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ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Lois E. Meier, of  
name

455-3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. #721,  
street or P.O. box number

Fairbanks, AK, 99701,  
city state zip

transfer to the University of Alaska Rasmuson Library my  
title, interest, and copyright to the interviews recorded  
with me on June 13, 1991,  
month/day yr

to be used for scholarly purposes.

Lois E. Meier  
signature

June 13, 1991  
date

H91-33-01/02

ORAL HISTORY BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

NAME: Lois Elizabeth Meier  
(first) (middle) (last)

(NICKNAME: ) \_\_\_\_\_ (MAIDEN NAME: ) \_\_\_\_\_ (same)

MAILING ADDRESS: 455 Third Avenue #721, Fairbanks AK 99701  
(city/state/zip)

DATE OF BIRTH: 8/29/13 BIRTHPLACE Seattle, Washington  
(city/state)

SPOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

MARRIAGE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILDREN: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ALASKAN RESIDENCY: Arrived in 1939 to take a teaching position in  
Fairbanks. Came by steamship Baranof, then bus from Valdez.

OCCUPATION/PROFESSION: Professional teacher. Taught business  
classes at Main School and Lathrop High School. Retired in 1977.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT IN RELATION TO ORAL HISTORY:

Lois Meier relates her experiences in a teaching career that spanned from  
1935-77, including the growth of Fairbanks schools, changes in the  
teaching profession and education programs, teaching requirements and pay.  
She also describes the impact of the construction and opening of Ladd  
Field, the devastating 1950 polio epidemic, effects of World War II,  
her residency at the Northward Building since 1952, the 1967 flood,  
Peace Corps service in Ethiopia in 1962-64, statehood and the pipeline impact.

INTERVIEWER: Susan Fisher

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 13, 1991 TAPE NUMBER: 336

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LOIS MEIER TAPE / key words

1935-39, teaching at North Bend, Wash.  
University of Washington Teacher Placement Bureau

Father, attorney; mother, teacher; honeymoon in Nome, 1903

Teaching surplus, post-Depression  
Metropolitan Business College, Washington

Travel to Fairbanks, 1937:

Alaska steamship, Baranof

Cabinmate: Fairbanks teacher Rosamond Weller

Bus from Valdez to Fairbanks

Overnight at Tonsina roadhouse

Apartment rented from NC Co. (formerly Nordstrom men's store), three teachers rooming together, \$75 a month

Rosamond Weller  
Hildegard Olson  
Ellen Lyman

Fairbanks in 1937:

Nordale Hotel

Pioneer Hotel

Empress Theater

Main Post Office: mail arrived once a week

Main School

New addition (south addition) opened in 1939 school year

High school, 1939: 120 students, six teachers

Business classes: typing, shorthand, bookkeeping,  
checkwriting, deposits

Town population about 3,000

Teaching salary: \$2,280 a year (North Bend salary, \$1,400)

Wechter's Meat Market, NC Co., and other stores delivered

Entertainment: record collections

Skiing at Birch Hill

Harding Lake: rustic summer cabins

Bicycling

Lathrop High School opening, 1955

Moved library books from Main to Lathrop: students each carried an armload of books

Ladd Field, under construction 1939

Impact: more people, increase in crime



## World War II

Working at Ladd Field as teletype operator  
Planes ferried from Montana to Ladd: Russian pilots  
then flew from Ladd to Soviet Union  
Food supplies good/no rationing  
Russian pilots: using old, larger-sized dollar bills  
Military restrictions on travel into Alaska

First radio station, KFAR, on air October 1939  
World War II news  
Telegrams

University of Alaska: impact of war (near closure)  
Military presence on campus

## Teachers:

Comradeship between public school teachers and  
university faculty  
American Association of University Women  
Alaska State Retired Teachers, 1961  
Annual teacher conferences in Anchorage

Traveling Alaska Highway by car, 1948, with Hildegard Olson  
Milepost published

1950 polio epidemic  
Epidemic scare  
JoAnne Wold  
Death of senior class president  
Schools open, but no classes

Superintendent James C. Ryan  
Unsuccessful attempt to require school uniformity

Northward Building opening, 1952

Peace Corps service, Ethiopia, 1962-64  
School board approval for leave

Superintendent Charles Lafferty

Governor Ernest Gruening

Lathrop High School: new school featured specialty classes  
for art, music, shop: encouraged areas of exploration

Alaska statehood: teacher support

Fairbanks North Star Borough organization: community  
resistance

1940s: Teachers once paid by warrants (promise to pay)  
rather than checks: banks honored warrants

University of Alaska 1959, obtained master's degree  
Dr. Charles Ray  
Lafferty first superintendent to support higher pay  
for teachers with master's degrees

Teacher requirements

Alaska State Retired Teachers Association: Lois Meier  
elected president March 1990

National Education Association membership  
Teacher resistance to push to pay dues to national,  
state and local organizations  
American Association of Retired Persons & ASRTA

Restrictions against married women teaching  
Hold-over from Depression  
Restrictions dropped during WW II

Teacher retirement funds: state fund goes broke, 1950s

1967 Flood:

Water running on Noble Street  
Northward Building structurally isolated  
Northward lobby under six feet of water  
No electricity  
Red Cross offered hot food, served on alternate floors  
Flood-damaged cars bought (for export outside?)

Native students: boarding program in Fairbanks  
Cultural disadvantages and trauma to students

Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline  
Impact on school enrollment  
Inflation  
Double shifting classes at Lathrop

Antarctica trip, December-January 1979  
Christine Smith, retired teacher  
Wildlife and marine life  
Scientific stations

Mississippi River trip, 1977, aboard the Delta Queen, from  
New Orleans to Minneapolis

National Retired Teachers Association