

# MILDRED ERICKSON REIS AND OSCAR WATSJOLD

Interview conducted By Al and Lynda Shaw  
Kenecott, Alaska  
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Reis: *She told us...teacher told us we were not to speak Norwegian at home because I would have an accent. So there was no more Norwegian in our homes so I lost my accent...[ability to speak Norwegian. My father was of Swedish descent and was raised in North Dakota. He was glad of this rule as his Norwegian wasn't that great.]*

Shaw, A.: *So when you came to McCarthy you were speaking...[bilingual]?*

Reis: *Norwegian. I could speak English too but I lost the Norwegian.*

Shaw, A.: *Tell us when you first came to that one room schoolhouse.*

Reis: *It was 1919.*

Shaw, A.: *1919.*

Reis: *Yes. And I went to school there until I was in the fifth grade. And I have with me ... I have my report cards and that will tell you all ... what kind of student I was...what my department was ... and all the years ... when we get up there give them to you.*

Shaw, A.: *Are you the one who told us that the last class at that school was 1922?*

- Reis: *No it wasn't.*
- Shaw, A.: *Somebody mentioned that..*
- Reis: *I didn't think it went on that long, but I don't know.*
- Shaw, A.: *Somebody we talked to...maybe it was in a letter ... said the last class there was 1922. Did you ever go to the 2 room schoolhouse?*
- Reis: *Yes, I went from the time I was in 5th to second high. Then my last year ... in ninth grade, I had my lessons at recess and at noon time and after school ... so I didn't conflict with the grade school.*
- Shaw, A.: *How many grades were in that one room school house?*
- Reis: *All of them, from the first through second year high. They had quite a time getting all the lessons in, as you can imagine, so they one year divided so some of us came in the morning, some in the afternoon. But I don't think that worked any better. All the teachers who came to Kennecott had to be able to teach High School.*
- Shaw, A.: *That was still the one room school house?*
- Reis: *Yes. They had a system there that when you were in the 7th grade the superintendent of the Territory ... Superintendent of Education ... would send a sealed envelope to the teacher with your tests in it ... so when I was in 7th grade I had physiology and geography and they sent that back to Juneau and I had to sit and wait and hope that I would get into eighth grade. [In eighth grade we had all other subjects tested from Juneau.] Then it would come back and I have my certificate along with me from that. And the Kennecott School was called the Blackburn School in Kennecott. That's what they called it then.*
- Shaw, A.: *The last year you went to that school was 1924?*
- Reis: *No, it was 1927 ...27 because I went to Holy Names Academy in Seattle [after that].*

Shaw, A.: *Did they continue to use the one-room as a school after that then?*

Reis: *No. When they got the new two-room one Mr. Nieding had just come up as the new manager and they used the one there for a ... and they had this other one built. It had been a bunkhouse before. When I first came up there we used to make these little things with wheels on them and you push around ... little scooters ... and we go in there and play but then they made it into the school. It was a beautiful school. The old schoolhouse they used for storage and stuff and also for ... [a marque?]*

Shaw, A.: *When you went to school there it was up at Kennecott. Do you think that was the same one that was down at Blackburn?*

Reis: *Well, all I know is that they had a school in Blackburn where the McCarthy children and the Kennecott children went, that was before my time. And I know about that and I know that the kids*

*would walk from Kennecott down to Blackburn to go to that school and I remember hearing about Jimmy Dennis, whose father was in charge of all the tramways in Kennecott, that he went down to the school one day and they were carrying guns and he shot a bear. I remember that story. That's about all I know about that school.*

Reis: *But, you see, it was painted red and white, like the rest and I believe Blackburn was the railroad town. Because Mother and Dad stayed there and the Engstroms were there, they were railroad people, and there were others that worked on the railroad and Dad did for a short time. And then Pete Johnson and his wife had a road house there.*

Shaw, A.: *In McCarthy?*

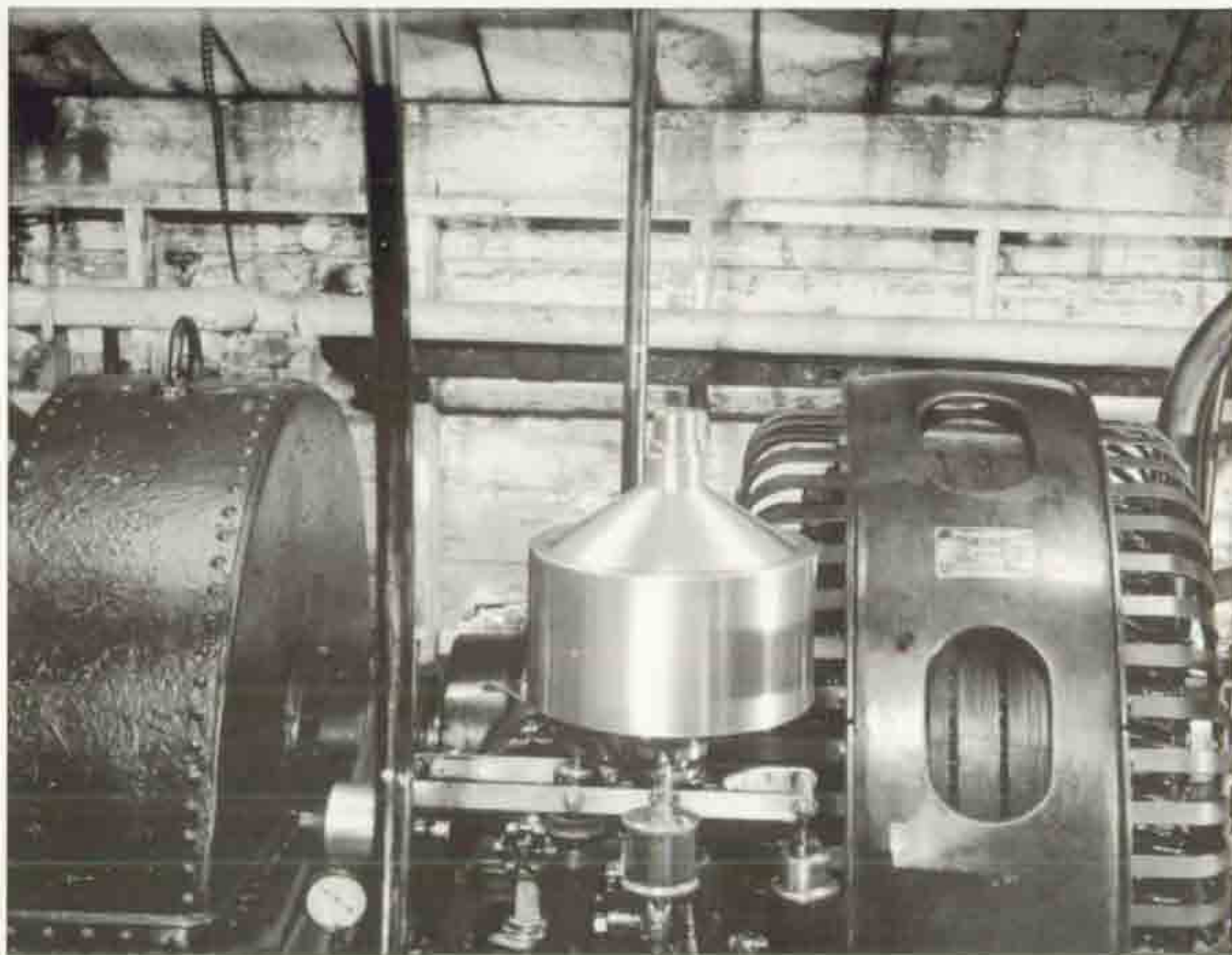
Reis: *No, in Blackburn. I have pictures and I'll show you. And... that's all the people I can remember... there were some Radivans that lived there.*



*Skate rink at Blackburn School.*

- Shaw, L.: *Martin Radivan?* *Chester Padgett, Harold and Frank Groff, and Kenneth McDonald.*
- Reis: *Yes. And Martin Radivan had dogs, big sled dogs. And one of their sled dogs jumped me one time and knocked me down and my mother said it was...[scary as the dog was vicious.] My dad went to Martin Radivan and told him to keep the his dogs fenced or tied or he would shoot them. And from then on they wouldn't speak to us but their dogs were penned. My dad was a very quiet man but he had a temper.* Shaw, A.: *I forget the names but Mildred's one and Frank's one. [Mildred Erickson and Frank Johnson].*
- Shaw, A.: *Now that schoolhouse has a little room in it where they had a drain board.* Reis: *Yes.*
- Reis: *I don't remember that but there was a little cloak room.* Shaw, A.: *Was there a Chester or a...?*
- Shaw, A.: *Yes. That cloak room still has the names of six people there.* Reis: *Chester and Kenneth Padgett. Mr. Padgett was the electrician.*
- Reis: *Probably mine. It was Roy Kay, Frank Johnson ... Rodney Lloyd, Dolly Lloyd, the two Nieding girls, and Wilbur Lloyd, I believe, he was the older boy, Kenneth and* Shaw, A.: *You were saying this morning that they only had one stove in there?*
- Reis: *Yes. The bigger boys were appointed the firemen, of course, and they kept it warm because the teacher was from down in the states and she was cold, we just died of the heat. We got to play outside and we wouldn't have much of a place to play, but the train would come by when we were sitting in our desks and we always felt that we were moving and the train was standing still. It was right on the track and there was a chute, and I don't know if it is still there,*

- that went down from the railroad tracks to the barn. It was just like glass because they sent the bales of hay down and we used to slide on that and we went so fast we had to hold onto the sides.*
- Shaw, A.: *See that schoolhouse actually has a place for two stoves but it only had one in it...*
- Reis: *I don't remember that, I only remember the boys taking care of the big one in the back.*
- Shaw, A.: *It wasn't enough to heat the whole place was it?*
- Reis: *Well, apparently it was or at least that was why the teachers always complained, it might have been cold up there. We didn't complain, we had our long johns... There was another boy I remember now, Kenneth McDonald, who was one of the big kids and Frank and Harold Groff. That's about all I can remember, ...a lot of kids.*
- Shaw, A.: *What did your dad do?*
- Reis: *He was the chief operator of the power house. He worked for a short time in the machine shop but then he went into the power house and he was the chief operator. Quite often went to Latouche. [He saw to the installation of new diesels one time, probably, he acted as troubleshooter.] I have pictures of the inside of the powerhouse.*
- Shaw, A.: *Where did you live?*
- Reis: *Right next to the lodge, House right next to the lodge, there are two of them alike. Ours and Olson's.*
- Shaw, A.: *To the right when you face the lodge?*
- Reis: *When you face the lodge it would be to your right, yes. There was a house between there and ours. Mr. Howard, Jack Howard, and Louie Vick and another man, but I can't remember the other man's name... That was before Mr. Howard was married and I believe his daughter is coming, Catherine*



*Pelton wheel, Kennecott.*

- Shaw, A.: *Hodge from back East somewhere. I don't remember where.*
- Shaw, A.: *When you were here have you seen the schoolhouse?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Mr. Barrett, Lawrence Barrett - did you know him?*
- Reis: *Yes, I knew him in McCarthy. His mother and mine were good friends, they used to ski together. I remember Lawrence, he was older, he was one of the big kids.*
- Shaw, A.: *Well, he was the one who said that the schoolhouse was brought up from Blackburn.*
- Reis: *Well, he should know. He was probably there. He went to the Blackburn School.*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, he went to the Blackburn School? See that schoolhouse really didn't have ... tell us about the bathrooms. Do you remember the bathrooms at the schoolhouse?*
- Reis: *They were in the back, there was a hall or some room, well back where the teacher would be, it was in there, the bathtrooms.*
- Shaw, A.: *How many of them were there?*
- Reis: *A boys and girls.*
- Shaw, A.: *What were they, they weren't flush toilets or anything, were they?*
- Reis: *No, no. They were just the old fashioned kind, a hole, one-holers.*
- Shaw, A.: *Do you think they were one-holers or did they have like a potty that had to be emptied?*
- Reis: *No, I think it was the old fashioned dug hole type, I think that was what it was, I can't remember anything else. That was the prominent thing up here then.*
- Shaw, A.: *There's a shed on the back, with two rooms in it and a vent pipe, no holes in the corner or anything.*
- Reis: *Well they probably covered it over later when they closed the school.*



- [Inaudible].
- Shaw, A.: *Oscar, when were you there?*
- Watsjold, O.: *At where?*
- Shaw, A.: *Kennecott.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh, I was in McCarthy.*
- Shaw, A.: *You were in McCarthy?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes, we came to McCarthy in 1929. April.*
- Watsjold, Nell: [Nell Watsjold, Oscar's wife has entered the conversation]. *But you went to school in Kennecott, sometime.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes, 1934 I think, or '33. '32-'33 I went to school in Kennecott.*
- Shaw, A.: *You went to school there?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes. Well, I went to school in McCarthy first.*
- Shaw, A.: *What did your parents do?*
- Watsjold, O.: *They had a store in McCarthy.*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, they had the store?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Which one? The General store?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes. Watsjold's Hardware. It said hardware on it, or did say hardware on it. It was a general merchandise store.*
- Shaw, A.: *When did you leave McCarthy?*
- Watsjold, O.: *1938 when they closed the mine.*
- Shaw, A.: *When they closed the mine that was it?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Well, might as well hold up now til we think of other things... [Inaudible].*
- Watsjold, O.: *A team, when the road was open and then when the road closed we went by dog team.*
- Shaw, A.: *You had your own dog team?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh yes.*

- she hit a knot in the wood and it came back and just missed her. ...it was up by the stream.*
- Shaw, A.: *Maybe about 10 miles or so?*
- Reis: *No it was just down from Kennecott, a mile or so.*
- Shaw, A.: *Was it after...after McCarthy?*
- Reis: *Yes, you go down to McCarthy and up to the property that was owned by the Kennecott Copper Corp.*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, it is up by Jeanie Miller's.*
- Reis: *Yes. And there's also, somewhere near the graveyard, there's a sign that used to say "The End of Kennecott Property". Was that graveyard kept up at all?*
- Shaw, A.: *A little bit.*
- Reis: *Did you know a Mrs. Letendre? Mr. and Mrs. Letendre?*
- Watsjold, O.: *John Letendre?*
- Reis: *Yes. He was a French-Canadian. And his name was "Letendre" - French and that got a little hard to explain I guess so he just changed it to Letendre, L-E-T-E-N-D-R-E. They lived up in the canyon and when you have time I can tell you a story about them, very interesting. I read about her [Mrs. Letendre's] brother Charlie Hanson in the Seattle Times a number of years ago in an article by Don Duncan. Mother and I visited with her often and she told us about coming to Alaska from Sweden with her brother and he made a rich gold strike near Fairbanks.*
- Watsjold, O.: *We couldn't find ...*
- Reis: *Probably gone already.*
- Watsjold, O.: *We could find [a marker for] Olaf [in the Kennecott cemetery], he was down there, you know, in the barn. He used to make all the, he was a blacksmith, he made all the hinges for the barn door and all that, beautiful work. When we*

- were down the last time, someone had stripped all that off of it.
- Shaw, A.: *He was the station master there in McCarthy in 1938. I think he had only been there three years.*
- Reis: *The station master when I was there was Pugh.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Pugh, Yes.*
- Reis: *The kids always used to say "Clyde O. Pugh". [We said his middle initial was "O". I think we just said that because we thought it was funny.]*
- Shaw, A.: *Was he the station master at Kennecott or McCarthy?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Pugh? He was at McCarthy.*
- Shaw, A.: *Lynda [Shaw] thinks that maybe Bill Herman might have been up at Kennecott. But I thought he was there where we have the museum there.*
- Shaw, L.: *I thought he said he closed Kennecott, he brought the last train out.*
- Reis: *He was there when I was in McCarthy and I don't remember who was at...*
- Watsjold, O.: *...cars right on the railroad...six foremen.*
- Shaw, A.: *Did you have to pump it [the car] or was it...?*
- Watsjold, O.: *No, it had a little motor on it.*
- Shaw, A.: *On the way out there, just before you get to Long Lake is one of those little cars, still sits there.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Reis: *They had one, the pump kind where the track walker - to check the tracks. [The car trackwalker used had three wheels and a space for tools. There was a lever in front that he used to make it go.]*
- Watsjold, O.: *So warm in the wintertime that if he turned on his flashlight he had to open the door, he'd get too hot in there.*
- Reis: *A little exaggeration there.*

- Watsjold, O.: *A little bit.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Is this George Flower[s] you are talking about?*
- Reis: *The only Negro I ever saw up there.*
- Watsjold, O.: *That's the first one I've seen, coming from Norway.*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I mean, the first one I knew.*
- Watsjold, O.: *...Long Lake*
- Shaw, A.: *They still knew,....about 10 or 15,000 a year [?]*
- Watsjold, O.: *Two years ago we walked down there to find George Flowers' cabin. I can't remember, what's the guy's name at Long Lake?*
- Watsjold, N.: *Collins.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Collins. He told us his son's got that property now that George Flowers had.*
- Shaw, A.: *Yes. Mr. Collins comes up every year April 15 and stays until October 15.*
- Reis: *Did you ever go ice fishing down there?*
- Watsjold, O.: *No.*
- Reis: *We did one time and we caught these fish and I don't know what they were. We got them out on the ice and they just jumped all over the place and my mother cleaned them, they were still jumping and I wouldn't eat them. They were a type of cod I believe.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I think Collins said there is lake trout in there.*
- Reis: *I wouldn't have anything to do with them.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Too frisky, huh?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Did you know the school teacher, Margaret HARRAIS?*

- Reis: *No. The only one I knew is Mrs. Refior. she taught the family free. She continued to teach.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh. She was WCTU, Women's Christian Temperance Union. Of course in those days McCarthy was wide open, all the bootleggers, the bars were running like they do now. And she always writing to Valdez complaining about the bootleggers and the bars. At that time the court system was in Valdez. Bob Reynolds, he was the U. S. Marshal, and he'd make a token raid or something once in a while, and that was it. So then they decided they couldn't get rid of her. So Mrs. Garrity and her son Gene Garrity and myself we'd leave and go to Seward and go to school. My sister Stella, brother John and Eleanor went to Kennecott School. They didn't have enough kids for school so they got rid of the school teacher, they also got rid of the school.*
- Watsjold, N.: *But there was a family there that they said that couldn't afford to send their children anywhere so*
- Watsjold, O.: *I don't know how long she was there. She ended up as U.S. Commissioner in Valdez.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Are you talking about Mrs. Harrais, the school teacher in McCarthy?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Reis: *McCarthy wasn't a nice town.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh ... Yes.*
- Reis: *My mother and dad and I had lived there so I had little friends down there. Mother would let me go down to visit my friends and stay the night, mother thought it was fine because her mother was a nice lady and they weren't all bad. She got criticized for it. So people would say little things like, "Why do they let her daughter go down to that place?". Mother felt there were nice people everywhere and you just had to behave yourself where you were. That was her way.*

Watsjold, O.: *McCarthy was a "sin" town. None of the girls got to go to McCarthy. "Off limits"...*



*Young girl, name unknown.*

Watsjold, O.: *Did you know Sig Wold?*

Reis: *Oh yes. I talked to him one time, he called me up in Seattle.*

Watsjold, O.: *He was glad when we came, of course he was one of two people we could talk to because he knew Norwegian. And he used to run the taxi service in McCarthy and he had a wood business, the ice business.*

Reis: *Yes. He was in Kennecott first but that wasn't enough for him and I don't know how he made all his money, but he did, he became quite wealthy, when he was in Fairbanks.*

Watsjold, O.: *Oh, yes. And he made it after he left McCarthy. He did everything. As a kid, I used to help him cut wood and haul ice, and haul the honey buckets. We haul honey buckets and dump it in McCarthy Creek and then go an' hose out the truck and then we go to the ice house and take the ice out of the icehouse and put it on the same truck and haul it and deliver it to*

*the bars and the hotel. It didn't make any difference, people washed it off after they got it, they didn't know it was in the honey bucket wagon.*

Watsjold, N.: *Oh, of course not!*

Reis: *Well, if you're getting on a subject like that. When I first came to McCarthy, we lived in back of where the lodge is, we had a log cabin, and nearby was a big house, as I remember it being big, the girls, the "sports" as they called them, lived there. And my mother, as I say, was quiet ... well, she came from a Norwegian home and was quite religious, and one night when daddy was working a man came to the door and asked for Diva Dale. And Mother was scared to death, Diva Dale was one of the girls. They had different names ... Shortly after that time, she had nothing to do with it, but all the girls were moved down the line, that was by McCarthy Creek, in the houses down there. Well, I was just a little kid and my dad said "You are never to go down there."*

*I didn't know why and finally I asked my mother "why, what did they do?" and with quick thinking, my mother said "they sell white mule." You know that white mule was the drink?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yes, yes.*

Reis: *Well I'd seen men on the street and I think they were drunk and I saw them stumbling and I'd get across the street. They scared me to death. I'd never go down there. I was a big girl before I knew...*

Watsjold, N.: *They sell something besides white mule!*

Watsjold, O.: *Life down on McCarthy Creek where the line was ... there were a lot more houses than there is now...*

Reis: *Yes. Well, I've never been down there.*

Watsjold, O.: *I used to go to the post office for the girls. And they 'd give me a dollar to run all the way up to the post office, I think it was about 2*

*blocks ... When Ben Jackson had the post office.*

Reis: *I don't know if they were allowed up to the dances, I never saw them.*

Watsjold, O.: *Not in Kennecott.*

Reis: *I mean in McCarthy.*

Watsjold, O.: *Yes. There were some of them there.*

Watsjold, N.: *A dollar for a trip like that was a lot of money in those days, wasn't it? 1929 or...*

Reis: *Yes.*

Watsjold, O.: *In the '30s...and I got a dollar an hour when I was helping Sadie.*

Reis: *Well, that was a good wage too.*

Watsjold, N.: *Well, didn't you go down and take your baths, didn't you tell me that?*

Watsjold, O.: *Well, we didn't have a bath at the hotel and when I got so old I'd go down to Blanche Schmidt's, she*

*was the madam, she had a bath tub, charged a dollar for baths. 'Course she was a good friend of our mother's and she tell all the girls that Oscar was off limits!*



Reis: *Kate Kennedy had a hotel up in McCarthy but I just barely remember her.*

Watsjold, O.: *Kate Kennedy and Mrs. Garrity, she was a dress maker in McCarthy, they were sisters and then I came to Seward with her. Kate Kennedy moved to Seattle.*

Watsjold, N.: *Is that the place across from McCarthy Lodge that Kate Kennedy had her hotel.*



Watsjold, O.: *No. That was Ma Johnson ... after she got married.*

Reis: *I never knew Mrs. Johnson was Ma, I don't remember her first name, of course I had to call her Mrs. because I was a child, but she had a lodge in Blackburn.*

Watsjold, O.: *Yes, but then she had a boarding house in McCarthy.*

Reis: *Yes. It was a boarding house at Blackburn. And I can tell you a story, my mother told me. I was four, I sang Norwegian, my mother sang Norwegian songs to me and she was sitting in the lobby of this little boarding house. They would take everything off the tables and the men could come in and play poker, I guess. And of course that was off limits to me but I didn't realize it. But I left my mother and went into this little room where they were playing poker. They were very nice to children, the men were, this man lifted me and asked me if I could sing and I said, "Oh, yes." So he put me up on a table and I sang the few Norwegian*

*songs that I knew, and then they passed a saucer for money and they put it in a little bag. I ran out to my mother and said "keep this, I going to make some more." She was horrified! And she made me go to bed. That ended my singing career! But I was just tiny and this was fun. She told me that. She didn't like that for a long time then finally she realized it was kind of funny. But there were a lot of Scandinavians there and there were so many Johnsons. There was Washboard Johnson, Too Much Johnson, Silent Johnson, I can't remember any more now but Washboard was the road beside the railroad where the horses would go. They would put logs across so they could walk across and that was where he got his name.*

Shaw, A.: *Oscar, as you think about that, what was the population of McCarthy?*

Watsjold, O.: *Well, about 200 at that time, when we got there in 1929, my dad got there in 1928.*

- Reis: *Somewhere I read that in its heyday it was about 500 or 600, when I was there in about, in 1916-17.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh, yeah. Then it was a booming place. They hadn't left yet after the [Chisana] gold rush.*
- Watsjold, O.: *'29 was the depression and 1930 they closed the mine, or '31.*
- Watsjold, N.: *It was closed for how long?*
- Watsjold, O.: *I think it was 2 years.*
- Shaw, A.: *They closed the mines in 1938.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I mean the first time.*
- Shaw, A.: *[Inaudible].*
- Watsjold, O.: *Then they quit running the railroad in the wintertime. Then when they opened up again they ran the railroad from April to October.*
- Reis: *Well, my dad had left then before they closed. Came down to visit mother and I in Seattle and then he went up to the Bremner Mines.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh, he was in Bremner?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Watsjold, O.: *...Pete Ramer?*
- Reis: *Pete Ramer and he had a brother, I don't remember his first name.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I don't either. I was looking forward to seeing Bertrand Crantz[?]. Do you remember, was he a teacher there when you were there?*
- Reis: *No.*
- Watsjold, O.: *He was a school teacher in McCarthy ... er in Kennecott.*
- Reis: *Peyton Ramer was Pete, we always called him Pete. Used to come and see us in Seattle.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Lots of bears up there. Used to be, I don't know about now.*
- Shaw, L.: *Usually, they are seen every year around now. I think last year one or two bears stole somebody's lunch and swiped at somebody's*

tent. Last year I was coming out of our outhouse and one had me, he didn't have me trapped, really, but I wasn't going to move, come out of the outhouse until he left. It was too close!

Watsjold, O.: When we went to school in the wintertime, [if] it got below -50 we could stay home, it was too cold. I could stay warm running behind [Sig Wold's truck]. Some mornings I left it was -60 in McCarthy but it was always warmer up in Kennecott because the altitude was higher.

Reis: And you know, the mines didn't get cold like that either, the mines were way higher [in elevation]. Well, I've seen it -60 and we had a door in our living room and you couldn't see the nails any other time but when it got cold the nails would show frost. And my dad said that's a good thermometer, you know.

Watsjold, O.: When I was chasing buckets we'd call up there and say, "What's the temperature?". And sometimes

there would be thirty degrees difference between the Bonanza and the top of the mill.

Reis: Did you chase buckets?

Watsjold, O.: Yes, for over a year.

Watsjold, N: Oscar was the shift boss over Mayor George Sullivan.

Watsjold, O.: I figured it out that I walked 5,000 and some miles chasing them buckets before I got to be shift boss. Just goes round and round catch the bucket and dump it, hook it back up...

Shaw, A.: Oscar, did you ever stay in those bunk houses up at the mines?

Watsjold, O.: No, I never stayed in the upper camp, I had to be down below where the girls were. I couldn't stay up there on the top of the hill.

Reis: Some of those miners didn't go out of there for years.

Watsjold, O.: Some of those miners stayed up there for six months, then they are



*Mrs. Letendre, Ole Jensen, Inger Jensen, Ingeborg Jensen,  
Mrs. Anna Johnson, and Frank Johnson.*

*“...there were a lot of Scandinavians there and there were so many Johnsons. There was Washboard Johnson, Too Much Johnson, Silent Johnson, I can't remember any more now but washboard was the road beside the railroad where the horses would go. They would put logs across so they could walk across and that was where he got his name.”*

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going to go to Seattle, had their plane ticket and never made it out of McCarthy. In about a weeks time, back up the hill they went for another six months.

Reis: *My father said the fellows in Kennecott, some of the men, would get their paycheck and lose it in a poker game right then.*

Watsjold, O.: *Oh, yeah! Poker games in the bunk house next to the store up there ... what the heck was his name? ... Pete The Greek ... No it wasn't Pete The Greek, but anyway he won about \$1500.00 that night. Didn't have a bank, always talked about going back to Greece—they said "put your money in a postal savings bond." He said "No, no, \$2,000.00, \$2,000.00". Next night, he lost it all.*

Reis: *My dad used to play cards in Kennecott, the men would meet in different homes and play panguingue.*

Watsjold, O.: *Oh, yeah?*

Reis: *They liked to play that.*



Watsjold, O.: *It is something like 500 Rummy.*

Shaw, A.: *...Chick Nelson?*

Reis: *I know Chick Nelson.*

Watsjold, O.: *You knew Chick?*

Reis: *Yes,*

Watsjold, O.: *...Japanese coins[?] They'd be camping with Japanese. They must be cheap ... He always seemed to come out alright.*

Reis: *The Japanese liked to play. He was a prospector. Pete Erickson.*

Watsjold, O.: *A prospector?*

Reis: *Yes. He used to work in Kennecott as a night watchmen. When summer would come, why he'd go back out [to the creeks to prospect].*

Watsjold, O.: *Was that the one they called the Swedish policeman? A big guy?*

Reis: *No, he wasn't too large. A very trim man. Wore a Van Dyke beard.*

Shaw, A.: *Other than playing poker, what other kind of entertainment did you have?*

Reis: *At Kennecott?*

Shaw, A.: *Yes.*

Reis: *We had a movie twice a week, Sundays and Wednesdays. And I got to take the tickets, if you took tickets, you got in free, otherwise you had to pay 10 cents. This was fine when I was a little girl, but*

*when I came back up there and I was 17 and one of the young men asked me to go to the show with him. The ticket salesman, said, "Oh, is Mildred with you, well she always pays 10 cents". I was so embarrassed, I was grown up you know.*

Shaw, A.: *What year was that that you came back?*

Reis: *1928. But I did take tickets down there, the adult fare was 35 cents. And the funny thing about it, the peculiar thing is, when you came into the hall, all the seats on the left were for the men, the other side was for the families. I don't know if there was a law, well, there wasn't any law but if a woman came and didn't know and sat on the men's side, they all whispered, "Look, she is sitting on the men's side.". Some of the men who knew the families would sit on the family side.*

Watsjold, O.: *I saw my first "talkie" in Kennecott.*

Reis: *Did you?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*

Watsjold, N.: *What was it called? Do you recall?*

Watsjold, O.: *No.*

Shaw, A.: *Did you have a lot of Charlie McCarthy movies and Keystone Cops?*

Reis: *No. We had the ... news first and then we had a ... I can remember, Harold...*

Watsjold, O.: *Harold Lloyd?*

Reis: *Yes.*

Watsjold, O.: *Charlie Chaplin.*

Reis: *Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd and...*

Watsjold, O.: *Tom Mix.*

Reis: *Yes and Rudolph Valentino. He was in the movie, he was in "The Sheik", I remember. That was rather a risqué movie.*

Shaw, A.: *Wasn't he a talkie, Valentino?*



Reis: *He was later but this was before that.*

Shaw, A.: *[Inaudible].*

Reis: *Well the stage was only put up at Christmas time, for the school children's program, and every child in school had a part in it. And I was shy and it scared me to death. I always had a part in a play and they always had me sing. So I had to get up there on the stage all alone and sing. I would look out at my father, he always had a twinkle in his eye, everything I did he thought was wonderful, but I could see in my mother's eyes that she was worried for me, she knew how hard it was. One*



*time they had me start in the back and I was to sing as I went down the aisle and then up on the stage, then the others would join me. I had no accompaniment, and I worried all the time that I'd be out of key by the time I got there. But it worked out I guess. My daughter says, "You're not shy now."*

Watsjold, N.: *You get less shy as you get older, don't you? I think it doesn't matter to you as much.*

TAPE #1  
SLIDE #2B

[Inaudible].

Watsjold, O.: *The one he is referring to is only a one dog race, 'cause he [Gene Garrity] only had one dog. So he used to...*

Shaw, A.: *Did you have regular sleds or what did you use?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yes. He had a snow sled. He used to deliver water after school, we used to go down to the spring in the wintertime and haul it out in*

*gallon buckets. He had one dog and go all through town and stop at different places....and I did the same thing only I used three dogs hauling water, I delivered water to Kate Kennedy and a couple other people and to the store. Somebody came up with the idea that we should have a race between Garrity's dog and my dog. But I had a leader in my dog, he was an old dog, he wasn't very fast, so I started training one of the other dogs. I start up the hill across McCarthy Creek at the airport and come down and run through that town and down to the depot. Well that dog I was trying to run, he'd come down the hill fine and when he hit Jack O'Neill's store he'd head for home. Every time for a couple of weeks, he did that. I took some meat scraps out of the store and put it in a can down at the depot and I come down the hill and when we got to Jack O'Neill's store I jump off and I had a rope on his collar and let him pass that intersection and we went down to the depot and I'd feed him some scraps out of his*

*can. And I did that every day until the day before the race, he still turned for home. Had to lead him away. So the morning of the race, it was on a Sunday, I got up early in the morning before daylight, that dog went straight on through town right...heading for that can of meat down at the depot. .... A lot of people came down from Kennecott for the race, the race was on, and the bets were on and I told my dad, "...one bet, I'm going to win this race". So we start off together, me and Garrity, but he was ahead of me coming up the hill from the old power plant, I was just waiting for my dog to head for home when we got past ... we got right to Main Street and just as he got almost through Main Street, Garrity, his dog was ahead, his dog ran into the car. He had one of his customers watch the dog when they go in there and stop. I just went on through town, right on down to the depot and fed my dog the scraps that were there and went home and won the race. Oh, we had lots of fun as kids.*

- Watsjold, N: *So Gene Garrity is a nephew of Kate Kennedy's?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Really had to make up your own entertainment, didn't you?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh yes.*
- Watsjold, N: *And didn't you have baseball games between McCarthy and Kennecott?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh, yes.*
- Reis: *Yes, there was a rivalry.*
- Watsjold, O.: *They [McCarthy] imported a pitcher from someplace else on the 4th of July, that was the big game. We played in McCarthy, ... you had all the booze and stuff and you didn't have fun at Kennecott like you could at McCarthy. And then [we'd] build fires and that would keep the mosquitoes away and have a ball game.*
- Watsjold, N: *Yes, who was it that imported the pitcher, was it McCarthy?*

- Watsjold, O.: *McCarthy. .... like ... Snyder and some of those that knew somebody that was a good pitcher and import him from someplace.*
- Shaw, A.: *So they'd bring in a "ringer" huh?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes. 'Course, everybody knew about it. 'Cause all the people in McCarthy was older people any where from 60 to 12, I think my brother was the youngest one on the team, he was about 12, and the oldest one was about 60. All the young fellows came from Kennecott, they were younger fellows.*
- Shaw, A.: *You know, the hall up at Kennecott has a basketball court painted on it, on the floor, did you have basketball games too?*
- Watsjold, O.: *No. Never heard of any.*
- Reis: *Not when I was there either.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I guess they might have scrimmaged up there but ... We didn't have any basketball games in McCarthy, I know.*
- Reis: *I don't remember any in Kennecott at all.*
- Shaw, A.: *Maybe that was painted on later or something.*
- Reis: *Yes. The women, for a while had a, in Kennecott, had an athletic club going and one of the men, Carl Stattel, led them in exercises and coached volleyball.*
- Shaw, A.: *Didn't they have tennis courts up above?*
- Reis: *Oh yes. We had the tennis courts and that is where I spent half of my life when I was up there. Take my lunch and go up there and play tennis. But we had hockey games. And one time they brought two men [to work for Kennecott], their name was Cobb, they were brothers, and they were very good hockey players for Kennecott. ...and then we kids would try to play too. I didn't have hockey skates, I had figure skates.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Well they built a skating rink where the baseball field was. Right across from the school.*



*Standing, left to right: Mr. Dennis, Mr. Davis, Mr. McCord, Dr. Vista, Mr. Schütze, Mr. Lommel, Mr. Bruers(?). Front row, left to right: Mr. Singers, Mr. Brunelle and Inger Jensen, Vic Vickery and Ole Jensen, Mr. Lyons, and Chris Jensen.*

- Reis: *I knew the man that started that, Joe Gmunder. He was a Swiss, and he said he knew how to make an ice rink and he went to the office and asked if they would let him build a rink there and they said "well if he knew how, they would give him the yard gang to help," and they made this rink. He showed them how to pack the snow down and then they used boiling water to put on because cold water would freeze before it hit the ice ... So they had this beautiful rink up there, as nice as the one in Seattle... where we had all our hockey games and, you can ask any of our friends from Kennecott who were out there all the time were kids, recess, for 15 minutes back in, you know. At night they had the lights around the rink and once a year they had a carnival. Everybody dressed in costumes, and I think one time, it was about -25 but that didn't matter. They made a three-sided building by the rink, and they brought the piano in from the hall and the .... orchestra would play. So we had music. That orchestra*
- ... used to practice at our house. ... Five pieces...[?] We had a really nice time.
- Shaw, A.: *I know Inger [Jensen] said she would have liked to have went to Kennecott and raised a family there.*
- Reis: *Yes, but Kennecott ... left.*
- Shaw, A.: *What was your home like, electricity and flush toilets?*
- Reis: *We had electricity in all of the houses but only the houses beyond the store and up on the hill [had flush toilets], seemed to be a pipeline there that provided it. And that's the only ones that had the bathrooms. We did not. In our house the upstairs was cold and my dad put a pipe in our living room stove and put a tank upstairs so then it was warm upstairs too and we had hot water.*
- Shaw, A.: *They must have had, somewhere, sewer lines or ... some of them had hot and cold running water.*

- Reis: *Yes, but that was on the other side, right up from the new bunkhouse and up beyond that to the north was where the bathrooms were.*
- Shaw, A.: *They must have run that later then.*
- Reis: *They might have, after I left.*
- Shaw, A.: *Some of them by the one-room schoolhouse have toilets in them and had heat in them.*
- Reis: *We had a nice stove. The stove was pretty, it was in our living room. When I studied, did my homework, I pulled a piano bench up and sat down on a footstool. That was my desk, I kept warm and studied there.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Did you know that Eleanor and her sister are going to stay in the same house they lived in McCarthy when they were kids?*
- Reis: *Are they really?*
- Watsjold, N.: *Yes. They have permission from whoever owns it now. And she*
- says she hasn't been back in it in all that time.*
- Reis: *Her house was down by the store.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Right across the street.*
- Reis: *R. L. H. Marshall. Robert Lewis Henry Marshall.*
- Watsjold, O.: *I can remember when Judy was ready to go to the hospital about 2:00 am ... came banging on the door. I needed some fresh dogs, I just came back from Kennecott, and Mrs. Tjosevig is about to have her baby so we went out and got some dogs, my harness and hooked up to him and got him and put her in the basket at 2:00 am, it was cold again. I don't know how cold it was but it was cold. We took them up to the hospital and it was born the next morning.*
- Shaw, A.: *Take them from McCarthy to Kennecott?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *That was a pretty active hospital.*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeab, It was the only one between here and Cordova.*

Reis: *My mother became ill in Nizina. They bundled her up on a double-ender. I don't know what time of the year it was - it must have been when it was frozen because they took her to McCarthy and they took her by train to Kennecott.*

Watsjold, N: *What is a double-ender?*

Reis: *It is a sled, there's one by your museum, there's a picture of one ... The sled has runners that go up on either end.*

Watsjold, O.: *I saw ... People used it with horses.*

Reis: *Yes. At that time, my dad took me to a little roadhouse that was up beyond Nizina and fixed up a bag, or big bandanna handkerchief ... some of my clothes in it, put a stick on that and he said, "now, you're a tramp". And then he put me on the back of his horse and we rode up to a roadhouse. He was doing this to get my mind off my mother, I think. Anyway, I*

*didn't worry about her, I was up there, I was a tramp! I was tiny then, of course.*

Shaw, A.: *What do you remember, if anything, about the dairy.*

Reis: *Well, the dairy was in back of the private mess, in that building. I knew Mrs. Johnson, Frank Johnson's mother, ... she was Finnish. She took care of it. When the milk came from the barn she pasteurized it and put it into the bottles. That is all I know of it.*

Shaw, A.: *You said, "in back of the private mess?"*

Reis: *Yes.*

Shaw, A.: *Where was that at?*

Reis: *You know where the assay office was?*

Shaw, A.: *Yes.*

Reis: *It is right next door. It's a long building. The end of that building*

*was the private mess and the staff ate there. And the upstairs of that was called the annex. That was an overflow for the men that lived in the staff house.*

Watsjold, O.: *Then they built the barn because the barn...*

Reis: *No, the barn was way down there...*

Watsjold, O.: *Well, on the way to McCarthy ... down the road.*

Shaw, A.: *The barn is the one down there by the one-room schoolhouse.*

Reis: *Yes. They took the milk up to this place and my dad lived in the annex when we were in Seattle and he was up there.*

Watsjold, O.: *When they closed the mines down in '31 or '32 ... they got rid of the cows, my dad got one of the cows in McCarthy. It was my job to take care of the cow and milk it. What a chore, chasing that cow all over McCarthy. Every time you wanted to milk it was gone someplace.*

*You didn't know where it was, it didn't bear the bell.*

Reis: *We had the cows, 5 of them in Kennecott, Louis Eldershope was the barn man. When we were little kids, Frank Johnson and I, he told us to go up and get the cows, they would be up back of the mill someplace, "you drive 'em home." Then he says, "don't let them run, you let them run, the milk will be sour." They had one silly cow that was running all the time and we were just horrified, we didn't know what to do. We were just sure ... the milk would be sour. [Later, we realized he was just having fun with us.]*

Watsjold, N: *Depends on what they eat, doesn't it?*

Reis: *I don't know. I don't know anything about it. He would let us milk the cows, he showed us how, when he was through milking, there would be a little left, because he always had cats in the hayloft upstairs. Mice would come in, and the cats would get them. So we got*



*made with a friend that he could get the bull with one shot. The men who were back of the hall sawing wood ran up the logs to be out of Jerry's way if Mr. Osborn missed. I didn't witness this as my mother called me into the house. Carl Stattel got a pole to swing at Jerry but it wasn't needed.*

Shaw, A.: *Did they cut down a lot of those trees on the hillside?*

Reis: *No. They were gone when I came there. Pete Brenwick in McCarthy and Mrs. Brenwick and their son, Leonard. They went down past Iverson's for the logs. They supplied Kennecott with wood for stoves.*

Shaw, A.: *Down towards Blackburn, on the way up towards McCarthy, along the old railroad bed as you head towards Kennecott, on the left there is a big rock dike like - a wall built - but it was large. Like somebody had built a rock fence. Do you know anything about that?*

Reis: *No, I don't. There was a bridge between Blackburn and the railroad.*

Watsjold, O.: *I don't remember that.*

Reis: *I remember a bridge there and whoever had the lodge there, had liquor of course, and there was all kinds of liquor bottles thrown off this bridge. That's how come I can remember it there. A little farther toward McCarthy there was a place that was all sandy and it had ditches in there, I don't know what the ditches were for. I don't think they buried their garbage in those days.*

Shaw, A.: *The big rock wall. Nobody seems to know what it was there for. It could have been stored there for the rock crusher.*

Reis: *Down by Blackburn and just a little ways off in woods there, I don't know why I was there but I was everywhere, and I found a grave, with a little picket fence around it. I've often thought, "Who was that? "Maybe some*



*Clara Bussinger Gruber and daughter Eleanor.*

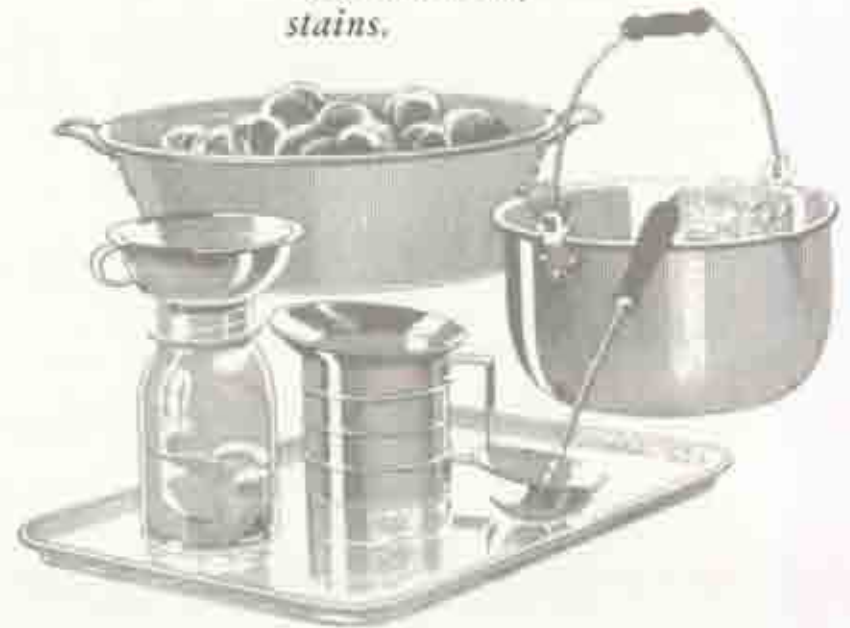


*“...the train would come by when we were sitting in our desks (at school) and we always felt that we were moving and the train was standing still. (The school) was right on the track...”*

MILDRED ERICKSON REIS

- Reis: *I used to go on the back of Mr. Iverson's horse, hold on to his suspenders.*
- Watsjold, N.: *No wonder you loved it so much. Sounds like you were very pampered.*
- Reis: *I was never told not to do things, I think that was it. My parents did not go for spanking children. My father, or they were both with me sometimes, he would say "you know, you need a good licking," but I never got one. But I hurt his feelings and that was enough.....*
- Shaw, A.: *Did you pick a lot of berries?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yep!*
- Shaw, A.: *Berries and make jams...*
- Watsjold, O.: *There was a big berry patch right across the Kennicott River. On the hillside up to 4th of July Pass [9 miles west of Kennecott] was a good raspberry patch. Just before you got to Green Butte, there was a beautiful currant patch. Bigger currants than you'd ever see....*

- Reis: *There was a currant patch up by the old detention camp. Right up in there. And there was raspberries back of Iverson's farm. And strawberries in Cordova. We never ate them but they were good eating, the mossberries, they were everywhere. Remember the little black mossberries? You'd sit down anywhere and you were covered with mossberry stains.*



- Watsjold, O.: *I don't know where you got blueberries but you got cranberries on the way to Kennecott along the railroad track.*

Reis: *There were blueberries beyond the mill, by the tennis court.*

Shaw, A.: *Did you do a lot of canning?*

Reis: *No. Jelly, jam, my mother made but we didn't have any big fruit to can...*

Watsjold, N.: *When we were in McCarthy and Kennecott last, people let us go into the old store building and look around. And, Oscar, there is a trap door where they used to keep their eggs and butter and everything, it was still there, you raise it up in the floor, in the main part. It was really interesting they had some kind of school going, college. [?]*

Shaw, A.: *Cold storage?*

Shaw, L.: *They do [the school] every year.*

Watsjold, O.: *Until the mine opened up for the second time, the railroad didn't run in the winter. So we'd get all our eggs and all our supplies in in October so we ... that place, it stayed about 40 degrees all the*

*time, ... 40 cases of eggs down there. And they got a little ripe by February or March. Every week I had to go down there and turn the case of eggs over so the yolks were in the center on one end.*

Watsjold, N.: *When we went to McCarthy in the '70s, going into the store building there was a runner that went up the stairway, with a rug that matched, down below, that was still there, and they had brought this from Norway, Oscar's mom and dad, when they came in 1929. And it was still there and it was still in good condition at that time.*

Shaw, L.: *Do you know what ever happened to it?*

Watsjold, N.: *No, it was gone the next time we were there and there was still a hand lettered sign, vegetables or eggs or something, that said how much a pound. And it was hand written, and it was still in the store. And we would have loved to have had that but we didn't bother anything. But it was gone the next time.*

Shaw, L.: *Yes. There was a lot ... about the mid-'70s...*

Reis: *Pilfering.*

Watsjold, N.: *I think so.*

Shaw, L.: *A lot of stuff was taken out in the late '60s... We've been told that there are actually big vans sitting around just full of things stored, that people went in and took.*

Shaw, A.: *Yes. There is supposedly some one in Chitina who has a big van load of things and they want \$25,000 for it.*

Watsjold, N.: *They left all their cars and furniture when they left in 1938.*

Watsjold, O.: *I left a 1917 Model T, a 1922 Chevy sedan, 1925 Model T pickup. Left them sitting there when we left.*

Shaw, A.: *Left them sitting in the center of McCarthy, huh?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeab. Then, later on an old car collector ... and they threw them all out of there. Ever been into*

*Alaska Sales and Service? Well, they've got a Chevy coupe sitting up there on display. That used to belong to Ben Jackson, he used to have a drug store in McCarthy. And us kids used to go there all the time. And it was thrown out of there then.*

Watsjold, N.: *And it was he, [Ben Jackson] who got Oscar's dad to come from Norway. Then he married Eleanor's mother later, in her later years. Ben Jackson.*

Reis: *I remember Ben Jackson.*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeah. He came up there when it started, he started his drug store and he had tents then, for the store or whatever.*

Watsjold, N.: *The old car that still sits by the store, in McCarthy, by the hardware store, is the one that Uncle Ben used to drive.*

Watsjold, O.: *No, no, no. That's the one that Bill Berry made. He took the pieces out of and made a frame out of wood, put the Model T*



*Gracie with tracked automobile.*

*marks on it. It was sitting there last time I was up there.*

Reis: *What happened to Bill Berry, I mean, after he left there?*

Watsjold, O.: *I guess he died. I don't know how he kept his feet warm because he went winter and summer in tennis shoes. Never wore shoepacs or mukluks.*

Reis: *Did you know Shorty Guinn?*

Watsjold, O.: *You betcha.*

Reis: *He had a place over by the Nizina River. He never fastened his shoepacs, they were always flopping open. He took mother and I up to Nizina one time, when we were in McCarthy, and we were going with the sled dogs, I don't know if he didn't have the sled right or what but we went down the hill like this. We didn't get hurt, there was a lot of snow on us, what a mess!...And then there was Pink Whiskers, do you remember Pink Whiskers?*

Watsjold, O.: *No.*

Reis: *He made this "white mule". He had a still somewhere, and he would come to town, and nobody locked their doors there, but when he came to town they all locked their doors, I don't know why. But anyway he had a red beard so they called him "Pink Whiskers". Then I was up there one time and talked to Molly McDonald, it was probably ... Gilmore [Molly's married name] ... and her husband said "you know, we found the old still that Pink Whiskers had." Copper kettle ... don't know where it was...*

Watsjold, O.: *Most of them are gone now.*

Reis: *Yes. Marian died last... I don't know about Verna, but I know all of the others are gone.*

Shaw, A.: *Were these all people who were out in McCarthy?*

Reis: *Yes.*



- Shaw, A.: *Where did you say that good currant patch was on the other side of the glacier?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Currants, no. The currants was up towards Green Butte. You can't get to it now. Just before you got to the Green Butte lower camp.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Is that the mine that Eleanor [Tjosevig] and her sister [Stella] still own?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yeab. They have their mine further up the creek. They used to live in that cabin there, Green Butte.*
- Reis: *There was a place called Horse Camp when I lived there, it was up that same way. I don't know why horses - the horses would get there ... maybe it was from that lower Mother Lode.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Well I guess the easy way now if you going to walk to Green Butte is to go up to Kennecott and go over the pass and down the other side.*
- Shaw, A.: *Do you know Lloyd Green [?], out there?*
- Watsjold, O.: *No.*
- Shaw, A.: *Lloyd's been out there now for about thirty years. He stays in a cabin in the wintertime about 13 miles up McCarthy Creek. By the Green Butte Mine up there. He actually mines back in there. He has a little plane that's got a snowmobile engine in it.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh! He's got one of those ultra-lights hub?*
- Shaw, A.: *Yeab.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Do you know somebody up there named Spearstead?*
- Watsjold, O.: *John Spearstead? He's at Anchorage.*
- Shaw, A.: *I think I've heard that name but I don't know.*
- Reis: *...Children, in a way...I was down on the Fourth of July [Creek, 7 miles northwest of McCarthy] one time and Marian, my little friend down there, had a bicycle. And I knew how to ride because I had*

*ridden in Kennecott. I was going down Front Street there [in McCarthy] and of course, all the men were down from the mines and I hit a little rock or something and went sailing over the handlebars. I was so afraid I hurt the bicycle. This older gentleman came over and asked me if I was hurt, I said, "no." He said "well your bicycle is alright" and said "it's not mine, I don't have one." He said, "oh, you don't have one? You'll have one next year." I didn't pay any attention to that. The next year I got a letter from the mine with \$15.00 in it. It said "this is for the freight on your bicycle" at the post office. I ran over to the post office and it was there. A beautiful big red bicycle! His name was Stephen Veach, he worked up at the mine. ... When I went to boarding school my parents sold it to somebody. The men liked to do things for the children. I remember the hardest part of that was I had to write a nice letter to thank him. That was the hardest thing, for a little kid. But I did it.*

- Shaw, A.: *Do you live in Anchorage now?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Seward.*
- Watsjold, N.: *Since 1939.*
- Shaw, A.: *From here to there, huh?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Almost. First came to school there in '31, in Seward, '30-'31....Stage from Valdez to Fairbanks in the early days.*
- Shaw, A.: *Horses pull the stage?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Yeah, horses.*
- Watsjold, N.: *This is Bill Cameron, you are talking about?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Bill Cameron's dad.*
- Shaw, A.: *Were there many cars in the '30s here in Alaska?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Oh yeah. Not like there is now, but there was quite a few. McCarthy had quite a few and no place to go but to Kennecott and Nizina River and Dan Creek.*

Shaw, A.: *Was there bridge access to Dan Creek?*

Watsjold, O.: *Oh yeah! Across the Nizina River. Bridges there, a lot of it, not all of it, is still there.*

Shaw, A.: *One end of that bridge fell down.*

Watsjold, O.: *Probably on the far end, middle to the end. That was all pilings. We used it every July, we move the camp off the river. Used to be a camp on the Nizina River bar. We'd move the camp up to May Creek because that pothole would break on the Nizina and flood where the camp was and it would take out part of the bridge. Regular sparkler[?] every year it went out in the first part of July.*

Reis: *When I first came to Alaska and my father was going to go to Nizina to work, we had to go up in a pack train of horses and my mother and I, my mother held me in front of her in the saddle, I had a teddy bear and I tied that to the pommel of the saddle. That's the way we went to Nizina. We got to*

*the river and there was no bridge, we had to cross by horseback. Some of it the horses had to swim. We ended up a mile down from where the crossing was. I don't remember much about it but mother has never forgotten that ride. I lost my teddy bear, I know, that was pretty sad.*

Watsjold, O.: *Well, it used to be, it was Harold Boylan, Tom Miller, and Pete Brenwick, they all had pack trains of 20-24 horses. They took off from McCarthy, and up the White River and all that took these hunting parties. Good old fashioned hunting parties, not like they have now, fly-in. You went with horses, took you three, four weeks before you got back from that hunt.*

Reis: *Bill Slimpert.*

Watsjold, O.: *Bill Slimpert, I didn't think he had his own horses. He helped. I think he was with Harold Boylan. Bill ... he had an old dog and the dog always liked to ride on the running board of the car. One day, he was*

*riding from the depot up to the store and the dog was sitting on the running board. The dog fell off and went under the back wheel. He was so upset, but it didn't hurt the dog, he limped a little bit but that is all. So..one time I was going Outside and I had this one dog left and I left it with Bill...he said he'd take care of it for me and I could have it in the spring. That dog would do anything. My best leader I ever had. Next spring I come back from Seattle, he said "you can't have that dog back, that's my dog now". He got so attached to it and I said "well, okay." A couple years later, they found the dog but they didn't find him. They figured he tried to cross the river someplace but didn't make it. The dog, they found him.*

**Reis:** *In the olden times they ... go up to hunt gold, to prospect. Maybe one would come back.....you never knew.*

**Watsjold, N.:** *And they didn't investigate thoroughly.*

**Watsjold, O.:** *When Bill Slimpert disappeared, he was alone at the time....*

**Shaw, A.:** *...When these guys disappeared ... they never knew what happened?*

**Watsjold, O.:** *... You didn't even know where they were going, these prospectors they never told you where they were going prospecting.*

**Reis:** *When the two prospectors would go up, and one would disappear, nobody investigated, they just took his word, the man had fallen in and if you fall in these rivers, you done. Strange things.*

**Watsjold, N.:** *Did you go to Robert Service's cabin when you were in Dawson City?*

**Reis:** *Yes. There was Dawson Creek in British Columbia and Dawson City up here.*

**Shaw, A.:** *In the situation where somebody disappeared, was there a lot of gossip ... speculation?*

- Watsjold, O.: *They didn't have helicopters to go looking for them like they have now.*
- Reis: *Just like the people in airplanes that disappear, they can't find them, they don't know where they are. Later on they may find the remains by the plane, or maybe the bears had drug them away.*
- Shaw, A.: *Did they have much activity with airplanes out there, 'cause they had an airport?*
- Watsjold, O.: *McCarthy? Oh you betcha! Airplanes were there every day all the time. Harold Gillam was in and out of there. I learned to fly in McCarthy. I used to haul freight and stuff from McCarthy to the airport, up and down. Took the Model T or the dog team, whatever. And instead of paying me they gave me flying lessons. John Clause[?] was the one who taught me how to fly. He was flying with...Airlines, then he moved up to Deering[?].*
- Shaw, A.: *Well, they sure have a nice airport out there. Nice long runway.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Where, in McCarthy? Yes, but at that time they were using the one on top of the hill.*
- Reis: *Yes. Sourdough Hill.*
- Watsjold, O.: *They didn't have the one in McCarthy where it is now.*
- Shaw, A.: *Where was it?*
- Watsjold, O.: *On top of the hill, across McCarthy Creek. That's where the airport was when we lived there.*
- Reis: *I went on that, the rocks were flying in all directions.*
- Watsjold, O.: *They didn't start building that one in McCarthy down below until they started hijacking that ore out of Kennecott, flying it out of there. What was his name?*
- Watsjold, N.: *Mud Hole.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Mudhole [Smith]. Did you ever hear of Mudhole? He's the one*



*Mrs. O'Neill, Tommy O'Neill, and James O'Neill at the McCarthy runway.*

- who started the lodge in McCarthy years ago. Started that lodge in McCarthy. I think he was the first one....*
- Shaw, A.: *Yeah. McCarthy Lodge was something else before it became a lodge, wasn't it? A store or something, a dentist?*
- Reis: *You mean the regular lodge there. That was [J.P.] Hubrick's store, and he had a photography studio 'cause I have a picture that was taken there. Cap Hubrick. He lived across from the depot ... railroad ... he had Airedale dogs which he used to take out for bear hunting.*
- Shaw, A.: *I bet his family must have a bunch of pictures.*
- Watsjold, O.: *Probably. It was so many years ago, he died in the '30s. Who knows where they are now.*
- Reis: *Maybe they're upstairs in the lodge where someone said the picture of my mother and I was...*
- Watsjold, O.: *[Inaudible].*
- Reis: *There was one in the lodge, I saw it there when...[inaudible]*
- Shaw, A.: *Have you read the little history beside the pictures?*
- Reis: *No, I haven't, but what I did do, a few years ago, a lady in Langley, she taught at the university, and she thought we should and write our lives so they would have them for our grandchildren. I joined her class. She didn't tell us how to write because it had to be in our own words. We were to remember the way they dressed and the way they did things, it would be interesting. So I took this course and had two big notebooks crammed full but I never had it typed up. So I was going to have it ready before I came up here but I didn't get around to it. My daughter-in-law called me one day and said "you want me to type up your notes?" I said "if you want to, it's quite a chore". Then she said my son would take it to where he works and they would run it off*

*and make me a book out of it. So when I get that, you'll have to remember that I was a child when all this happened to me, so it won't be anything ... It's just my memories. So I hope it will be interesting.*

Shaw, A.: *Particularly, if your children want those pictures...*

Reis: *Yes. I thought I'd have copies of them and put them in the book for them. I was invited by a girl that knew, this lady that lived in Cordova, her name was Mrs. Breedman. And she had been a teacher up there in the '30s, she's in her 80s now. She said "I know this lady and I know she'd love to talk to you." So I went to her house one day, we had quite a nice talk and she gave me a book of her adventures in Alaska.*

TAPE 2  
SIDE A OR C: [AS A CONTINUATION OF THE CAR INTERVIEW]

Reis: *This is Clarence Breedman ... Margaret Breedman. She and her*

*husband lived and worked and were long time residents in Cordova and Chitina-later in Fairbanks.*

Shaw, A.: *So we'll have to get in touch with you to see...Getting some of that information...*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeah. ...Nelson ... Big city...*

Reis: *Oh, I remember something about that.*

Watsjold, N.: *Who did you say ... Breedman and O.A. Nelson?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeah ... store in Kennecott...*

Reis: *Was it the Nelson that had 2 sons? And the elder one died. The younger one was a doctor. Philip was the younger one, Adrian[?] and Philip. She used to come to Kennecott to visit.*

Shaw, A.: *Between Chitina and McCarthy there seems to be some railroad roadhouses ... or I don't know if they were stops or stations ... what were those? We'll see them on the way out.*



Watsjold, O.: *I think those were section houses.*

Reis: *Yes. They served as section houses.*

Shaw, A.: *The crew would stay there?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeab.*

Shaw, A.: *There's a number of those around. I've never known the history of them.*

Shaw, A.: *[Inaudible]. What was it for?*

Reis: *...Turning the engines around.*

Watsjold, O.: *Turn the engines around in McCarthy.*

Shaw, A.: *Was that a building they had ... turntable?*

Watsjold, O.: *Yeab. No building now, just the turntable is there.*

Shaw, A.: *The turntable is still there across from the museum.*

Reis: *They had a section house down there, they didn't have one in Kennecott...*

Shaw, A.: *How many people were up there in Kennecott?*

Reis: *600 men, I would say, and about 200-300 in Kennecott itself. [The others were up at the mines.] And there were thirty families.*

Shaw, A.: *That's an awful lot, isn't it?*

Reis: *It was a big place. \$1,000,000.00 of ore went out every month.*

Shaw, A.: *How much?*

Reis: *Million. About nine carloads of ore went out every day, they stacked them on the flatcars ... gondolas ... they always put them on neatly. One of my friends was ... Mike the Ore Sacker. I'd go through the sacking shed at the foot of the hill and he had a crew of men there and they'd stand up on the boxcars, flatcars, and hold the sacks up to catch the crushed ore, sew up the sacks and put them on the car. That was their job. I always stopped to talk to Mike. [He was the foreman - his full name was Mike Kallas.]*

- Watsjold, O.: *Weighed about 140 lbs. a sack. I helped stack them up.*
- Reis: *That's a lot of weight, you must've gotten pretty strong doing that.*
- Watsjold, O.: *When the mine opened up the second time they didn't run in the wintertime so we loaded all the cars they had and put it on the siding and the rest was stacked up in the yard. Several million dollars worth of ore sitting in the yard when, spring came they hauled it back out.*
- Reis: *When you were there as a bucket chaser, were there three shifts then?*
- Watsjold, O.: *Two. Sometimes they only worked one shift off the Jumbo Tram, two off the Bonanza, Mother Lode, whatever you want to call them.*
- Reis: *The men used to ride on the trams, buckets, to go to the mines. But the women were not allowed to. They had to have permission from the office to go up there. So my mother and I went up with a*

*nurse and her friend, one time, to Jumbo Mine. I was used to biking, I was doing fine and got part way up and I got a little faint. So they made me lay down and I passed out. Then I'd get up, be fine and go a little farther, I got to the last part, we really had to climb up, one of the engineers came up, I guess, and picked me up. I don't even remember it. I ended up at the ... Jumbo Mine. But then I was alright again. It was the altitude. Then they took us all through the mine, it was way down, I don't know how many feet they were, real deep. Beautiful in the mine. They had those little locomotives in the mine. When they would come by you'd have to push back against the siding because they would take up so much space, they were electric, on tracks. Then we went down on one of the skips, they hold nine men, 3 lay beside each other, then 3 and then 3. You couldn't sit up or you'd hit your head. Had no idea, how fast, it was just pitch black, kind of scary. Then we had our lunch with the miners in the underground*

- lunchroom. *It was kind of nice. They were very quiet, I guess they weren't used to women being there.*
- Watsjold, N.: *I suppose there is still a lot of copper there.*
- Reis: *I think there is. Two young men were making something and wanted high grade ore. They were not allowed to go in the mine ... but they did, they took some dynamite. They were killed....*
- INTERVIEW TAKING PLACE IN THE ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE
- Shaw, A.: *Mildred, we are looking at your public school cards and it looks like you started in 2nd grade here in the one-room schoolhouse at Kennecott in 1919. Your teacher at that time was I don't see her signature on here.*
- Reis: *I believe it is Mary Waddle.*
- Shaw, A.: *And you were still in this one-room schoolhouse in 1920, 21.*
- Reis: *Well, I went through the 4th grade when Virilda Jacobs was the teacher. This is 5th grade.*
- Shaw, A.: *In 5th grade you went where?*
- Reis: *To the new schoolhouse.*
- Shaw, A.: *The two-room?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *That was in 1922. Here's 6th and that was 1923-24. This one has to be the 5th grade, right here, Mildred.*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *1922-23.*
- Reis: *That's right because I was promoted to 6th.*
- Shaw, A.: *Did you go to school here, in 5th grade?*
- Reis: *No.*
- Shaw, A.: *So your last grade here was 1921-22?*



*Schoolhouse steps. Front row, left to right: Sissy Lommell, Dick Schneeburger, Jerine Osburn, Richard Osburn, Missy Lommell, Inger Jensen, Jean Douglass, Bill Douglass, Deb Vickery. Back row, left to right: Kenneth (?), Chester (?), Unknown, Frank Johnson, Jane Vickery. Back: Miss Thompson (?), Mildred Erickson, Ora D. Clark.*

- Reis: *Yes. Then this one is 7th grade.. And that's, I don't know her first name, A. Ulleland.*
- Shaw, A.: *The last year this school was used was 1921-22?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Then they used the two-room schoolhouse after that?*
- Reis: *Yes. We moved there. This is when I was in high school. But I didn't go here. You see, I had my studies at recess, and at noon and at recess in the afternoon, and then after school. Because, that way I didn't conflict with others. This was Mrs. HARRAIS, and I was tested to tenth. Then I went to Seattle.*
- Shaw, A.: *You were out of the school. Let me get a light here, I want to show you, I think your name is still in the closet. It is something I wanted you to come and look at.*
- Reis: *I think those tests like that we had were a good thing. The school district knew what we were doing*
- and I think that they should do them again.*
- Shaw, L.: *Using the flashlight or do you want this?*
- Shaw, A.: *No. Let me use a flashlight too.*
- Reis: *I wonder why it's down here.*
- Shaw, A.: *See that, ..Chester..*
- Reis: *Yes, that's Chester and they must have had them up here with something to hang...*
- Shaw, A.: *No. You can see there's holes where there were books but there were no books here when we got it.*
- Reis: *Maybe that's what that was for, books.*
- Shaw, A.: *Just a minute, can you read that?*
- Reis: *That's Frank Johnson.*
- Shaw, A.: *Frank Johnson, did you know him?*
- Reis: *Yes.*

- Shaw, A.: *He was in your 5th grade class, your last class here?*
- Reis: *I can't remember. But who is this? Eleanor. I don't remember an Eleanor but there was one family here a very short time, it might have been one of them. Dolly Lloyd.*
- Shaw, A.: *Do you know this person right here.*
- Reis: *Yes, that's Mildred and Kenneth. That was one of the Padgetts.*
- Shaw, A.: *Is that your name right there?*
- Reis: *Yes. Must have been something we had to hang up. Were there other books here, taller ones?*
- Shaw, A.: *No. Well, I don't know, these shelves were here. We haven't done anything to change these but there are book holes right there. Like somebody had taken them out.*
- Reis: *Because they are down so low, it was when we were smaller. Frank Johnson was two or three years younger than I.*
- Shaw, A.: *I don't know what the larger kids might have done. Those books are ones that we put in up there.*
- Reis: *There were kids second year of high school here then.*
- Shaw, A.: *That is her name in there.*
- Shaw, L.: *Is that you in there Mildred? Was there a nail there to hang...*
- Reis: *Well, we found little nail holes. There was something we hung, maybe some of our school work that the teacher wanted us to keep separate or something.*
- Shaw, A.: *The last year she went to school here was in her 4th grade, that was 1921-22 and that was the last year this school was used. Then they moved into the two-room schoolhouse.*
- Reis: *That [two-room] school was apparently a bunk house at one time, then they took everything out*

*down there, and why should they when they had the facilities to put it up here and move it and have the building, which belonged to them because Blackburn was a railroad town for the railroad people who took care of the CRNWRR. So it was their building.*

Shaw, A.: *How many students were in here at a time?*

Reis: *I don't remember how many were in here, but when we were in the other school it always seemed to be six in each room. So it must have been about the same. Two would move out and two little ones would move in, it just worked out that way. We always seemed to have 12 children.*

Shaw, A.: *It was all grades, wasn't it? Right up through 12th.*

Reis: *Yes. 1st through 12th. I was just looking up here at the lodge and I saw a little thing they had written in for a schoolteacher, they said "Miss Brown, you must be here by*

*the 5th of Sept." and it said "be sure you have a certificate for Palmer Method of Writing[?]."*

Shaw, L.: *Oh is that right!*

Reis: *I thought that was kind of ... I don't know if you remember it but you held your hand stiff and worked this way, this is the way you wrote. You had to do this every day for so long. And I never did learn to write that way.*

Shaw, A.: *As you can see we put a bedroom upstairs so that helps. Lynda wanted to make sure we left it intact inside here, not build any walls or anything, divide it up.*

Reis: *You painted it white.*

Shaw, L.: *No, it was painted white, we just put some undercoat.*

Shaw, A.: *It was painted down to the blackboards.*

Reis: *I don't know what was here but the blackboards [were] up there. But a lot of us kids used to have to take the ... pound the erasers.*

Shaw, A.: *Somebody has the chalkboards. It would be nice if we could get them back. But we don't know who it is.*

Shaw, L.: *You were saying there was only one stove in here?*

Reis: *Yes.*

Shaw, L.: *This end or that end?*

Reis: *Right here.*

Shaw, L.: *There is a stack here.*

Shaw, A.: *Did it face that way?*

Reis: *Yes. The head row of desks were here ... stove back here. The younger ones sat here, then high school..*

Shaw, L.: *Over by the wall.*

Reis: *I think the desks were smaller.*

Shaw, A.: *So you faced the south which we call the back of the schoolhouse.*

Reis: *The teacher was always cold and the bigger boys kept this fired up.*

Shaw, L.: *What did they burn in it, wood?*

Reis: *Yes. They had coal here too, cause there is a coal bin up here, but mostly wood. We always burned wood. I think you had a choice.*

Shaw, L.: *Our stove is pretty efficient so we are kind of toasty in here. I can imagine in the winter, it wouldn't...*

Reis: *Well the big boys had to be busy.*

Schneeberger: [Gretchen Schneeberger, a local resident, enters the conversation]. *Insulation...*

Shaw, L.: *It has sawdust in the walls.*

Shaw, A.: *Yes. It has sawdust in the walls, here, which is good and bad 'cause it collects moisture and will have a tendency of freezing so you can wind up with the walls getting rotted.*

Schneeberger: *What about the floor?*

Shaw, A.: *No there is no ... when she was here, all it had ... Has the original sawdust in the walls, that's all. So at -50 I guess it was pretty cold.*



Reis: *Yes. And there was no insulation in our houses.*

Shaw, L.: *Some of them were canvas and they put...I know Bern's [Hoffmann] house up there was, the original part of it was a tent house. Then they built sides to it.*

Reis: *Our house was too, there are three up there of the same design. And they had no insulation. It was up from the ground about ... so ... and when you get the snow packed around it keeps the warmth in...*

Shaw, A.: *Your house was this one right up here wasn't it?*

Reis: *Yes, the Company Land Office..*

Shaw, A.: *The Company Land Office House now.*

Reis: *Does the man still own that?*

Shaw, A.: *Randolph of...yes.*

Reis: *Isn't he a dentist or something?*

Shaw, A.: *Yes ... Power and I can't remember the other.*

Shaw, L.: *...Kennecott...*

Reis: *They were staying there when my daughter was here a couple of years ago and she wanted to see the inside and they finally got a key for her and let her in. She said "it was so tiny, Mother." We had smaller houses, everywhere they were smaller. They weren't big like they are now. Thought we had plenty of room, we had five rooms!*

Shaw, L.: *I think you did ... Like you say, it is really what you are used to. It was certainly more economical to have a small place.*

Schneeberger: *How many children were there?*

Reis: *With me? I'm the only one.*

Shaw, L.: *So you had plenty of room, the three of you..*

Reis: *I had the room that faced this way so I could watch...*



*Kennecott gripped in winter.*

- Shaw, A.: *How many years did you actually live here in Kennecott?*
- Reis: *From '18, or was it '17, no '18 that I came up and I went back to Seattle, '27 then I came back up, then went back down again, then I came back up again, visiting.*
- Shaw, A.: *So you were 17 years old when you went back down, did you say?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *So you were here from 1916 to 1927? What did you do, finish up the last two years at boarding school?*
- Reis: *No, I went one year to boarding school and, one year here and one at boarding school, then my mother came down with me and I went to Queen Anne High School, that's where I graduated.*
- Shaw, A.: *Then did you come back after that to live anymore?*
- Reis: *No. We decided not to and then daddy stayed a few years and then*

*he went to the Bremner Mines near Chitina. Pete Ramer and his brother owned it. He was there, they wanted someone to tell them what kind of machinery to buy for the mines and that was his specialty. He drove a tractor from McCarthy to the Bremner Mine, I don't know how but I remember it seemed to take a long time. 'Cause they are way up the mountain. He was there, not too long and woke up in terrible pain one morning and they tried to signal Bruce Johnson the pilot then as he flew over. They had an S.O.S. in the snow, he couldn't land on the snow because his plane was too heavily loaded. Came up here and came back and my dad had peritonitis. They took him up to the hospital and then my mother and I got a night letter and they said, "your husband is doing very well, now," and we didn't know what had happened.*

- Shaw, L.: *Did they bring him up to this hospital?*
- Reis: *Yes. They came from all around here. When we lived in Nizina, my*

*mother became ill and they brought her up here for an operation.*

Shaw, A.:

*My understanding, from what you said yesterday in our conversation, that this was the only hospital between here and Cordova.*

Reis:

*I don't know if ... But I don't think there was. But Dr. Gillespie was known for his expertise anyway. He was a very good orthopedic man, that isn't what he said he was, but he was, which they need in a company like this, because of their accidents and broken arms and so forth. One of the men in the machine shop, one of the head men, Carl Engstrom, everything was running with belts, and he got caught in one of the machine belts. This one spun around. I don't know how many bones were broken, Dr. Gillespie had to patch him up. It was quite a chore. He had weights on him, all over. Mr. Engstrom was in the hospital a long time but was completely cured. He was a very well liked man. Someone wrote a poem one*

*time and they showed it on the screen when we had a movie. I can't remember the words but it was to the affect that when any machine broke down he could fix it. Each stanza ended "Carl Engstrom can fix it, God bless him." After he left Kennecott he lived in Tenakee Hot Springs until his death. When I was eleven, my mother became ill again, she had a goiter. You never hear of goiters anymore. Dr. Gillespie was going to Seattle and he said, "come along with my wife and I and I'll go to the hospital with you." So, he went in with Dr. Mason at the Virginia Mason Hospital and they operated on it. A few months later, we came back. I was a spoiled child, I think I demanded that I go too, so I did and mother had a friend in Seattle and I stayed with her while she was in the hospital. I didn't like Seattle, I didn't like those streets, I thought it was ugly. I wanted to come back.*

Shaw, L.:

*You were very fortunate to grow up here.*

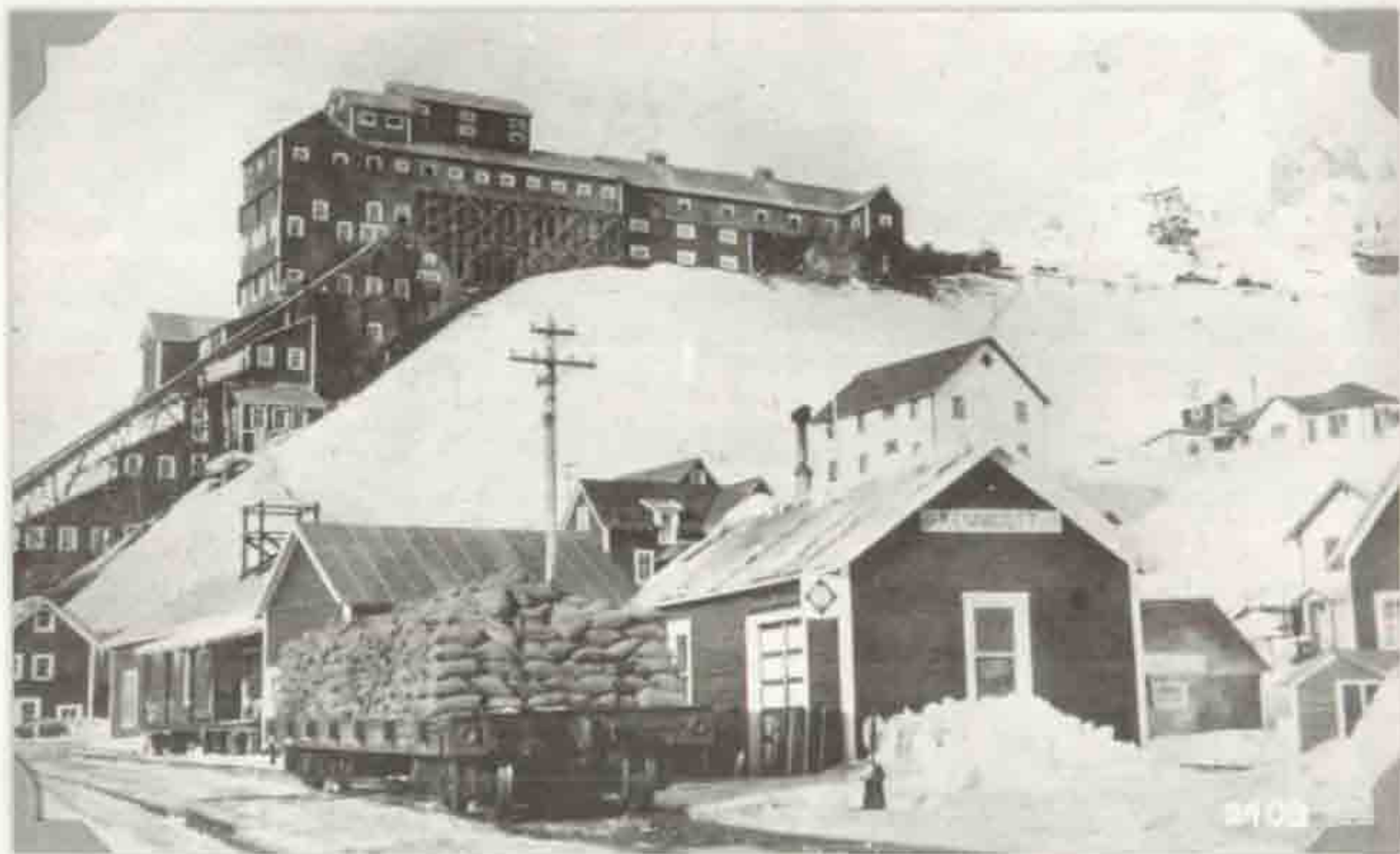
- Reis: *I always thought so.*
- Schneeberger: *Mildred, wasn't Dr. Gillespie involved in that mushing to Nome with the diphtheria serum?*
- Reis: *I don't know but he may have been because there was quite a bit of that at that time. They had the different drivers, I imagine he was. He was into things anyway. He had his own horse here. A saddle pony. They had a tack room and I'd ride in the saddle. Then Mrs. O'Neill, a woman in McCarthy had a beautiful horse. I used to go down there for music lessons but then she started coming up here because she got more students. She was a wonderful pianist! She'd come up. She was a lovely woman and she had the riding habit wear.*
- Shaw, A.: *The dairy barn is right here.*
- Reis: *Yes. The horses had one side and the cows were on the other.*
- Shaw, A.: *In the barn?*
- Reis: *Yes. I remember the barn man as you called him, allowed us to milk the cows after he had milked them to take out the milk up to the cats in the loft. Had lots of cats in the loft. This was an exciting thing.*
- Shaw, A.: *Believe it or not, I was raised back in Pennsylvania and had similar experiences. We'd go to the ... room and watch them milk. We'd always get milk for the cats. He'd have fun just squirting us now and then too.*
- Reis: *This went on down there too as I remember. We liked to go up in the loft, there was chute for the oats and things to go down below. That was fun to watch. Mr. Eldershope was very nice to us down there.*
- Shaw, A.: *Mildred, look out the window here and tell me what you see, and what are the changes in the glacier.*
- Reis: *I was noticing, because you told me yesterday, seemingly the mountains are up higher for some reason and that island..Donoho*

- [Peak] ... is so large. It just dawned on me the island has shrunk down.
- Shaw, A.: *The glacier, you mean.*
- Reis: *Yes, glacier has shrunk down. This make the other ... seem so much larger.*
- Shaw, L.: *It is no different than when you have the trains going by. We have the vehicles now...*
- Reis: *Yes. That's what has happened. This was way out, because we used to walk down the road here and, I'd go with my uncle...*
- Shaw, A.: *The wagon road.*
- Reis: *Yes, we'd walk as far as the grave yard and pick flowers and things and the glacier was right here. So these houses up here were right out. And there were no trees out here at all, just the glacier.*
- Schneeberger: *It was actual ice?*
- Shaw, A.: *Was it white, or was it brown like this?*
- Reis: *Brown. Moraine.*
- Shaw, A.: *That is just dirt on top, it's all ice underneath.*
- Reis: *We had a place on the baseball field that they kept a wheelbarrow and sacks and a shovel and you'd come down there and get ice for your ice cream. But the ice was so dirty with the little bits of sand through it, you couldn't use it for anything else. Oh, you have a patio!*
- Shaw, A.: *Yes, we built that patio. We are going to put a door out the shed, off the back there. So we can get to it, so...*
- Shaw, L.: *That is owned by Jim and Jean Miller.*
- Shaw, A.: *Yeab. When you look out here, where did the glacier come to?*
- Reis: *It seemed to come quite close because...*
- Shaw, A.: *It must have come out against the road here.*

- Reis: *Yes. It was quite close, there was just a little bit of space there, and it was high. It was thick like it is over there. I remember one day there was a little hole across from our house that came through and pretty soon it was a river. Then it stopped. It was one of the lakes in the glacier, when it melts in the center and breaks through.*
- Shaw, A.: *Some of the older pictures I've seen show these to be pretty high mountains right here, ...glacier... but now see this is, looks like all the ice has melted out underneath that. In fact that one right there, that high one just right off the edge here, we climb up on that and take pictures here. Some of those pictures of the schoolhouse we showed you were part of that. What is interesting is how, it hasn't exactly receded, it just melted down more.*
- Reis: *It is called, I think, Dan Glacier, it comes down from Wrangell, Mt. Wrangell, on one side and what's the other one?*
- Shaw, A.: *It's the Root Glacier and the Kennicott Glacier.*
- Reis: *...must be on this side of the...*
- Shaw, A.: *Comes down from Blackburn, Mt. Blackburn, then the Root over here and they meet up here by that island you talked about.*
- Reis: *We loved it up there, mother and I and dad. They had to watch me, my father never allowed me to go on the glacier, it was dangerous. But he'd take us across to the island but we'd go up to Erie Mine and walk across. Then you had to jump the crevices. I forget...it was crevasse... The tourists would come up and they would say "crevasse" and we would say "tourists!"*
- Shaw, A.: *The hillsides here, when I look at some of your pictures, you don't see these trees around.*
- Reis: *No. Our ... was quite high and if you ... look out at just dirt. But if we had it up above, we could look up at the mountains.*

- Shaw, A.: [Inaudible].
- Reis: [Inaudible].
- Reis: *Mt. Porphyry has changed. Maybe the earthquake has done a lot to the glacier but you can't see it from here.*
- Shaw, A.: *You can see it out the kitchen...*
- Reis: *Now this one end up here was just straight across with a piece up like [a finger]. My dad always said, "I'm going to go up and knock that thing off someday". He started out one day and didn't make it. He came home and said he was sure he couldn't walk up there.*
- Shaw, A.: *There was a rock up there he wanted to roll off or something?*
- Reis: *Then, the next time I came up, it was after the earthquake and it was gone. Must have been large. And I notice now it is kind of rounded where that was, it was square before.*
- Shaw, A.: *When was the earthquake here?*
- Reis: *'64. The one in Anchorage, the big one.*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, I see.*
- Reis: *But it did damage a lot up here because there was a flood from National Creek right into town, at camp. I couldn't figure out how the water would go almost to the office. But I think the earthquake wrecked the scenery around there.*
- Shaw, A.: *When you were a kid here, did you have much in the way of earthquakes?*
- Reis: *No. I don't remember any. I don't even remember ... well we had one little wind storm but that is the only wind I can remember. It was very calm, but it got cold ... -60. All you wanted to do then was stay by the fire.*
- Shaw, A.: *The only time you went into the butcher shop you had ... hanging what?*





*Ore-laden flat car, Kennecott. Courtesy Anchorage Museum of History and Art.*

*“About nine carloads of ore went out every day, they stacked them on the flatcars...gondolas... they always put them on neatly. One of my friends was...Mike the Ore Sacker. I’d go through the sacking shed at the foot of the hill and he had a crew of men there and they’d stand up on the boxcars, flatcars, and hold the sacks up to catch the crushed ore (about 140 lbs. a sack), sew up the sacks and put them on the car. That was their job.”*

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- Reis: *The side, the full beef sides. Here was this thing, I just knew it was human, I was scared to death. It was a bear and they had skinned it. [It was hanging with the beef.]*
- Schneeberger: *Mildred, do you remember the store[?] before, there was the remnants of the store. Is that totally gone?*
- Reis: *I don't know, I haven't been up there, I think the store is still there. Last time I was here there were papers everywhere.*
- Shaw, A.: *We've picked those up. We had volunteers last year [1989] that picked those up.*
- Shaw, L.: *Not just papers, anything that could have any value that could be saved has been picked up now.*
- Reis: *They had on one side all the different materials for the ladies and the sewing things, everything and they had some boats and things like that. This side, the first part, I remember, because it was candy and then it was canned goods. Very seldom much fruit or anything because they didn't have airplanes.*
- Shaw, A.: *No fresh fruit?*
- Shaw, L.: *Yes, the store is still there. The back half of the store, the roof was torn off in the late '50s, I believe. So that building has a problem, that is one of the critical buildings we would like to get a roof on.*
- Reis: *The teamsters used two horses and a wagon to take all the supplies up to the mill. In the afternoon, they'd leave about 5:00, they'd take the horses down by the store, unbitch them. As a little girl, I used to hang around and then I'd get a ride to the barn. Great big work horses! You could just lay down on them! They would say "oh, would you like a ride?"*
- Shaw, L.: *You knew the routine.*
- Reis: *It was kind of fun. They were so good to children.... Magalina, that is the Norwegian spelling.*

- Shaw, A.: *So your dad didn't call you Madaline, he called you Mildred instead?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *That was the compromise?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, L.: *To your knowledge, did they have any murders here?*
- Reis: *Not in Kennecott, no. In McCarthy, there may have been, but I'm not sure. We heard of some - a couple of times men going up to the creeks to prospect, partners, and one would come back and the other had fallen in the river and couldn't get him. Now, they didn't know, nobody investigated. I told you this I think. That's all I know. I believe one of the girls was killed, but I don't remember because my little friend Marian took me down to a house and there were some dark stains on it. She said "that's blood". We got scared and we ran home. So I don't know, that's as far as I really know.*

- Schneeberger: *Somebody was telling me that McCarthy was the rough town where all the "naughty kids" were and all the little kids in Kennecott had to have their parents go with them to McCarthy.*
- Reis: *Well, my mother felt that I could be a lady no matter where I lived and I knew where I could not go and I was trusted to do as I was told. I could go down and stay with my little friend Marian and she could come up and stay with me. The ... ladies she knew made a few remarks which got back to mother but she paid no attention.*
- Schneeberger: *There really was a reputation, that extended even to the children.*
- Reis: *Yes, our house was here and right over here was a large ... house, and it housed the "sports" as they called them. Later on..*
- Schneeberger: *What's a sport?*
- Reis: *That's the name of the girls ... our house nearly burned when the part next to it burned. They came*

*over, wearing their high heels and with their buckets, began a bucket brigade and poured water on the roof. Saved our house. Later on, whoever had charge of things, I don't know, they were asked to move down the line, down to McCarthy Creek.*

Shaw, L.: *There were several houses there.*

Shaw, A.: *Brotbels.*

Reis: *'21 or '22.*

Shaw, L.: *'20, oh was that...*

Schneeberger: *Was Kate Kennedy the madam?*

Reis: *She was not down there with the girls. She had a hotel in town and there was a saloon next and there were girls in the saloon. I always thought she was, I meant to ask Fred [Fritz] Seltenreich. In fact I am going to ask him. He should know because he lived down there. I think she was but she was more or less respected. I don't know...*

Shaw, A.: *Who were you going to ask?*

Reis: *Fritz Seltenreich. Fred I guess.*

Shaw, A.: *There was no alcohol allowed here at Kennecott, was there?*

Reis: *No. Although, people made wine. Home brew. But it was not allowed.*

Shaw, A.: *So they had to go to McCarthy for that?*

Reis: *Yes. For a while they were bringing up fresh figs in the store and they disappeared fast and then they didn't sell fresh figs anymore. But I never heard anything, too much about it. My dad was not too much with having liquor around. Just had a little wine now and then.*

Schneeberger: *There was the story when Prohibition was declared they had that group go down to McCarthy and load up trunks and whatever else was available and haul it back up here. Hide it under the floorboards. Dr. Gillespie and our ... were both involved in that.*

- Reis: *Probably, and then there was Chris Jensen ... might have been, I won't say for sure, because he always bragged that he had some whiskey buried. Said he was seasoning it, wouldn't tell anyone where it was. I don't know if that's true or not. Such a character. Wasn't at our house but there was a lot down in McCarthy. I might as well tell you, my dad said I was never to go down the line. Didn't say why, so I had to ask my mother, "why, what did they do down there?" She said "they sell moonshine". I'd never go down there because I had seen men drunk and they would fight and everything, so I thought they must be horrible. When I grew up, it dawned on me one day.*
- Shaw, A.: *There was a story in town yesterday, I didn't pick up on it all the way, that had to do with you singing when you were a little girl and they paid you for that.*
- Reis: *That was in Blackburn, Mrs. Johnson had a boarding house, little lobby. They had a dining room. In the evenings she cleared*
- the tables and they could play poker. I believe there was a bar in the back, I'm not sure. I was a tiny thing and I wondered in, my mother wasn't watching me too closely and I wondered in. Of course, they welcomed me, the men sitting around the tables. They said "can you sing" and I said "oh, yes". They put me on the table and I sang Norwegian lullabies, that is what I knew. They passed a plate and gave me some money and I came back to my mother and I said "take this, I'll go get some more". And that was the end of my singing career. I couldn't have been more than four and a half.*
- Shaw, A.: *A little Shirley Temple, huh?*
- Reis: *Yes. I don't know how I did it because I was shy. The men were very nice to me and a lot of Scandinavians and maybe that's why.*
- Shaw, A.: *Now Gretchen, you were 2 years old when you left here, so you picked up stories from your parents?*



*Chris Jensen and son Ole.*



*"...then there was Chris Jensen...might have been, I won't say for sure, because he always bragged that he had some whiskey buried.*

*Said he was seasoning it, wouldn't tell anyone where it was. I don't know if that's true or not. Such a character. ...my dad said I was never to go down the line (to McCarthy).*

*Didn't say why, so I had to ask my mother, 'why, what did they do down there?' She said, 'they sell moonshine'."*

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Schneeberger: *Yes, Alaskans are such a close knit group, as they'd say, whenever they came out they'd come by my parents and they spend long evenings going over all these experiences. So, I felt part of it, but not a part of it. Reminiscences of Erickson...*

Shaw, A.: *Did it seem like a rough place?*

Reis: *Here?*

Schneeberger: *Here.*

Reis: *No.*

Schneeberger: *But it seemed like...with the girls and the...*

Reis: *That was McCarthy.*

Schneeberger: *McCarthy was indisputably..*

Reis: *If you read Lone Janson's book, ["The Copper Spike"] she speaks of Kennecott, says it was staid, she says town, camp. And we were, we had ladies' tea parties, we were dressed to the nines,...*

Schneeberger: *There was a class distinction too, wasn't there.*

Reis: *I didn't feel it, I was in and out of everybody's place, I didn't bother ... When you went into the show, and I don't know if this is a law or ruling, but all the families sat on the right and few of the men who were friends, and all the other men sat on the left. If one lady came in that didn't know, they would say, "oh, she's sitting over there with the men". I don't think it was the rule, it was just the thing to do. All nationalities, Polish, Russians, Swedes, Norwegians...*

Schneeberger: *A cross section. That one book up there lists all nationalities, numbers of them.*

Shaw, A.: *Were any Oriental?*

Reis: *Just Japanese, the cooks in the mess house, and the Japanese laundry man, the little house next to that, was run by the Tom Mori, who was the laundryman. And they had the laundry in back of the store. He did the laundry for*

- the camp....That was the only Oriental, there was one in McCarthy, Charley Chong. At that time Chinese and Japanese did not get on together. But once in a while they'd load us into the sled, straw and blankets, go down to McCarthy to Charley Chong's and have food. I can remember he was a jolly fat man. We'd all load up and be ready to go home and he'd throw candy bars at us.*
- Shaw, A.: *This house next door, what do you know about that one?*
- Reis: *Tom Mori stayed there. He was the laundryman. Took care of the laundry in back of the store. That was where they stayed.*
- Shaw, A.: *He wasn't Japanese was he?*
- Reis: *Yes.*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, he was Japanese.*
- Reis: *M-o-r-i*
- Shaw, A.: *Oh, M-o-r-i.*
- Reis: *I don't know what age he was. He was quite an ice skater, fall down, jump up. He wasn't a young man but he seemed to be.*
- Shaw, A.: *So the house right next door to us was the fellow that ran the laundry?*
- Reis: *Yes. Quite a few Japanese there. They'd come to our house with the laundry, always bow, how they do. At Christmastime all of us would...they'd give us Chinese dolls, little boxes, little gifts. I had a little dog I always called Snooty. I had it on the dresser. One time I told my daughter she could have it, then I told her, "I want it back." I missed the little dog, she said "you're an Indian giver", I said, "yes".*