

**Edgar P. Nollner Sr.  
a Biography**

EDGAR NOLLNER, SR.

A BIOGRAPHY

Compiled from Taped Interviews by  
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For

Yukon Koyukuk Biographical Sketch Project  
Yukon Koyukuk School District  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Under Provisions of a Contract with  
The Athabascan Curriculum Study Project  
University of Alaska  
Fairbanks, Alaska

January, 1985

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Yukon-Koyukuk School District for this Special Edition  
in honor of Edgar's Memorial Potlatch, July 2005.

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## FOREWORD

This book continues a series of biographies begun by Curt Madison and Yvonne Yarber for the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. The original idea behind the series was to provide cultural understanding of our own area, Interior Alaska, as well as relevant role models for students. As Curt and Yvonne have pointed out, all too often the history of Alaska's Interior is seen primarily in the light of the gold rush or the oil pipeline, events that are easily understood by people from Outside. But people living in the Interior know that their lives have been affected by a wider range of factors such as missionaries, schools, celebrations, fur prices, traders and stores, health care, wage labor, subsistence practices, the availability of animals, and transportation, to give only a partial list. All these and more have contributed to a rich and varied history and culture that should not be glossed over lightly.

The initial project from which this series grew was begun in 1977 by Bob Maguire. Representatives of Indian Education Parent committees from each of the eleven villages in the school district met in Fairbanks in February 1978 to choose two people from each village to write about. This book represents a second phase of the project in which the Regional School Board selected ten additional individuals for inclusion in the series. This second phase differs slightly from the first in that the School Board provided a series of topics that they hoped would serve as a broad outline for gathering the biographical information and writing the book. By using such an outline the Board hoped that students could use the biographies in this second series more easily for comparative study of such topics as seasonal subsistence activities or changes in modes of transportation.

However, the main goal of providing a vehicle whereby elders from the Interior can describe the events of their lives and thereby speak to their friends, neighbors, and the young people of their communities in their own words remains the same. It is important that the rich and varied oral knowledge that the elders carry should not be lost but transmitted to us all. It is only proper that information about rural Alaska should not just go out for audiences far away but should return for local use, as well.

The methods for producing this biography were much the same as those used for previous books in this series. Because the earlier books are widely known, I suspect my job was somewhat easier than when the project began. I found I had to do relatively little explaining. After an initial set of visits and taped interviews with Edgar in Galena, I transcribed the tapes, organized the material from the transcripts, and then wrote a draft

of the biography, using Edgar's own words as much as possible. I sent a copy of the draft to Edgar and then returned to Galena where we went over the draft word-for-word to correct any errors and make sure that he could add or delete any material before the biography becomes public. This kind of review process is essential to any work based on oral history. Not only does it help in building trust, but it also improves the accuracy of the results, and most importantly, it can help avoid difficulty and embarrassment for the person who has given generously from his or her life story.

For me, personally, it has been a pleasure and privilege to work with Edgar and his family. I hope that you, too, will enjoy learning about his life.

I welcome any comments, questions, or corrections concerning the biography.

Wendy Arundale  
University of Alaska  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
January, 1985

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## INTRODUCTION

Although today Galena is one of the larger communities in interior Alaska, serving as a regional center for transportation and other services, it did not exist as even a village before 1920. There was a fish camp at nearby Henry's Point, but the only village was Loudon, located about 14 miles upriver. As Edgar describes in his biography, in 1920, the people living in Loudon began to build rafts of their cabin logs and move their belongings to the Old Town part of Galena.

Before that, only one family, John Antoski's, lived on the site. In addition to Edgar's family, other early Galena residents included George Jimmy and his family, his brother, Little Jimmy, Ambrose Abraham and his mother, Eenyas Paul and his family, Walter Nollner and his family, George Nollner and his family, Sam Stannish and his family, and Old Wholecheese and his family. Soon after the move to Galena, John Antoski became Edgar's father-in-law. Other aspects of Edgar's life are also closely entwined with Galena's history.

There seem to have been two reasons for the move to Galena. First, much of the wood supply around Loudon had been used up, and Galena had a large stand of spruce trees where the air strip is now. Wood was important then not only as fuel for people to heat their homes, but also as a source of cash. Steamboats going up and down the river needed great quantities of wood for fuel, and local people would cut wood, haul it to the river banks in the winter with their dog teams, and then sell it to the steamboats in the summer. A hard-working man might cut as much as 250 cords in a winter. Wood brought \$8.00 a cord in 1921. As a young man, Edgar gained his reputation for strength and hard work cutting many cords of steamboat wood. He also trained a strong and capable dog team that won many races by using them to haul the wood to the river.

Second, a mine opened on the south side of the river opposite the village site. Sam Kincaid discovered the deposit of galena (lead sulfide), and Jack Price and a crew of miners dug out the ore in 1919 and 1920. Although local people helped haul food and supplies to the mine, they did not work there. In 1920 and 1921, Albert Verhonik brought his horses down from Ruby on the river ice in the spring and hauled the ore out to the river where boats carried it to St. Michaels. Over 250 tons of ore were removed from the mine before it closed in 1922. Edgar recalls how he took Albert Verhonik to the mine to negotiate a contract for hauling out the ore.

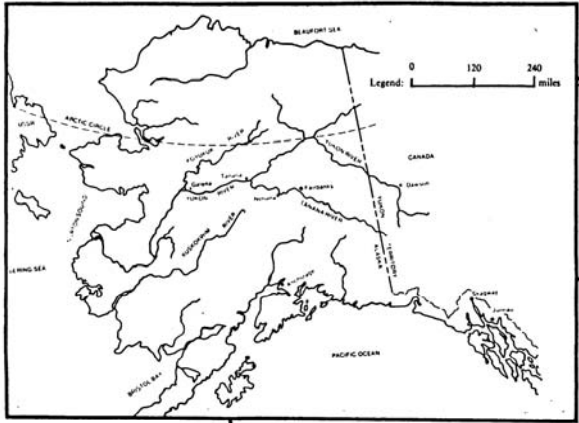
Galena had its first major flood during spring break-up in 1925 when ice jams forced the swollen Yukon over its banks. There have been several other major floods in 1945, 1963, and 1971. To avoid flood problems, in the early 1970's Galena residents selected a new townsite east of the airbase and began building homes and other buildings there. Although quite a few people still live in Old Town, the population is gradually shifting to the New Site area. Edgar still has a house, cache and property in Old Town, but he lives at New Site.

School came to Galena in 1928; Ernest Peck was the first teacher. In 1930, Galena residents built a log schoolhouse. For many years, the BIA operated a school offering grades 1-8. In 1969, the state of Alaska took over the school and gradually began adding high school grades. Galena became an independent school district in 1974, and soon began to develop a new school building in the New Site area. Today, in addition to the school, Galena has an extension division of the University of Alaska and a medical-dental clinic named after Edgar.

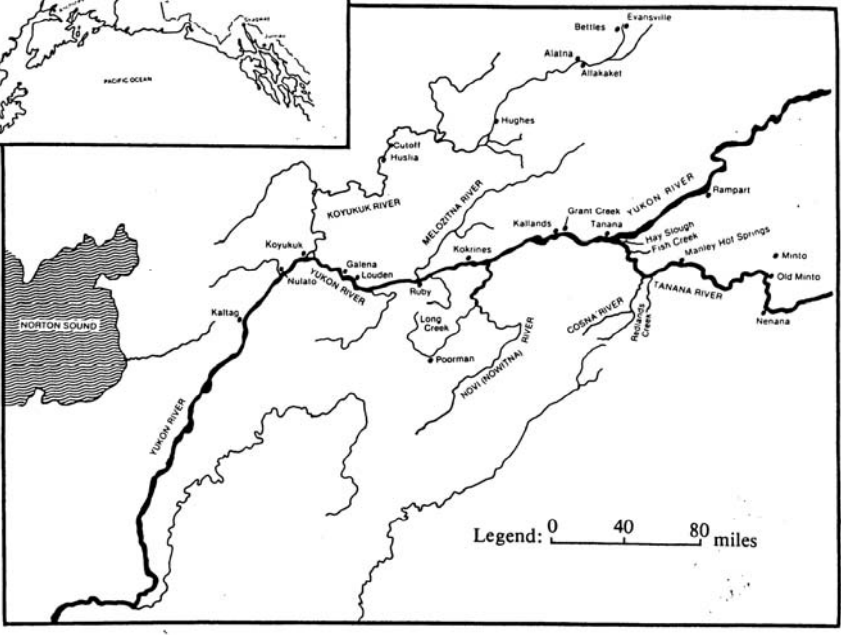
Perhaps the event that has had the most impact on Galena and its people was the construction of a military airstrip by the U.S. Army beginning in 1940. Fear of Japanese invasion through Alaska was one of the original reasons for building the base. People from all over the area, including Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk and villages on the Koyukuk River, came to work on construction of the air base. Edgar, too, worked at the base and recalls vividly what it was like. Even now almost 400 people live or work at the air base.

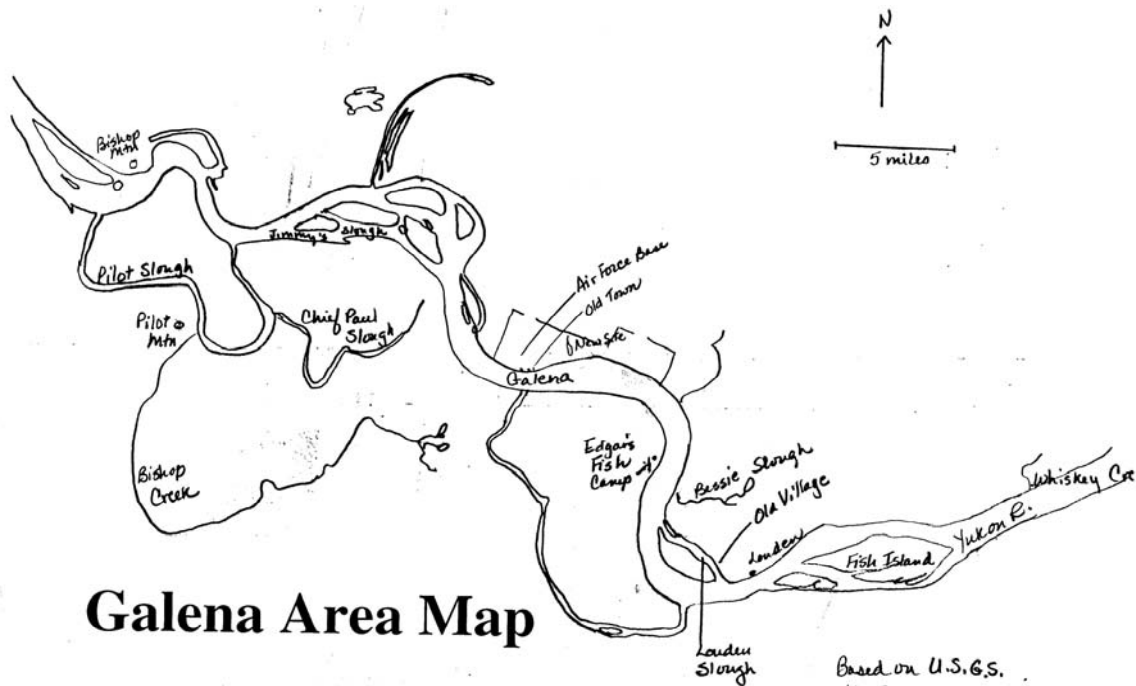
Today, Edgar Nollner is a strong, soft-spoken man who, despite his 80 years, thoroughly enjoys staying busy cutting wood, working at fish camp, and doing the other tasks of daily life. Though he has already raised a large family, his house is still a place where his younger grandchildren gather. And if you visit for a little while, you will soon find that he also has a twinkle in his eye, a fine sense of humor, and the skill of a master storyteller.





# Local Area





## Galena Area Map

Based on U.S.G.S.  
 1:250000 map series  
 Nulato Quadrangle  
 Base map 1952,  
 Revised 1974

Family Group Sheet

<b>Husband: Edgar Paul Nollner, Sr.</b>	
	Born: November 11, 1904 in: Old Louden, Alaska
	Married: March 29, 1922 in: Galena, Alaska
	Died: January 18, 1999 in: Galena, Alaska
	Father: Alfred Redmon "Al" Nollner, Jr.
	Mother: Cecilia Frank, (Morondoyedat/no)
	Other Spouses: Esther Captain, Bessie Lucille Sprunger
<b>Wife: Ann Jean Antoski</b>	
	Born: October 15, 1904 in: Camp on the Yukon River
	Died: November 9, 1985 in: Fairbanks Memorial Hosp., Fai., Ak.
	Father: John Antoski
	Mother: Agnes Antoski, (Addozzo)
<b>CHILDREN</b>	
1 F	Name: Josephine Nollner Born: February 1, 1922 in: Galena, Alaska Spouses: Lawrence Roberts, Henry Minook
2 M	Name: George Nollner Born: 1923 in: ? Died: Unknown in: ?
3 F	Name: Mary Louise Nollner, (Tlaansinaadlino) Born: February 24, 1925 in: Galena, Alaska Married: April 25, 1947 in: Galena, Alaska Died: June 7, 1987 in: Fairbanks, Alaska Spouse: Charles "Charlie" Carlo
4 M	Name: Barney Nollner Born: January 25, 1927 in: Galena, Alaska Died: Unknown in: ? Spouse: Marie Demoski
5 M	Name: Franklin Nollner Born: 1928 in: ? Died: Unknown in: ?
6 F	Name: Esther Nollner Born: 1930 in: ? Died: Unknown in: ?
7 M	Name: Gabriel Nollner, Sr. Born: October 9, 1933 in: Galena, Alaska Married: January 1, 1957 in: Ruby, Alaska Spouse: Margaret McCarty
8 F	Name: Cecelia Agnes Nollner Born: April 17, 1935 in: Galena, Alaska Married: March 23, 1955 in: Galena, Alaska Spouse: Norman "Buckets" Burgett
9 M	Name: Edgar "Paddy" Nollner, Jr. Born: December 24, 1936 in: Galena, Alaska in: (Not Married) Spouse: Amy Nollner
10 F	Name: Sophie Nollner Born: July 26, 1938 in: ? Died: Unknown in: ?
11 F	Name: Annetta Nollner Born: February 18, 1940 in: (Died as a little girl)

Family Group Sheet

12	Name: Flora Jean Nollner Born: March 2, 1941 Married: August 21, 1963 Spouses: Claude Lee Cooper, Claude Alexander "Bobo" Keogh	in: Galena, Alaska (Old Louden) in: Galena, Alaska
13	Name: Baby Nollner, (died as a newborn) Born: May 1942	in: Spring Camp "Edgar's"
14	Name: Marie Nollner Born: May 1943	
15	Name: Angela Nollner Born: December 14, 1945 Spouses: Harold McCarty, Leo Anthony Grasso	in: Galena, Alaska
16	Name: Alfred William Nollner Born: July 19, 1948 Spouses: Ester Commack, Buelah Newman	in: Ruby, Alaska

Family Group Sheet

<b>Husband: Edgar Paul Nollner, Sr.</b>		
	Born: November 11, 1904 Died: January 18, 1999 Father: Alfred Redmon "Al" Nollner, Jr. Mother: Cecilia Frank, (Morondoyedat/no) Other Spouses: Bessie Lucille Sprunger, Ann Jean Antoski	in: Old Louden, Alaska in: Galena, Alaska
<b>Wife: Esther Captain</b>		
<b>CHILDREN</b>		
1	Name: Lena "Dee Dee" Captain Born: 1948	

Family Group Sheet

**Husband: Edgar Paul Nollner, Sr.**

Born: November 11, 1904 in: Old Loudon, Alaska  
 Died: January 18, 1999 in: Galena, Alaska  
 Father: Alfred Redmon "Al" Nollner, Jr.  
 Mother: Cecilia Frank, (Morondoyedat/no)  
 Other Spouses: Esther Captain, Ann Jean Antoski

**Wife: Bessie Lucille Sprunger**

Born: October 13, 1914 in: Yuki River & Yukon River , Alaska  
 Died: September 10, 1986 in: Fairbanks, Alaska  
 Father: Joe Sprunger  
 Mother: Lucy Henry Issac  
 Other Spouses: Lincoln Holmberg Antoski, Joe Stickman, Earl Williams Wholecheese, George Nollner

**CHILDREN**

1 F	Name: Jean Louise Wholecheese Born: October 27, 1948 Spouse: George James Jenkins	in: Galena, Alaska
2 M	Name: Roy John Wholecheese Born: June 20, 1950 Died: June 10, 1968	in: Galena, AK
3 M	Name: Walter Allen "Cookie" Wholecheese Born: October 1951	
4 F	Name: Joyce Ann Wholecheese Born: December 15, 1952 Married: August 27, 1971 Spouse: Larry Allen Hausmann	in: Galena, Alaska in: Galena, Alaska
5 F	Name: Maudrey Marie Wholecheese Born: October 26, 1954 Spouses: Gary Benson, Barney Attla, James Stewart Honea, Sr.	in: Galena, Alaska
6 M	Name: Larry Lloyd Wholecheese, Sr. Born: April 26, 1956 Spouse: Grace "Gracie" Demoski	in: Fairbanks, Alaska in: (Not Married)
7 M	Name: Archie Edgar Wholecheese, Sr. Born: June 12, 1957 Spouse: MaryAnn Flink	in: Fairbanks, AK

## CHAPTER 1

### EDGAR'S FAMILY

“Yeah. My old man came from Missouri... His Dad was German, and his Momma was Irish... His name was Alfred R. Nollner... Well, he come over the Chilkoot Pass—I think he said '98 or..., and then he came down Dawson. And he said there was no land to claim, stake around there. All staked up. So he went down to 40 Mile and staked up 40 Mile River that winter before he came down this way.



Nollner-1

Cr. Josephine Roberts Coll.

*Edgar's father, Alfred R. Nollner. This photo was taken toward the end of his life when he was not well.*

And from there, he came down Loudon, above Loudon on the island. Then he made a little cabin there, and he cut 120 cords of wood that winter. He had only pole ax, that's all. And then he got it on the bank, and he sold it all that summer. That's how he started a little trading post... And then he married one woman. She was burnt. Her dress caught fire and burnt pretty bad, but they had one boy... She died from the burns after she had the baby. Got infected, I guess. And then he gave the baby to the, Larson-and-them... Larson Charlie. And they went up Novi, but that kid died.

And after that he married my mother. And my mother was from around here, too.” Her name was Cecilia Frank. She had Indian name, too... (Her maiden name as

recorded by Father Jette was Morondoyeatlno). My grandparents, old people, ...they were living. I was pretty big when they died...”

Edgar was born in 1904. He was the first child in the family. He had four brothers and six sisters. Among the brothers were Walter, George, and his youngest brother, Alfred. Only Alfred is living today. “He was in the Army for 26 and a half

years, and he worked in the Post office, oh, four years. He got good farm out there (in Washington State), little farm. I never saw. He married one of them German girls from over in Germany.” Among the sisters were Sophie, Flora, Nora, Cora, Gracie and Lizzie or Elizabeth. Lizzie married Edgar’s good friend and fellow serum run musher, Charlie Evans. None of Edgar’s sisters are now living.



*(Left to Right) Elizabeth Abraham Henry, Mary Dean, and Edgar’s mother, Cecilia Frank Nollner. Mary Dean was a family friend who frequently took care of the Nollner children. This photo was taken at Old Loudon before 1920.*

### **Living in Old Village, Old Loudon, and Galena**

When Edgar was born, his family lived in what Galena people refer to as Old Village. “And then from Old Village, we moved up 1906 to Loudon.” Apparently, one of the reasons people left Old Village was a measles epidemic. Edgar explains. “And one time there was measles, and there was eighteen died one time, one fall, right here. In the Old Village. Around 19--, 1904 or ’05. Along in there. Maybe ’06. They move up to Loudon, 1906. Lots of ‘em, they think they get better, and they go out and get wet, and then that quick, they die. And my Old Man—there was two guys. He told ‘em to stay in



bed, don't go out. He said them two got all right. But these other people, they think they're all well, and they go out and get cold, and they die...

And then 1920, we moved down here (to Galena). Everybody moved down, 1920. Everybody build a raft, and put what little stuff they got, and float down here, and build down here... No furniture much. Not like now, TV and everything. If you started make a raft (now), you'd have to have lots of raft, I guess..." When Edgar's family moved, there were... "not too many people here. There were more people at the Old Village, but ... some moved to Koyukuk, some moved to Dave Lewis, Kokrine. There wasn't too many people left after that."



*Nollner 3*

*Cv. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*

*(Left to right) Elizabeth "Lizzie" Nollner, Mary Dean, Cora Nollner, and Sophie Nollner*

The spot where Edgar's family first settled is no longer visible because the river has eroded it away. "Bank was way out beyond the village, and we have big gardens when the Old Man first moved down here in 1920. Them buildings, and big garden in front. Two big ones. Bank cave... and then they went in, and pretty soon the buildings. It come up to the buildings. They tore them down, too"



## Making a Living

“1921 I hauled out over 200 cords steamboat wood. There used to be lots of steamboat up and down the river. And we had over 3--, near 400 cord of wood on the bank that time down here. And that summer, the steamboat took it all, they bought it all. ‘Cause... boats coming and agoing all summer long. No airplanes, them days. Now there’s no more. Just these big tug boats, that’s all.”



Nollner 5

Cr: Paddy Nollner Coll.

*Alfred' Nollner's store in Galena. When Edgar's family moved to Galena, the family dismantled the store in Loudon and moved it to Galena. The river has now eroded away the place where the store once stood.*

The small store that Edgar's father owned in Old Village was a small log cabin. He carried some dry goods and things like "flour, sugar, all that stuff. He also carried ammunition and things like that." Since there were not airplanes then, freight came only in the summertime by steamboat. People usually paid Edgar's father in furs. Compared to today, fur was cheap then. "They used to sell muskrat, eight for a dollar."

Since there was not much money around, traders such as Edgar's father also used bingles as a medium of exchange. Bingles were coin-shaped discs made out of inexpensive metal; they usually had the trader's name stamped on them. Edgar's father sold his furs to the Seattle Fur Exchange or to West Coast Grocery from whom he bought most of the good for his store. When the family moved first to Old Louden and then Galena, Edgar's father moved his store building along with their house.



*Nollner 6*

*Cr. Wendy Arundate*

*Two bingles from Alfred Nollner's store.*

### **Carrying the Mail**

In addition to running the store, Edgar's father also carried the mail during the summer. "At the Old Village, he used to carry mail from there once a month to Tanana, and back down by rowboat. And then from Old Village down to Kaltag once a month. In the wintertime he used to carry mail by dog team. In the summer one way he had it easy but the other way, he really work. Downstream he could float all the way down, but coming back up, he got to row or pole or line the boat all the way up. No kickers, them days. He used to work hard. And Uncle Andrew Pitka used to go with him all the time, and he get tired, but my Old Man, he never get tired."

## Gardens

Edgar's father was also a successful gardener. "Oh, Old Man had them gardens, and springtime we used to dig it up with shovel. Hot sunshine and ... Three of us. But my cousin, Lincoln Stockman, he used to help us, too. Dig it up. All the time, we just dig up all the roots and everything, then its ready for the spring.

We moved down here 1920, spring. That fall we had to dig up them gardens here, too. Trees, and... But we had garden up that Louden slough and at Louden, the hillside. Had lots of potatoes there and carrots, turnips, carrots and things. Old Man used to work on the gardens all the time. Like Louden. We used to go down Old Village. Sunshine and we sweating. Got to go down and work on the garden. Got to hoe the garden and pull the weeds."

Edgar does not know where his father got his seed, but he used to get seed potatoes from outside. "They order potatoes from outside, of course. Everybody, there were lots of people that used to have gardens like Stockman, Bill Honea, and oh, lots of 'em. Old Man used to sell some stuff from the... We used to get about 3500 pounds of potatoes, and things like that. He sell potatoes all winter. Order them outside potatoes, but they too dry when you cook them, too dry."



*Nollner 7*

*Cr. Josephine Roberts Call.*

Edgar's father also fished, hunted, and trapped for fox, lynx, and other animals. Edgar's mother trapped a little bit from Louden, too. She got... "mink and just once in awhile get fox and things, lots of Lynx..." Edgar remembers helping her snare rabbits and ptarmigan.

Edgar's mother, "died around,... I forgot what year. Between '22 and '24. Along in there. TB. You know, lots of them died. That's how I lost all my sisters, too. Except my sister Lizzie. Her heart stop on her." Edgar's father, "died around 1929. And my brother and two sisters, they send them to Eklutna... Grace died in Tanana, and my sister, Laura, died down, it's a down Edwards somewhere small. She's buried down Nulato. My other sister buried in Tanana."

*(Left to Right) Flora, Alfred, and Grace Nollner at Eklutna. They were sent to the boarding school there after Edgar's father died in 1929.*

## CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

### First Fish Wheels

“Oh, like the first fish wheel we seen built in Louden Slough. I always remember that ‘cause we make fish wheel pretty near every summer now. Uncle Goltchik-and-them, they were building fish wheel... And I used to go down and watch them, making the raft and baskets... Every day, go down there and watch them. Finally, they got through with that, they shove it out, and pretty soon it started to turn. Fish going, they had two box, one box this side, one box on the (other side).



*Edgar's fish wheel, hauled out on the bank in Galena, waiting for the fishing season.*

They fill up, though, ‘cause lots of fish them days. Everybody cut fish. And they used to put a log down in front and then put the willow stick there with leaves on it, throw fish on it. Pretty soon that thing would get too full, and all the fish go right back in the river. Us kids, we used to go run down and grab all the fish, and fix it up, throw it back in, walk in the water. We loose lots a, though. We help them guys, hang fish and everything. We used to help them old people all the time. Yeah. You see some old guys working, we just help them, cut wood or things like that. Way different now. Used to help old people all the time...



That's the first one we see up at Louden. Yeah! Pretty soon there was lots of 'em." Goltchik, whose son is Richard Derendoff of Huslia, was one of the first to build a fish wheel in the Galena area. Goltchik was probably middle-aged when he built the fish wheels that Edgar remembers as a boy.

### Going to Spring Camp

When Edgar was young, his family did not move around as much as some other families, probably because of his father's store. However, they did go to spring camp across from or below Louden. They didn't have one particular place where they went for spring camp, but put up their tent just any good place along the slough. Muskrat hunting in the evening was an important activity at spring camp. "Lots of ducks and geese, them days," Edgar recalls.

### Learning to Hunt

Edgar was not yet a big boy when he first learned to shoot a gun. His first was a "single shot .22, short barrel... All the kids used to start off with little .22." The first animals he hunted were muskrats and rabbits. "I used to go with my Dad and my Uncle down the slough from Louden. One time they got over 40 rabbits. No gun. I just go with them. I just pick up the rabbits, that's all... That's what we done all our life. Hunt all the time."



Hollner 9

Cr. Josephine Roberts Coll.

*The Captain family, other early Galena residents. (Left to Right) Back row: Bertha Captain, Leo Captain, Sophie Captain, Mrs. Bogey, (Sophie's mother and a close friend of Edgar's mother), Ester Captain, Henry Captain, and Patrick Captain. Front row: Billy Captain, Jenny Captain, unknown.*

### School

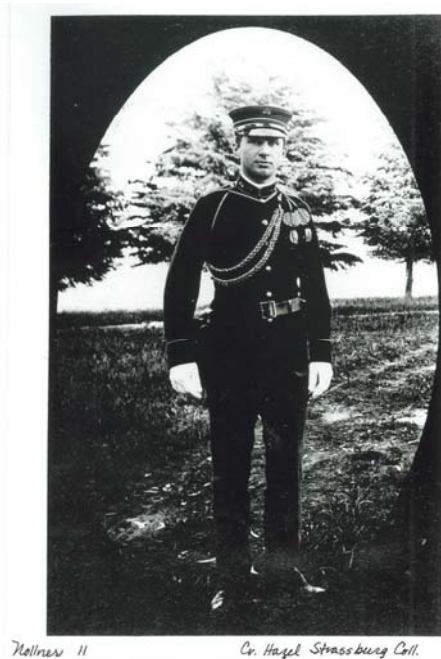
"We had a school in Louden when we was kids, and I went till third grade when they tore that school down and move it to Koyukuk, 'cause there was more kids down Koyukuk. But Koyukuk in the fall, everybody go up Koyukuk River. No kids there. They come back around Christmas, or after they catch their furs. But we had no school, no more school up there. That's why some people move from there down Koyukuk. I got

to third grade, and they took the school away from me. Not like now, they got schools every village, every place now. Back then, I didn't have the chance."

## DOG MUSHING

### First Race in Ruby

"First dog race I was in Ruby. 1919. I went first. I beat the second team by over six minutes. But I never went up there (Ruby) until about 1916 I guess. They had dog race. I went up with Auntie Pauline and Stockman, but I was not too big that time." Edgar started racing because "we had good dogs, so we went to Ruby."



Once again in 1919 we "went up with Stockman. He was married to my Auntie, my mother's sister... Pauline Frank... He used to be operator out here long ago, telegraph operator long ago before we moved to Louden. I was pretty small that time. He was a Signal Corpsman already when I was born... Afterward, he taught school here, for a while, then he taught school down Koyukuk. Arthur Stockman... A.J. Stockman they call him... Then he was deputy Marshall for I don't know how many years, too. Then he had store in Kaltag, one in Nulato, and down here (Galena), and up Ruby." Pauline and her husband had one adopted son, Lincoln.

After the 1919 race, Edgar entered many others. "I used to win lots of 'em. Down Koyukuk. I never raced in Nulato, though." In those days, the prizes were almost always money.

*A.J. Stockman in his Signal Corpsman uniform.*

"Not too much, but it was quite a bit... Like around \$20, \$25. They had in Ruby, there was \$50 first prize... \$50 you could buy lot a... That was quite a bit, you know. Now they get mostly trophies, that's all. But they get some money, too."

### Edgar's Last Dog Race

"Well, after we trapped, our dogs was in good shape, and we went down Koyukuk to sell our skins to Dominic and Ella. And then, they having an old man race down there. So I got in, too. They said over 50 years old. I was the oldest one in, too. And I beat them guys. Albert (Herbert?) Solomon was second, and Robert Demoski was third that time. I think it was '65. Along in there. I had pretty good dogs then. Never stop, go morning till night. Got 40 beaver that year."

## Learning to Drive Dogs

“Oh, when we were small, we start out driving dogs. And all the kids used to drive dogs, all time. Everybody used to drive dogs. We had good dogs.” Nobody taught Edgar to handle dogs. “All the kids used to just start in. Learn how by themselves... I had one. George had one. And all of us had one dog apiece. And we just talk with them. When we have pups, we talk with them. One dog, and then pretty soon two, and three, like that. Pretty soon, everybody drive dog. Everybody used to have dogs. There was no snow machines, no nothing no trucks, no cars or nothing.” Edgar’s dad did not have dogs. “Just us boys. That’s all. George, Walter, me.”



Kollner 10

Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.

*Grandma Tatiana Abraham, another early Galena elder. She died at age 80 at a fish Camp near Galena in 1943.*



Kollner 12

Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.

*Three women in calf skin parkas. Edgar’s aunt, Pauline Frank Stockman, is on the left.*

Edgar has only one dog that he remembers especially well. “Only my leader I used to call Dixie, the one I race in Ruby with. They were smart dogs, all of them. There was a little spring above Loudon. I go up in the evening, get a couple buckets of water. And then put couple cans in the canoe, put harness on Dixie, and then he’d line the canoe all the way up to the fish wheel, put water in it. Then he’d sit down behind me, and I paddle down. Never move, too. There used to be lots a people used it, no kicker, they used dogs, three dogs. And there, and there’s a stick in the water, they tell ‘em, ‘Gee,’ they go around the stick. And some of them pretty smart, go up the river...”

## THE SERUM RUN TO NOME

In the winter of 1924-25, a diphtheria epidemic broke out in Nome. To combat the disease, serum was shipped by railroad to Nenana. From there, dog mushers running in relays took it to Nome. The modern Iditarod Dog Sled Race commemorates this event. Edgar recalls his role in the original serum run. As his narrative illustrates, there were actually two serum runs to Nome that winter, one in January and another in March.



Nollner -14

Cr. Josephine Roberts Coll.

*Edgar, after the Serum Run, when he was in his 20's or 30's.*

And George (Edgar's brother) took it from there down to Bishop Mountain. I was going take it all the way, but he called up and he wanted to... take it down... 'cause Joe Stickman's wife was his girlfriend, too. That's why he wanted to go down there, so I told him, 'Go ahead'. And then when I got on top of the bank (at Galena), he just jump on the sleigh, say 'Haw', and those team, they just kept agoing."

The trail "went through Jimmy's Slough..., then down this way, then around here in Pilot Slough. And Charlie Evans was... waiting for George... right here (at Bishop Mountain) to bring it down to Nulato. This was 24 miles from Whiskey Creek to Galena, and then 18 miles down to Bishop Mountain.

There was one guy, Monroe, had a good team, there. Charlie Evans' Dad, Johnny Evans, he had a store down Koyukuk, and he asked him 'You want to go up Bishop Mountain and bring that serum to Nulato?' 'How much they gonna pay?' They told him everybody sick over to Nome. They need that medicine. 'No,' he said. 'How much they gonna pay?' He wanted to get paid. So Charlie Evans told him, 'I'll take it.' So he had

"Oh, that was 1925. Now, there were telephone line around here, that's all. No radio. But telephone line. And then they call here, and they want some teams to take that serum... They ask me... I tell them, 'Yeah, I'll take it.' Billy McCarty brought it from Ruby down to Whiskey Creek. And then I took it down to Galena. Louden, down to Galena. There was a good trail all the way down. Down Bessie Slough, and then down this way, and then down right here.

It was... below 50 below. Coming down, I left Whiskey Creek seven o'clock in the evening, and it was dark, just dark, and (when) them dogs breathed, it was like smoke around them dogs. I can't see them dogs out there.



about six dogs, I guess, and then he went up Bishop Mountain and took it down to Nulato. And Tom Patsy from there (Nulato) down to Kaltag. I think its 36 miles, something like that.

And on the second run, it was in... March, I took it from Galena to Bishop Mountain. Scotty Clark was going to bring it from Whiskey Creek to Bishop Mountain, but it snowed pretty near a foot, and then he called up, and he said, 'I can't make it. Be ready. You take it from here down to Bishop Mountain.' So I took it down Bishop Mountain. Monroe was there because we got paid little bit the first time, you know. And then second trip he was there. That's the guy who had good dogs, but he wanted to get pay first. We didn't know, we didn't care if we get pay. We just went because there was too many people sick over there. A few died, I guess, I don't know."



*Edgar's sister, Flora, and her husband, Johnny Sommer, on their wedding day in Nulato.*

Edgar doesn't remember who originally contacted him about carrying the serum, but word came out on the Signal Corps telegraph line that ran from village to village along the Yukon and then on to Nome. He does recall, however, that he was asked to carry the serum because he had good dogs. His team for the first run included seven dogs, and he used a relatively small birch sleigh that he had built himself. The serum was packaged in a wooden box less than two by two by three feet and "wrapped in blankets and things." Despite careful packaging, the serum froze and was only partially effective, requiring the second serum run in March in which Edgar also took part.

In addition to a modest payment, Edgar and the other mushers received a letter and a citation from the governor as well as a medal for their efforts. As of

summer, 1984 Edgar is one of only three serum run mushers who are still living. In addition to Edgar, there is his good friend and brother-in-law, Charlie Evans, who lives in Galena. The third living musher, Billy McCarty, is blind and lives in Denali Center in Fairbanks.

Edgar also knew several of the other serum carriers, including Harry Pitka from Kokrine, Edgar Kallands from Kaltag, Tom Patsey from Nulato who carried the serum from Nulato to Kaltag, and Jack Screw from Kaltag who ran from Kaltag to Old Woman.

## STORIES FROM THE GOLD RUSH ERA

Edgar is a good story teller. His father, Sam Kincaid, and others passed on several stories from the Gold Rush Era that he enjoys retelling. Here are some of them.



*Harry Brush, Francis Brush (front), Bobbie Brush, and Grace Nollner Brush, Edgar's sister.*



*Walter Nollner, Edgar's brother. Photo taken in Koyukuk in the late 1920's or early 1930's.*

### **Edgar's Father Encounters a Bear**

These events occurred during the fall and winter that Edgar's father spent on the Forty Mile before he came downriver to the Galena area.

“And they say one fall he was coming, going down the creek, and it's pretty wild and a little stream running in the middle. He said they were coming around a bend, he had only a pole ax, and there were two big brown bear and two cubs, big ones, too, coming around the bend on the other side. And he said he just keep walking. And then them bears just keep walking on by him. And these smaller ones, they get up, and then they look like they turn around and look at the Old Man, but they kept going.

And he said that night it snowed quite a bit. In the hills it pretty near snowed a foot. And one guy was coming over the hill, and he stepped on something soft, and it growled. He stepped on a brown bear. And it snowed on it, and he said they seen his tracks down the hill, long ways apart down the hill. And he told them guys, and a bunch of them went there, and they shot that brown bear. They said it was awful fat, that brown bear. They said he must have twelve, fifteen feet (between steps) he went down the hill. My father, he used to tell us about that. The fellow, he almost fly.”

## The Man Who Rode a Bicycle Down the Yukon

“Used to be lots a (men) going through, but Louden, we were up Louden that time when he was going down. And his chain broke or something broke on, and he couldn’t fix it. He was pretty near, almost to Unalakleet, I guess. Out where he needed it, he couldn’t... (fix it.) It went a long ways, though, from way up around Dawson, I guess. All the way down. They say that trail was just packed hard. Whole line of ‘em (men) going down, steady.”



*Ann-Jean Antoski Nollner with Edgar and Ann-Jean’s oldest daughter, Josephine (Roberts) in front of their cabin in Galena in 1922.*

## STEAMBOAT STORIES

During the gold rush era and for two or three decades afterward, steamboats were a major source of transportation and employment for those living along the Yukon and its major tributaries. These stories that Edgar tells illustrate how steamboats affected people’s lives.

## John Antoski’s trip to St. Michael

“One time, long ago, when John Antoski, that’s Walter and Ann-Jean’s Dad, he used to be pilot, he used to go up Dawson in ’98. And one fall he was coming down on one of them big steamboats. And he got off at Nulato, and they ask him if he want to go to St Michael, bring the boat to St. Michael, and he told ‘em, ‘Yeah.’ He said ‘If you take my sleigh and dogs, and give me enough grub to come back on’ But the Captain said, ‘No.’ He didn’t want to take the dogs and sleigh, and he (John Antoski) got off.

And that next day, next night, there was another big boat coming down, and they see him in Nulato, and told him, ‘You want to take the boat to St. Michael?’ He said, “sure, if you take my dogs and sleigh, and give me grub to come back on.’ They tell him ‘Okay.’ And he said he got on. This side around Anvik or below or above, I don’t know where, too, they was coming down, and pretty soon they see big steamboat down there in the water, sunk. They hit a rock. There were lots of passengers on the beach. And he said they landed, and... that Captain was mad at him.

But that was the Captain's fault. If he'd a tell him, 'Okay.' Then he would have got on, he would have stayed on. But they didn't want to give him grub and... take his dogs and sled and dogfish. And he said they pick 'em all up, picked all them passengers up, and then he take the boat down to St. Michaels. And the steamboat was a big steamboat, way out from the bank, sunk. It all went away with the ice that fall, I guess, or next spring. Big steamboat, he said. He used to be good pilot, they say."



(Left to Right) Mary (Carlo), Josephine (Roberts), Ann-Jean, Cecelia (Burgett), Barney, Edgar, and Gabriel.  
Photo taken in front of their cabin in Galena, 1936.

### William Demoski

"That old man used to tell lots a good stories. He used to work on the steamboat, Old Man William Demoski. A long time ago. Big William. William Demoski, the old man, that's Robert's father and Aloysius'. And he have big family... Used to stay up to camp. That place that used to belong to us long ago. We used to hear them play mandolin and violin across the river at camp on this side. In the evenings we could hear them playing music over there.

And the old man used to work the steamboats. He used to be a fireman on the big steamboats. And he said he got '\$20 a month. Dollar a day.' And then one time he started to get on the boat. And the storekeeper in Nulato told him, 'Don't get on the boat. Stay home and cut wood.' So he said he stayed home that summer. He went up above Nulato, and he cut about six cords he said, and then he brought it down, and then he piled it on the beach, and pretty soon steamboat came, took it all. \$20 a cord, you know. He said, 'I never got on the boat no more because that same fall I had a little box full of money. If I would have gone on the boat, I wouldn't have had that much.'

He said anybody put a cord of wood there, the steamboat got to stop there, pick it up. There the last place they run out of wood, they have to go on the hillside; they have to cut their own wood. He said there's lots a steamboat coming all the time."

### Old Man Gurtler

"Old Man Gurtler, he used to live above Whiskey Creek, behind the island. And he got so many cords, five cords, I guess. And two bulkheads he had out of green cottonwood. And they tell him they measure the whole thing, but they leave the bulkheads every time, the steamboats. They take the dry ones inside every time, but they leave behind the bulkheads.

But one night, he said, it was dark, and they took it all. I don't know how many times I saw them bulkheads on both ends. Half cord on each end. But when it was dark, they took it all. He used to tell about that. Lots a people used to cut wood, bring wood, raft wood down Louden, pile it up, and my Old Man buy it, and then steamboat come around. They take thirty, forty, fifty cords at a time, the big steamboats. When the Julia B used to bring the freight for the Old Man all the time from St. Michael."

## CHAPTER 2

### EARLY MARRIED LIFE

Edgar and Ann-Jean Antoski were married in 1922. "I was around 18 when I first got married with Ann-Jean." Ann-Jean was born in 1904 to Agnes and John Antoski in Nulato where she was baptized as Angen or Angela by Father Rossi. Her parents had a roadhouse for the mail carriers four miles below Galena until 1917 when they moved to the present site of Galena, becoming the town's first residents. Because all of her brothers and sisters died, Ann-Jean was almost like an only child. She had one adopted brother, Lincoln, who lived to adulthood.



(Left to Right) Ester Captain and Ann-Jean Nollner.

Edgar and Ann-Jean had eight children who lived to be adults. "There's Josephine, Mary, and Celia, and Angela, and Jean Cooper. There's Gabriel, and Paddy, and Alfred, left. Barney, he drown down here" They lost another five children in early childhood. Their first log cabin site has long since been eroded into the river as the bank in the Old Town area of Galena has washed away.

Edgar recalls when their oldest child, Josephine (now Josephine Roberts of Tanana) was born. "She was born in 1922. And she was about couple months old when we used to trap head of Yuki, stay out in the tent, go over towards Yuki on the hills. Stay over there for a while and come back. Keep fire going all night, though, in the tent. She was just little baby, that's all. Two months old.



We used to put the kids in the sleigh and then go down Koyukuk, and have a good time. Everybody just put little babies in the sleighs and just take off. Now nothing. Airplanes, that's all." Edgar said that when they traveled, the baby was wrapped "sometimes (in) rabbit's (skin) robes and plenty of blankets. They never got cold."

When Edgar and Ann-Jean's children were born, they were all born at home, with the women helping each other at birth. There were no doctors or nurses around at that time. When Edgar's oldest children were young, they still went out to camp in the sleigh. When they were eight or ten, they started walking on snowshoes.



*Nollner 23* *Cr. Cecelia Burgett Coll.*  
(Left to Right) Cecila (Burgett), Gabriel, Paddy, and Sophie Nollner. In Galena about 1940.

When Edgar's kids were young, "They had some toys, little cars and things like that." They also had small "bows and arrows, and little sleighs... I used to make little sleighs, too... Them kids used to stay outdoors all the time... (They have) all kinds of clothes." Some of the kids had rabbit or muskrat parkas and moose skin boots with caribou leggings.

They were all baptized in the church in Galena by Father Rossi or Father MacNamiel. Other than the church service, there was no special ceremony or observance at baptism. Sometimes in the old days before Edgar's children were born, people would give a little potlatch for the baby and invite the older people.

When the boys got to be "big enough... Oh, fifteen, along in there," Edgar began taking them hunting... "Fall time, we used to go out up Yuki or Bishop's Slough."

Edgar and Ann-Jean's children remember some of the lessons they learned from their parents as children. "Be kind to people." "Don't bother people." "Don't talk back." "Make visitors feel welcome." "Don't talk about other people. If you don't have something kind to say, don't say anything at all." They also learned about hunting and fishing, how to skin animals, how to live outdoors. They remember Edgar as being the quiet one, setting the example, and Ann-Jean as the one who talked to them, explaining why things should be done in a certain way, and communicating both hers and Edgar's values in words and deeds.

## MAKING A LIVING

When Edgar's family was young, he hunted moose in the fall and trapped in the wintertime. Trapping season started in November. He trapped mostly fox, lynx, mink, and marten. In the early spring, they trapped beaver. A little later in the spring, they went out to spring camp when muskrat trapping and hunting was an important activity.



*Nollner 24*

*Cv. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*

*Early Galena residents in front of Edgar's father's store, which later became his house. Taken in the 1920's.*

"We used to trap, but there were not much to trap them days, too. So, oh, there's some fur." Edgar and his brothers didn't have a trapping camp. "We used to go, hitch up dogs. What we need, put in sleigh, just take tent, stove, grub, dogfish and go out for a week or

ten days. When we run out of dog fish, come back, just like running out of gas with snowmachine." Edgar used to have a trap line, "Down that way, this side of Pilot Mountain, what I bought from Sam Kincaid, 1925. Used to trap over in there."



*Nollner 25*

*Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*

*Galena between 1937 and 1939 as taken from the river bank. The first log building on the left is the old school. It was built as a dance hall in 1932 and rented as a school house for \$15 per month. Next to the school is then Lincoln Antoski's little house, John Antoski's next to it, and Earl and Bessie Wholecheese's cabin, Henry Captain's place, barely visible on the far right is Lena Demoski's house.*

### **Winter Caribou Hunting**

"There'd be... ten, twelve teams and like that go hunt caribou. We had that big hill (Galena Mountain) way back there. We go above there, caribou. Whole bunch same time, go way out there. Have lots of fun. We get about enough for sleigh load, and we all come back, all of us. Sometime we get about 20. And haul about two apiece. They're fat, springtime.

They had over 5,000 reindeer behind Kokrines, one time..."They were driven down there in the winter time. Most of the herders were Lapps. "They (the reindeer herd and the herders) came from Unalakleet... I was at Loudon when they were going up. They brought some up to Loudon when they bringing them up, and Cap Crane, Cap William was there. They were taking them up behind Kokrine, that time. And, I don't know... how many hundred, not too many. And they had around 5,000 after that. They sold lots a (reindeer)in Ruby. Mining camps.



Now after that, they all scattered, get with the caribou. We used to hunt caribou, and once I seen one white, all white reindeer, too. But they're wild. I tried to get him, but it just went over the... hill, not too far, too, but it was going over the hill. All white one.

Oh, we'd go around March, in March. And then we'd go out this way. Sometime we'd go up, and then over the hill way up around above Yuki. Went that way. Once... me and Lincoln Antoski, we hauled over three caribou. We had about fourteen, fifteen dogs. Strong dogs, too. Charlie Evans, oh, lots of us. They're pretty near all gone, now, them people. Only Charlie and I left, that's all, I guess. Good many people I used to hunt with. They're all gone."



*Mallner 26*

*Cr. Hazel Strassburg C661.*

*The Galena school house in about 1940. The addition on the left is the Post Office. Later a kitchen was added on the right. The whole thing was torn down in the 1960's.*

### **Fishing in the Summer**

"We fish all the time (in the summer). We used to fish up camp, some place." Edgar and Ann-Jean had their fish camp, "Up, over here, sometime up Louden, and then we moved over there where we got camp now. Sometime we used to fish down here mostly long ago. Sometimes we used to get about 2,000 fish a night with a fish wheel. Everybody cut fish. Everybody got dogs. Fish racks all along the beach. Used to fish out at Jimmy's place where he's got a camp, above there... About two summers, I think I fish above Ruby, too."

Edgar stored the fish in his cache in Galena. "Oh, we bring 'em back here. We bring 'em back in the boat, and we put 'em in the cache. We had one big cache. We just get enough for the winter, that's all. Lots of them, (some people have) not even thousand,

and they got seven dogs, and they say 'That's enough for all winter.' You figure about 250 fish, 300 fish for each dog. And then we always have lots a (fish) left over. But them other guys, they can't figure, I guess. They always run short, middle of the winter. Some guys they say they got enough fish. I tell them, 'You guys going run out middle of the winter.' And they always do that, every time."



*Nollner 27*

*Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*

*Galena children, probably taken in the 1920's. Left to right) Unknown, Andrew Wholecheese, George Captain, Alfred Nollner, Lincoln Antoski, Lawerance Jimmy, Bertha Jimmy (King), Dora Paul (Jacob), Rheba Dayton, 2 school teachers, (girl in front unknown).*

## **PULLING BROOM**

Perhaps because he worked hard as a young man, Edgar became very strong, and though he almost never had to fight with anyone, people respected him for his strength. This story about "pulling broom" indicates that his reputation was well earned.

"Back there is big spars, fish wheel spars. I keep moving them, and my back started ache. And then Mary Carlo, she was about this big (shows with his hand). While then she was cooking, them boys was pulling broom, and Walter says, 'Come on,' he says, 'Let's try the broom.' I told him my back is aching. I hurt my back moving them spar logs, big spar logs. And then he said, 'Just for once, that all.' He ask me, ask me. I sit down and then got a hold of the broom. And he try his best, and I pull him. And I got up. Yee. Mary said he tell his uncle, 'My Dad is always strong.' 'What?' 'My Dad is

always strong.' She was about this big, Mary Carlo. And then he, 'One more time.' I sit down, and then I pull him same way. Mary told him, told her uncle, told his uncle, 'My Dad is always strong.'

About a couple weeks, I guess, they come up from Bishop Mountain. They said, 'We got to try that broom.' And my back was all right then. I said, 'Go ahead.' I sit down. Charlie Evans, Lincoln Stockman, there was lots of boys there. And then I sit down and get a hold of broom just right, and he pull hard as he can, and he couldn't move me. And I started pull him, pull him, and I pull him. And he said, 'One more time.' So I sit down again. The same way. He pretty soon he turn over. He try his best. I pull him, and I pull him again. He never said nothing. And he went down Bishop Mountain and next morning, he couldn't bend his back; he couldn't pick up nothing down there. And Charlie said, 'What happened?' 'Doggone, broke my back,' he said. 'That's the hardest I ever try pull on him, but I couldn't make it.'"



*Nollner 28*

*Cr. Paddy Nollner Coll.*

*Another early Galena family. (Left to Right) Eneas, Warner, Elizabeth and Florence Paul. Photo taken in Galena.*

"Pulling broom" means that two people grab a broom handle, and each tries to pull the other one out of place. And there was Ambrose and Laurence, Ambrose was a man, and he said, 'I never let the broom go, though.' I told him, 'Me, too, and nobody hang it.' And Ambrose was sitting down and Laurence behind him and he hold Ambrose like this (around the waist) and pull him, too, two of 'em. I pull them five times straight. I haul out over 250 cords steamboat wood, and I threw them big heavy cord wood up, way up high, too. Just like nothing them days. That's handling over 500 cord of wood.

And nobody try to fight with me. Nobody. Only couple of guys, that's all. They get mad at me. I just hit 'em once, and then it's all over. Never bother no more. And one guy up Ruby, Henry Titus. He said, 'When the first time I see you guys down there, they said, they tell us about you guys, you three brothers. He said, 'George'--George was small, though--and he said 'they're awful strong. Never bother them boys.'

But we never fight. The last time I see some guys drunk, and then the sober guy try to lick this drunk guy. I always to there and tell 'em, 'If you want to fight, fight with me. That guy is drunk.' He walk away every time. They don't want to fight, then. Sam Standish and George Jimmy's the only one I ever hit. Yeah, and then down Kaltag some boys--that guy died. He was a strong one, too, but he said, 'I know you guys strong. We always hear about you guys.' I always tell him, 'We never start fight or nothing.' I see some guys, they think they're awful strong. And when they're drunk, they think they're stronger. Only in your head you feel stronger, that's all. They always get beaten up every time. No. I never fight." Edgar never took a drink in his life.



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*Nollner 29*

*Cr. Josephine Roberta Coll.*

*The Aloysious Demoski family. (Left to Right) Back row: Valentine, Junior, Aloysious, Rose, and Caroline. Front row: Peter, Billy and Morris.*

## THE GALENA MINE

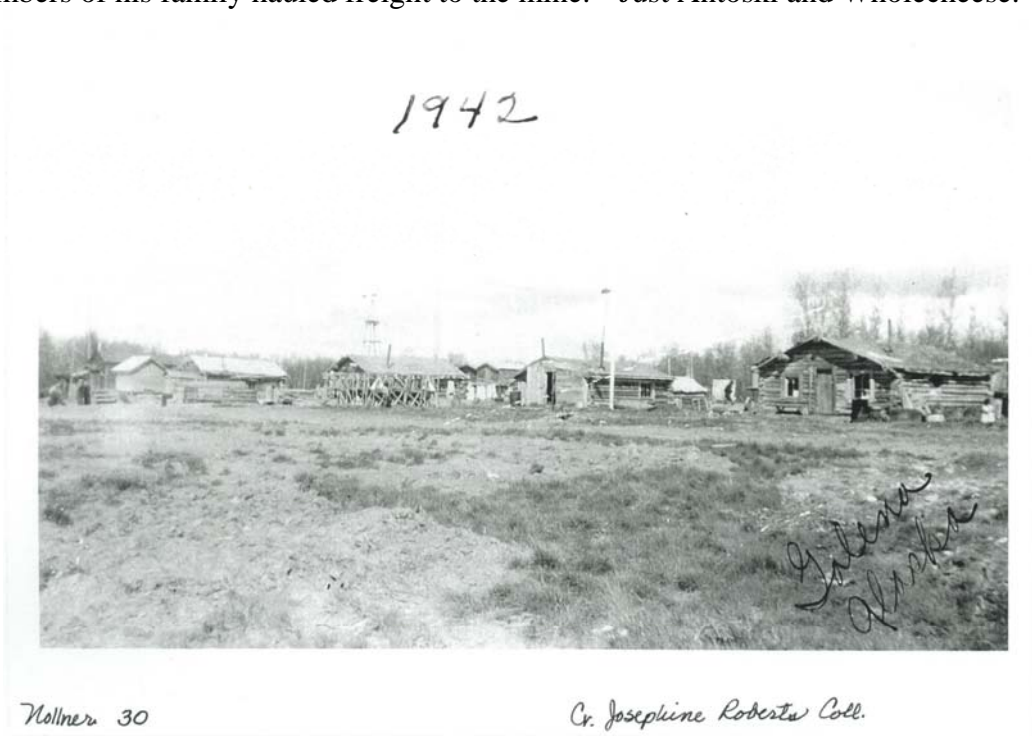
One of the factors stimulating the founding of Galena and giving the town it's name was the opening of a Galena mine about twenty miles from town. "They were working over there when we moved down here that summer, that fall. J.J. Price, they were mining. He had 18 men working over in the mine that time..."



And then they used to haul freight from here and then over, five cents a pound to the mine. And Old Man Wholecheese used to haul freight, 450 pounds, sometime they haul 500 pounds. Go over, stay overnight over there and come back next day. And they haul some freight over sometime, and Jack Price, he a big man, over 200 pounds... He ask him, he said, 'Hey, Wholecheese. How much you haul me to Galena?' Old Man Wholecheese says, 'Five cents a pound.' Just like the freight. Jack Price used to get a kick out of that.

So they used to laugh about it. That guy, didn't talk English very much. And he get there. 'Tough trail isn't it Wholecheese?' 'Oh, yes.' Next guy say, 'Good trail isn't it Wholecheese?' 'Oh, yes.' Everything, 'Oh, yes. Oh, yes.' Whatever they ask him is, 'Oh, yes.'

And John Antoski used to haul freight over there, too. And there (was) dynamite and caps to haul over. He used to get Larsen to haul it over. He was hauling dynamite. They told him after that, way after that. He says, 'I didn't know.' When he get over there, they ask him, 'You know what you haul?' 'No.' 'Oh, you haul dynamite.'" Although Edgar once made a trip to the mine with a friend from Ruby, neither Edgar nor other members of his family hauled freight to the mine. "Just Antoski and Wholecheese."



Galena in 1942.

### How Old Man Wholecheese Got His Name

"His name was Charles. Charlie Williams, I think. And then, at the old village before we went to Loudon, they used to gamble all the time... They used to play a lot.

Poker and things like that. They just gambled with everything, guns, snowshoes, sleigh, everything. And every time there's gambling, and then he bet what he got here, he say, 'I'll bet the whole cheese. I'll bet the whole cheese.' Pretty soon they started calling him Wholecheese. That's how that name. His name was Williams, but that's a nickname, that Wholecheese. That's why all them kids got Wholecheese names, 'cause of... that gambling. That's how the whole thing got started. 'I'll bet the whole cheese.' If he don't say nothing when he bet, he wouldn't have had that name. Williams, I think, was his name."



*Nollner 31*

*Cr. Josephine Roberto Coll.*

*(Left to Right) Pauline Frank Stockman, Edgar's Aunt; Bessie Wholecheese; George Nollner, Edgar's brother and Bessie's husband at the time; and a woman identified as "Calvin". Photo taken in Galena or Ruby between 1926 and 1931.*

### **Hauling Out the Galena Ore**

Edgar did make one trip to the mine for which he was paid. "Spring of '21, Albert Verhonik, he came down with the mail team, and then I took him over to the mine. I hauled him over to the mine, and he paid me \$15 for the whole trip. We hear them guys working in the mine. Hear dynamite going off all night. We went straight into the hill. We watched them guys pick, make pick hole then put in dynamite and a fuse. When they get ready to light it, they use a candle stick and then go out. But I go out ahead of them right away.

And we stayed overnight, and he find out how much he going to get paid for hauling the freight, ore out to the river bank over here. And he came down with six or eight horses that time... Albert drove his horses down on the Yukon... in winter... from

Ruby... And then they haul all that ore out to the river. And then in the spring they put it on a barge, and took it out St. Michaels, out that way. The next year, Sam Kincaid and Charlie Tricks, they took out 55 tons, I think. Galena... ore, silver and lead ore. And Albert came down and hauled it out, too.



*Nollner 32*

*Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*

*Elizabeth "Lizzie" Nollner Evans, Lydia Simon, Maudry Wholecheese, Bessie Wholecheese, Edwin Simon, Jean Louise Wholecheese Jenkins, Edgar Nollner, and Joyce Wholecheese Hausmann. Photo taken in Galena about 1957.*

### **THE MAN WHO FOUND GOLD ON BEAR CREEK**

In addition to the Galena Mine, people were still searching for gold when Edgar was a young man. "I forgot... I think his name was Bruce... We was up Loudon that time before we moved down here, and he went back that way. And they talked after that, he came out. He found gold, I guess,... but he didn't say where it was. He went back to old country. He was going to make a trip out and come back. But he went out there, and he never came back. He died over there someplace. And we used to look for it, but we couldn't find it.

Oh, there was my brother Walter, and Lincoln Stockman, and Charlie Evans, and whole bunch of us used to go. Lots a guys used to go back in there, but they couldn't find it, too." They found a windlass, but as Edgar said, "That's right. We seen that place, but might have been different guys around there though. 'Cause used to be lots a guys used to go up Bear Creek, too. Used to be cabin here and cabin there. Just like Yuki. Same

way, too. They used to all go out, look for gold, you know. We never stake. We were going to stake, but we didn't think it was the right place, so we started stake, but we give up."

Edgar never got "gold fever." His explanation is partly economic. "It (gold) was around \$16, 18, around \$16 an ounce, them days, you know. Now it's over \$300 and something."

### EDGAR'S BROTHER GEORGE DROWNS

One of the events that marked Edgar's years as a young man was the loss of his brother, George. "I hunt ducks and geese every spring. I remember we used go up Louden or down below, hunt down below. That's where my brother got drowned, down between the islands, hunting. I went down Koyukuk that time, and then they telephoned down. There was telegraph line that time, and they said George got drowned on May 8th, 1931, I think.



*Galena's first "snow machine" made from two bobsleds with an inboard motor engine. According to Hazel Strassburg, it didn't steer too well. All the kids would run after it hoping for a ride, but usually ended up helping to tow it back. Left to Right) Lincoln Antoski, Lincoln Stockman, with Josephine Robert's doll, and Alfred Demoski. Photo taken near Galena in the early 1930's.*

They started cross the river, and... not too long after they started go across and that ice got too soft, and then went down there. He had three dogs, that's all, and he was on the back the sleigh. The sleigh went down with him, and his foot around there, and he



went under. And them two dogs got drowned, but the leader was on the ice for I don't know how long. Little Jimmy came up, and then told them guys. They went down. They got Henry go out, small guy. Put long rope on him, and he walk out there and pull on them, and found the team. Pull them two dead dogs out, and the sleigh, but the body was gone. Went under. They never found him."

### CHAPTER 3

#### CHANGES

In about 1951, Ann-Jean became very ill with TB and went into an Anchorage hospital for an extended length of time. Her daughter, now Jean Cooper of Galena, also became ill with TB. Medical authorities planned to send Jean to Seattle, but Ann-Jean persuaded them to keep her in Anchorage and the two were allowed to visit briefly from time to time. Her sons, Paddy and Gabriel, remember hitching a ride to Anchorage on a military Globemaster to visit her when she was sick. During this period, Ann-Jean and Edgar separated. After her stay in the hospital, Ann-Jean, Angela, Alfred, and later when she also got out of the hospital, Jean moved to Ruby. Ann-Jean lived there until about 1958 when she returned to Galena where she died in November, 1982.

While battling TB, Ann-Jean had a lung removed, and her remaining lung did not function fully because of the disease. As a result she sometimes found breathing difficult, especially during cold weather and she generally tired easily. Yet she had the courage to live as full a life as possible despite her handicap. Her patience and kindness are remembered well by many people in the Galena area.

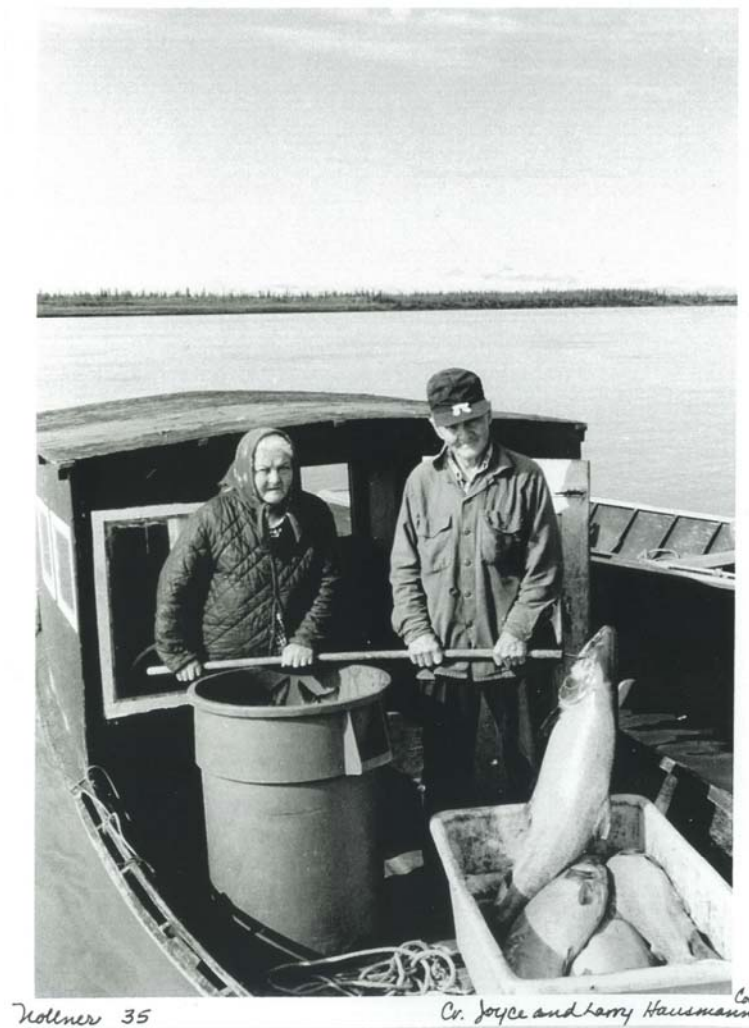
#### Edgar and Bessie Wholecheese

Edgar and Bessie Wholecheese got together in the early '50s. Bessie was born in 1914. Her parents were Lucy and Joe Sprunger. In 1927 at the age of 14, Bessie married Edgar's brother George. They lived very happily until George was drowned in the spring of 1931. Bessie and George had four children. For the next three years,



*Nollner 34* *Cr. Hazel Strassburg Coll.*  
*The Evans Family. Left to Right) Lizzie Nollner Evans, Edgar's sister; Margie Evans; Charlie Evans, Edgar's brother-in-law, friend and one of the few living Serum Run mushers; (in front) Florence Evans; and Hazel Evans Strassburg.*

Bessie, her mother, and her children lived together and Bessie supported them by trapping and hunting. In 1937 she married Earl Wholecheese who died in 1943.



*Edgar and Bessie aboard their boat.*

Edgar and Bessie have now lived together, "Oh, about thirty years." They have several children. The oldest is Jean-Louise, now Jean Jenkins. After Jean-Louise, there was a boy who died. Then, as Bessie gave their names, "Joyce, and then Maudry, and then Larry, and then Archie." Bessie indicates that their children helped out a lot at home. "My girls used to do the dishes, clean up house or maybe take turns, you know. (They) do laundry, mop the floor, wash dishes, pick up things." Joyce and Maudry both attended Mt. Edgecomb while Archie finished high school in Galena. Edgar and Bessie have also raised two of their grandchildren, Danny and Gail Wholecheese, who graduated from high school in Galena.

Altogether Bessie has had 22 children and more than 60 grandchildren and great grandchildren. Edgar also has many grandchildren and great grandchildren, but he doesn't know exactly how many. He has never seen some of them. He commented, "Lots, I never see them yet."

There were several years between marriages when Bessie struggled to raise her family. Edgar notes, "Its easier now 'cause they get food stamps, they get the house now, but before, you didn't get nothing at all. There was nothing. She used to cut her own wood, haul wood. She was strong." Bessie Slough near Galena bears her name "'cause she camp in here lots a times."

Bessie adds, "We have to work to feed our kids. When I lost my husbands, every morning I get up and fix breakfast for the kids, and for me, and then put on my boots. I

got to go out and check rabbit snares, then go out and check my traps. I got to go out and cut wood for myself, and then one of those, my son, haul the wood for me. Turn warm little bit, and I got to stay out in the woods all day, cut wood. Get enough wood in case it turn cold again. I got to go every morning. Put on my boots, just to feed my kids. No welfare them days. No food stamps. Nothing. I used to tan moose skin, work on moose skin lots, sew, do beadwork and sell it to feed my kids."

Bessie is known in the Galena community as a strong woman who had to work like a man to keep her family going. Edgar tells a little story about Father Spills that illustrates her reputation. "Father Spills, he ask me, 'How's Bessie?' I says, 'All right.' 'Is she still going strong?' I said, 'Yeah.'"



Nollner 36 Cr. Wendy Arrindale



Nollner 37

Cr. Wendy Arrindale

*The Edgar Nollner Health Care Center in Galena.*

## TRANSPORTATION

### Kickers

"The first kicker we had, Old Man ordered three, and we had one for nine years 'cause we take care of it. Because these other guys' break down, no more parts, and they give it back to us. And then use parts. That was around 1916, around in there. Kicker, they call two and a half horsepower. Then after that, about the same time, there were two horsepower Evinrude. There were two horsepower Evinrudes and three and a half Evinrudes, too. Three and a half Evinrudes seemed real big. To start it, there's a knob on top. You grab the handle and pull it around to start it. It went around so slow you could almost count it.

Stockman came down here, stop, and they were going move their whole camp up from here. Him and Bill Honea fish from here. And there was Peter Demoski had two horsepower, Stockman had a two horsepower, and Bridgewater (a Signal Corpsman whose first name Edgar does not recall) two and a half, and Bill Burke had a two horsepower. We had two and a half. And there was about five kickers, I think..., but about eleven horsepower whole thing. Eleven horsepower for five boats, I think. They're all full of fish, tents, and everything, dogs too, and they move the whole camp one time and going about two or three miles an hour. And they say, 'Gee, we're making good time.'"



*Nollner 38*

*Cr. Wendy Arundale*

*The first Yutana tug and barge of the year arrives in Galena in May 1984. Edgar was expecting a new pick-up truck. Just as when Edgar worked on the CAA boats, the barges are still an important source of freight transportation for people who live on the rivers.*

The early kickers burned a mixture of oil and gas. "Some you got to do that now, too. We had a five horse. I bought her around '52, '53. Around five horsepower Johnson. And then next we got a ten. She (Bessie) said seven and a half. And Harvey said, 'No.' Harvey was selling kickers then. And I wanted to get eighteen, and she said, 'No, it's too big. We'll get a ten.' And next time we get an eighteen. And next time we get a thirty-three. And then we got a thirty-three, we got a fifty after that. And then we got a seventy now. Then we got a one-twenty-five, too, but they broke the bracket. It's new. We never use it. And we got a little Mariner, too, a thirty (hp)."



Today Bessie and Edgar have a comfortable boat with a little house on it that is driven by their seventy. Edgar remarked, "We used to sometime, we just stay in it in fall time. We just tie up and stay inside. No rain, wind blowing. It's warm, too. We used to have a long boat with a thirty-three on there, and put a tarp over it... Anytime we come home we pretty near half froze when we come home. After that, we stay inside and let it blow or rain."



*Hollner 39*

*Dr. Catherine Attko Coll.*

*Edgar chats with some of his friends in Huslia. (Left to Right) Steven Attko (with his head turned back), Edwin Simon (with cast), Edgar, Lavine Williams, and Joe John. The occasion was the 1976 potlatch for Chief Henry's funeral.*

## **Snowmachines**

"When they first start to build them long tracks, Hazel and Gabriel and, just a few. After that, they was getting smaller, but more horsepower and making them better.

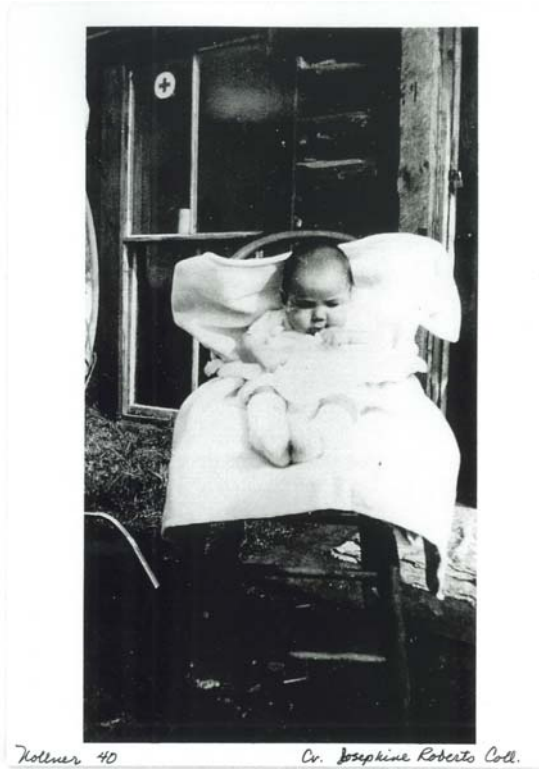
I bought a Johnson first one. I forgot what year. We went to Ruby in it. Then they got a Challenger after that. Then after that, we got these ones out here. And them guys, they buy pretty near new one every year. They're smashed up before spring, and roll 'em over. They race too much.

Oh, its easier because they go faster and don't have to work on dog fish or nothing all summer or..." At this point, Bessie remarked, "Dogs is cheaper." Edgar replied, "Yeah. Some guys is using dogs now, too. Gas is getting higher all the time. They go out trapping. Get wood. What we used to use dogs for all the time."

### **The First Cat Edgar Saw**

"In Ruby. Oh, around 1927, I guess, along in there. When they started build a road out that way. Albert Verhonik, they used to use horses out to creeks to haul freight all the time, and Albert Verhonik got a little cat. And the Road Commissioner was working out Salatna under the south bridge between Long Creek and Poor Man, about half way. And, well, they say, when Albert get back here, he's going get stuck in this hole, all of them. Pretty soon Albert Verhonik was coming with two wagons full, and these were twenty horse, cleat track, I think they used to call it, cleat track. And they come, and they watch him, and he just go right through, never even stop. Never get stuck. Everybody was waiting for him.

They found out after that, there was no more horses, all cat tractors, that's all. And they cheaper to have a cat, they say, because horses got to eat every day. Albert Verhonik had twenty horses. He lost ten one time. The barn burned down with them. And he had ten. I asked him, 'How much it cost to keep a horse?' He said, 'Each horse costs three dollars a day when they're not working. But when they're working they eat more than that.' And after that he got cats. After that, he got another one again, bigger one. Pretty soon there was no more horses in Ruby. Used to be lots of them up there. Its cheaper to have a cat because they they're not working, they don't eat nothing."



*Edgar's first grandson, Fred Minoak.  
Taken in Tanana in 1942 or 1943.*

### **Edgar's First Automobile Ride**

"In Ruby. Albert Verhonik, the steamboat was coming. I went up there, and the steamboats was coming down, and he had some meat, and some mail for the Road Commission out Salatna. That's about, let's see, about 45 miles from Ruby. And, I ask him where he's going. He say he's got to go out Salatna to Road Commission. And then he asked me, 'You want to go with me?' I said, 'Sure.' And that's the first automobile ride. Model A? A Model T, I guess.

And three miles from Long Creek, we got stuck. And then we got hold of some poles and piled them across and piled some the other way, and he pried up the car, and put poles under it, and then get out. And he said, 'Gee, if you didn't go with me, I would have had to walk to Long Creek to get help.' And then coming back, same way. But we waited coming back 'til it was light anyway. He tell me where he used to haul freight all alone. He was short guy. He was the guy who used to haul ore from the mine over here."



## Learning to Drive

"When Charlie (Evans) was a teacher down here, I forget what year. When they start to build a theater down here, '41 or '42, '41, I think,... he had a Model A. And we, him and Richard, Charlie's brother--he died a few years ago--we'd go out. We'd... ride around the field, anyplace. There was no road no place, but we'd ride around, back up, and go ahead, turn around, and... While Charlie's sleeping, put it back, yeah. He let us use it any time we want."



*Hollner 41*

*Cr. Joyce and Harry Hausmann Cel.*

*Edgar and Bessie and grandchildren Carol Wholecheese, Shawn Wholecheese and Morris Demoski.*

Edgar was working for the CAA at the time, "but in the evenings that's all we (did)." Edgar bought his first automobile, "from Alfred Gurtler. It was a Chevy, half ton... About '50, 1950, I think. I was on the boat that time... We had it long time... Haul lots of wood with it, too. And when I was working on the CAA boats, I let Barney use it, and he put over 5,000 miles on it. No place, no runway up there, just this field. Just right around here, up base station, that's all. That summer he put 5,000 miles on it."

At that time, almost the only other people in Galena who had trucks were the Army personnel. "Charlie had a Model A car. There were a few. Stanley Nichols, he had a store here, he had a Model T. And pretty soon there's little more trucks, little more trucks." Because parts were hard to get, repairs could present problems. "But there wasn't much to them, them trucks long ago, just only carburetor, starter, generator. Now, they got everything on the car now." Edgar used to do all his own mechanical work.

## The First Airplanes Edgar Saw

"1920. There was... four army planes from New York to Nome and back. There was about four army planes. Two in each plane... It's an open plane, two winged, I think those... And we was moving down here (to Galena from Louden) that time, and everybody went to Ruby. They said there's planes coming in. And they build a field for them up the hill, but it was not very good, so they had to land up there on the sand bar. That place was good, long and flat. And everybody from all the way down, they all went up in the boat. We couldn't go because we were working.



And some of them was there watched the airplane. They didn't know that one was coming right on top of the water. And some of them was right on the edge of the sandbar, and when they go like this (Edgar demonstrates how they flew low with his hand), lots of 'em walk right into the water backwards to see. Scared everybody.

And from there they went to Nome. And next day we see them. From here we seen them going down behind here. Going down. And next day, we see 'em, or two days afterward, I think. They was three going up. And one was gone. And went up Louden. Pretty soon, the last one. They had to work on it down Nome, and they left him behind. We's up Louden when it went over Louden, going up. It was the first one we seen."

## Edgar's First Airplane Ride

"And the first airplane we took a ride in was around 1930, '31, I guess, now was that. Meagan and Mrs. Meagan and Ann-Jean and I got in the plane, and we went over the hills. Pilot, Cope, he got killed around Ketchikan or around Juneau someplace. He had torn the ski of his airplane, tear his ski off, and he had a shovel on the end there, just for ski. Pile up good. He used shovel for a tail ski. He took off, and we went around over there, and came back. It was pretty good. See all them moose track, but we didn't see no moose though. And twenty minutes we fly around all over around there, and came back."



Nalmer 45

Cr. Wendy Arundale

*Edgar and one of his dogs. Although he no longer mashes dogs he keeps several and enjoys them.*

## Early Pilots

"There was lots of them around here long ago. There was Robbins, and Jerry Church, and... I forgot lots of their names. Alden Williams used to fly around here long time, too."

## Early Air Carriers

"Oh, there's, I forgot his name now. He used to stay down Koyukuk, too. Restivik.(sp.) He had a little airplane, and Manual Holt, he used to work for CAA back here, he had a airplane, and then after that Yaeger got in. He's married to one of my grandchildren, Rosie.

They used to land on a sandbar down here. Good gravel bar, long. That's where they first start land here when they started make field here. Long, smooth, too."

## EDGAR HELPS RESCUE TWO DOWNED FLYERS

"'53 I think. I forgot the date, though. I forgot how many below--it was cold that time. 50, 50-some temp..., and I went up the road, and I was starting cut wood up here. And I took three dogs and went up there, and I was cutting wood. I hear that jet taking off down there. And then pretty soon it took off and... the motor stop, and then just like it was whistling, when it was coming down. And Donaldson was on that side of the lake

over there. He was cutting wood, too, but he had lots a parkies on, and he didn't hear that plane crash 'cause he knock a tree down the same time. And I heard it crash back here, so I run out to the lake. I was looking for smoke or... Nothing, so I run back to my dogs--I left my ax and things there--and I start down the road. I was running down, and turn.

Pretty soon I met the fire truck and a weapons carrier. And they asked me. I told them, 'It's down that way.' I was coming down the road, they see. I tell 'em, 'It's down that way.' 'No,' they said they going look up here where he came from. I let 'em go. I keep running with them three dogs.

Pretty soon I met another truck right out there Alexander Lake. And they asked--I stopped them. I tell them, 'It's back this way.' Oh, then them two G.I.s. No gloves. I had extra gloves on the sleigh. They jump on the sleigh, and I was running with them. We went all the way back. They got off, and I look over this way. Nothing. So then we came down, and then I went back that way. And no, Donaldson picked them up, and then Donaldson was coming. I told them, 'Plane crash back here.' He picked these two G.I.s up, and they were going back, and I went back that way.

And when I came out, they were going round the bend back here, back this lake, and I see where all them trees broke. And, then they just kept agoing. Even them branches on the snow. Them two guys couldn't even figure that out. You could tell. They went into the end and over into the other slough. And I stop there, and I look up there, and I see it back there, so I thought they were killed. I run back to my dogs, and I went over in the slough, and they were just going into the slough up there. I had .22 in the sleigh. I shot a couple times, and they stop. They look. I told 'em, I went like this (demonstrates with his arms). I point back that way, and I turned around.

And then when I got there, I went back up there, and diesel all over, jet fuel. And then I see them way over there. They get out. And, those guys, they try and make fire. No gloves. One got big cut around here on the face, and blood all over them. And they trying make fire away from them jet fuel, you know. Quite a ways. And they couldn't make it. And I had diesel in the sleigh. Then I run down there, and I got it, and I made fire for them. They try to go in the fire. They're pretty near froze all ready.

By that time Donaldson-and-them came. Them two G.I.s,... they left the truck out there. And we start down the road with them three dogs. And, then I met another truck coming up. And I told 'em, they drove all the way to there, but no ax, couldn't bring them guys out. Pretty soon, Raymond, and I forgot who had dog team, they came in there, and everybody was coming through the woods, right straight. And, G.I.s and Charlie Evans told them, and way after I had fire going, we were staying with them, and the truck, I went back. I left my dogs down the road on the side. And they came up; I came up with them. I told them, 'Right to the end.' And no axe.

Pretty soon Raymond-and-them came, and they unsnapped the sleigh, and they packed the sleigh back, and they put them guys, one guy at a time, on the sleigh, and then

packed them out. Couldn't make trail. Nobody had an ax or nothing. And thick willows, too. No. When I got there, this one guy said, one guy was all right, but the other guy, he's one had broken back. And his face, he don't know nothing. This other guy, he said, 'I can walk out,' to my sleigh, but I had only small sleigh and three dogs, that's all. And I tell him, 'Wait,' before I went down.

And 'til them guys came, and they pack them out, and finally they got the other truck. And their hands, their feet was pretty near froze, too, cold. It was cold! Maryvella, the teacher, they came, too, and then they had big coat, and they tore off their boots and then them G.I.s put them under the coat and keep their feet warm. And then they took 'em down.

26 years after, when they came back. Now we seen them walking by in front of our place, him (one of the flyers) and his wife, but we didn't know who they were. And they were looking for me. Not for me, but they didn't know who it was. They didn't know it was me.

They didn't know. And then when they went by, he look at me, but they went by. And soon they back. We was going go back to fish camp pretty soon, and Rosie, my grandchild, Yaeger, they were ready to leave back airport. And they were telling about they were looking for a guy that rescued. And she said, 'My grandpa might know. He's out the village.' Then she brought them out to our place. And, then he come in, and then he ask me. I said, 'Yeah. I made fire for you guys.' And he said, 'No wonder I thought I recognized you, but I wasn't sure,' he said.

26 years. And then, they were here, him and his wife. They were just going get on the plane, too. They only (had) few hours left when they found out it was me, and they were there two days. They couldn't find out who it was. And after that we had some pictures that they took in the house. And him and me. And then after that, he came a few years ago, three, four years ago. Just about three years, maybe, he came back here again. He ask me, I don't know how many times, he want to take me out California. He got some kind of business now, electronics, something. Some kind of business. He said he got I don't know how many guys working for him out there. So they wanted to take me out there, but I said, 'No.'

I gave him a ride back this way, and out on the Yukon. Take pictures, he take pictures when I sit on the snowgo, and I took his picture on the snowgo. Yeah. He wanted to take me out, too. I told him 'No.' The pilot is around California. He said he seen him. After that, yeah. He told him he seen me, who made the fire. He said he'd be back again sometime."



## CHAPTER 4

### WORKING FOR WAGES

Edgar is known as a hard, steady worker. Even today, he is always busy. Edgar learned to work from his father. "When we moved down here (to Galena) about 19... Fifteen years old, I work eight hours a day, pretty near, putting up them buildings with Old Man... Busy all the time, all my life, used to work all the time. Even now we're just doing something all the time."

#### Working for FAA

Edgar couldn't remember exactly when he first started working for the CAA, the predecessor of the FAA, but it was, "when they first started working on the field down here (Galena). That's a '40 or '41. '40 I think. Yeah. Summer '40. I used to work for the surveyors up here where the towers are, up there. I work all that fall, and next summer, I work for CAA."



*Nollner 44*

*Cr. Joyce and Larry Hausmann Coll.*

*Stopping the fish wheel and taking the leads out. Walking the spares is no problem for Edgar.*

When Edgar worked for the CAA, he worked "on the runway and up the road and up them towers and around the shop. I just drive trucks and work on the runway, them lights, oh, lots of things. Every day, eight hours a day. And, then Saturday, its a time and a half."

Edgar recalls what the Galena base was like during World War II when it served



as an advance airfield for lend-lease planes being flown to the Soviet Union via Nome and the Bering Straits. "Sometimes they got about 50 planes there at a time. Bomber and fighter planes.

They were going build down below Pilot Mountain. They called West Ruby on the hill, but it not very good down there. They, they had to build it right away, so they came up here, and they build it down here. Them CAA guys, I mean, them surveyors, they were glad they come up here because they were in the mud this much every day. It's kind of swampy, and kind of water. I forget how many percent water, there. But they had to build the runway right away 'cause them Japs was coming over this way, you know, through the islands.

Everybody had a job from Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, and from Ruby. Lots of people here that time. Tents all over. Yeah. Everybody had to work, work. Everybody had jobs because of... No other jobs anyway." After the construction was done, everybody went home.

### **Working on the CAA Boats**

Although as a kid, Edgar never had a chance to ride the steamboats, later as an adult he worked on the river. "I was a pilot CAA boats, 1950-53, four years. We used to go from Nenana, out of Nenana as far as Kaltag, I don't know how many trips, morning 'til night. Then we made three trips up to Lake Minchumina, one trip to Fairbanks, one trip down to Marshall.

Gee, but I was a pilot. And Charlie (Evans) was the captain on the boat." Edgar explained that he got the job when the former pilot quit. Frank Turner was the boss in Nenana. Hank Olson was Turner's assistant. Turner told Charlie that he would get him another pilot, but, "Charlie said, 'No. I'm going to get my own pilot.' So they called down. I was working for CAA that time. But he called down, and I told him, 'Yeah, I'll go.' I was on the boat about four years. Go up (to Nenana) in April, last part of April. Then pull the boats out in October."

Rather than steam, the boats ran on big diesel motors. Edgar recalls, "We used to push them (the barges). They used to take one at a time. Now use the same boat, just like "Taku Chief, they use two barges, but take longer, harder." The freight the boats hauled was for the various CAA stations. "They used to have repeater stations up, now, Tanana and Birches, Ruby, and we have all the freight for this place here, and then around Kaltag, below Kaltag they had repeater stations there."

In the boat's crew, "there was five us. I think me, Charlie, the two engineers, and the cook. Five men on a boat. Among the men that Edgar worked with were, "Tony Jensen, and Archie Holstrum, and Merle Strassburg (Harvey Strassburg's younger brother). All of them. They take turns, them engineers."

On the boat, the men worked, "Straight time five days, Saturday you get time and a half, Sunday, you get double time. When we were traveling, six hours on then I would be sleeping six hours, and Charlie be taking it, then he'd sleep. Take turns like that. When its dark, in the fall, we tie up, and then go, start out early in the morning 'cause we don't want to get stuck on a sandbar. When it's foggy, we have to tie up, too."

Edgar doesn't recall the names of any of the boats that he worked on, but he does remember that "They used to call them 'surveyors.' They used to be tugboat. We go up and down the river, day and night, six hours on when it's light. Only time we tie up is when it's too dark, Tanana River. Allakaket up to Bettles. Seven trips I made up there, too. It's swift up in there. When it bends like this, going around a bend like this (Edgar shows with his hands), you just go straight, back up, and then it back around, and then back up again, and go ahead. Yep."

Working on the CAA boat was not without it's adventures. Edgar recounts some of them.

### **"Just Enough Water to Drink"**

"It was, one summer we went up above Hughes and there's a riffle there. We got that far, three boats. There were Taku Chief and them two ST boats, and then the Taku Chief unload all their drums there. And we stayed there. The first trip I went up Koyukuk River we took us 56 days to make one trip from Nenana, up Bettles, back to

Nenana. All we do is just tie up, eat, that's all. Sleep and eat. The cook, Jim Waters, say, 'Only one man working, the cook.' He had a big restaurant in California. He was working just to be up there.

No water. It didn't rain. Finally it start rain, and then it come up. And Joe Beetus from Hughes, he came down from Allakaket with kicker boat. We was eating, and the cook was out there. The beach is along here, and he landed right there. And he standed by the boat right there talking with the cook. He said, 'No water up there.' 'That's all right,' the cook said, 'we got enough to drink. Just enough to drink.' I always tease him about that. I told him, 'what he tell you?' He says, 'Well,' he says, 'Just enough to drink.'

And when I came back, we came back to Huslia, they all tease me. All of them. Gee, first time you went up Koyukuk River, and you had to stay on the sandbar all summer, they tell me. Fifty-six (days) that trip. I said, 'Yeah.' And after that, my friend, Edwin Simon used to tease me about that. And then he tease me and tease me.

And next trip, Jimmy Huntington got off, and they got him for a pilot. And we left Huslia, and we got to Hog River. And we couldn't get across the bar, so we had stay there four days. And me and him go up on the hillside, and we sit down there, look all over, I tease him. 'Gee, you're sitting on sand bar with me,' I tell him. 'Now you're sitting on the sand bar with me, too.'"

## **A Trip to Marshall**

"We made a trip down Marshall once, too, Charlie and I. Taku Chief was down there. We brought up eighteen big storage tanks, one time. There was two tied together, like this. Eighteen of them big, big, big tanks. And the Taku Chief pulling, and we were shoving. It took us about a week to come up from Marshall, day and night. About three miles an hour, along through like that."

## **Edgar's First Trip to Fairbanks**

"I never went to no place until 1950,... when I got on CAA boat and went up the river. I just stayed around here all the time. I see pictures of it before, that's all. And, 1950, when I got on the boat and went to Nenana, Charlie's daughter, Margie, my niece was up in the hospital." She had TB. "She was in the hospital a long time... she died. And Charlie was going go up see her. He asked me, 'You want to go?' I said, 'I don't know.'

He asked Turner, the main guy in Nenana, got to Turner, Frank Turner. 'I try to get him (Edgar) to go with me, but look like he don't want to go. He never see that big town yet.' 'Come on,' he (Turner) said. 'Go with Charlie. Go up there. Stay a couple of nights. So we start down (downriver) right away (after you get back),' he said. So I went, we went on the train. We get round trip ticket, and we went up. The day we supposed to come back, no train. We fly back anyway."

## **Working at the Base Mess Hall**

"And when I work back mess hall (at the Galena Air Force Base), this last time, I work there pretty near three and a half years, dining hall. There's four on each shift. I'm only one back there. These other guys never show up. Only, I'm the one... When I quit, I wouldn't quit right away, but new mess sergeant came, big guy. I don't know, he came up to me. I was alone. Nobody showed up. They have to get a G.I. to help me. And he walk up to me. I was in washing pots and pans, and then dining hall, I had to mop up. And he walk up to me, and he said, 'Well from now on you guys got to do what I tell you to do.'

I said, I told him--it was Thursday--and I told him, 'Tomorrow be my last day.' He look at me, and he walked away. I bet the commander ball him out, I guess, because the commander told me, he said, 'Why don't you lay off about a month and come back?' And I told him, 'I don't like the way that sergeant talk to me. The sergeant, the new guy. And them cooks.' He tell me, 'Why don't you lay off one month, come back.' 'No,' I said, 'No.' I tell him, 'I'm through.'"

## HUNTING

Hunting has been a way of life for Edgar, but he seems to have enjoyed goose and duck hunting the most.

### Calling Geese

"I used to call geese right down. I used to call geese pretty good. They always tease me about that now. One time around 1931, I guess, we's playing volleyball in front of the school, the little school was up there in the village down there. And they had a volleyball net up, and four (players) on each (side), and right after break up there was a goose coming up. I call 'em, and it come right down. And it went down.

And there were no,... I look for a rock or stick. Nothing. And they were laying down like this, and I had an eyeshade on. And right here, I jump up with eyeshade, and I went like this. I hit 'em on the head. Went down in the water. Put his head down in the water. Earl Wholecheese shot at it with a rifle. And he missed it. I told them guys, 'If it was lower, I would have caught it.' But I couldn't catch it. Little too high. Yeah, I used to call 'em right down.

One time on the Kantishna on CAA boats, there was about, must be about 80 geese going in the willows. Young ones. They couldn't fly, lots of 'em. When we got in front there, I started call geese. They all came out. And then they would stay right behind the big boat. Some want to be (close), some on the water right behind it, the whole thing, when I call 'em. And when I quit, they all go around like this. (Shows turning motion with his hands). And when I call 'em again, the whole thing move. About three bends then my throat start to get sore, and I quit. And they all go around, and we go around the bend. Charlie took pictures of it, but it was a little too dark. It didn't come out good."

### When Archie and Larry Were Young

"Then one time I went behind (Vortac) repeater station up there in big lake. The pilot was up there. He got some geese. And the next day we went up, her (Bessie) and Archie, we got some geese. Next day, we started go up and Daniel Patrick says, 'I want to go.' We tell him, 'Go ahead.' Then he used the Power Wagon, and we got to the lake, and we came out the lake.

And Larry said, 'Me and Danny going stay in that little blind out there.' I say, 'Go ahead.' And then Archie and I made one this side. Archie was about this big, that time. And he didn't have no shotgun. Only Larry, that's all. They were sitting out there, and there was two geese coming up. And Daniel Patrick had a goose caller. He was calling

them geese, and them geese was just going like this. (Shows with his hands.) They were out there, and too far from me, and to this side. And then when they pass, Danny calling them geese. Nothing.

So I just (Edgar makes goose noise). Them geese, they just turn, and like this. And then Larry knock one down, and they couldn't hit the other one because the blind too small. I see the shotgun going like this (demonstrates motion in restricted area). The other one got away. I hollered at Danny. I said, 'Danny, how much that thing cost?' He said, 'Five dollars.' I said, I told him, 'Throw it away.' I don't know, I seen lots of 'em call geese with 'em, but them geese, they just keep going."

### **A Good Shot**

"One time I heard shots back this way... I was going down on the river. Quite a few years ago. I wonder how many years ago? And there was five geese coming. They were flying out from back that way. Five. And I had old automatic in the sleigh, and then, going like this, I call 'em. They made one circle this way, then they, this way. Them dogs are still going. I sitting on top of the handle bars like this, I got my legs like this. Then I pull my shotgun out when they went around this way, and I took my shot gun, and I shot four times. I knocked five of 'em down.

Just shoot like this. (Edgar demonstrates how he can shoot without raising the gun to his shoulder.) We'd shoot like that all the time. We used to practice all time. Old man used to order lots a shells, you know. We make our own shells, too, black powder, too. Practice, practice, all the time." For targets, Edgar and his brothers used "anything that's flying, we just use that. Do it all the time.

Willow grouse. We used to hunt willow grouse. Willow grouse, they take off fast, too. You be walking along. When they take off, you got no time to put it (the gun) up there (to your shoulder). You just, like this, and knock them down. We get used to that, but ... I see lots a guys. The can't, they don't know how to shoot the ducks or geese out of the air. They shoot, shoot, shoot, and they blame the gun and ammunition. I never blame the gun and ammunition."

### **This Spring**

"I went out about three or four times this spring... with them boys, Dick and Edward Sommers,... but north wind cold, and I shot couple times, but too far. They were back there. I was back there, and they came. And only Dick got one. And Edward knock one down. I told him, 'Hurry up, go over there, pick it up. That thing going run away. Going take off.' He took his time, and when he started, pretty soon that goose took off. And Howard Beasley was way over there. It went over him then he knock it down. Dick tell him, 'Well, that's your first goose isn't it.' And Edward said, 'Yeah, that's the first one.' But just after that, it took off."

## **Moose Hunting Up Yuki**

"One time we was up Yuki, way up. And we was coming down, and coming around the bend, there was a bull moose in the water. And then he turned, no in the water, he was against the water, and he started go back. And the boat was going fast, and I shot. And when it went in the woods, I shot, and pretty soon it came right back out again. I must have hit it, and it went right in the water like this, and the horn got stuck in deep water. And it was muddy down there. Little creek come out right there, too. And he got down, he got stuck in there, and we couldn't get... We tie rope on the boat, and on it's horn and nothing. So, about this much water, I guess. Keep sawing and cutting and sawing. And finally we cut that neck off, and the head off.

And then we tie onto that neck. And we left the head there, stuck there. And we went down a couple of bends, and there was gravel bar. So we pull in there, and we put block and tackle on it, and we pull it out little, put willows, and we didn't know, we put black plastic under there, tarp. They say it slide easy, but we didn't know. We put several blocks on it; we got it out. We got hip boots on and keep cutting. And then, finally, we cut it up and put it on the beach. And we stayed overnight in the boat and next morning frost all over, white along the bank, cold that morning."

## **Up Bishop Creek**

"We's up Bishop Creek one time, and we stayed overnight way up, and we came across... going around down below, and we started go up Chief Paul Slough. And we made camp on this side on the bank, and seven o'clock in the morning I got up. Just getting daylight, and I pound on a dry tree, and hear moose that way. And I thought around the bend.

But she (Bessie) said, her and Joseph and I, three of us, and she said, "Sounds like over here." And I said, "No. Sounds like around the bend." So Joseph was running the little kicker. Just little one hanging off, five horse on the big boat 'cause it's shallow. About this much water (shows with his hands). It'd go over logs, things like that, that's why. And I shoot, I shot lots of ducks, mallards and teals. Went to the end, come back, so we stop across where we stayed over night.

She was sitting in the boat, and there's a grass lake up there. And I went out there, look. Nothing. Then I had a boy's ax, and I pound on a dry cotton tree. And Joseph went down there. I'm pretty sure he said, 'Moose coming. One.' I started to go to him, and he said, 'There's two coming.' So we went down the bank. Went little ways. And the big timber over here, we got in the big timber, and we look. Ask him, 'Where is it?' 'He's one right there,' he said. I knock it down. Near the water in that lake. And I ask him, 'Where's the other one?' He said, 'It's over there.' I tell him, 'One's enough 'cause not enough water.' And we let that other one go.



While we were talking about this one, I knocked down the ... (the other one). It was about from here to that truck out there. That thing took off towards us. He coming in down, big horns. Right straight towards. I hit him. He shot. Then I hit him again. Right about twelve feet from us where he finally went down right here. I was ready to jump behind a big tree. There was big trees around there, this big around.

And, when it went down, he (Joseph) said, 'Gee, I fell down.' He said he step in a squirrel hole when he fell down, but he said, 'I jump up quick.' Gee, that thing come fast, too. It was going like this, too, putting his head down. Just like a train coming. Whow. But I hit him again. I hit him two times. He shot once, I think. And finally, it went down, but twelve feet from us, it just...scrape everything. But I was ready to jump behind this big tree."

### **Last Fall**

"Last fall we were down Bishop Creek, down in the slough. I shot a big bull. Long ways, too. We going down by Pilot Mountain. There's a creek there, Bishop Creek. And Archie was behind us with his boat. We thought he was going to pass us. But he stayed behind. He went into that creek. We was going down around the bend, and pretty soon she (Bessie) says, 'There's a moose down there on the side, down on the bar.' I see it down there, walking out, but it'd stand there, and we were coming towards it. And then she took the wheel, and I got in front the boat here. And the moose started turn around walk back. Then I wait, wait, and pretty soon that moose started trot faster. And I, 'Bang.'

I see I hit it around here, the hair. Then I throw another one in. 'Bang.' Down he went. Long way, too. 'That's small moose,' I said. It was a big bull. It was quite a ways, I knock it down. Long ways, too.

And then we loaded all his camp on this side where the timber come up. There's kind a creek there. Good place ... We stop there. The moose is over there on sand bar, on the bar, way back. Pretty soon we see Archie coming. They went by. They didn't see that big bull moose laying there. They landed and she told 'em, "Your Daddy got a moose over there." They look. "Oh, yes. We never see it." And then we stayed overnight there."

### **Bears**

"Oh, we used to hunt bear... In September... Not much bear around, now. Used to be some bear around Bishop Creek, around there. Lots of 'em get them bear. Not much bears, too. White guys used to kill lots." Edgar recalls that they hunted bears, "Just when we see 'em, that's all. Sometime we never see 'em, no. We see bear tracks, that's all. No, we never follow the tracks. We got to see 'em first."

Edgar has never had a close call with a bear. "I think we would have close call, but... I was up to fish camp, and we started coming down, and fish wheel is above the camp, and wanted to get some fresh fish, so I started the kicker, and we were going up. And there was a big bear standing on top of the bank by the fish wheel. And then I shot at it. I shot too low. The boat was going, too. And the whole guts, the whole guts blowed up here.

It turned around, and Roy Wholecheese was not too big. He didn't have a rifle, and we went up the bank where he stand, and there's bear scattered all over. And kick willows and grass; you couldn't see even that far. And there was blood all over, so and I told him, 'No, we let it go.' And then we went back down the bank, and we got one fish from the fish wheel.

As we came down, about a week after that, maybe a week, we got two little dogs. They're back there. They're barking back there. And then Roy had his rifle, and you could see long ways then. And we could see where he went back, and he went this way, and he came back, and he was right here. He was... and if we would have follow him, he would have jump on us. That's the way they do. It was dead already. It was spoiled.

On that, they say never follow a bear when its, when you can't see very far, because its going be right here, or he's going be on this side. And before you can shoot, he can just jump on you, knock you down. We hear about lots a, how them guys get chewed up when they follow bear in thick willows and grass."

### **Trapping Wolves and other Animals**

"We used to trap wolves. She (Bessie), the last one she caught, it got away from her down the dump, trap and all. I got one, too, I lost. I had that set for lynx. And it took the trap and went away with it, too. I followed, but he was with the bunch. I never got it. And her's, too. I followed it, but it takes two guys 'cause if he hear you, he follow you back, and you go this way, then hear you coming. Two or three guys different. She lost one, and I lost one, and Archie lost a big one too, up to camp, same way. They took the toggle off, and they took the trap, and never got that one, too. (The wolf) chewed the toggle right off, too."

### **Wolverine**

"She (Bessie) caught one over in the Slough a few years ago, too." People trapped wolverine, "When there's some around. Yeah, always rob your trap line all the time. They take marten out of the traps. They don't eat it, I guess, but they always hide them, too. They always go right through the trap line." Edgar has never heard of anyone ever having an encounter with a wolverine. "They're better than wolves. They have trouble with them wolves, I guess, some time, but not wolverine."

Some people eat wolverine, but, "Nobody eat wolves. Lynx is pretty good. We used to eat lots of 'em. Got good meat. Just like turkey. We eat lots of beaver, too. Yeah, muskrat, too."

## **Showing Respect for the Wolverine in the Old Way**

"That time I was at Loudon, my Old Man used to go out bring lynx, fox, and wolverine. One time, in the store just counter all the way around. And then every time he come in, he have sack full, and then he'd bring it in, and we'd untie it and dump it. See what he catch. One time he was up on the hill, and he came back, and he caught a wolverine. And then he put his sack by the wood box, and then we untied it, and we didn't know what it was when we untied it. And it came out, rolled out, and he said, 'That's wolverine.'

Pretty soon they found out, you know, them old people used to make the wolverine sit up, and gun like this or put lots a grub around the wolverine like that. Them old people used to do that. Put new blanket under it. Pretty soon they start to come in. And Old Man Bogey. And George Jimmy said, 'Tell him to put new blanket under it.' And George Jimmy told 'em all about it. 'They want you to put new blanket under it.'" Edgar's father responded, "'You think I'm going dirty a blanket over that dead thing?' And they all went out.

That's what they used to do. And when they coming, they holler, and everybody holler, and then everybody come with grub, and they go in there where they bring the wolverine in. They put grub around the wolverine. And, ... my Old Man get mad, that's all. 'I'm not going to dirty the blanket with that dead thing!' Then he skinned it, and the carcass, he just throw it over the bank. But my Mom was different, too. She haul it over in the woods, and we burned it up."

## **CHANGES IN ANIMALS**

### **Muskrat**

"We used to go out spring camp long ago, but no more muskrat, too. Robert Attla said he seen one. He went out all the night, he seen one. As soon as he see him, he dived. And he said pretty soon he came out. I stayed there a long time. When he go down, 'I run there and wait, but,' he said, 'pretty soon way over there,' he said. 'And when he dive, I run over there. That muskrat smarter than me. I never got him. That's only muskrat I seen, too,' he said. Gee, there used to be lots of muskrat, everywhere. Just like this lake in here. Used to be lots a muskrat in here, too. Yeah. No more. Nothing."

### **Moose and Caribou**

"Oh, yeah. There's quite a few moose around yet. There were no moose long time ago, though. They say there used to be lots a caribou back in here, too. Over here on that hill across Galena over there, there used to be lots a caribou. And they used to go, from Nulato a bunch go over there and kill lots a caribou. They just take the tongue and

sinew, that's all. They just... And John Antoski used to tell 'em, 'Do that and there's no more caribou,' but they didn't believe it. They just kill lots'a for nothing. Take the tongue out and sinew, that's all. Yeah. Pretty soon, he said, he used to tell about, pretty soon no more caribou over there."

### **Fur Bearers**

"Oh, sometimes there's been more, sometimes not very much."

### **Geese**

"Well, we just take dogs and go up around Louden or down below, any place. Bunch of us used to go together. Geese everywhere them days, anyway. ... Them geese used to be coming and going, steady. And I don't know how many days, everywhere you look, there's geese flying. No more now. Just few. (We built a blind of) Willows-and-them. Grass-and-them."

### **Other Animals**

"No more now. Used to be lots of 'em. Lots of willow grouse, everything, rabbits, willow grouse, muskrat, everything. Now nothing. Lots a geese, white geese. I never see white geese for how many years now. Used to be more white geese. Now, there's none. They see them along the coast. Along the coast, that's all. Them white geese used to come through here, lots of 'em, them black ones. No more, they never come through here. They go along the coast, I guess."

## **EDGAR'S LIFE NOW**

Edgar and Bessie are busy people today. As Bessie put it, "We really work for ourselves all the time." And Edgar said, "That's one thing. I can't lay around. Busy every day. We work around the house and get ready for fish camp or make fish wheel spring time and used to trap a little bit. I used to go out with them boys when they go out little bit, with Archie all the time. Go out that way with him. I just follow him. Sometime I have a few traps."

In the fall, "Her and I go out with boat and hunt for... (moose). We used to go up Yuki every fall or up Bear Creek and down, until we get a moose. We used to go up Yuki, and in one night, we get a moose. But went out last time, nothing. And then we go down the other way, Bear Creek."

Trapping season begins around the middle of November. Edgar still likes to go out with his boys, but doesn't do much trapping of his own. "Just put few traps. We, I trap up the road, but too many guys set traps up there now."

Wood cutting is an important winter activity. "I like to go out, cut wood, haul it in. But she all the time, 'You might get hurt,' she always tell me. I always got big pile out there, and still I want to go out. She tell me not to go. When she go away, she tell me, 'Don't go out and cut wood. You going, you might get hurt out there.' But I like to... After she leave, I go out, cut wood, haul wood. I see lots of guys. They got no wood in front their place, nothing. No, all my life I have big pile of wood in front the house, all the time.

Like this spring, just put everything away before the flood, but they didn't flood this time. I hunt about three or four times. I went back that way, too. It windy all the time; it too cold, so I didn't go out no more."

Edgar and Bessie still go to their fish camp. "Its about nine miles up that way. Up above here on the other side. Archie got a house up there. Just little ways above our fish camp. We could see it from fish camp up here.



*Mollner 47*

*Cr. Wendy Arundale*

*Edgar and Bessie*

We're going down fish camp, not for a while. We always go up there, and we used to have a garden up there, too, little garden... Its harder for us now. When we kneel



down, it's hard to get up, our legs. Not like long ago... Just like her. She like to work in garden, but she have hard time to get up. I tell her, we're going have little garden, this time, 'cause just two of us, that's all. Maybe Archie. He got his own place over here. That's all. Help us around here.

We don't fish dog salmon, just silvers, that's all. On the other side in August. Good fishing. One time I was working on a fish wheel after dog salmon went by, and Simeon Mountain came up. He was up here, down Galena, and he was working on... He said, 'What you going do?' I said, 'We're going go fishing.' He said, 'But all the fish went by.' I said, 'No. That's dog salmon. We never fish for dog salmon. Only silver salmon (fall run chum salmon that resemble silvers), that's all.'"

Edgar and Bessie go to their fish camp almost anytime during fishing season. "We'll go up. Come back same evening, lots of times, we just go up, come back, go up, come back. Every day go up to camp. But last summer we stay up there a long time 'cause Archie there and Larry. They cut fish."



*Nollner 45*

*Cr: Joyce and Harry Hausmann Coll.*

*Dog fish drying racks at his fish camp up river from Galena and across from Campion Bluffs.*

*"Feeding dogs takes a lot of work."*

## APPENDIX A

The following is the text of a newspaper article by Jack Boettner that appeared in the Pittsburgh Press on Thursday, January 4, 1979. Its headline reads, "Twenty-six Years Later, He Finds Rescuer to Say "Thanks."

Irvine, California--Lionel W. Levin knew he was up against prohibitive odds, but it was a chance he took to gain peace of mind. Levin's mission was to find a man whose name he didn't know, an Indian who had saved his life in a plane crash nearly 26 years ago on the frozen Alaska tundra. Levin, 48, beat the odds. The improbable story began February 7, 1953. Levin, then 22, and an Air Force 2nd Lt. was stationed temporarily at a small base near Galena, Alaska, about half way between Nome and Fairbanks. He climbed into an F94 Starfighter jet plane along with the pilot, First Lt. Robert Royer. Levin was an observer, a radar man. It was 54 below zero when they took off on routine patrol. Levin, now an Irvine resident and owner of Digital Alarm Systems, Incorporated of Laguna Hills, recalls the minutes that followed.

"We hadn't gone far when the plane developed a flame out. The engine failed. We lost power. We were flying one of those early jet fighters. There were no ejection seats. No way we could bail out. Too low. The pilot said, "Get ready," that we were going to crash. We were probably about 1,000 ft in the air. We had to ride the plane in. The pilot did an incredible job. He guided it so that the wings were sheered off by trees. I didn't have time to be scared. I was later. The pilot said we had to get out because the plane might explode. I just couldn't believe that we were alive. Levin and Royer, both seriously injured, crawled away from the wrecked plane which was resting upside down against a tree. Levin was to learn later, he had a broken back, broken ribs, and internal injuries.

The two men tried to build a fire, realizing that they could not survive for long in the snow with temperatures far below freezing. "I was too weak to break a twig," Levin remembers. "It looked like the end. We wouldn't live 30 minutes in that cold." Levin recalled that despite the fact he was lapsing in and out of consciousness at the time, he could hear a dog sled approaching. "The next I knew we were lying beside a fire. I assumed the dog sledder built the fire and pulled us over to it. I found out later that he had called a man with another dog team because a three dog team could not have gotten us out of there. They were hauled by dog sled to the Galena airfield. Doctors and nurses met them and flew with them to Anchorage where they were hospitalized.

Levin eventually returned to active duty, and retired from the Air Force Reserve a few years later. He said Royer also recovered. "I asked the Air Force people and others if they knew who rescued us," Levin said, "but nobody knew. I certainly didn't know. It has preyed on my mind all these years. I wanted to meet the man and say "Thanks" face to face. In September, Levin and his wife, Suzanne, flew to Anchorage by commercial jet, and then hired a pilot to fly them to Galena.

"It was like going back in time. Nothing much had changed except the planes were newer. The village was about the same size, maybe three to four hundred. The people at the base found us a place to stay, the Yukon Saloon and Hotel, not far from the Yukon River. Nobody around the village could shed any light on the man we were seeking. We were there two days. We were disappointed and discouraged. We booked a flight and were ready to return home."

While waiting for their flight, Levin said he accidentally met a woman who ran a flying service at the airport. Her grandfather had been operating dog sleds in the area for a long time, and she said she would contact him immediately. He lived in the village. She ran back into the airport shack, and told me that it was her grandfather who had pulled me out. "We were in a time squeeze. Our flight would be leaving in a short time. She drove us in her truck about two miles to the small house. We walked in, and there was this white haired, bearded man in his 60s, I would guess, or 70s. It was incredible. I was speechless. He was a stranger, yet I felt like I knew him."

Levin said he hugged the man who turned out to be Edgar Nollner, Sr. of the Athabaskan Indian tribe. "I thanked him for saving my life," Levin said. "I really don't know what else I said. He spoke in broken English, recalling details of the crash scene, things that I didn't remember because I was unconscious. He told of building a fire, and of calling his friend, Charlie Evans, to help get us out of there. He and Evans had been out looking for wood. They were hunters and fisherman, and still are. It was a dream come true, a miracle."