BS: This is an oral interview with Mr. Gerald F. Carlson, taken as part of the Polar Oral History Project of the American Polar Society and the Byrd Polar Research Center of the Ohio State University on a grant provided by the National Science Foundation. The interview was conducted by Brian Shoemaker at Mr. Carlson’s home in Vancouver, Washington, on the 16th of November, 2001.

OK, Jerry, we’ve talked on the phone. I’ve read your book. I know your history in general and I found it very exciting. We’re interested in you as a man. Where you grew up, how you got started in life, why you wound up joining the military, becoming a teacher and why you went to Alaska and what happened while you were there. So, it sounds like it was two phases – you had a phase before near Nome, where you taught, and then you went to the islands. Correct?

GC: Correct.

BS: All right. Let’s just take it from here.

GC: From Nome?
BS: No. Where’d you grow up?

GC: Oh, OK. I was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan, up on the peninsula and my Dad went over there because Henry Ford was offering $5 a day and that was big money in 1925. So, he put his wife and me and a big dog by the name of Buddy, in a Ford open car with eisenglass windows, and he took off for Iron Mountain, Michigan. Eisenglass was flapping like partridge wings. And he stayed there a year, and then Ford went to metal bodies. He didn’t need that wood in northern Michigan any more, so he closed the plant.

BS: The wood was for paneling?

GC: Bracing of stuff on the old cars. They had wooden frames. There was more wood in them than there was iron.

BS: Incidentally, how old were you?


BS: Oh, is that right? December 25th. I was born July 4th.

GC: So, I was born in Iron Mountain, and Ford closed up, so they packed everything up and we went back to Cloquet, Minnesota, which is about 20 miles west of Duluth. And he worked in the mills and I grew up in Cloquet. I attended grade school there, junior high and I was just getting into high school when World War II came along and my Dad thought this was his chance to get out of the paper industry. He wasn’t particularly happy there, but there was no place else to go, so he decided to go to the west coast. We packed up and we threw everything into a ’36 Chevrolet Coupe and took off.

We got out to Washington. My Dad happened to know a fellow living here that had lived in Minnesota. We stopped in and saw him for a couple of days and got the layout of the land.
The Kaiser Shipyard was going full blast in Vancouver. This was 1942, and we lived in several places because there was no housing. All of a sudden . . . Vancouver was a town of 18,000 people and almost overnight, 50,000 shipyard workers showed up. So, housing was at a real premium. And we lived in boarding houses and this and that and everything, until finally, the government was building houses like crazy. We went on the list and finally got a home – a pre-fabricated home - but it was a lot better than what we had been living in.

I started school in Vancouver. There was one high school there – Vancouver High School. I went down there to start my junior year and there were no books. They didn’t have enough books. The town was loaded with people. They didn’t have enough desks. They didn’t have enough teachers. The young teachers were off to the war. They dragged people out of retirement. Some of them could hardly walk. I went to one study hall, finally, one day. I’d been in school about three weeks. I went to study hall and there was no place to sit down. There were people sitting on the floor. So, I figured, the heck with that and I left.

I went home and told my mother I was going to quit high school. She had a fit. “Oh,” she said, “you can’t do that. You’re going to have to talk to your father.” So, my Dad came home from the shipyard that evening and I said, “Dad, I want to quit school.” He looked at me and asked me why and I said, “I’m not learning anything there. There’s not enough books, there’s not enough teachers, there’s no place to sit down in the stupid school.” So, he said, “OK, go ahead and quit, but don’t you ever come back later and tell me that I should have made you go.” “OK with me.”

So, the next day I went down to the high school, took all my books out of the locker, put them on the principal’s desk in the office and told them I quit. He says, “Do you have a note
from your parents?” I said, “No, I don’t have a note from my parents.” “You’ve got to have a note from your parents if you want to quit.” I picked up the books, put them back in my locker, spun the lock. Walked out the front door and never went back.

I walked 18 blocks down the main street in Vancouver to the US Employment Service. I walked in there and told them I wanted to work in the shipyard because I knew there were other young people in there. And “No problem. What do you want to do?” I told him I’d like to become an electrician someday. So he said OK. I filled out a piece of paper, went two blocks the other direction, reported to the Electrician’s Union and reported the next day as a helper in the shipyard. I was 16 years old.

BS: That’s interesting. Your Dad was working for whom?

GC: Kaiser Shipyard. He was a machinist.

BS: Building Liberty ships?

GC: Well, when I first started working there, we built 36 LSTs. Then they switched and made 8 Liberties, and that was a turnover. When they got the 8 Liberties they were fitting, then we started building baby flattops, and they had a contract for fittings. I rode one LST down on the waves when they launched it. I rode one aircraft carrier.

BS: So, how long were you there?

GC: Just about two years. Good job. I’d still be there if the place was open. I really liked my work there. So, anyway, I got to be 18 years old, draft age, and I got drafted. So, I reported for my induction physical in Portland, passed the physical and went through all the rest of the stuff - testing and things – and I figured I’m going into the Army. I got drafted. It has to be the Army, there was no way out of that. I had my papers and I went into this big room and there were people lined up. And there were three lines and some non com told me to pick a line. There were
a couple of Marines in one line – non-coms, and a couple of overweight called-back-into-the-
service Army sergeants, and there was a Lieutenant JG in the third line.

So, they said pick a line, so I looked at the Marines. They looked too spit and polish for me. The creases on their pants you could shave with. Naw . . . I didn’t think I wanted to be a Marine. Then I looked at those old soldier types and decided I didn’t want to go there either if I didn’t have to. And I looked at this neat, young Lieutenant JG, all sharped up and I figured, “Hey, that’s for me.” So, I got in the Navy line and that’s how I got into the Navy.

**BS:** *Tell me about your young life. Were you a Boy Scout or anything like that?*

**GC:** No, our church started a Boy Scout troop and I went to the first meeting along with every other kid that went to the church. And they handed out the *Boy Scout Handbook* and said here’s all the things you’ve got to learn and I was thumbing through it and I knew how to split wood. I’d been splitting wood for years already. I knew how to camp. I’d been camping. There’s no point in me joining this and I left and I never joined the Boy Scouts. That took care of my scouting.

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**BS:** *Sounds like your Dad was pretty important in your life in influencing you. That is, he let you get out of school, basically. He probably knew what he was doing. Was he an inspiration?*

**GC:** Oh, yeah. My Dad was a hard-working man. He was independent right down to the core. You didn’t tell him what to do unless you had a real good reason and it better make sense or he wasn’t going to do it. He was a good machinist. Real good. After the shipyard closed at the end of the war, he joined the Construction Machinists Union and he worked the rest of his life on
dams – big projects. Matter of fact, his grandson followed the same steps and he followed the trade for 20 years. Now, he’s in business for himself. Followed him right down the line.

**BS:** So, what did you do during the war, in the Navy?

**GC:** I went from the induction center in Portland, I went to Farragut, Idaho, to boot camp. Spent 7 weeks in boot camp. The first day we got into boot camp, they told us we were going to be 5 weeks. Well, as we got along, they boosted it two more weeks and when I got out of boot camp, I got 15 days leave, came home to the folks place, spent my boot leave, reported back into Farragut and I figured well, I’m out of Farragut. Nobody likes boot camp and I didn’t want to go to Farragut any more and they put me 14 weeks in gunner’s mate school in Farragut, Idaho.

So, I put in my 14 weeks there and then eventually, I ended up in Seattle, Pier 91, which was a receiving station and from there, Treasure Island, California, and I was down there about 39 days. I was cooking every blasted day. We started our day at 4:30 in the morning, and we ended it about 9 at night by the time everything was cleaned up. But, they were really kind to us. They said we could have a liberty every night. I think in 39 days, I had four liberties. By the end of the day, you were so dead you didn’t want to go to town. But anyway, finally we came up on a draft and I ended up on a ship you wouldn’t believe. It was called the **USS Puebla**.

**BS:** Pueblo? The same Pueblo as in later years?

**GC:** No. This one ends in an “a.” And it turned out that it was a German passenger liner that got caught in a Mexican port when Mexico declared war on Germany and the United States and all of them did. And the Mexicans had this ship. They didn’t have anything to use it for, so they turned it over to the US Army. And so the Army took the ship and it was an Army ship.

The Army hired the Merchant Marines to man the thing. So, we got on the thing in Oakland, California. It was an Army ship and there were a few Army Non-Coms running around.
With a Merchant Marine crew and captain, and it was hauling Navy personnel – 1800 of us on the thing. And we started off across the Pacific. That thing could do about 8 knots max, and we wandered all over the place. We stopped at Anawetok, and of course, Hawaii. We stopped just about every place you could think of to stop. And we were finally just coming in to Ulithi, when we got the word from the Armed Service radio that they’d dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. We all looked at each other and thought ‘What’s an atomic bomb?’ We had never heard of an atomic bomb. Then, they started telling about all of the damage. We were on our way into Ulithi a few hours out. We got in there and half the seventh fleet must have been there. That is the most humongous coral reef atoll system.

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There were battleships and carriers and cruisers and destroyers just as far as the eye could see. They were all in there. And what they were doing was starting to bunch up to make the attack on Japan because Okinawa had fallen and that was it. So, anyway, that’s where I was headed as a replacement for the amphibious forces. Probably an LST is what I would have ended up in. But, the war ended.

So anyway, we left Ulithi and we hadn’t been out of Ulithi a day or two and it came on Armed Forces and said, they dropped another one on Nagasaki. And then it came on that the Japanese were suing for peace through neutral countries and that sort of thing. So, the war was basically over. And we got to the Philippines and there was 1800 of us, so they dropped us off at a receiving station called San Antonio, Samar – on the island of Samar. Of course, the war was over, so right away they started the point system. Guys with medals and war time and one thing and another – points – they sent you home. And I stayed there about 6 months and I was stationed three different places on Samar. We really didn’t do anything constructive – just stood
watches 6 on and 12 off. The watch was guarding empty quonset huts with a 30 caliber rifle. And one time I had a post way out on the end of a row – it just dead-ended in the jungle, and that’s where the post was. Stood around there for 6 hours. Built a little fire to keep the mosquitoes off and it was really busy work just trying to keep us out of trouble. And then finally, my number came up. I came home on APA 222, and got 30 days leave in San Francisco and reported into Bremerton separation center and in three days, I was out.

BS: *That was in 1945?*

GC: I got out June 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1946.

BS: *OK. Came back here to Vancouver?*

GC: Yeah. Came back to Vancouver. Moved in with the folks and I was kind of at loose ends. I didn’t know what to do and my Dad was in construction, and they were building a big addition on the Crown-Zellerbach paper mill in Camas, Washington. And I went down. Of course, I didn’t have any skills and they hired me in the Labor Union. I worked a year as a construction laborer carrying boards and digging holes, the usual. And after a year of that, I thought there’s got to be something else besides working out in the rain and the mud all winter. Of course, I hadn’t finished high school.

My mother saw in the local paper here in Vancouver, *The Columbian*, that the veterans could go down to the high school and take an exam and if you could pass it, you could get a diploma – GED. So, I wasn’t going to go. Nah! Didn’t want to go. But, she kept on my tail like mothers can do and so finally just to get her off my back, I went down and took the test. It was pretty easy. I mean, if you could read, you could pass it. At least, that’s what I thought. I took the test and I got a high school diploma. OK. Now I’m a high school graduate. What am I going to do with it?
BS: *Was your mother an inspiration?*

GC: Oh yeah. Yeah. She inspired me. Anyway, I finally decided, well, I’ve got this GED. I might as well do something with it. Of course, I had the GI bill. Five years of education comes on the GI bill. So, they’ve got Clark College here in town – junior college – and I knew some of my beer-drinking friends that were going down there, so I thought, well, I’ll go down to Clark College. So, I did. I went down to Clark College and I didn’t work too hard the first semester. And grades came out and I had straight Cs. I hadn’t done anything. I thought, I wonder what I could do if I worked at this? So, I started to study. Started to do assignments the way they should be done. And at the end of the two year course, I came out with a 3.4 grade point.

But, that was it. I wasn’t going to go on to school any more. I’d had two years of it. That was enough. I had the Associate of Arts degree they gave at the Community College. I had a degree and I passed the word around that I was thinking about going into the Air Force. But, for some reason, I don’t know why I picked the Air Force. They were new, though, and that may be it. And I was thinking of joining the Air Force and the Dean of the College – Dean Cannell – who just recently passed away, he looked me up on campus one day and said, “Let’s go for a ride.” So, he had an old jalopy of an automobile and we went for a ride. We rode all over the county and he talked and he talked and he talked and his idea was that I should go to college. Not waste my time going into the service or any of that stuff. There was nothing wrong with the service, but he thought it would be a waste of talent or something. I don’t know. And he said, “You’ve just got to go to college,” and he wanted me to go to his alma mater, which was Reed College in Portland. Well, I got to checking around and some of the guys I knew down at Clark were going to go to Washington State College over in Pullman. It was a college then. It wasn’t a
university at that time. And I figured I’d go with the rest of those guys. So, that’s what I did. I went off to Washington State, went two more years there and I graduated. Had a BA in Sociology. And now, what am I going to do with it? So, I got out and I got a salesman’s job with the 7-Up company. I really didn’t like sales, and I got married. That was in 1951.

BS: *Married to . . . ?*

GC: Got right out of school and got married.

BS: *1951. What was her name?*

GC: Donna Mae Witkowski. She was working in the office at the Iron Fireman Manufacturing in Portland, and I didn’t like the soda pop job. There was a dairy – Mayflower had a dairy and I got offered a job down there. Teamster’s job.

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And I drove a truck for them. The problem was, I worked swing shift. I had to pick up a load of milk all bottled here in Vancouver, and about 4:30 in the afternoon and I had to drive over to Portland, unload and come back – make about two trips before the shift was over. All of a sudden I discovered, I’m going one way down Union Ave in Portland with a truck and Donna’s coming the other way in a car. She’s getting off work and we were waving at each other as we went in opposite directions. Well, that’s not much good for a newly-wed, so we sat down and talked it over. I still had one more year on my GI Bill, so I said, “I’ll tell you what. Let’s go back to Pullman, Washington State, and I’ll get a teacher’s certificate.” So, that’s what we did. She quit her job. I quit my job. And we went back to school. I went back to school.

We got over to Pullman, Washington, to the campus. Got all signed up and we found an apartment in just an old farmhouse was what it was. We had one half and another couple had the
other half. I started to school and Donna got a job at the Pullman Laundry, working in the office. So, between my GI Bill and her working, we were scraping by.

And then I ran into a kid by the name of Bob White, and I didn’t know him before. He was from California, and he was just newly married. He had worked for Davie Tree Surgeons Outfit at one time and he asked me if I wanted to go into business with him. Well, I didn’t have any money to go into any business for starters. He said, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’m going to buy a pick-up truck and a few tools. And we’ll go out and do tree work and we’ll split it three ways. You’ll get a third, I’ll get a third and a third goes to the truck.” He was making payments on it. And so we did that on the side. We did a tremendous amount of work. It was great. And eventually I got my teacher’s certificate. He ended up chief ranger at Kings Canyon. He’s still alive. He lives in California. He’s retired already. And anyway, we had a good time, making money.

School was easy, at least I thought it was. I never had any trouble with it. And got that teacher’s certificate. And the years were running out on the GI Bill. I couldn’t go to school any more. I had my certificate locked in, so I was in a coffee shop called “The Tub,” on campus – Temporary Union Building – TUB. I was sitting in there having a cup of coffee and there was a guy by the name of Yoakum – a real young guy, and I’m sharing a table with him and he was from Alaska. His Dad owned a hardware store in Fairbanks or something. And I told him – I was just making conversation – I thought I’d like to go to Alaska. “Well, that’s easy,” he says. “Planes fly every day.” I said, “Yeah, but what would I do when I got there?” “Teach school,” he said. “Go down to the Post Office and get the government form and fill it out and send it in and I’ll bet you they’ll hire you.” So, I did.

BS: Which year was this?
GC: Let’s see – I graduated in ’51. Went back. School was just getting out in the spring of 1952.

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And I went down to the Post Office and got the forms. I filled them out. I sent them in. School was over and I had my degree and we came back to Vancouver here. Rented a little house not far from here. A couple of miles from here. And started looking around for a job and I got one down here at the paper mill. Started working in the paper mill and out of the blue, we get a telegram. “This is not a job offer. This is just a query. Are you still interested in teaching in Alaska? If so, wire collect.” So, I wired collect. Didn’t hear anything. Summer passed. Getting down into the fall of 1952. I’m still working in the paper mill down there, and all of a sudden, we get another telegram, “You have three days to be at Boeing Field in Seattle. You’re going to Alaska.” So, three days, we took the little furniture we owned and stored it in my mother-in-law’s place. We stored our furniture and three days later, we were in Seattle.

BS: You say “we.” Did she get a job offer, too?

GC: Yes, she did. I got a job offer as a teacher and she was hired as the principal’s secretary at the boarding school in White Mountain, Alaska.

BS: White Mountain, Alaska. Where is that near?

GC: It’s about 90 miles due east of Nome.

BS: Now you say Boarding School. This was for refined ladies?

GC: This was a school for Eskimo children, kindergarten through the 9th grade.

BS: How many students were there?

GC: Oh, maybe 150.
BS: *How many teachers?*

GC: Well, let’s see. There were 9 grades. I’d say about 12 teachers and the principal. Cooking staff came from the village of White Mountain – ladies.

BS: *Now, did your wife have experience with administrative work?*

GC: Oh yeah. She had worked at Iron Fireman’s for a compounder operator and she worked for the Pullman Laundry in the office there. She had some experience. BS: *So, you were a pretty good package for them.*

GC: Apparently. Well, anyway, we reported in the Federal Building in Seattle, and they gave us the tickets and we went down to Boeing Field. Caught a Pan Am flight and flew to Juneau. We got into Juneau and had to report to the Alaska Natives Services Offices there in Juneau, Department of Interior, and reported in there and got stuck by the weather. So, they had to put us up in the Chinook Hotel which was first class in those days. And I think it was $18 a night, and we didn’t have that kind of money, so we got stuck. We knew we had to move out of there. We moved into the Gastineau Hotel, which was a pretty second rate hotel. We got up in the room they gave us and the fire escape was a coil of rope on the floor with a knot in it tied to the radiator. We stayed there a couple of days and we finally got out of Juneau, and then we landed in Fairbanks, and we got stuck there a couple of days. But, we managed to survive that. And then we took Alaska Airlines out of Fairbanks, and flew to Nome, via Kotzebue. We landed in Kotzebue. We had time to kill before the plane was going on to Nome, so we were wandering around. Kotzebue, in those days, was just a strip of buildings along the water, and we were wandering around and we were in front of Archie Ferguson’s store. Archie Ferguson was an old time Alaskan pilot. He’d been up there for years and years and years. He’s dead now, too. But, anyway, out in front of his store, down on the beach, he had a polar bear cub tied. Apparently,
the mother had been killed and he took the cub and the cub was destined to be hauled out to a zoo someplace. So, my wife, she was still dressed up citified – Seattle like. She’s got on silk hose and a skirt and she goes down to see this little cub. The little cub was tied there and Donna squatted down with her knees out like this and this cub comes up, he looked at her knee and he grabbed it. He tore her socks, cut the skin a little bit. So, my wife can say she’s been bit by a polar bear.

BS: *So, this was what time of year, which year?*

GC: This was the last of August or near the 1st of September, 1952.

BS: *So, you flew from Juneau, to Kotzebue, via Fairbanks. How long were you at Fairbanks?*

GC: Just overnight.

BS: *Didn’t see much of the town.*

GC: No.

BS: *So, you flew to Kotzebue.*

GC: Right.

BS: *Why Kotzebue?*

GC: Because that’s the way we went. They flew a route. Fairbanks-Kotzebue-Nome-back to Fairbanks.

BS: *Oh, I see. So, they stayed overnight at Kotzebue.*

GC: Yeah. The next day, went to Nome, and in Nome, we were picked up by a man by the name of Willie Foster, an old time bush pilot. He had a Stinson. Picked us up along with our stuff and he flew us into White Mountain. White Mountain’s air strip was typical Alaskan. It was on a rounded hill and the planes coming in landed up hill. And when they wanted to take off, they
turned around and went down the hill and halfway down to the bottom was a cliff and the drop off at the end of that cliff was just like planes coming off an aircraft carrier. It was a real stomach turner. But, they never had an accident there. All the time I was there and we spent a year there.

**BS:** You spent a year at White Mountain. You didn’t elaborate on this much in your book. Let’s talk about it a bit.

**GC:** We got off the airplane and here comes the surplus wartime Jeep, no brakes. It comes thundering up the hill to the airport to get us. The principal was driving it. A man by the name of Floyd Russell. And he was an old-time BIA teacher. He’d been in the BIA for years and years and years. But, anyway, he was principal of the school, and he picked us up and he took us down and the first place he took us to was our quarters. Our quarters was a big dormitory type building which they had divided into apartments. And there were about four teachers living in that one building – four or five. And we had a little bitty room. That was the main room – the living room. And we had a bedroom – when you put the bed up in it, there wasn’t room for anything else. You’d crawl out of bed and you stepped into the living room. It had a shower. Actually, no, it had a bathtub and a commode. And because of the winters up there, they run all of the water pipes above ground because permafrost gets under the ground and they’d freeze. They put them up above the ground and then they run live steam in there. Well, of course, you had hot water and then you had cold water that was also hot. You’d flush a toilet – it was a geyser. Steam all over the place. So, if I wanted to shave, I’d turn the cold water on or the hot water, it didn’t make any difference. They were both scalding hot. I’d go outside the door, pick up a snowball, stick it in the water to cool it down so I could shave. So, anyway, we got settled in there and the principal came to see if we were settled in and he took us around to the school.
The school was a wooden grey painted building. And he took us down to the school and he had a key and he opened the padlock and he took me into this room and he said, “This is your room.” And it was just a big room with tables and chairs. There were no desks, just tables and chairs, and a blackboard, and a teacher’s desk. And he said, “Oh, by the way, school starts tomorrow morning. You’ve got 40 students, a split 7th and 9th grade.” “Split 7th and 9th?” I said. “Yeah, we just had enough eighth graders to make one class, and so you get to split the 7th and 9th.” I had 40 students, 7th and 9th graders.

**BS:** *How many total in the school?*

**GC:** Oh, I would say there were about 40 to the classroom. I would say there was a good 300 anyway. We had some village kids, too.

**BS:** *Now, these were all native Eskimos?*

**GC:** All Eskimo.

**BS:** *Yupik?*

**GC:** Inupiat. And most of them were shipped in because they had no place else to go. They were orphans, or their parents were in prison, or some problem. Their parents were dead and they were living with in-laws.

**BS:** *So, the kids boarded at the school.*

**GC:** They stayed there. We had a few kids from the village of White Mountain that came on a daily basis. Other than that, the rest of the people stayed there.

**BS:** *Did they come from . . .?*

**GC:** All over Alaska.

**BS:** *Little Diomede, too.*

**GC:** No. We didn’t have any of them.
BS: Well, that’s interesting. So, you guys must have been in somewhat of a parental situation.

GC: Yeah, sort of.

BS: Teaching them morals, and things that parents do. Spread pretty thin.

GC: And they had a girls’ dorm and a boys’ dorm. They had a fellow that was running the boys’ dorm – his name was Samuel F. N. Lightwood, and I never did learn what the F. N. stood for, but he had two middle names, and he was a Quaker. Of course, being a Quaker he was non-violent. And some of the bigger boys started giving him a bad time, so the principal comes to me and says, “Will you check in on Sam once in a while?” So, I would once in a while. I’d go there and just pretend I was visiting and once in a while, I had to take some big Eskimo boy – 8th grader or 9th grader, somewhere in there – they get to be a pretty big size – take them down a peg or two. But, we got through the winter just fine. They were a good bunch of kids, basically. Just like anybody else, they get rambunctious.

(500)

BS: How isolated were you? Was there a town there that the kids could go into?

A village?

GC: There was a village of maybe a dozen log cabins.

BS: Natives?

GC: Eskimos. And they had a village store.

BS: Their kids would go to school at your school?

GC: Yeah.

BS: But the rest of them were in the dorms.

GC: The village kids came in on a daily basis.

BS: There weren’t many of them, then.
GC: No.

BS: *What kind of Eskimo village was that? Were they seal hunters?*

GC: No, they were fishermen. The Fish River went right by the school. And that river was aptly named. Certain times of the year, it was just smothered in fish. Salmon. Char, Shee-fish. I’m not exactly sure what a shee-fish is, but they’re a pretty good size. They were basically fishermen and they hunted a little bit. They got one brown bear, and once in a while somebody would pick off a moose, but there weren’t very many around.

BS: *Dogs? Dog teams?*

GC: Dog teams. Everything was dog teams in those days. There were no snowmobiles.

BS: *Did they fish through the ice in the river in the winter?*

GC: Yeah.

BS: *Nets?*

GC: Nets in the summer.

BS: *They didn’t use nets in the winter?*

GC: No.

BS: *So, it was an old Eskimo fishing economy, I take it? Some modernization with steel fish hooks and things? Guns?*

GC: Guns, yeah.

BS: *Did they trap birds or anything like that?*

GC: Not there. Now in Diomede, they trapped lots of birds.

BS: *I understand. I’m interested in it. So, you have a big operation where you’re superimposed on a small village. You were the major industry in town, basically.*

GC: Oh, yes. Our cooks were all village women.
BS: You hired natives. Did you teach them to cook anything special?

GC: Well, I don’t know where they learned to cook, but when we got there, some of them had been there for years. I don’t know where they learned to cook, but they did. And there was a mission in town. There was a Swedish Covenant Church and there was a pastor and his wife and he had a couple of kids of his own. And I don’t remember their name.

BS: Did they have an effect on the town? Did they all become Swedish Covenanters?

GC: Well, I talked to the minister a few times. He was a nice guy. He said, “You know I’ve been here two years – something like that. I haven’t married anybody yet.”

BS: They didn’t know what it was.

GC: Well, they had Eskimo marriages. He said I’ve buried a few, but I haven’t married anybody.

BS: Did they wear skin clothing?

GC: Oh, yeah. Parkas.

BS: So, they must have done some hunting.

GC: Or they traded.

BS: Parkas, seal-skin?

GC: Primarily. Some reindeer.

BS: What’s the difference between Yupik and Inupiat, from your perspective?

GC: I don’t know.

BS: Different language?

GC: The language is different, I’m sure. Other than that, I don’t know.
BS: Other than that, the culture's about the same from an outside view. Well, that's quite interesting. So, here you are. You're in a school, the school is to take in Inupiat children who have been somewhat abandoned. Well, I guess we'd better get back to you. You start teaching here. What was it like teaching the 7th and 9th grades?

GC: It was no problem at all. Those kids came to school. They buckled down. They were several years behind, academically speaking. They used to give them the Binet test from California once a year. And most of them would score a little bit on the low side, but that's easy to see because these kids read a story and there's an elevator in the story and they'd never seen an elevator. They didn't have a clue what an elevator was. And most of them hadn't ever been in an automobile. Most of them had been to Nome and seen an automobile but, they had never been in an automobile. And so you have to start from scratch. And the kids did well.

BS: Have you been in touch with any of these kids since they've grown up?

(End of Tape 1 – Side A)

(Begin Tape 1 – Side B)

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BS: This is the Carlson Tape 1 – Side B. Jerry, we were discussing students in school and what's happened to them. Did you follow any of the students?

GC: Yeah, I haven't really followed them, but I hear about them once in a while. I had a 9th grade girl, her name was Flora Vincent. She was from Point Hope and she came from a pretty good family. Point Hopers were whaling people. And she grew up in Point Hope. She went to Mount Edgecomb and finished high school after she left White Mountain.

BS: Where's Mt. Edgecomb.
GC: Right down near Sitka. They had a big native school there. They bring them in from all over, so they could finish high school there.

BS: So, both Indians and Eskimos?

GC: Yes. Which can sometimes create minor problems.

BS: So, she finished high school?

GC: Yeah, and she went back home to Point Hope and she ended up marrying a fellow – he was a bush pilot for Alaska Airline. They live in Point Hope now.

BS: So, they live there today. They’re retired now?

GC: Yeah.

BS: So, she married a bush pilot and she’s done pretty well.

GC: Yes, she has. She’s quite a lady. She really is. Intelligent. Fine – her married name is File.

BS: So, she is now Flora Vincent File.

GC: Real nice people. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had our 50th wedding anniversary and we sent her an invitation and she and her husband were going to come down, and then they had an illness in the family and couldn’t come.

BS: He could fly for free. They could fly for free on Alaska Airline.

GC: So, too bad they couldn’t come, but we’ve seen her several times. They have what they call Rendezvous in Anchorage. And the Diamond Mall up there, the native people come in from all over Alaska – northern Alaska – Eskimo people, and they bring in all the handiwork they’ve done all winter long. And they bring it and they put it on tables and she goes there and she’s there with some of her family and I run into other students there.

BS: So, you went up to this. Was this last year?

GC: Last year and two years before that.
BS: So, that was for Rendezvous 2000. And you ran into Flora.

GC: She was there.

BS: And other students?

GC: Yeah. I didn’t meet these two, but they called me when they found out we were in town. Flora gave them our number. We were staying with our daughter.

BS: And this is Fairbanks, right?

GC: Anchorage. And then Flora got a hold of one of the girls, her name was . . .

BS: That’s OK. But, anyway . . .

GC: Another young lady called me, she had been one of my 9th grade students at White Mountain and she now worked for the government in the Welfare Department in Anchorage. And she’s married and has a family.

(50)

And then I got a call from a young man – he’s not all that young any more, but he was a 9th grader that I had and he had joined the Alaska National Guard and he made the military a career and he retired a Master Sergeant and he thanked me profusely – not only me, but he was talking about the school in general. He really appreciated the education he got. He made a life for himself.

BS: You don’t know if he was one of the ones that was an orphan. Was he an orphan?

GC: I don’t think so. Just came from the village. We ran into another girl, too, that was in my 9th grade – Agnes Kiyuteluk – and she lived in Anchorage, and every time we go up to see our daughter, we visit her for a little bit. My wife would remember how to spell her name. She knew those kids better than I did. I had the 7th and 9th grade and she dealt with all of them. She had all their records and stuff.
BS: Agnes Kiyutelic. So, she’s living in Anchorage now. Retired?

GC: She got a couple of kids. She’s retired.

BS: Doing well? So here you are – I’m going to back you up now. You’re in school. It’s your first year. You just arrived basically, and you told me how you’re living in this dorm type situation and you’re working with the students. Tell me – classrooms. You talked a little bit about the kids not understanding about the modern conveniences written about in the books. What technique did you use to present something that you probably didn’t have a picture for?

GC: No. I didn’t have a picture. But I had a lot of fun for an elevator. We had a closet in the room where we stored paper and stuff like that, so I’d open the door to the closet and I’d put two of them in there. I’d say, “Now turn around and face the door. and when I pull the door, there will be some buttons there, you can push the number of the floor you want and your whole room will go right up.” They looked at me like you must be kidding. That’s what we did. And sure enough, they finally got the idea that there was a room in a building that had cables on it and the cables were hooked up to a motor and it could go up and down. That was really something!

BS: You had an advantage in a way that many teachers don’t in that you took these kids out of their home environment and you could teach them something and they could go home and there isn’t anybody to say, that’s not true.

GC: That’s right. Not only that, they could go home and talk between themselves too, you know.

BS: You know what I’m talking about. You may have had the problem down here later on when you taught down here you had the problem of kids going home and their dad says, “That sounds fishy to me.” So, these kids were in a pretty good teaching environment. Learning environment.

GC: I really enjoyed my job.
BS: How about your social life?

GC: Well, we had a pretty good social life. Like I say, we had at least 12 teachers. And we had a full-time nurse with the Public Health Service and then she had an assistant, Mrs. Johnson. She wasn’t a nurse, but she knew something about medical things. Like some of these ambulance drivers around here, you know. We had them and we had Rosemary Wood who was a home economics teacher. She was a young girl then. And she had been teaching for several years and we had Samuel F. N. Lightwood, and the principal and his wife, of course. We had a couple of maintenance people – they were Eskimos. They were around the place. But, we got together and had parties and stuff like that.

And we ran dances about every other Saturday night. The kids would play their records and they’d dance. And we had a house mother. She was Eskimo - Emily Ivanoff Brown was her name – and she had a religious mother, and she didn’t like dancing. That was sinful. But, she was outvoted all the time. I remember one time, I don’t remember what the occasion was, but we decided – I say “we” – I think this couple decided we’d dimmed the lights a little bit in the dining room where we held the dances. Emily had a religious kick and she didn’t believe in dancing. She was sort of outvoted and this one time, somebody decided we ought to put something over those naked lightbulbs – get a little atmosphere. So, they put red crepe paper around some of the lightbulbs and Emily had a fit! Oh, god, she had a fit. I don’t know if she thought we were running a cat house or what with our red lights. She finally took the red lights and threw them away. There was just no putting up with those red lights. Little things like that would crop up, which you’re bound to have in an isolated situation like that. You’re going to get on each other’s nerves every once in a while.
BS: I’m curious about her. She’s Eskimo. She’d obviously been educated by a religious school?

GC: Probably a missionary school.

BS: Were there many natives then – this is early ‘50s – that could read and write?

GC: The kids could. The older people could not. She was educated. She had gone to school.

BS: What I’m trying to get is she was an exception to the general adult population as far as being able to read and write?

GC: Yeah. She had more education. She had some college and I don’t know where she went to school, but she had some. And she was just a nut. She didn’t appreciate a lot of things we did.

(150)

BS: Was she married?

GC: She had been married. Her name was Emily Ivanoff Brown and Ivanoff was her maiden name and she was married to a Brown, but I’d never seen or never heard anything about him, so I assumed he was long gone. But, anyway, we enjoyed that year at White Mountain. We hated to see it close up because that’s the reason we left. They closed the school.

BS: Closed the school.

GC: Yeah.

BS: Why? The BIA did this?

GC: No, The Alaska Native Services closed it which was part of the BIA – separate part of it.

But, anyway, the building plant was getting old – really old. And the buildings were not in good shape and the place was getting run down. They had this big school at Mt. Edgecomb out of Sitka and they finally decided that instead of having these kids in White Mountain, as long as they’re going to haul them out of their villages, they’d haul them down to Mt. Edgecomb to the
modern school, which made sense in a way because down there they could have science courses. They had the laboratories and you know, stuff we didn’t have at White Mountain.

Anyway, they decided to close the school and we got the word towards spring that the school was going to be closed and Donna and I had a two year contract as did most of the other teachers. So, we got a choice. We could sign up for another school or we could discontinue our contract and they would pay our way back to the States because they broke the contract. So, there was an opening at Barrow, and they needed a teacher and they needed somebody to work in the office at the school at Barrow, so that was right up our alley. So, we decided we’d go to Barrow. And we told our principal we’d go to Barrow, so we were making plans to go to Point Barrow for the next school year after the White Mountain closed. And right after the kids left, they flew all the kids out of White Mountain. And that was something else. We had bush pilots flying them out and one guy – Bill Peters – he flew a Cessna with a forked tail – and he’d come down and get the kids and he started putting kids in that airplane and baggage in that airplane and when that big forked tail came down and hit the ground he would say, “Well, that’s a load.” And he’d close the door and turn that plane around and down that hill, off the cliff and away he’d go.

But, anyway, he got killed later on outside of Billings, Montana. He’d go out every two years and have a physical at Rochester Minnesota, and he was flying in the winter time and he couldn’t do much flying around there in the winter time. Not enough daylight hours. And he was coming down – the word we got – he was in the area of Billings, Montana, and he iced up. But, he was coming down in good old Alaska fashion and he was going to land on the road and he was just about to set her down and here came a car in the other direction, so he pulled it up and of course, he lost it. He flew into the side of a mountain and that was the end of it. He got killed.
They found him thrown out of the airplane and he was underneath the tail when they found him. He was good man.

BS: *Too bad.*

(200)

GC: We were all set to go to Barrow, and this airplane shows up and in there there is a guy by the name of Mr. Lawrence Williams. And he was an older fellow. Bald, red around the fringes, and chain smoker. And he came down to the principal’s house and the principal sent a kid up to get us and we went down and Mr. Williams was there and he said, “I understand you decided you want to go to Point Barrow,” and we said, “Yeah, we’d like to go to Barrow.” He said, “You don’t want to go to Point Barrow.” My wife says, “Why don’t we want to go to Point Barrow?” He says, “It’s dark up there almost all winter. That darkness will get to you. Drives people out of their minds. You get nervous and people have breakdowns and things like that. Besides, there’s nine teachers up there, and a principal, so your husband would be the tenth teacher and you, of course, would have the office job.” Then he threw the curve at me. “How would you like to have a school of your own and be your own boss?” Well, I hadn’t thought about it, but I told him I would think about that. He said he had taught in Barrow. He said, “You won’t like Barrow. You don’t want to go to Barrow. Those winter nights are so long. They just drive you crazy up there.” He kept yakking and yakking and yakking. And finally, he convinced me. So, “OK, if we don’t want to go to Barrow, where do we want to go?” “Little Diomede. You’ll be your own boss. Your wife would be your assistant, and you’d have the school all to yourself.” Well, the only reason I knew anything about Diomede was because as a schoolteacher, I knew where it was. That’s about all I knew.

BS: *You knew it was a little dot on the map.*
GC: I knew where it was. Other than that, I knew nothing about the place.

BS: You didn’t know how big the island was?

GC: Didn’t have a clue. He just told us it would be a one-room school and there would be the radio. He didn’t tell us it wouldn’t work half the time, but anyway, he convinced Donna and me that we should go to Little Diomede. So, I went back to dinner in the cafeteria that night and we told the rest of the teachers we were going to go to Little Diomede and one of the teachers by the name of Mert Hall, who had taught above the Arctic Circle, she said, “You’re going to Diomede? You’re crazy!” And she could think of a thousand reasons why we wouldn’t want to go out there and the nurse, Esther Schuabel, good old gal, she only had one thing to say. She looked at Donna and said, “Don’t you get pregnant out there or you’re going to have to deliver your own.” And that was it. But, we went anyway. So, that’s how we ended up going to Little Diomede.

BS: So, you overlooked their negative comments. Took it as parochial.

GC: Oh, yeah. Right.

BS: Well, that’s quite interesting. Did you go home on vacation? What time of year was this anyway? The school was closing. Was it in June?

GC: Yeah, June. Anyway, we stuck around there and helped close up the school and boxed up a lot of stuff and they took it out.

BS: You didn’t think to take that to Little Diomede.

GC: We took a little, but not much. And anyway, when it came time to leave, we were going to catch the North Star, which was a cargo ship – a big one.

BS: Who ran it?

GC: US Government.
**BS:** *Was it the Coast Guard?*

**GC:** No, it had a merchant crew.

**BS:** *Department of Interior? Service ship for the coastal villages. Called the North Star. What kind of ship was it?*

**GC:** It was a big cargo ship, that’s all I can tell you.

**BS:** *This was on a schedule? It serviced all the little places along the way?*

**GC:** They would just pull in and the native people would come out in their boats and off-load all that stuff.

**BS:** *OK, so where did you link up with them?*

**GC:** Well, they came in to Golovin Bay and we took our stuff and loaded it in the boat. We had sort of a landing craft that had been modified a little bit – the school had it. We took that thing and one of the young men from the village usually ran the thing and we had our personal gear and we went on down to the village of Golovin. There isn’t much left, but Golovin was at one time the jumping off place for the gold fields on the Seward Peninsula back in the Gold Rush Days. And a guy by the name of Dexter built a big boarding house there and it had a store and the whole bit. And a lot of the old buildings are still there. But, the village itself, there’s hardly anything left of it. There’s still a few people hanging in there. But, anyway, that’s where we had to off-load the stuff to go to White Mountain. On the *North Star*, they had a lot of groceries and things for the White Mountain store to be taken up river by the boat. And, of course, we would board it. We got down there a day early. It was summertime, so it was daylight almost 24 hours a day. That night, Loman Commercial Co., brought this big barge and tug, and pushed it up on the beach and the idea was, they were going out to the *North Star*. They wanted a ride, but it wasn’t
there yet. They were to take all the groceries and things that had to go to White Mountain, up the river, but as long as they were going out to the ship, they would take us out to the ship.

Well, anyway, it was dark when we finally got out of there with the rain and a storm a little bit. And we got on the tug and everything was calm when we were on the inner bay, but out in the outer bay and into the Norton Sound, the ship was anchored about 10 miles out, and oh, the wind would blow and that tug boat just bounced all over the place. And they were fighting to keep that barge in tow. We were down in the crew’s quarters, hanging on to the wooden benches down there to keep from being thrown around and down came an Eskimo hand, one of the sailors on the tug, he came down and he threw a big coffee pot in the cage on top of the stove and fired up his coal stove and it got just hot as hell in there and that smell of boiling coffee permeated everything and I’ve never been seasick in my life – never – not on ships in the Navy and small boats, never was sea sick and I’m sitting there and it’s hot and pretty soon I knew I needed some air or I was going to lose it all, and up the ladder I went, out on deck and boy, it was storming and the waves were breaking. Tugboats are low in the water anyway, and the water was raking over that thing. I got out there and grabbed ahold of the deck and wrapped my legs around and I sat there and let the ocean pour over me. But, the air was fresh and I got over my urge to puke.

BS: How was your wife doing?

GC: Well, it wasn’t long she was up there too. She was holding on to me and I was holding on to the deck. We were both a couple of drowned rats, but we didn’t get seasick. Anyway, we finally got out to the ship and then they had to jockey that barge between the tugboat and the ship and it was rough. And they finally got the damn thing in there, but it was going up and down. The tug would go one way and the barge would go the other and it was like two high speed elevators passing each other. And, of course, there was that gap in between. There’s only one
way you’re going to cross that thing and it’s to jump, so you’ve got to time it just right. You’ve got to catch the thing when it’s on it’s way up or down. You’ve got to catch it at that exact moment, otherwise you’re lost. And Donna looked at me and she couldn’t do that. She couldn’t jump there and I didn’t want to either. So, one of the seamen on the tug hopped over and back – made it look so easy and Donna still didn’t know if she was going to go or not. Finally, I took one of her arms and the seaman took her other and we waited and as those two things passed going in opposite directions, he said, “Jump!” and we jumped. And we both fell on our hands and knees, but we landed on the barge. We didn’t drown between them.

BS: Now, how big was this barge?

GC: Oh, the barge was as big as this house.

BS: Big flat one. Steel?

GC: Yeah, big flat steel thing.

BS: So, and this was where that you jumped on this barge?

GC: In Golovin Bay - actually just outside of Golovin Bay in the Norton Sound.

BS: That’s on the Alaskan mainland, right? Near Nome?

GC: No, it’s only about 14 miles from White Mountain.

BS: So, you’re on the barge now.

GC: We’re on the barge. Now we’ve got to get on the big ship, so they send down the stretcher board on a cable and we crawl on that thing and they hoisted us up and put us on the big ship.

BS: What’s a stretcher board?

GC: They call it a stretcher board because once in a while somebody might get hurt or something and they put them on there and haul them in.

BS: Did you go two together or just one at a time.
GC: There was three of us on there.

BS: Who sits in the middle? Didn’t have anything to hold on to?

GC: I think Donna was in the middle, and she was on her knees. Anyway, they set us down on the deck and the Chief Commisary Officer was on the deck. His name was Sig Sundt. A little rotund, pot-bellied, grey-haired man - Scandinavian or something because he had a heavy accent. And he was clucking just like a little old lady. He said, “I got sick just watching you out there, going up and down.” Big ship itself was like a rock. It wasn’t going anywhere. He took us down to the mess hall in the ship and put out the hot coffee and offered us some rolls and stuff. We weren’t much for eating, but we nibbled a little bit. They gave us a cabin and we settled down for the night. Woke up the next morning and we were underway. They worked out there all night unloading and loading.

BS: So, that was your introduction to the North Star. Where did you go from there?

GC: The North Star took us right out to Diomede. And we went right past Nome. And when we got to Diomede, it was late in the evening and it was really late because it didn’t get dark too soon, but it was getting dark. And the nurse on the North Star – her name was Tatty – Mrs. Tatty. I don’t know what her first name was. She was a crusty old gal. She’s been on the North Star for some 14-15 years or something like that and she brought natives in that needed tending to. If she got to one of the villages and somebody had a problem, physical problem, medical problem, she would help them with it. And she had x-ray machines on the ship. So, anyway, we were all sitting in the lounge on the ship, sitting there playing cards, and she said, “They won’t come out for you tonight. You might as well get a good night’s sleep while you can.” So, we did.

We got up in the morning, went out on deck and pretty soon, here come two boats – skin boats. The guys were all dressed in white parkas. They were all men. They came on board, one
of them was Albert, the storekeeper. Albert Iahuk was his full name. But, anyway, they came out and we introduced ourselves and they were like shy little kids meeting their school teacher for the first time, but they were adults. Anyway, Moe – guy by the name of Moe, but his real name was Cecil Cole, but everybody on the Alaska coast knew him as Moe – was the third officer on the ship and he always brought a whole bunch of candy with him. Every time he left Seattle, he came with a whole bunch of candy and he would dish it out to kids from his pockets. And everybody knew Moe. He was a great guy. But, anyway, Moe was third officer and he was talking to this Albert, the storekeeper and also the Skipper of the skin boat and he was saying that they had the teachers’ stuff and he asked Albert if he could get the teacher and the stuff into the island today because it was kind of rough on the beach. Albert thought maybe he could do that. He didn’t think he would be able to land on the beach in front of the school because it was too rough, but he could take the stuff half a mile, or some distance to the north on the island and get us ashore there. So, they proceeded to load our gear in there, into the skin boat. And then Moe dropped the hammer on them. We got a new furnace to the school. Is it going to be able to take the furnace in? And I mean that was a big old heavy metal thing. And Albert said he didn’t think he could do that because there were only five men on the island. Everybody else was in Nome and Kotzebue and they wouldn’t be coming back until the North Star came back several weeks down the line. He had to pick them up and bring them back. And he said only five men. They couldn’t handle that big stuff. Oh sure, you can do that!. Well, anyway, Moe pushed himself on Albert and they took us in with our stuff and then they started bringing in that furnace – radiators – 500 lbs a piece. And they couldn’t land on the beach in front of the school because it was too rough. There was no way. So, that’s one thing about an umiak, though. They landed us, I would say about a half a mile from the school on the north side of the village. Those umiaks
face those boulders and they hit them like a basketball would bounce. They didn’t break anything. Heavy skin. But, anyway, they did detail a couple of sailors out to the North Star to help get that stuff ashore – that furnace and all the radiators and pipes and stuff. But, that’s what they did. They helped get it out of the boat, but they didn’t go another step further. Union I guess. So, there it all was piled on the beach.

BS: And your stuff too?

GC: Our stuff, too.

BS: How many umiaks did you say, two?

GC: Two.

BS: And they hauled all this stuff.

GC: Many trips.

BS: How big is an umiak?

GC: Well, they run different sizes, but the average one, I would guess is about as long as this room. Maybe a little bit longer.

BS: What’s the difference between an umiak and a kayak?

GC: A kayak is either just a one or two seater. You sit in it and it’s got a cover. An umiak is open. Like a big open whale boat. It’s made out of walrus hide and driftwood. Anyway, they got it all out on the beach. Worked hours and hours. Of course, the days were long. We got all of our stuff up to the school. We had it in boxes. We couldn’t handle the boxes and we broke the boxes open. Donna went up to the school and found a whole bunch of mail sacks stacked and she brought those back and we shoved all our stuff in mail sacks and carried it up to school. We got it all up there and I was wondering about the mail sacks and I was told, “Anybody that’s coming
to Diomede always stops at the Post Office in Nome and picks up the mail.” But, nobody ever takes the empties back. Finally, we put them to good use.

We got our stuff up there and then we had that furnace and we really worked. They sent out a guy from someplace. He was on the ship and he was to put that furnace up and then the ship was to pick him up on the way south again in another week or so – two weeks, I guess it was. So, we took everything we could carry and we got it all to the school. We got it all except those radiators - 500 lbs a piece and he says no way we could carry those up the boulders strewn on the side of that island, so we left them. And the guy that was putting up the thing, he went up and checked the old radiators in the school and he said, “They’ll do.” So, I just forgot about those stupid radiators out there in the salt water. They weren’t going to last long out there anyway. He put the furnace in.

BS: *This was a non-native?*

GC: Yeah, he was a white man.

BS: *And he was visiting there.*

GC: Yeah, he was contracted to IBANS to come and put that furnace in. Yeah, it worked. The only thing is, as happens often, a lot of small parts didn’t show up and using things off the old furnace, he gerry-built something, but the one thing he couldn’t do anything about was the door. They sent the wrong door for the furnace and it was too small. He’d hang it and there was air all the way around. No way to stop it. So, you couldn’t really shut the draft on the thing. And there was some cold air and when the North Star came back to pick up this guy, they brough another whole bunch of coal – the brought it in gunny sacks – and they lost some of it on the beach in Seattle, and they lost some of it on the beach on the island, but they got a lot of it to us.

BS: *This is hard coal?*
GC: Yeah, just plain old hard coal. We would have probably gotten through the winter if that furnace would have operated correctly, but because we couldn’t shut the draft off on the stupid thing, it burned fuel faster than it was supposed to. So, about January, we ran out of fuel. That was it. So, I opened up the pit-cocks on the thing and drained all the water out of the boiler so it wouldn’t break when it froze and, of course, we couldn’t hold classes in the schoolroom anymore because it was too cold.

And our living quarters were upstairs. And we had an oil stove in the kitchen. We had an oil heater in our combination livingroom and bedroom, and that was the only two rooms we had to heat. So, we had enough oil to keep those two stoves going – the stove and the heater. So, we just forgot about that stupid furnace down there. And once in the middle of the winter, some visiting dignitary, some hot-shot in the BIA, was making the rounds and he came in in an airplane, bush pilot brought him in, and the first thing he wanted to see was what we did with those radiators because the word had gotten out that we never put those things in. So, I told him where those radiators were. Follow that trail and they’re up there. And I was about to tell him where he could put those radiators. He went and he came back and all he said was, “Well, do the old ones work OK?” I said, “Yeah, as long as we could get the furnace fixed so that the thing will burn coal like it’s supposed to, it’ll work.” That’s the only thing he ever said about it.

Anyway, we ran out of coal. We were double-shifting in our rooms so they sent another guy out from Juneau, or someplace to see if they could convert that furnace to oil, and he brought the stuff to do it. And he did.

BS: This was mid-winter.

GC: Mid-winter. He took that furnace and he converted it so that you could burn oil in it. But, we didn’t have enough oil. So, there we had the furnace, but we couldn’t use it. But, the idea was
that next year, if we’re still here, at least we’re going to have an oil furnace. We’re not going to have that coal furnace. But, then we never went back. But, the next ones didn’t have to put up with that.

**BS:** Let me back you up a little. I’m going to put you back on the beach. You get off and you unload the umiaks. Give me a description of what you found there in Little Diomede. What’s Little Diomede, where is it, and what’s it look like? Is it hilly? Is it flat?

**GC:** Little Diomede is one of three. There’s three rocks out there. Big Diomede which belongs to the Russians. There’s Little Diomede that belongs to the United States and then there’s a rock out there called Fairway Rock and it sticks up 600-700 feet in the air, but it’s not very big. It’s wide. It’s like a spider that sticks up out of the ocean and that belongs to the United States, too. So, anyway, that’s what they are. They’re rock piles. Just big boulders piled up, stacked up, cliffs, and a heap million birds during the season - aucklets. I don’t know where they all come from in the summertime. The birds just get in there – they make a nest and they lay one egg in it and they go down between the crevices in the rocks and there gets to be so many birds in there that when they all start to hatch, you walk out there and all the rocks are making noise because there’s birds in there. And they go out and get this krill to bring back and feed the baby. And they always stand on the same rock.

(End of Tape 1 – Side B)

(Begin Tape 2 – Side A)

(000)

**BS:** This is Tape 2A of the Carlson interview on the 16th of November, 2001.

**GC:** There were individual birds in every crevice on that island and they were all squawking – just a din coming out of the rocks. And the adult birds feed the young ones. They go out and get
krill – these bitty shrimp-like things – they come in and they always land on the same rock that was right close to their hole and they stand there and make sure that everything is clear, and they always crap on that rock. Then they go down the hole, feed their baby, come out and go get another load. Pretty soon their landing spot would be painted red because the krill had been eaten and crapping on these rocks. So, the Eskimo ladies, the Diomede ladies, they’ve got these little box traps and they put the spring trap right there by where that bird sits and when he comes from there, they fly in on their usual spot and bingo, they’ve got him. Whap! They got birds like that by the hundreds.

BS: So, they trapped them – subsistence economy.

GC: Oh, yeah. Sure, they ate those birds.

BS: Again, you’re standing there. The island is in the Bering Straits, correct?

GC: Right.

BS: And how many miles away is Big Diomede?

GC: I would guess 1 ½ to 2 miles. The big island. The Russian island is huge compared to Little Diomede and Little Diomede is no small island.

BS: OK. So, it’s a real rocky island. Nothing but rocks. Anything growing there? Moss? Lichens?

GC: Moss and lichens. That’s all.

BS: Now, how many natives were there? How many Eskimos?

GC: We had a population of 130.

BS: 130 Eskimos.

GC: Yep.

BS: And they were Inupiat or Yupic?
GC: Inupiat.

BS: *And how many kids?*

GC: In the school, we had 8 grades and kindergarten and we had a total of 35 students.

BS: *And 35 students – 8 grades. One classroom?*

GC: It was a one-room school. It was designed that way, but they had a system of folding doors, regular household doors and they were rigged on hinges so you could drag them out and you could convert it into two rooms. You would just have this wall made of doors. Then you could fold them up and you’d end up with a stack of the on each side of the room. You could drag them out and they were slotted.

BS: *This was the summer when there was not many people in town.***

GC: Nobody there. Most of them were in Nome or Kotzebue

BS: *So, you’re there with a number of the men. Any women?*

GC: Not very many. There were 5 men and maybe . . . let’s say, counting some of the young girls, say 5 women. That’s about all that was there. Everybody else was in Nome or Kotzebue.

BS: *Not many people around. Tell me, your quarters, where were they?*

GC: Second floor of the school – upstairs.

BS: So, you were up above the schoolroom.

GC: Yeah.

BS: *Were there any other houses like western-style houses there?*

GC: No, there was an old – Father Tom Cunningham, the Catholic priest who was out there for years and years, he had built a little church on the other end of the buildings from where the school is and it was like a white man house – frame building. But, it wasn’t very big, and other than that, those were the only two frame buildings on the island.
BS: That leads into, what did the natives live in?

GC: Their houses were – if they were built of snow, you’d say they were igloos, in most people’s comprehension of an igloo. These were all made out of stone. Of course, that was the building material. The whole island was stone.

BS: OK. Were these chips – flat type chips?

GC: No, they actually looked like they’d been rolled like by river water, except there was no river.

BS: Because they were roundish.

GC: They were roundish.

BS: What would cause them to be round?

GC: Well, that’s a good question. I never thought of that before, but let’s see. I’ve got a picture of one here. Yeah, see the rocks.

BS: You’re showing me pg. 79 of your book. And in the background, what’s that?

GC: That’s Big Diomede.

BS: Oh, I see those rocks are roundish, probably beaten back when the islands were raised by the surf. I understand now. So, they took these rocks and made stone igloos.

GC: They did. They’d build them with driftwood, packing cases, anything they could find and mostly driftwood. They would build sort of a wooden box and then they would build this rock house on top of it and around it.

BS: How would they plug up the holes in the rocks?

GC: Moss.
BS: Work pretty good?

GC: Must have.

BS: Warm?

GC: They could heat them, but of course, they weren’t very big. But they could heat them with seal oil.

BS: Seal oil in the bowl type lamps?

GC: That’s what they used to use, but when we were there, they used 5 gal. gasoline cans. Cut it down so it’s like a pie tin and then they’d get a strip of canvas, plug up the edge of it and fasten it on the inside of that dish and then that thing would act as a wick and they would light it and you would have a line of fire.

BS: And that was their heat.

GC: Their heat and light. And there was no smoke. That fuel oil burned without smoke.

BS: That’s good clean seal oil.

GC: Yeah.

BS: So, this is the environment that you’d entered . . . totally new environment. The environment around White Mountain was totally different.

GC: Oh yeah. Not in my wildest imagination could I have imagined what Diomede was like until I got there.

BS: So, did you think of just saying, “There’s no way. I’m getting back on the ship or leaving on the next plane or . . . ?”

GC: No, I never thought about it. To me, we were there. We’d committed ourselves. That had happened in the past with other teachers. They’d come up there with high ideals and they’d take
one look at what they’re getting into and get back on the ship. But, no, we never even considered it.

BS: *But, you were surprised.*

GC: Oh yeah, it was different.

BS: *Now, besides the birds, what other animals were there?*

GC: There were fox and I don’t know what those fox lived on in the winter time because there were no birds there in the winter time. We had a water boy – we had to melt snow in the winter time for water, so we had a 55 gal. oil drum next to the stove in the kitchen and we had a water boy and he kept that thing full of snow and it would be there melting so we always had water. And he’d catch fox, every once in a while. Beautiful white Arctic fox. He’d trap them. He didn’t get many, but he got maybe half a dozen in the winter. Like I say, I don’t know what they lived on. I can’t imagine what they lived on.

BS: *What about dogs? Eskimos use dogs?*

GC: Oh yeah.

BS: *In a traditional sense?*

GC: Well, the Diomedes are different from other people. On the mainland, they’d always keep the dogs chained. The Diomedes, they let them run. They never chained their dogs. So, if a man wanted to go someplace with his sled, he had to round up the dogs. He could spend half the day chasing down dogs if he had a team. He had to catch them.

BS: *Did they have a collar?*

GC: He had to catch them somehow. He’d get a few dogs, then he’d take off.

BS: *In this rocky environment in the summer you couldn’t use dogs.*
GC: No. The dogs just ran wild.

BS: *Do they feed them?*

GC: I’ve often wondered about that. I imagine they fed them when they’d bring in a seal and they’d gut it and they’d throw the rest to the dogs.

BS: *How about in the summer?*

GC: Summertime. I don’t know what they lived on. Birds, I imagine. But they were starving dogs. They were hungry.

BS: *So, did you ever worry about being attacked by one?*

GC: By the dogs? No. Never gave it a second thought.

BS: *The reason I ask that is that they had a history of them attacking particularly children in other villages.*

GC: Usually those are dogs that are tied all the time.

BS: *Oh, I see. And then they get loose.*

GC: Or when a kid gets chewed up by sled dogs in Alaska, usually the kid gets too close to the trail and they get run over by the team and then one of them takes a snap and pretty soon they’re all at it. If there’s a kid in the middle, he’s going to get killed.

BS: *What did the Eskimos have for sanitary facilities?*

GC: Same thing we had – honey buckets.

BS: *What did they do with it?*

GC: Take it out on the ice and dump it.

BS: *On the sea ice.*

GC: On the sea ice.

BS: *On the surf?*
GC: Sure.

**BS:** *But, it didn’t just lay around everywhere.*

GC: It depended. Some people go farther out to dump it and some people went half that far and some just went out the door and gave it a slosh. It’s just the way people are.

**BS:** *You have a lot of rain in the summer there?*

GC: No.

**BS:** *Pretty dry.*

GC: Pretty dry.

**BS:** *So, it didn’t wash away. As the snow melted, it sloshed everything up. OK. Now, here you are in the middle of summer – you just got there. Most of the natives were on the mainland – how come?*

GC: That’s the way they’ve always done it since the beginning of time, I guess.

They get in their boats and they go to town and they’ll spend the summer on the beaches with the other Eskimos who happen to live there. Sometimes they might find a wife there or whatever. But, anyway, they’d spend the summer. It’s only been in recent times – since we left the island – they were doing it when we left the island, but at that time, it had only been recent times, the North Star was picking them up and bring them back in the fall because they lost a few people in the storms.

(150)

As long as the North Star was there, they’d hoist all the umiaks up on the deck and they’d take them back to the village. They could get out of there in the spring. The water was usually calm and they could go, but getting back in the fall was iffy, so that’s why the government literally gave them a free ride. But, the ship was going there anyway, so what’s the difference.
BS: *Did they work on the mainland?*

GC: Some did. I imagine there’s more to do there now than there ever was before, because Nome has grown considerably and I imagine there are things to go into. Some of them go off to Prudhoe Bay. Some of the younger men.

BS: *Did the money show up back in Little Diomede?*

GC: I don’t know about now. When we were there, they weren’t going to Prudhoe Bay in those days, so there was no money.

BS: *But, they all came back for the winter. Why did they come back?*

GC: Home. It’s home. They were born there.

BS: *So, they’d all come back in time for school then.*

GC: Yeah . . . well . . . school waited until they got back, but yeah, they usually got back about in September. We were told, when we went out there, if we wanted to get in our 180 teaching days, we had to get them in before the walrus migration because once the walrus start migrating, there wasn’t going to be anybody in school. We didn’t take Christmas vacation or any of that kind of stuff and we got our 180 days in before the walrus migration.

BS: *Interesting. So, everybody comes back. I assume the North Star comes around the 1st of September and dump 100+ people and all of a sudden, you’ve got a community which you didn’t have – kids and . . .*

GC: Lots of kids running around and all of them had never seen the teacher before. All of them had to go look to see what the teacher looked like. But, that’s the way it goes. And they’d come and they’d bring a lot of stuff. They buy things in Nome and Kotzebue. It was like a big picnic for a day or two.

BS: *So, they come back, they have a big celebration. When did you start school?*
Jus\textemdash as soon as you could?

GC: Just as soon as we could, yeah.

BS: \textit{You were worried about the walrus migration.}

GC: I didn’t worry about it too much, but that was one reason. And another reason was when the kids showed up they wanted to go to school.

BS: \textit{They liked school.}

GC: Well, you know when they’re living in these littly bitty houses, there’s not much room to run in those houses. And the only other place to run is outside. In the school house, there’s room. And so they like to come to school. Never any discipline problem.

BS: \textit{How about learning problems?}

GC: Well, like it was at White Mountain, by our standards, they were behind. But, you could see why they were, you know. You can only get so much out of books. There are a lot of things that you pick up in life and learn along the way and if nothing came along the way all winter long, they are isolated. They’ve just got each other and that’s it.

BS: \textit{But, they certainly picked up native lore and learning . . .}

(200)

GC: Oh yeah, and they picked up the English language.

BS: \textit{From their parents?}

GC: Nope. I’ll tell you how they did it. After we got school going, I had this one big room and Donna was supposed to be my assistant which meant she was supposed to take care of the furnace – all the chores – fuel the light plants and do general run-of-the-mill janitor stuff. And I told her, “Hey, you’re supposed to be my assistant. How say we close those folding doors – pull those doors shut and you can have the little kids on this side. I’ll give you Kindergarten, first and
second. And I’ll take 3 through 8 on the other side.” So, she taught too. She became my assistant teacher and she was a teacher. And the way I conned her, I said, “Any little kids don’t need a teacher anymore, they need a mother.”

Anyway, we had these three beginners, and they didn’t know a word of English. Not a word. And of course, we didn’t know any Eskimo. Still don’t. Anyway, we had these three little kids and Donna was wondering how was she going to teach them English? And she came up with a real good idea. She’d turn loose in the classroom with the first and second graders, turn them loose and if they wanted paper and crayons, the only catch was if they wanted a pencil, if they wanted piece of chalk or if they wanted a crayon or anything else, they had to ask the teacher for it. And the teacher doesn’t know Eskimo. They’ve got to ask in English. So, these little kids would go to a first or second grader and ask, “How do you say it in English?” And then they’d come and say one word, “Crayon, book or whatever.” And that’s how they learned English. And by the end of the year, they had a nice working vocabulary.

BS: Did the older kids teach the younger kids?

GC: They helped them out a lot. Yeah.

BS: The reason I ask that is that in China, the Communists who can dictate things, dictated that kids in the older grades had to teach a younger grade. And I forget where it was – somewhere like the 6th grade taught the 1st grade to read and brought them along and that kept on going because when they took over China, there was something like 90% illiteracy. And in one generation, they taught everybody to read, including old people. They had better general literacy than we do in the States.

GC: Kids are good teachers to other kids.
BS: Yeah, and we don’t take advantage of that. So, you’ve experienced that somewhat. Did they have problems understanding what some of the things were from the outside world like they did in the White Mountain. Better school books? Did you have better school books out there?

GC: No, we had a lot of old stuff.

BS: Did the BIA school system support you well? You must have written reports to INA that you need better stuff.

(250)

GC: Not really, because where we were, half the time you couldn’t get mail out of there anyway. And the second thing is, if you ordered something, you didn’t get it until next year when the North Star came back.

BS: Didn’t fly things in for you?

GC: No. I don’t ever recall them flying in any school supplies.

BS: That raises a good question. Suppose you had an emergency.

GC: Well, there’s the big hang-up – medical emergencies. And we had some. Walrus season, they worked with a lot of sharp knives skinning, cutting, and naturally people were going to get cut. And the first one I had had the walrus in the water. It was shot dead, of course, and he had a hold of the tusk and he was cutting the head off and I don’t know if he was going to take the body or what, because sometimes they didn’t. Sometimes they just took the ivory. And he dropped the knife and by instinct, he grabbed for it and it was sharp and he laid open his palm right across here. He had a rag or something on it and they come to the school. All the problems always come to the schoolhouse. Come to the school house and he opens it up and there’s a gaping wound there. It’s going to have to be sewed, so I’m the guy that has to do it. And I’ve never sewed up anybody in my life. We had the sutures and some little curvy needles and a pair
of long nosed pliers is what I used and I proceeded to sew him up. No novacaine. Nothing to kill the pain. That man never even winced. Didn’t even wince. I could have been sewing on a piece of fabric someplace as far as he was concerned. And I sewed his hand up and it healed up. As far as I know, he never had any more problems with it.

BS: *Didn’t hit a tendon.*

GC: No. And we had a lot of people with tooth aches. They had bad teeth. And we had a strong man in the village who was a dentist and he loved to pull teeth. But, anyway, the system was he’d find somebody that had a toothache or they’d find him. One or the other. And the patient and strong man would come and I’d get the forceps out. The first time I did that I tried to get them germ free, cooled them off, but I gave up. Anyway, he’d come and his method was for pulling teeth, he’d lay them out on our kitchen floor. Flat out. Then he’d get on top, put his knees on their shoulders to pin them down and he’d get in their mouth with the pliers and forceps, get a good grip on the tooth and he’d pull and if it wouldn’t come, he’d swear – I think they thought their damn neck was going to break. And finally – pop! – he’d get it out. That was it. The poor patient would get up kind of dazed, spit in my honey bucket, and that was it.

BS: *So, your school was the city center? It was basically the administrative center of the town? Not just the school, it was the social center?*

GC: Yeah.

(300)

BS: *Did they hold meetings at the school?*

GC: Not so much meetings. They had two big houses in town. By big, I mean they were bigger than the little rock houses there. They were wider and they had more of a wooden structure on top and to get in them - they called them the Kuggery - you had to go down a tunnel. I had to
stoop over to get in there. You go down the tunnel and you get to the middle of the house, there’s a hole in the floor and you came right up in the middle of the house.

**BS:** *Any windows?*

**GC:** No, no windows.

**BS:** *Nobody lived there.*

**GC:** Oh yeah. There was a family there. They’d have maybe a little village meeting or something. There was a single family in there, but the family consisted of grandma and grandpa, a couple of brothers and their wives and kids.

**BS:** *You’re using a word for this building – can you spell it?*

**GC:** Well, I’d spell it Kuggery.

**BS:** *Kuggery.*

**GC:** So, anyway, once in a while we’d have a meeting there, but usually they’d come to the school.

**BS:** *How about for parties? Christmas?*

**GC:** The school. And a dance every Saturday night.

**BS:** *A town dance at the school. Below your home. What happened when you ran out of fuel.*

**GC:** That took care of that.

**BS:** *Didn’t have the dance.*

**GC:** Didn’t have the dance at the school. We had a guy – it was Thanksgiving – and we were going to have a big Thanksgiving dinner at the school. They had a hot lunch program. The hot lunch program didn’t amount to much, but we had 8 jillion hundred tons of beans that the *North Star* had hauled in over the years. So, we’d have a big bean thing and they brought in some walrus and made a stew. And we had a kerosene stove right off the classroom that was where we
got our hot lunch program. There were a couple of ladies from the village that were not paid or anything, but they used to come and put together a little soup or something for the kids each day.

Anyway, we had a big Thanksgiving thing with a big walrus stew and Donna made a whole bunch of cinnamon buns and donated them and we had a nice little village get-together in the schoolhouse. And after the meal, it was dance time. So, Otto Opiak was his name - he went to his house to get his drums. He was the one who lived in the big Kuggery. So, he went and got his drums and he had new mucklucks on and new mucklucks are just slipperier than grease on ice and he was an old man already. So, he was on his way back with his drums and he slipped on the ice and he fell and pretty soon a couple of excited kids came running in crying, “Teacher, teacher!” They called me a school-tuk.

(350)

“School-tuk, Otto hurt!” So, the school house automatically emptied. Everybody had heard that Otto was hurt. So, we got out there and he was laying on the ice, moaning, so we took him to the schoolhouse. He was really in pain, so we couldn’t see what was wrong with him. So, we pulled down his pants and he had a big lump on his hip and it was broken, but I didn’t know it for sure at the time. I thought, my! So, what to do? There was no place to keep him at the school, so we picked him up and put him back in his Kuggery and I got on the radio to contact the doctor and the doctor in Kotzebue was on the air every night at 6 o’clock. And if anybody out in the villages had a problem, you could reach him, provided the radio worked. We had no such thing as satellite communication in those days, and you could go for weeks sometimes and never hear anything but static on that stupid radio. Anyway, I got on the radio and tried most of the evening to get a hold of the doctor and nothing. Couldn’t raise a soul. Just loud, loud static. And I got up early the next morning and started playing with it – nothing. Not a thing. Donna kept trying.
Well, we had to do something with the guy. By this time, half the family is just sitting in the Kuggery watching Otto sit there, wondering what the schoolteacher was going to do. So, I didn’t have a clue. Not a clue. So, I went to the old Mission there – Father Tom’s old Mission there – the church – because I had seen an old medical book on a shelf – Copyright 1914. And I looked up hips – broken hips – and here was this diagram and you were to stand the patient on his good leg and draw these lines on his buttocks. If they were one way, you had a dislocation. If they were another way, you had a broken hip. And then the book went on and it was mostly pray – I mean, all problems according to this 1914 doctor was the result of sin and blasphemous behavior. That’s what we had. We couldn’t get to a doctor, so I went back to the Kuggery. Everybody in the village showed up to see what was going to happen. So, I got a hold of another Eskimo and he was a good friend of the man who had the broken hip.

(400) So, I talked to him – I had to get an interpreter because he didn’t speak a lot of English - and we came to the decision that – how we reached this decision I don’t remember – but, maybe if we pulled on that leg a little bit, it might pop it back in the socket and that would be the end of it. I trusted this man because he had three fingers on his hand. He had got them caught in a rawhide rope on a spear point that was in a walrus and it had jerked the two fingers right off his hand one time. So, anyway, we decided to try the 1914 physician’s system first, and got a couple of men and hoisted Otto up on his good leg and of course, he was in pain. God he was really hurting. And it was quite obvious that we weren’t drawing any lines on him because it didn’t look anything like the book. And we talked it over and we were going to pull on it. I didn’t want to pull on it, but I really didn’t know what would happen if we did. So, OK, gotta do something.
One man got behind him – got Otto up, got behind him – got his leg like this and I got on the other end and I put the bottom of my feet against the bottom of the other guy’s feet and I took hold of the ankle and I leaned back on it and I could feel the bones snap back. And I thought, hey people, we got it. Of course, Otto was screaming by this time. It was hurting like hell. And I looked over and the whole hip went back the way it was. So, that was the end of that. Obviously he had a broken hip as far as I was concerned.

We tried and tried to get through to the doctor – all day long I’m on the radio trying to get through and all of a sudden out of the blue, here’s a guy by the name of Paul Touey, he’s on St. Lawrence Island a good 100 some miles south of us and we told him what the problem was. I told him what we had. Well, he got a hold of Nome. I couldn’t get hold of Nome, but he could just like that. He could hear both of us. So, I’d give the sentence to Paul, Paul gives the sentence to the person in Nome and the Nome people get the doctor and the doctor comes on and the doctor decided that he had a broken hip. OK, what do we do about it? Well, today they’d call a helicopter and they’d come get him. Well, that wasn’t the way it was. So, the doctor gave instructions. He had talked to someone and he told us to put him in traction and then he started talking about sandbags. Well, we’ve got no sand.

Any kind of weight will do, so we found a bunch of old plumbing fittings in the school shop and put them in a bucket and that was our sand. And we didn’t have any pulleys, but we rigged something up and we got a slip on him and we were supposed to increase the weight by so many ounces per day.

So, we had a bathroom scale, and we were weighing pipe fittings on the bathroom scale and about the third day, Otto decided he didn’t want any more of that. He was really hurting and
we had phenobarbital and aspirin, but that was all we had and we were giving him all we dared
give him of that. But anyway, I was gone and in the classroom, and while I was gone, Otto told
his two sons he didn’t want any more of that, to take it off. So, they took it off.

I went back and I tried to tell him that he had to do that, otherwise he was going to end up
a cripple. He wasn’t going to buy any of that. Of course, we communicated, but that was all I
could do for him. I told the doctor the next time I got to the doctor, he didn’t want to mess with
this and the doctor said, well you can’t do anything about it, so you just have to let it go and see
what happens. And I didn’t see him anymore for the rest of the winter. And the next spring after
school was out, we decided to leave the island. Donna was pregnant, so we decided to get off the
island and come back to the States. The next spring we were boxing our stuff together, the North
Star was coming and we were going to leave. And we were both in the kitchen putting our stuff
together and I heard somebody come thumping up the steps and who came up and knocked on
the door . . . 99% of the time they never knocked on the door, they would just walk right in.
But, this one knocked and I opened the door and there stood Otto. He had a crutch of some kind
made out of driftwood and he hobbled in on his own feet and that crutch and he didn’t know a lot
of English. He just looked around and watched us pack. Finally, he decided it was time for him
to go and he turned around and hobbled to the door and when he got to the door at the top of the
steps, he turned around and looked into my eyes and said, (“Thank you,” in Eskimo) and he
turned around and that’s the last I saw of him. And he went down the steps. Miracle of miracles,
how he did that, I don’t know. But, he did. He was a tough old bird, really tough.

(500)

BS: All Eskimos are tough.

GC: They have to be, I guess.
BS: From my experience, they’re tough. Interesting story about how tough this man was.

Teaching . . . tell me, your wife took the first couple of grades and then you took the rest. How do you teach them all at once when they’re all at different levels?

GC: You just take a little group here and a little group there. Keep this one busy and then take another group, and make sure everybody’s got something to do. People have been doing that for years.

BS: Did they have trouble learning to write?

GC: No, actually, some of these people are great artists. And writing was no problem at all.

BS: I mean understanding how to write a literate sentence.

GC: No, they had trouble with that.

BS: They could read, newspapers and such.

GC: They could read. We didn’t get newspapers, but . . . they could read a book.

BS: Vocabulary . . . was it as extensive as kids down here at the same grade?

GC: Oh no. Usually it was a little mixture of English and Eskimo.

BS: I see. Did they spell Eskimo words?

GC: The Eskimos didn’t have a written language, but with the phonetic alphabet, you can get so-called Eskimo writing.

BS: That’s what I meant. So, you had great kids and they learned well.

GC: Never any discipline problem.

BS: Never, never at all. They all came to school. You didn’t have any truants.

Wonderful to know. So, you were in the center of the social center of town. But, no legal dealings, no marriages, etc.

(550)
GC: I had a guy that wanted me to marry him and his girlfriend and I told him that I couldn’t do it. She had been married once before and they were both Catholics and so the Catholic church wouldn’t let him, so I told him, the next time you’re in Nome, go to see the judge. Whether they did or not, I haven’t any idea.

BS: But, they lived together. So, here you are. You’re into the school year. I assume it’s getting darker and darker. And when did the ice freeze around the island? Did the Straits freeze?

GC: Actually, they don’t freeze at all. The ice flows down from the Arctic Ocean and just fills in.

BS: Just fills in. Does it solidify?

GC: Oh yeah.

BS: So you can walk across the Bering Straits?

GC: You could walk over to Big Diomede if you wanted to. Of course, the World War was on and you couldn’t do that.

BS: Did they ever have any natives try to leave Big Diomede to get out?

GC: No. Not that I know of.

BS: They could have though, it sounds like. Did they come out on the ice and hunt?

GC: We think and I’ll tell you why we think that way. We think when we were there were no natives on Big Diomede. The Russians had moved them all to the mainland. And the only reason we think that is because we were out hunting walrus. Under normal conditions the Big Diomede Eskimos would be out hunting walrus also. We never saw any. Never saw anyone hunting of any kind on that island. The only thing we saw were 15 soldiers once. And I know there were 15 at least on that island because they were having a forced march on the ice of some kind and they
went around their island and I counted 15. There were always two up on top watching us. I know there were at least 15 all told, because I saw that many.

BS: So, they were worried about defections.

(600)

GC: And as far as I know right now, there still aren’t any native people on the island. But, there is now traffic going back and forth between the native people because when we were up there not too long ago, everything’s changed. I couldn’t believe the changes.

BS: I understand. I heard a gal swam between the two islands. OK. Winter is setting in. When does walrus season start in the spring? When the sun comes up again?

GC: There’s a short migration in the fall, but it’s not very large. It’s mostly bulls. But, in the spring after the ice starts breaking up, the cows and all the calves come. They come from the South and they’re headed north and that’s the big migration and that’s when they do most of the hunting.

BS: But, they have to get out in the fall to the Chukchi Sea through the Bering, right?

GC: Yeah.

BS: But, they’re all grown by then.

GC: Yeah, and they’re on both sides of the Big island, too. And there’s open water out there.

BS: So, there’s a big area for them to go through, so you can’t see too many of them.

(End of Tape 2 – Side A)

(Begin Tape 2 – Side B)

(000)

BS: This is Tape 2B of the interview with Jerry Carlson. Let’s explore a couple aspects of life in camp and one of the things that I think is a recurrent theme throughout Alaska is the alcohol in
the Eskimo population. What was your experience with that? Perhaps I could back it up even to your experience at White Mountain.

GC: At White Mountain, we had no problem with alcohol. The village voted itself dry and if there was any alcohol around, it was minimal because I never did see any drunks or anything like that. Diomede, on the other hand, they loved to drink and the only thing that kept them sober was that they couldn’t get it most of the time. There was no way to get it out to the island. If they did get it, they really tore off. Spring of the year, they were just trying to get off the island and I’d already hired a boat crew and the day before we were supposed to leave to come back to the States, the weather turned beautiful. The water was glassy and a bunch of young bucks got in the boat and away they went and they said they’d be back that night. So, I couldn’t stop them. And they went over to Cape Prince of Wales and apparently, they had made a deal with some liquor store in Nome and some pilot and they had cached a bunch of liquor at Cape Prince of Wales. And these guys went over and got it and they brought it back to Little Diomede and they came back in the evening. The days were getting long, so it was quite late, but it was still daylight. And they no sooner hit that beach and they broke into those whiskey cases. Funny they didn’t get drunk on the way over, but they didn’t. They broke into those things and I swear, an Eskimo can get drunker faster than anybody I’ve ever seen. Maybe they don’t have a natural immunity to it or something, but an hour after that, everyone in that village, practically, was falling down drunk.

BS: Kids?

GC: Not the kids. But every adult or young adult was loaded – men and women. There were one or two exceptions and they stayed in their houses and didn’t come out. The rest of them were up and down the paths between the houses, fighting, throwing each others stuff out of the houses. And we were supposed to leave the next morning. I thought how am I ever going to get a boat
crew together to go? A lot of the little kids were frightened. Little kids came to the school, so we just took them in and they stayed with us overnight. Slept on the floor because they were afraid of all of that drunkenness and brawling and fighting. Nobody came near the school, nobody.

We were looking out our upstairs window which looked right into the center of the village and there was Tommy Iapana, our water boy. He came out of an igloo with a rifle and he was so drunk he could hardly stand up. And he sat down on a rock and he was trying to aim it and there was a whole group of people squabbling, fighting, drinking, and he was trying to get somebody into the sights and god, I sat there and I didn’t know whether I should run out there or if I’d get there in time or anything. And before I could even move, some young guy that wasn’t drunk came down the hill on the run – he saw Tommy with the gun – and he grabbed the gun and got it away from him. And another young guy came and they hauled Tommy back to his house and tied him up. Left him tied up all night. So, nobody got shot. That’s a miracle. He was so drunk he couldn’t aim it, but he still might have hit somebody. And I got up early the next morning because I wanted to get out of there and there were drunks laying everywhere. In the dog crap and between the houses . . .

**BS:** *Had they not had alcohol up until then since you’d been up there?*

**GC:** Not all winter. They didn’t have any way to get it. I started rounding up the boat crew and the strong man – Jimmy Iapana, the guy who pulled the teeth – he was supposed to be the captain of the boat, so I got him up and I chewed his ass up one side and down the other and told him he had made a deal with me and he was going to have to live with that deal.

(50)

So we both started to round up his crew and he found them, some of them in different houses. One of them showed up with a female’s parka on, pulling his wife. A real mess. You just
can’t believe how drunk those people were. And they got them in the boat. Iapana got on the motor and Tommy, our water boy, they untied him and he came just as they were pushing the boat out into the water. He came down and he piles into the boat. Got way up – our stuff was all piled up in the middle. He got on top of the pile and he passed out colder than a mackeral. He just laid there.

Anyway, we got underway. The crew wasn’t doing well at all, but the guy on the tiller was . . . man we were moving. And we went down south on the island and then we had to turn around the south end of the island and head across to Cape Prince of Wales and that’s about 40-50 miles. And we got turned around and then we hit the wind. The wind was coming down out of the north and the waves were big and the foam was blowing off the top of them, so they had a couple of the guys managed to get a couple of oars and get a hide between them to keep the water from coming into the boat, but then of course, the wind pushed it, so we kept getting off course and we’d have to go back and try to head that way. We spent more time back-tracking I think than we did going forward.

But, anyway, we were just leaving the island when Tommy Iapana came to, he’s sitting on top of the pile and he starts rattling off in Eskimo. He has his arms out like this and he rattling, rattling, rattling, and I finally asked one of the guys who was fairly sober, “What’s he doing?” “Oh, he’s praying to the people in the rocks.” He got all through praying and he passed out cold and he stayed out for the rest of the trip. We were a long time coming across from Diomede to Cape Prince of Wales because that wind kept driving us south and we needed to go straight across. But, we got there.

At one place in the crossing, I’m sitting there with Donna around the middle of the boat, slightly forward. I turn around and look and there’s our tiller man – James Iapana, the strong
man - draped over our motor with a whiskey bottle hanging in one hand and he’s sound asleep. I crawl over Tommy Iapana and I crawl over all of the boxes, over a couple of other drunks and I went back there and I took the damn bottle away from him and I shook him awake and I just chewed him up one side and down the other. Oh. . . OK. He didn’t say anything when I took the bottle. I couldn’t throw it overboard, but I went back and stuck it under my seat. Then I got to looking around and there were all kinds of bottles. So, I start collecting them. I had a whole bunch of them under my seat by the time we got to the Cape Prince of Wales. They never objected when I took their bottle. They were sort of bleary eyed.

Anyway, we finally got to Cape Prince of Wales. They pulled up on the beach and just as we did, a guy by the name of Howard Mays – a bush pilot from Nome – was to pick us up. He came in and he landed and we grabbed our overnight bags and I told James Iapana – the guy who was supposed to be running the show – I told him to put all our gear in the school at Wales and the North Star would pick it up on it’s next trip and we ran and Howard never even turned off the engines. We got on that airplane and away we went for Nome.

**BS:** Lucky to get out of there, huh? If it was anything like the umiaks I’ve been in at Barrow, they’re not built for rough weather.

**GC:** No, it’s just lucky we didn’t all drown. Just a miracle.

**BS:** So, you never really saw much of the continual drinking like I did at Barrow when I was there.

**GC:** No. In the city they do. Like in Nome, they drink all the time. We had one guy on the island. He invariably went to Nome every year at the beginning of the summer. Make a mess out of himself, dead drunk, fighting – he was a big guy. He’d fight and the marshall would throw him in jail and he’d leave him there all summer. And then in the fall, they’d let him out and send
him back home. He never stayed any time at all. He’d get to Nome, he’d get drunk, get in a fight and he’d be in jail.

(100)

BS: *They got used to him coming.*

GC: Yeah. Here comes Mike. Lock him up.

BS: *Tell me, I know the Eskimos subsistance culture. Let’s talk about what did they subsist on? I know the birds in the summer.*

GC: Their primary diet was seal. They were great seal hunters and they use that seal for meat, for oil, and oil was used for heat, for eating, for lights, and I figured it up one day, roughly, that it took nine seals a week per family to exist on that island. That included their heat, food, light – 9 seals a week per family. Average family was 6.

BS: *How do you get a seal? In the open water or on the ice?*

GC: They go out on the ice, but there’s open leads in the ice. The ice is always shifting. And usually they build a little wall out of snow blocks or ice or whatever is handy. And they just sit back there. And of course, they’re dressed in white themselves. And they sit back there with their rifle and they just wait until a seal sticks his head up and they shoot. And I watched them a lot. People always say the Eskimos are good marksmen. They’re not really. They don’t have the money to buy the shells to practice to become great marksmen. Most of the seals that I saw that were shot – they got hit with ricochet. They’d shoot and the bullet would land in the water in front of the seal and then ricochet into the seal’s head. That’s how they got them. Very rarely did they fire one and hit the seal right off.

BS: *Did any of them have glasses?*

GC: Yeah, a few had glasses.
BS: So, basically the natives would hunt the seals through the ice. How about when the ice was out? How’d they get their seals then?

GC: Then the walrus come.

BS: Oh, in the open water? In come the walrus. Was there any business in the ivory trade?

GC: Yeah. I’ve got those four tusks over there. I bought those at the village store. They trade their ivory in to the store for whatever the store’s got to sell in Little Diomede, and towards the end of the year, they don’t have a lot to sell, but they have a few things. And they stack that ivory up and then they sell it. There used to be a guy by the name of Abe Pollet, had a curio store in Nome and he was their main buyer. They always went to Pollet and sold their ivory. That’s where they got the cash they had.

BS: I think I know that name. He has a store there.

GC: I don’t know if he’s still alive, but maybe he’s got family that’s running the place. Abe Pollet.

BS: So, polar bears?

GC: Polar bears. We got . . . I say “we” . . . the island got three that year.

BS: Did they come in to camp?

GC: Well, they were just out on the ice. They’d get shot. I’ve heard stories about their coming into Little Diomede and somebody would spot them and shoot them, but they got three and one of them was big. Oh, he was huge. And they shot him way out on the ice someplace. And he was so big. They had dogs with them, and they had sleds, but he was so big, they couldn’t haul it all because they had to go over pressure ridges and stuff, so they cut off the hind quarters and the entrails and cached them on the ice and then just brought the front quarters ahead and the fur and then went back later and got the rest of it.
BS: Do they eat bear?

GC: Oh yeah. They eat it. And I tried. Usually if the hunting was good, they’d bring some by the school. And they were real good that way. And when they got the big bear, they came and gave us a pretty good chunk. And we hadn’t seen fresh meat for quite a while, except for seal. Seal liver is good, incidentally. It’s as good as any calf liver you could eat. But, they gave us this big chunk of bear meat and I was determined, boy, I was going to have a steak or something off of that thing. And I got out the knife and sharpened it. Couldn’t cut it. It was so damn tough, you couldn’t get a knife through it. We had one of those little hand grinders, so we fastened that to the table and got an ax and chopped pieces off of that chunk and tried to feed it through the grinder and you know, it wouldn’t grind? It would mangle, but it wouldn’t grind. It was the toughest stuff I’ve ever tried to put through. So, I ended up eating some of those chunks. Cooked them and chewed them and chewed them and chewed them and finally spit them out. Because there was no way you could eat it. Now what those Eskimos did with it, I don’t know but I know they ate it because the next day, after they got the bear, the kids got to school and they all just reeked of bear grease – just reeked. The whole school reeked.

BS: They cook it though.

GC: Oh, they cook it. Yeah. The women took the fur. Of course, the fur was bloody from being shot and butchered and all that stuff. They chopped a hole in the ice and they took that bear and they rinsed that bear hide in sea water. Got all the blood and stuff out of it and then they put it up on a rack and stretched it from the nose to the tail and tied it down. You measure it from the nose to the tail – it’s bought by the foot.

BS: Yeah, they did that at Barrow, too. Did they cure it with urine?
GC: I don’t know. I didn’t see them cure it.

BS: I’ve seen that done. I think they probably use chemicals now. Bigger business now. Hides are worth an awful lot of money now. So, you left the place improved with the oil heater and certainly the Eskimos had had a better education thanks to you and your wife. And you flew out to Nome? Did you go home from there?

GC: We went from Nome, caught Pan Am and went to Seattle.

BS: Did the new school teacher show up before you left?

GC: I don’t know who went there after we were there.

BS: So, when did you leave? About June?

GC: Yeah, about June.

BS: So, you were there about 9 months. And then back to Vancouver?

GC: Yeah.

BS: You wrote the book when?

GC: 1966. About ten years later. A little over 10 years later.

BS: You went back.

GC: Yeah, we went back. It’s been a couple of years ago, now. The date’s in the book. And we were sitting around here one day, wondering how things were going on Diomede and we hadn’t been back there in over 40 years, so we talked ourselves into going. The first thing I did, I picked up the phone and I got the Alaska operator and I asked if there was a number – we had read in the paper someplace that there was now a phone on the Little Diomede Island.

(200)

So, I asked the operator for Little Diomede’s number and in a couple of seconds she comes back and says, “Well, I show a whole list of subscribers.”’ I think, well, OK. How about
the school phone. And I call the school phone. “Which one? Elementary school or the high school?” OK, that set me back again – high school!? So, I said, “Well, let’s try the high school number.” So, we called the high school number and nobody answered. So, I thought I’d try the elementary school number. No answer. So, I gave up. I figured well, I’d try again tomorrow because that was on Sunday.

So, on Monday, I tried the high school number and I got the principal, Mr. Seidfowski. I told him who I was and that we wanted to come out to the island. First I said, I tried to call you yesterday and he said, “Well, the school was closed for the day. Too bad you didn’t have my home phone.” Wow! Anyway, I told him who we were and that we would like to come up. “Sure, that would be fine.” He could put us up for a few days if we wanted to come up. So, we set it up and we flew to Nome. And we had a reservation with a Bering Air outfit that flies out of Nome. I’d never heard of them before. And while we were in Nome, I called this principal up on Little Diomede, told him we were in Nome and that we were planning on coming out tomorrow and he said, “Who’s bringing you out?” And I said, we have a reservation with Bering Air and he said, “Then don’t count on it. They’ve been out here several times this spring and they’ve never landed.” He said “Try Olson Air.” OK. I called up Bering Air and cancelled that. Called up Olson Air and made a reservation for the next morning. And the taxi cab picked us up – we were staying at a bed and breakfast in Nome and the taxi cab picked us up the next morning, took us to the airport and on the way, I noticed out on the tarmac there were a lot of planes parked there and Olson Air – Olson Air, Nome-Golovin. And I thought, now wait a minute. We had a kid at White Mountain when we taught school there that was from Golovin and he was an Olson and I just wondered if there was any connection. So, anyway, we got to the airport and checked in.

**BS: This was a native?**
GC: Yeah. And sure enough, this was the son of the Olson we had who was running the airport. So, we got in the plane and the pilot was a young guy – about 19 years old. An Eskimo boy from Wainwright. We took off for Little Diomede, went up the coast from Nome, followed what is now the Nome-Teller Road and he said it was snowed-in, but you could see where the wind had blown it off and he followed the road pretty much all the way until he turned towards where Diomede should be. He went right over Cape Prince of Wales. We looked down at the village and it was down there, and it had been a routine flight up to that point. We started across the strait and no problem and he headed around to the south end of the island and just as we cleared the south end to go north, we hit the wind and boy, it was just like running into a wall. That airplane just bounced all over the sky. You can’t believe. He fought with that thing and you could see down on the ice, somebody had cleared off the snow and they had four red traffic pilings – one on each corner of the landing strip. The landing strip was running almost exactly on the International Dateline. It was out there in the middle someplace. And this boy flying that airplane, he fought that thing and at the last minute, he got the wings leveled down and boy we slammed – we hit hard. The only reason they didn’t call it a crash was because the airplane didn’t fall apart. Boy, it hit hard! There were a couple of guys out there with snow machines waiting for us. We got on the snow machines and they bounced us in. Here was this brand new village. Nothing of the old village was there.

BS: *Everybody in a house?*

GC: Everybody’s got a house and it’s a regular white man’s house. No igloos of any kind like that.

BS: *They didn’t immortalize one as a shrine or . . .*
GC: They’ve still got one of the old Kuggeries. But, they haven’t done anything with it. There’s talk about making it into a tourist thing. But, the school – they’ve got an elementary school. They’ve got a high school. They’ve got a big gymnasium. The kids go on field trips. When we were there, the elementary students were loading up for a spelling bee and they were going to go someplace over on the mainland for a spelling bee. And the graduating class the year before had gone on a field trip to Disneyland in California!

BS: Are they part of the Utkiotic Inupiat Corporation?

GC: Yeah, they’re in the corporation and then they had a lot to do with the Land Claims Act. They’re doing real fine.

BS: *Working at Prudhoe?*

GC: Some of the guys were.

BS: *Were there professionals there?*

GC: No.

BS: *Anybody involved in the tourist industry?*

GC: No, but tourists do come out from Nome in the summertime.

BS: *But, they don’t have a reception center for them?*

GC: No.

BS: *Tourists are pretty much on their own to look around.*

GC: Right.

BS: *How many people were there? You talked about 130 when you first went.*

GC: Well, there are now maybe 160, but there were only 14 left from when we were there.

BS: *Where did the others go? Die?*

GC: A lot of them died. A lot of them moved. Went to the city.
BS: What happens when they die there?

(300)

GC: When we were there, three people died. And what they do is when the person died, they dressed them up in one of his parkas and sealskin pants and, of course, they tie him down because they don’t want rigor mortis to twist them all to pieces, and kept them laying on the floor in the house and then a couple of the men would come over to the school and ask to use the shop, which of course, we never denied. And we always had scrap lumber around. The North Star used to leave dunnage material and stuff. You never know when it’s going to come in handy because you can’t get lumber out there. Anyway, they’d come and we’d give them the lumber and let them use the shop and they’d put together a box and take the box back to the house, pick the body up, put it in the box and then the village would follow them up the hill and they took the box and just wedged it down between the rocks. That was it.

BS: Fox get them?

GC: I don’t know. Fox, I imagine they did and the dogs, too, probably. Those boxes don’t last forever, but they last a long time, surprisingly, because of the salt air. But, eventually they weather and they break and rolling rocks break them. And I went up through that cemetery several times and you’d see a broken box and there might be a bone or two, but that would be about all. I had an idea the dogs and the fox . . .

BS: No embalming or anything like that.

GC: No.

BS: So how about the school teaching? Did they have more advances since you were there? Did they have videos?
GC: Oh, yeah. They’re all electronic. They’ve got satellite television. They had a special education teacher. They have a full-time medical person on the island. They’ve got the principal, of course, and they’ve got the high school.

BS: How many teachers?

GC: I don’t know if I can tell you how many they’ve got now. They must have at least 6 elementary teachers, minimum, and then they’ve got about 4 high school teachers and the principal is a part-time teacher. So, that would be about 11.

BS: So, they don’t have to send their kids off to high school anymore.

GC: That all changed in Alaska when Molly – what was her name – Molly Hootch? She was one of a group, an Indian gal, but I think there were 14 of them as I remember, and the Alaska State Operated School System – 1972.

(350)

“A diminuitive 16-year-old Eskimo girl named Molly Hootch from the village of Eminak in the Yukon River Delta – the class action bears her name because it was the first on a list of 27 plaintiffs and they brought a case that the State of Alaska was obligated by constitution to provide her with an opportunity to attend high school within her own village.” And that’s what happened. All the villages now have high schools. Which is a good thing.

BS: The natives in Barrow were sent down to Oregon. So, they’ve got a much expanded school system. How about the homes? What is the home like now? Do they have a bedroom for everybody?

GC: Yeah, they were 3-4 bedroom homes. Pre-fabricated, of course.

BS: Any vehicles?

GC: No, except snow machines.
BS: And how about boats?

GC: They still use a skin boat.

BS: Don’t use a zodiac?

GC: I didn’t see any, but we were there in the winter time. So they could have.

BS: They didn’t have any boats out in winter.

GC: No.

BS: So, you spent how long there?

GC: We went to stay over night and I think we were 5 days getting out because of the weather – fog conditions, mainly. Planes couldn’t come in, which was all right.

BS: How many old friends did you see?

GC: Like I said, there were 14 people from the village that were there when we were there. And that’s all.

BS: Anyone in particular that remembered you?

GC: No, not really. Matter of fact, I wouldn’t have known them. They were probably . . .

BS: You mentioned a lady that was there – one of your students.

GC: Oh yeah. I know who you’re talking about. She is now, or was this last time when we were up there, she was the cafeteria worker. She was an orphan girl and she lived with her grandmother. She was, at least in 1993, she was the head chef of the school complex and she also had a gold collar lapel with a VPSO – Village Public Safety Officer on it. She could be tough. Her dad was the strong man.

BS: She remembered you?

GC: She remembered us, oh yeah.

BS: Do you correspond with her at all?
GC: Christmas card. That’s about it.

BS: Sounds like White Mountain was a little more advanced with communications, integration with modern life.

(400)

GC: Oh yeah. White Mountain had a post office when we were there. They had regular airplane traffic and Diomede didn’t have any of that.

BS: Why do people stay in Diomede now? They work at Prudhoe? They could go to Anchorage. They could move out of the state.

GC: They can go anywhere they want to, but I think it’s home. They were born there.

BS: Give me a retrospect. How did it affect your life afterwards. I mean you certainly have mementos around.

GC: Well, I keep track of things in Alaska because I’ve got a daughter up there, too. A granddaughter and a great-grandson, so I keep track of what’s going on.

BS: Your son was conceived on Little Diomede.

GC: Yeah.

BS: Has he gone there?

GC: No, he lives about 20 miles from here.

BS: Your daughter lives in Alaska, though.

GC: Yeah, she lives in Alaska.

BS: So, you’re glad you did it.

GC: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was an experience.

BS: Your wife?

GC: Oh yeah, she’s glad she did it.
BS: Sounds like a very exciting time in your life. Well, it’s been a good interview. I’m going to follow this up in the next Polar Times with a combined oral history/book review.

GC: My wife, she’s a female. She has a different slant on things, but she liked those people.

BS: Hard not to like the Eskimos. Well, I think we can end it on that. It’s been a good interview.

(End of Interview)