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Clara Rust, Grandma Tucker, Helen Callahan, Mary Stock

Neville Abbott Jacobs, narrator and interviewer

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Neville Jacobs said Alaska is a strong land and demanding and requires sense from its people. She talked about the strength which was needed to put up with the everyday northland. She introduced the guests, Clara Rust, Grandma Tucker, Helen Callahan and Mary Stock.

Clara Rust said the flood of Fairbanks, Alaska in 1967 was the worst they have had. Other floods would affect the lower ends of the town. In 1929 they had a big flood that knocked a boat off their front porch. Rust talks about the 1906 fire which destroyed the entire business district between Cushman and Lacey Streets along 1st and 2nd Avenues. Rust said they had very few fires below Cushman except for a couple of the old hotels which burned down. Most of the fires were on the upper side of Cushman. The 1906 fire started between 1st and 2nd Avenue where a dentist had his office. It took out the middle part of town. The Northern Commercial Company (NCC) had large boilers which kept the pumps going in case of fire. Clara's husband Jess was working at the NCC power plant during one of the other fires that burned Fairbanks. It was controlled by an extraordinary decision. Rust said all of the employees of the NCC were with on the fire department. When the whistle would blow everyone would run to the fire. The operator would call the managers at the power plant to get the boilers going even before they called the fire department. She could see the fire from her house. She went down to the fire to serve coffee to the firefighters. The wood fueled boilers just couldn't keep up the steam so they decided to throw bacon on the boiler fires to make them hotter. It saved the town. Rust said in the early days it was difficult to get supplies in the winter. Everything came by boat in the summer. She talked about having to soak and scrape off the mold on the slabs of bacon. The whole winter supply of eggs were brought in on the boats and they had to keep them cool. The eggs would be sorted by candling and split the eggs out into different levels of quality with different costs to the buyers. Onions and potatoes were also a problem. It was difficult to keep stocks of food. Her children got used to the taste of older eggs and didn't like the flavor of fresh eggs. They used a lot of dried foodstuffs. She talked about picking raspberries, blueberries and low-bush cranberries. She described cooking high bush cranberry jam.

Grandma Tucker was born on the Bering Sea and didn't see a white man until she was in her teens. She used seabird eggs from birds nesting on the Bering Sea Coast. After she married Mr. Tucker she worked as a cook in a roadhouse. Grandma Tucker described gathering seabird eggs on the cliffs above the sea. She talked about cooking in a roadhouse.

Helen Callahan was born way out in the woods in a tent. They hunted moose in the Koyukuk and dried the meat. Her father was half-Russian. Her mother's cousin had a store down at St. Michael. She talked about attending the mission school at the 40 Mile. She was about six years old and learned to speak the King's English. She had spoken Russian like her parents up to that point. She remembers learning to drive a car. Every summer they used to travel to Circle for picnics. There wolf who was following their car one time who was interested in their small dog.

Mary Stock came to Alaska to meet up with her husband to be, Adolph Stock. He came over in 1923 and was mining. She came nine years later in 1931. She came from Munich and it was quite a change to come to Fairbanks which was only 5,000 people. There was a trail out of Fairbanks at the time. She talked about traveling up to Alaska. You only got mail once a week. Mail from Europe would take a month. When she arrived by train into Fairbanks there were about 100 people there to see Adolph's bride. She couldn't understand English church. She got married in the Catholic Church and recalls a story about the wedding. At that time there were no flowers in Fairbanks and she felt a little sad about not having any flowers at her wedding. They had dinner at the Model Café after her wedding. The owner made a wedding cake with red roses on top. She compared life in Alaska to her homeland. She talked about buying water from the waterman.