. I think it was in Fairbanks, when he was ... there, at the University of Alaska.*

Hovis: *He could read and write backwards.*

Busey: *Right, right. That is a long job, setting up type.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... Indirectly, kind of ... the, the good part of ... So, there's a history of that press that might be*

of interest to you, historically. After that period was over, and after I left in, ah, May of Nineteen thirty-eight ... the press was then loaded on to the flat car, again ...

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *And they took it back to McCarthy. But, now I've learned, it sat there for years and years, on that flat car, because I guess, Jack O'Neill probably saw no sense in ... moving it in there ... because they, the mine had shut down, and everything was, caving in ...*

Hovis: *Um-hum, hum, hum.*

Busey: *And, this was in May. And so he knew what was going to happen I suppose. But, anyway, that press then fell into the hands of Jim Edwards.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *And he still has, at this time, some parts of it.*

Hovis: *Ahh.*

- Busey: *He has, ah ... he's not using it as a press, but as, I've not seen him, but I've heard this ... from the Kenyons, that he still has a part of it – the table part, where you'd, ah ... put the paper on ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *It's been useful to him. He might have all the parts scattered around his place, I just don't know.*
- Hovis: *[Soft chuckling].*
- Busey: *So that's what happened to that press. There's another thing ... about the school that I want to mention, that I think would be ... a little interesting to you people. At the front door of the school house, there's a key hole, or there was a key hole. I hope it's still there. The sun, when it's ... in the southern sky, in about October, will shine through that key hole.*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *And when it shines through that key hole, on to a wall, why you get*
- an image of the horizon down here ...*
- Hovis: *For the Chugach!*
- Busey: *... very clearly inverted.*
- Hovis: *You get a pinpoint focal.*
- Busey: *And, as you know, then, and knowing what that is, why of course it'd be inverted.*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- Busey: *... upside down, and the sky down below. So, you ought to go over there and try that some time.*
- Hovis: *I ...*
- Bleakley: *Yeah, that sounds ...*
- Hovis: *In October you say.*
- Bleakley: *Sounds fascinating.*
- Busey: *I'm, I'm guessing it was October.*
- Hovis: *Ah ...*

Busey: *It was definitely in the fall.*

Hovis: *Um-hum. Some time with the ...
In, in the late afternoon?*

Busey: *In the late afternoon. When the
sun was, quite close to the horizon.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... tops of the mountains, there,
and shining in just the right angle
to get the image through that key
hole.*

Hovis: *O.K.*

Busey: *And, so they [the kids] were, really
given a little ... lesson about what
little I knew about optical matters.*

Hovis: *Um-hum. Didn't you have a lot of
fun with this?*

Busey: *Oh, yes.*

Hovis: *Were you scared silly parts of the
time?*

Busey: *Not, no. No. No. Not, not at all.
They were very good kids. I had
... no trouble at all.*

Hovis: *I don't mean of the kids, but of
you're, having to learn so much, so
fast ...*

Busey: *Oh I ...*

Hovis: *... and so constantly.*

Busey: *No. No.*

Hovis: *Their parents say they have to be
there! – You're earning a living!
[laugh with Bleakley].*

Busey: *Yes, true [Laugh].*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... and keep on top of even the
elementary ... geography, and
history, and arithmetic, n' reading,
and writing and all that. It kept
me going.*

Hovis: *Yeah.*

Busey: *But, it, was not an unenjoyable
experience. It was a good
experience.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *The snow was deep enough that winter to permit us to pull sleds through the tunnels and thus give the smaller kids rides from one end to the other of the tunnels. We did all sorts of scholarly things like that.*

Hovis: *[Laughing].*

Busey: *It was kind of fun, actually!*

Hovis: *You, you're teaching architecture, and geo... and geometry.*

Busey: *[Laugh]. I wasn't teaching architecture.*

Hovis: *Well, some sort of design.*

Busey: *No. Geology! [Chuckle with Bleakley].*

Hovis: *Playing fields out here in front, weren't there?*

Busey: *Yes, oh yes.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... [Looking at a photograph] Well, they're on the swings there, oh that's good.*

Hovis: *Yeah, hum-hum.*

Busey: *Oh, I have a better picture than that ...*

Hovis: *Yeah! Yeah! O.K.*

Bleakley: *All ... with them all [unintelligible words].*

Hovis: *Um-hum, yes. Um-hum, hum, hum.*

Busey: *Yeah, O.K., good. I brought, ah, several [photos] to pass around to ...*

Hovis: *O.K. And ... was there hockey rink? Or, a ball field?*

Busey: *No. I don't recall that there were organized games - just the sorts of short-time ball games, running, tag and so on that could be fitted into short periods of recess and the like.*

Hovis: *Yeah.*

Busey: *... and, ah, playing tag, and stuff, and, ah ... I just don't know about the baseball.*

Hovis: *Was the handball court still on the other side of the school? Was it still up at the time?*

Busey: *To my memory, there was no handball court.*

Hovis: *O.K., I wondered. I thought it might have gone before ...*

Busey: *I could be very well be wrong about these things. It's a matter of memory.*

Hovis: *O.K. Um-hum.*

[Gap in tape].

Hovis: *Ah, did you have much contact with the workers?*

Busey: *Not as much as I'd like. But there were times when the staff house would seem a little stuffy at mealtime; there you were right in*

the midst of all those people in charge.

Hovis: *Yes. Um-hum.*

Busey: *So sometimes I would eat at the mess hall in the bunkhouse. I enjoyed doing that, talking with these guys, 'bout their work and things like that. So, ah ... that's about as much contact of that kind ... Of course I met individuals. And I'm sure there are many individuals whom I met, talked to, got to know, briefly. But then ... sixty years later ... it doesn't seem quite so ... quite so ... easy to remember.*

Hovis: *What, what do you remember about the food, and about the kitchen staff?*

Busey: *I don't remember about the kitchen staff. Nor do I remember anything bad about the food.*

Hovis: *O.K.*

Busey: *I've no memory at all, of eating anything that didn't taste good [chuckle].*

Hovis: O.K.

Bleakley: *How about minorities; Were there any ... were there any, ah, Orientals? or ...*

Hovis: *Chinese, Japanese?*

Busey: *Yeah, that's a good question. But, I don't think there were. It's not the kind of a thing, that, in my training, would have stood out, necessarily ...*

Bleakley: *No, I just thought ...*

Busey: *Ah, no. It's alright you see. But, I mean, in those days, they did make a big fuss about that.*

Hovis: *Separate housing ...*

Busey: *Ah, oh no, no. Ah, to my knowledge, no. But, it might be those guys were not here simply because they didn't employ them. I don't know. In those days, anything was possible ... along those lines. To the best of my memory there were no minority employees at Kennecott.*

Hovis: *By this time there may not have been, ah, when they rebuilt the bunkhouse up at Bonanza in the twenties, when it burned, one of the areas laid out on the plans was the "Jap" quarters.*

Busey: *Good God. [Laugh].*

Hovis: *Ah, there's a Japanese gentleman ran the ... the laundry. And then a number of, ah ...*

Bleakley: *Earlier, yeah.*

Hovis: *And, a ... number of people, of ... Japanese and Chinese buried in the cemetery.*

Busey: *[Sounding amazed] Oh, there are?*

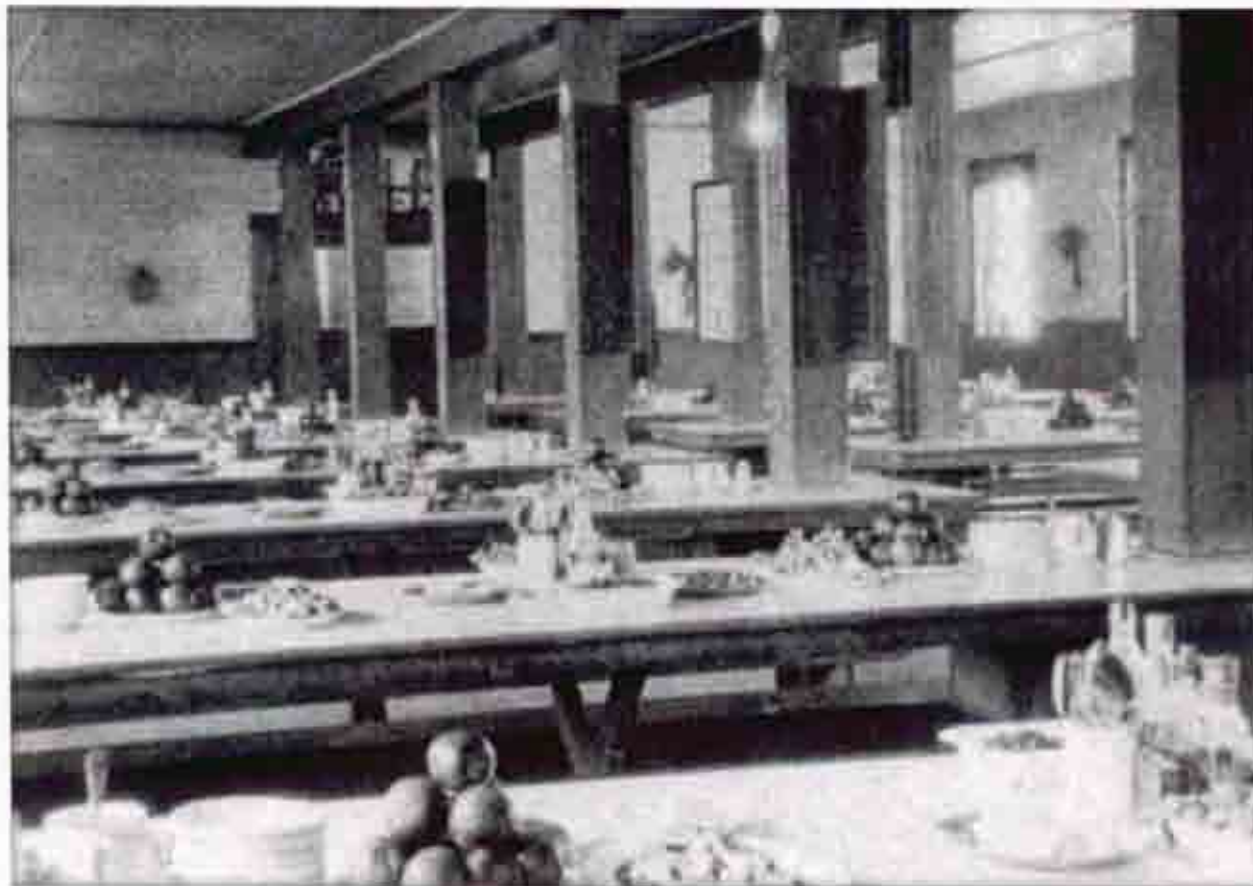
Hovis: *Did you ever ha... did you ever have an opportunity, while you were here, to walk down to the cemetery?*

Busey: *No, I didn't even know where it was, I guess.*

Hovis: *O.K. Was on the wagon road to McCarthy.*

- Busey: *Was on the road to McCarthy? I did that, ah, road, times, many times, as I said before. I skied down. I told you that, didn't I?*
- Hovis: *Um, no you didn't. But, ah, we ...*
- [All talking together].
- Bleakley: *We'll get to that [laughing].*
- Hovis: *I'm glad to hear it. Um-hum.*
- Busey: *... But, no, I'm sorry, that's a strange thing. I don't know where the cemetery was. I ...*
- Hovis: *'S probably enough snow there, that you went right by it and didn't see it.*
- Busey: *Well, basically, yes. But, what did happen, was a little bit interesting ... curiously enough, the ah, train, had something hanging down underneath it. I don't, never knew quite what it was. Which made ... tracks in the snow, between the railroad tracks.*
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*

- Busey: *You put your skis right in there; ... and close your eyes and go right down to McCarthy, just like that!*
- Bleakley: *Cool!*
- Busey: *That's true! I didn't literally close my eyes, but I mean, you could go in a straight stretch without, even thinking about it!*
- [Bleakley and Hovis talk excitedly together].
- Bleakley: *So it was like ... It was like ... it was like the track setter.*
- Hovis: *The locomotive ... It was like a course for you.*
- Bleakley: *Yeah, just like a powder track setter.*
- Busey: *It was quite accidental. I mean, if you would examine one of those locomotives, you might find what it was, metal fittings of some sort, that dropped down far enough to get down into snow. And your skis just by coincidence, fitted right in there. Just stand there ... and, be*



Meal hall with apple pyramids.



“...there were times when the staff house would seem a little stuffy at mealtime; there you were right in the midst of all those people in charge. So sometimes I would eat at the mess hall in the bunkhouse. I enjoyed doing that, talking with these guys, ‘bout their work and things like that. ... I (do not) remember anything bad about the food. I’ve no memory at all of eating anything that didn’t taste good.”

JAMES L. BUSEY

careful, you know – you could run into somebody or something coming up, including a bear looking for some place to hibernate.

Hovis: [Chuckling]. *And would you ski back up hill, too?*

Busey: *No, that's what I don't remember. Skiing up wouldn't have been so much fun. Maybe I got a ride; they had taxis you know.*

Hovis: *I was ... just gonna ask you about McCarthy.*

Busey: [Chuckles in background]. *Yeah, [chuckle] Yeah, well.*

Hovis: *Besides being different from here ...*

Busey: *Yes, it, it was a town, in other words. Ah, that's the way I saw it. Just a town, like any other town. Which had a ... drugstore, and a few books, and a few magazines, and ...*

Hovis: *A few amenities.*

Busey: *A few amenities. But some of the amenities, I didn't get involved with. But, ah [Bleakley and Hovis chuckling].*

Hovis: *You never, you never went fishing up at Nikolai Creek? [Laughter]. O.K.*

Busey: [I] *knew about that. [A prostitute on Nikolai Creek, approximately 10 miles from McCarthy.]*

Bleakley: [Laughing].



Busey: *Not in the winter, anyway [laughing].*

Hovis: *Um-hum. O.K.*

Busey: *But, anyway there it was, a completely different kind of place!*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *The one thing I think is kind of astounding, is all the services that there were right up here [in Kennecott]. Here you had a complete city!*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *With hospital attention, and doctors, and ... and everything you'd need ... food, and ... ah, laundry, and, ah, anything you want to name.*

Bleakley: *Yeah.*

Busey: *So, McCarthy was, just because it was different, something I'd like to do for a change.*

Hovis: *Um-hum. Now ... McCarthy had a few things you didn't have up here. But, ah, liquor I sus... I've always understood, was forbidden up here.*

Busey: *Well, it was forbidden down there too, because that was still under Prohibition.*

Hovis: *Yes, but then there's forbidden, and then there's forbidden. [Bleakley laughs]. I've, I thought [unintelligible].*

Busey: *Well ... sounds like Seldovia.*

Hovis: *Yes.*

Busey: *Where we had 369 people, and thirty seven of them ... were bootleggers.*

Hovis: *But, here it was company policy, not federal law.*

Busey: *Yeah, sure, sure ... [chuckle].*

SIDE 2
TAPE 1

[Interview continues, picking up here in mid-sentence].

- Bleakley: ... go to the drugstore, or something?
- Busey: Yes, I did, I did go to the drugstore. They had magazines there.
- Hovis: Um-hum.
- Busey: Ah, might have been a few books there too. Ah ... but only about two or three times, I guess, did that happen. I didn't always make it a regular practice every night, or anything like that.
- Hovis: O.K.
- Bleakley: Was there a restaurant, or ... or a roadhouse, or something down there? Where you ... where you might want to go eat?
- Busey: I can't tell you, I don't know.
- Bleakley: I guess if your meals were, were prepared here, why bother?

- Busey: Well, I can't tell you. I just don't know.
- Bleakley: Yeah.
- Busey: Ah ... but, yeah, but you, you get the idea. That, if you're at the same place, with the same people, and the same activities ... day in and day out, well you want to go somewhere else. Go to church. Do anything to be ... [chuckle].
- Hovis: Were there churches here while you were here?
- Busey: No, not to my memory.
- Hovis: Um-hum.
- Busey: They, ah, had something ... I'm, very, vague about it. Something went on in McCarthy I think. But, ah ...
- Hovis: Um-hum.
- Busey: I'm very vague about it. I don't think there was anything like that. Certainly no buildings devoted to it.

Hovis: *Yeah, do you remember any people in McCarthy? Ah, Margaret, Margaret, ah, Harrais ... perhaps?*

Busey: *Ah ...was that H, A, double R, A, I, S?*

Bleakley: *Yeah, um-hum.*

Hovis: *Yes. She, she'd been the school teacher down there.*

Busey: *And she was later, ah, U.S. Commissioner at Valdez.*

Bleakley: *Valdez. Yeah.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *O.K. Knew her well, later, when I was teaching in the Valdez High school during 1940-1942. She served there as the U.S. Commissioner - during territorial days, a judicial office like that of a Justice of the Peace.*

Bleakley: *Yeah.*

Hovis: *[Surprised sounding] O.K.*

Busey: *And, I think in Valdez. I knew her as being a person who had been in McCarthy. Yes.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *Jack O'Neill. Ah, I knew him ... in the drug store. But, undoubtedly, other people ... Time goes by. This is sixty years later.*

Hovis: *Um-hum.*

Busey: *... you talk about it sixty years later, why ... you don't actually remember everything, everybody, everything you knew sixty years before.*

Hovis: *[If] I ever have the opportunity, I'll make up anything I want to.*

Busey: *[Laughs]. Sure. [Chuckles]. ... Are we through?*

Hovis: *[Speaking to Bleakley] Do you have other questions?*

[Gap in tape].

Busey: *... here as long as you want to be.*

- Bleakley: *I think the newspaper, thing ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum, yes.*
- Bleakley: *... was really ...*
- Hovis: *Um-hum, hum.*
- Bleakley: *The "Star."*
- Busey: *And the point that I made there, that the, ah ... type was the same type, I'm sure it's the same type, and that, therefore, it was the press upon which the McCarthy Weekly News had been printed during the 1920s and before.*
- Hovis: *I assumed that the initials had been the, ah, students' initials ...*
- Busey: *Yes they were.*
- Hovis: *... but I wasn't aware about JB.*
- Busey: *I might not have put JB yet. Ah, some of these things that had no initials by them, I had written. Unfortunately, I don't have any copies with me [here] at this time. I have them all rolled up.*
- Whenever a student had written an item, his or her initials would be there.
- Hovis: *Um-hum.*
- [Gap in tape].
- Bleakley: *... Yeah, we would like to work something out today. If you've copies, ... I know, I'd like to keep copies in my file, at Wrangell St. Elias.*
- Hovis: *Well, I have the microfilm copy, actually ... But I'm not sure it's complete by any means.*
- Busey: *Well, look, ah, just give me a name and address ... I can get your card here?*
- [Unintelligible].
- Busey: *Well, ah, so I, it's very simple. All I have to do is, make copies of the ones I have, and send them to you, that's all.*
- Bleakley: *Yeah, that would be wonderful.*

[Gap in tape].

Busey: ... Copies of that would be very simple, indeed.

Bleakley: Yeah, I still... I teach, Copper Basin history, for Prince William Sound college [unclear word].

[Gap in tape].

Busey: Oh, that would be in Valdez?

Bleakley: Well, I teach at the Glennallen extension. But I teach at the ... interactive TV. So, I teach at, ah, Cordova and [chuckles] Valdez.

Busey: I see what you mean.

Bleakley: 'N then, I work at the Park Service, too.

Hovis: Um-hum. ... Where did you go when you left here?

Busey: That could require quite a long answer covering sixty-two years, but I'll be brief as possible. First of all, I left Kennecott-McCarthy on what must have been one of

the last trains to carry passengers, in May of 1938. After the ore and freight cars, came the one passenger coach. I was the only passenger, with just the conductor for occasional company; so it was both a beautiful and a peaceful ride to Cordova, and about the smoothest train trip I'd ever taken. By that means, Kennecott passed out of my daily life but by no means out of my memories. It had been a most pleasant year. The kids were unusually well behaved, and as far as I can remember everyone was friendly and supportive. The little incident with Mr. Richelson was of no importance.

After a short time with my parents in Seward, I was off to finish my studies at CPS. These I completed the following summer of 1939, followed by the B.A. in political science and history, with a minor in journalism.

Then there was another one-room teaching year, 1939-1940, at the Independence Mine above

Anchorage; and then, 1940-42, at the Valdez High school. During the summer of 1941 I was in Mexico City studying Spanish at the University of Mexico; and the most important event of my life was when I met Marian Snow, an art teacher from Ohio, at the Gardens of Xochimilco; and we married in Fairbanks on June 25, 1942. She has stuck it out, and is here with us today.

During World War II, I had a stint as an army draftee in the 232nd M.P. company, at Fort Richardson. After that, we went to Marion's home state, where I undertook studies at Ohio State University, which earned me the degree M.A. in Social Studies in 1948; and the Ph.D. in absentia in 1952 after teaching during three previous years at the University of Wyoming; and finally, another position in political science, at University of Colorado, Boulder and Colorado Springs, 1952 to retirement in 1980. So now, here I am.

Bleakley:

Great! Thanks!

Hovis:

Thank you!

