

1 **Interview of Margaret Pauline Stenson on serving**
2 **with her husband as a teacher in the American Indian Native Service**
3 **in the Alaskan territory during WWII**
4
5

6Elsie Hornbacher: This is Margaret Pauline Stenson recording for the Lansing unit of the
7 Women's Overseas Service League. Margaret lives at 207 47th Avenue
8 Drive West, Bradenton, Florida 33507. She may be located at this address.
9 The date today is October 2nd, 1984. Um. Well, go ahead, Margaret. [0:37]
10 Where did y-, uh, where did you, uh, spend your time overseas?
11

12Margaret Stenson: I spent my time overseas in Alaska. Uh. My husband and I had – uh,
13 wanted to, to do something different. We were both teachers and, uh, we
14 applied and, and finally, uh, got a, an appointment to Alaska in 1933. And
15 the appointment was as teachers in, um, tsk, uh, Indian service. The
16 Alaskan Native Service Department of the, um, Department of Interior and
17 we, uh, we went to Alaska and that's where we taught in the, um, in the
18 Federal Government service for, uh, um, 15 years and then, uh, one year of
19 our service w-, uh, in Federal Government was in – uh, on the Navajo Indian
20 Reservation, so I always say that I had 16 years of Federal service.
21

22Elsie Hornbacher: [1:46] Hm. Are you on a Federal retirement system?
23

24Margaret Stenson: No, I am not [laughter] because when I – 16 years is not too much for a
25 pension and so when I came back to Michigan, uh, and brought all of my
26 teaching credits, it was better for me to be, um, retired with the Michigan
27 Retired Teachers Assoc-, uh, what do we call it, Association rather than the
28 Federal Government.
29

30Elsie Hornbacher: Hm. [2:17] Couldn't you have had both?
31

32Margaret Stenson: No, you may not have both.
33

34Elsie Hornbacher: Oh! I didn't know. Well, I'm glad to hear that.
35

36Margaret Stenson: You may not. At least that's what they told me down at the, the department
37 here, the Michigan Retired Teachers Department in Lansing.
38

39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40

41Margaret Stenson: So, they did the thing that they did. They took my, uh, years of service in
42 the Federal Government and, uh, because I went to Alaska so long
43 [laughter] ago and the salary was so, so, uh, small, and of course when I
44 came back into Michigan, then I had to pay back into their retirement

1 system and it, it worked out better for me to use those years than some of
2 my other teaching years.
3
4Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
5
6Margaret Stenson: And so now I am, I'm retired. Uh. I have a Michigan teacher's retirement
7 pension.
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: [3:13] You decided to go, uh, to Alaska then with your husband, is that
10 right?
11
12Margaret Stenson: Yes, we both went. Mm-hm. [We were] [inaudible 3:18].
13
14Elsie Hornbacher: [3:18] What did he do?
15
16Margaret Stenson: He was a teacher.
17
18Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, he was a teacher too.
19
20Margaret Stenson: He was a teacher, and we went – uh, our first station was at, uh, a little, um,
21 uh, Eskimo village called Shishmaref, and Shishmaref is on an island and
22 north of Wales in s-, in the Arctic Ocean – on the Arctic Ocean coast, and
23 we were there our first four years. Tsk. That was from 1931 – I mean '33;
24 1933 to 1937.
25
26Elsie Hornbacher: [3:51] Uh, w-, uh, roughly how far is Shishmaref from Anchorage?
27 [inaudible 3:56] about?
28
29Margaret Stenson: Tsk. Oh, it's a long, it's a long way away from Anchorage.
30
31Elsie Hornbacher: I see. Mm-hm.
32
33Margaret Stenson: Yes. It's more – i-, it's out...
34
35Elsie Hornbacher: [inaudible 4:01] five, six hundred miles?
36
37Margaret Stenson: Oh dear, I don't know in mileage.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
40
41Margaret Stenson: I, I'm gonna guess it's farther than that...
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Okay.
44

1Margaret Stenson: ...but, um, it's better to, to try to located Shishmaref from Nome. Uh,
2 Nome and Shishmaref are on the, uh, tsk, Seward Peninsula and, uh, if you
3 know where the Straits are, uh, between, uh, the United States and, and
4 Russia, then...
5
6Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
7
8Margaret Stenson: ...we were 75 miles along the coast north of that.
9
10Elsie Hornbacher: Ooh!
11
12Margaret Stenson: So, uh, we were just, uh, 15 miles south of the Arctic Circle when we were
13 at Shishmaref. [laughter]
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: Mm. Goodness. [4:43] Then you, you were able to see perpetual days in the
16 summertime, weren't you?
17
18Margaret Stenson: Yes. Yes, uh-huh. Mm-hm.
19
20Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
21
22Margaret Stenson: And it's – uh, it isn't so difficult to adjust yourself to perpetual days because
23 it's a gradual thing.
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26
27Margaret Stenson: As, uh, [inaudible 5:00] you get – you can recognize the difference in, uh,
28 daylight as – and, uh, as the daylight lengthens, 15 minutes a day of, of, uh,
29 daylight on both ends of the day...
30
31Elsie Hornbacher: Is that right?
32
33Margaret Stenson: ...adds up pretty fast.
34
35Elsie Hornbacher: It sure does.
36
37Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: I have, uh, been, uh, uh, within the Arctic Circle in Norway.
40
41Margaret Stenson: Oh, yes. Mm-hm. So, you know what that's like a little bit.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Right.
44

1Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. We were there four years and then the, uh, Federal Government
2 had decided that [throat clearing] they would – uh, all of their teachers had
3 to have a Bachelors – uh, a degree, and I did not have my degree. I needed
4 an extra year of college, so we took a year’s leave of absence and, and came
5 to, uh, tsk, Michigan – back to Michigan and, and we went to the University
6 of Michigan for a year and my husband and I got his master’s degree that
7 year at, at, uh, University of Michigan and then when I finished that year, I
8 had – I still needed six hours of credit to graduate, so I took [care of 6:11]
9 all my credits back to Western and I’m – I have my, my, uh, Bachelor of
10 Arts degree from Western Michigan University.

11

12Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. Um. [6:24] D-, d-, did you go back to Alaska...

13

14Margaret Stenson: Oh yes!

15

16Elsie Hornbacher: ...after that then?

17

18Margaret Stenson: Oh yes. Then we went back, and when we went back, i-, that year in 1938,
19 uh, Mr. Stenson, uh, took a job with the Reindeer Service and we lived in
20 Nome that year.

21

22Elsie Hornbacher: [6:40] With the reindeer, did you say?

23

24Margaret Stenson: With the Reindeer Service. The U.S. Government Reindeer Service.

25

26Elsie Hornbacher: [6:45] You went to Nome.

27

28Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. We were in Nome, and I taught in the, in the, uh, Alaska Native
29 Service School in Nome and then, uh, tsk, he was in the Reindeer Service,
30 but then the, the government moved us, uh, the next year, 1939, to Kotzebue
31 and, uh, he – and we were in Kotzebue when, uh, uh, the, the, uh, Japanese
32 invaded Alaska.

33

34Elsie Hornbacher: [7:17] Uh, what islands had the Japanese taken, do you remember?

35

36Margaret Stenson: Well, I remember that they, uh, had taken the island, uh, of Attu and also in
37 this area of, uh, Unimak...

38

39Elsie Hornbacher: [7:32] Unimak?

40

41Margaret Stenson: ...pass. Unimak. The island of Unimak and the Unimak pass part, uh,
42 Dutch Harbor – in the area of Dutch Harbor, uh, but, uh, of course, we were
43 up in the – in Kotzebue and, um, uh, we were there for – in, in Kotzebue at
44 the time that, uh, that, uh, of – let’s see, that would be 19 – December 1941.

1
2Elsie Hornbacher: 1941.
3
4Margaret Stenson: Is that right?
5
6Elsie Hornbacher: December 19-, uh, that's when Pearl Harbor was taken...
7
8Margaret Stenson: Yes. Okay. That's it.
9
10Elsie Hornbacher: ...December 7. Uh-huh.
11
12Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm.
13
14Elsie Hornbacher: [8:10] Weren't you afraid?
15
16Margaret Stenson: [laughter] Well, I was a long, I was a long way from, from the Aleutian
17 Islands because – I, uh, should tell ya that we had in our home just, um, a
18 battery radio and we – uh, it was a good radio, but we were a long ways
19 away from anyplace where we could get extra batteries, so we were always
20 very careful about not turning on the radio for anything but news, and so on
21 the, on the, uh, that would be the, the probably the – not the very day but it
22 would be the morning that we would – could've heard about it or we might
23 have been able to hear about the attack on the Aleutians by the Japanese.
24 Uh, if we had a – had the radio on all – constantly, but we didn't because we
25 had to save the battery...
26
27Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
28
29Margaret Stenson: ...of the radio. So, Mr. Stenson was one of these people who loved to sleep
30 on Saturday morning and he was upstairs in our home sleeping, and I got up
31 that morning and I was finishing my Christmas cards because I, I still didn't
32 have all of my Christmas letters and my Christmas cards done. And he – uh,
33 when he got up, he turned on the radio, and I, I can still remember how
34 disgusted he was with me because I had not turned on the radio and I had
35 missed all of this news of the Japanese attack. But of course, [laughter] he
36 could have been out of bed earlier, too, and [laughter] listened to it. But that
37 was how we happened to hear about it.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40
41Margaret Stenson: And then, uh, that day they, um, all of the, uh, um, government people in
42 Kotzebue, uh, met, and I think that it would be better for me now to stop and
43 tell about k-, a little bit about Kotzebue...
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: Go ahead.

2

3Margaret Stenson: ...uh, because in Kotzebue we had, uh, a government school – uh, a-,
4 Alaskan Native Service School for the Eskimos and that school, uh, was
5 from – of Kindergarten through the 8th grades and then if any of the
6 children after they finished 8th grade wanted to go on to school, they went
7 to boarding schools either in Alaska or down in the lower states, but in
8 Kotzebue, we had the government school, then we had a government
9 hospital with doctors and nurses, we had, uh, a Signal Core and at that time
10 at the Signal Core, there were two men, uh, and they were married and their
11 wives lived there. We had a commissioner – u-, United States
12 commissioner, we had a United States Post Office, and all of these
13 government, uh, uh, organizations were – uh, at that time they, they were,
14 um, um, run by White people, not – we did not have native people in those
15 days in those positions. But besides that, in Kotzebue, we had three large,
16 big trading company stores; huge, big companies and they did all of the, um,
17 all of the, uh, business and the trading. And then besides that, we had an
18 airplane company that was – a small airplane company that was located in
19 Kotzebue. Uh, that gives you an idea that we had, uh, uh, quite a few people
20 there who were government people, so that...

21

22Elsie Hornbacher: [12:19] By quite a few, do you mean 50 or do you mean 100?

23

24Margaret Stenson: I – uh-huh, around 50 people.

25

26Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.

27

28Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. A-, and they were all in some way – except the store people, were
29 connuc-, connected with the – with different departments of the government.

30

31Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.

32

33Margaret Stenson: So on, on the day of [sighing], of, um, Pearl Harbor Day, they all met plus,
34 uh, the people – the native people who were on the Native Counsel and, uh,
35 th-, they made a decision that, that they would, um, tsk, have to do
36 something to, uh, guard or to protect Kotzebue. And, uh, um, they had – uh,
37 um, the, the, uh, Signal Core men sort of took charge because they felt that
38 they were the closest to the, the army – uh, the military of any of us, so they
39 took charge, and right away at this meeting they decided that, uh, they
40 would have to, um, organize all of the men in town; that would include all of
41 the Eskimo, uh, men as well as the, the, the government men and the White
42 men. And they listed – they made a list of everybody and then they
43 assigned different, uh, parts of the, of the little village that they were to
44 guard and, uh, the, um, thing that, that was really interesting was that, um,

1 Thor was to – my husband, Thor, was to guard the schoolhouse and, uh, he
2 had a – uh, his – uh, he had several guns but he carried his, uh, .30-06 that
3 night, and he, he walked all the way around all – uh, he did guard duty all
4 around the schoolhouse, and I was the one that was only inside being
5 guarded.
6
7Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter]
8
9Margaret Stenson: Then they had...
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: One man...
12
13Margaret Stenson: ...one man.
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: ... guarding the schoolhouse.
16
17Margaret Stenson: One man was guarding and I was inside.
18
19Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter] With a little communication, a radio that has batteries were
20 limited. [laughter] [14:44] How did you...
21
22Margaret Stenson: Well.
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: ...get supplies there, by the way?
25
26Margaret Stenson: To Kotzebue?
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: [14:48] Uh, did you – and – but the battery, uh, how often did you get them?
29
30Margaret Stenson: We got – uh, our supplies came in those days by, uh, by, um, tsk, freighter.
31
32Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. [14:59] And how often?
33
34Margaret Stenson: Th-, uh-huh. The – they came – we always got at least, uh, one big, um,
35 freighter from Seattle, where the Alaska Steamship Company came at least
36 once a year and then...
37
38Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, once a year! [laughter]
39
40Margaret Stenson: Once a year. And then we had, um, we had a mail boat that came from
41 Nome at least twice a month during the summertime.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: I see.
44

1Margaret Stenson: And, uh, then we had, uh, the government boat came only once from Seattle
2 in, into Kotzebue.
3

4Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
5

6Margaret Stenson: And, um, uh, now Kotzebue is in – on Kotzebue – um, up the Kotzebue
7 Sound, and, uh, the ship – i-, that’s, uh, uh, tsk, shallow, so the big ships are
8 not able to come into Kotzebue. They have to be, uh, lightered. Uh.
9 Everything had to be lightered from the big ship in the – and the, uh, big
10 freighter lay off, uh, shore from Kotzebue at least 15 miles.
11

12Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
13

14Margaret Stenson: And, um, e-, everything was – everything came by boat in those days except
15 we had airplanes, and our airplanes, um, could bring us things from
16 Fairbanks.
17

18Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
19

20Margaret Stenson: But, uh, um, I’ll go back to this, um, business of, of, uh, how the men had
21 organized. Well, [throat clearing] they, they guarded the Signal Core
22 buildings, they guarded the hospital, they guarded the commissioner’s, uh,
23 um, home and little office and the post office, and then – now this was in, in
24 deep winter and so the thing...
25

26Elsie Hornbacher: It was cold.
27

28Margaret Stenson: Yes! And when p-, we had lots of snow and big snowbanks, so the thing
29 that they did down at the Signal Core, uh, I think that the Signal Core
30 people, because they, they had ways of, of hearing what was going on and
31 we didn’t, that they, um, they were more frightened than we were because,
32 uh, I, I f-, I think that, that we knew that they could come in by airplane but
33 at that time of the year, they couldn’t have possibly gotten in by ship to us.
34 And, uh, but the thing that they did at the Signal Core, tsk, they, uh, um, had
35 paths, uh, that they had cut out of the snow and they let everybody know
36 that if, uh, anybody, uh, came at – and approached the building and didn’t
37 stay on the path, that they’d shoot’m!
38

39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40

41Margaret Stenson: So, when you had to take, uh, a telegram down to have it sent out by the
42 Signal Core people, you were mighty careful where you walked and let them
43 know that you were coming so [laughter] they didn’t starting shooting you.
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter]
2
3Margaret Stenson: Well, my husband and the doctor had, uh, talked it over and they had said
4 that, uh, they would have to have another meeting because the Eskimo men,
5 uh, would not be able to stand the amount of time, uh, guarding these
6 buildings that the, the committee had decided that they would have to do
7 because Eskimo people do not – uh, they, they have to go out in their – uh,
8 with their dogsleds. And in those days, it was dogsled, not, not these, uh,
9 snowmobiles.
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
12
13Margaret Stenson: I understand now they use snowmobiles, but in those days, it was
14 dogsleds...
15
16Elsie Hornbacher: [19:11] How many dogs to a sled? I've often wondered.
17
18Margaret Stenson: ...and dogs. Uh, anywhere from eight – uh, seven, they're uneven numbers,
19 seven to 15...
20
21Elsie Hornbacher: Oh.
22
23Margaret Stenson: ...depending on where they were going, what condition the weather was in,
24 how far the trip was going to be, who was going with them, how big the
25 load would be. All depended. They didn't have to take, uh, the same
26 number every time, but I've seen...
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: They're nice dogs too. Uh, h-, I had a sled dog.
29
30Margaret Stenson: Yeah. Uh-huh. Um. The – um, so they decided that the men, uh, couldn't
31 take that much time out of their, out of their daily, weekly chores that they
32 had to do because they had to go after, they had to go after fuel, they had to
33 go after wood, they had to go after, uh, um, tsk, uh, dog food, they had to
34 w-, go and, and take care of their traps, um, their trapline, and, uh, they had
35 to fish, do ice fishing. They had to go to wherever they have their caches
36 with their food, and so, tsk, finally they had another meeting and at the, the
37 next meeting, they finally had to convince the, um, uh, Signal Core men –
38 those two Signal Core men that it, it was, it was impossible for them to do it
39 because they weren't prepared, and, uh, it might be interesting to know that
40 actually Eskimo people did not bring in a tremendous amount of supplies
41 into a village for, uh – and have it there right in the village for the winter
42 because in their culture, their culture says that if you have a supply and at
43 this moment you're not needing it and using it, then you sort of have to let
44 me borrow it and I will eventually pay it back, but – uh, my husband used to

1 talk to the, um, the Eskimo men, uh, when he was out at [corralling 21:29]
2 and when he was out at camps with'm and he'd say to them, I can't
3 understand why you don't bring in a tremendous amount of wood in the boat
4 in the summertime and have it! And they'd say, 'Well, if I did that, my – I,
5 I wouldn't have enough to last me the winter because it's our way that if you
6 ask me for it and I have it, I must give it to you and I would – I, I would be
7 giving away...
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
10
11Margaret Stenson: ...uh, my winter supply and I can't, I, I can't do that.'
12
13Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
14
15Margaret Stenson: So, uh, they, uh, uh, s-, we White people, we thought well, my goodness. It
16 would be so much simpler [throat clearing], but we didn't understand some
17 of their problems that they had. Now, another thing that I remember about
18 that particular time – that right – those few weeks right after Pearl Harbor,
19 uh, one day, uh, a native man came – an Eskimo came to Mr. Stenson. He
20 said, "May I borrow your .30-06?" And, uh, Thor said, "What, what do you
21 need to do?" And this Eskimo was quite excited at the moment and he said,
22 "Well." He said, [throat clearing] "Uh, my gun isn't very good." And he
23 said, "I'm going – uh, now we have seen somebody walking down by the
24 inlet and we're sure, we're sure that it's, it's, uh, somebody that's a stranger
25 that has come." Uh, and, uh, they, they didn't know whether it was a Jap-,
26 Japanese or who it was, but they were – he was frightened and so Thor said,
27 "Yes, uh, you take the gun, but you better be sure that, that it isn't somebody
28 that, uh, you know. Before you shoot, be sure you know who it is." And
29 pretty soon, the native came back and he said it was the priest. [laughter]
30 The priest had on a, on a long black overcoat, and they'd never seen him
31 wear that and he was walking along the inlet that's behi-, on the shore
32 behind the, the village. But, um, then...
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: [23:55] How did you get those paths, uh, cleared out? Did you shovel'm by
35 hand?
36
37Margaret Stenson: They shoveled. Mm-hm.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: [24:00] By hand.
40
41Margaret Stenson: By hand.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
44

1Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. We didn't have, uh...
2
3Elsie Hornbacher: A snowblower. [laughter]
4
5Margaret Stenson: ...snowblowers in those days at all, no.
6
7Elsie Hornbacher: Well that would be a lot of shoveling.
8
9Margaret Stenson: Yes.
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: [24:10] How deep were they? I would imagine...
12
13Margaret Stenson: Oh! They, um, they were probably as high as my hips are.
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, I see. Mm-hm.
16
17Margaret Stenson: They weren't – uh, where the paths were. Uh, it would depend on where the
18 snowbanks were.
19
20Elsie Hornbacher: Right.
21
22Margaret Stenson: Now, in the – I think – uh, we always think of Alaska as having lots of
23 snow...
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26
27Margaret Stenson: ...and in northern Alaska, we don't have that much snow, but it looks as if
28 we do because of the snowbanks.
29
30Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
31
32Margaret Stenson: The wind blows the snow and, and it – any, anything that it hits, any
33 obstruction, then it begins to pile up beside that but it's – you – we had
34 snowbanks clear out to our second story windows...
35
36Elsie Hornbacher: Mm.
37
38Margaret Stenson: ...in our buildings, but I could see the grass sticking out on the – over on
39 the, uh, runway of – for the airplanes or out on the meadow.
40
41Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
42
43Margaret Stenson: So, it wasn't that we had, you know, lots of deep snow all over, it was...
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: Right.
2
3Margaret Stenson: ...it blew into the village and blew a huge, big...
4
5Elsie Hornbacher: I know my children in school, in science [throat clearing] always when I
6 said it doesn't snow when it, uh, gets real cold, and the children wondered
7 how we had so much snow in Alaska...
8
9Margaret Stenson: Hm.
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: ...if it didn't snow when it was, you know, way...
12
13Margaret Stenson: Hm.
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: ...below zero, and I explained to them that, uh, there was drifting and then
16 there were periods...
17
18Margaret Stenson: Yes.
19
20Elsie Hornbacher: ...of time when it did snow when the temperatures would be hovering
21 around...
22
23Margaret Stenson: That's right.
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: ...the freezing point.
26
27Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. We had a hu-, uh, every year we had a huge snowbank
28 between the hospital and, and the schoolhouse...
29
30Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
31
32Margaret Stenson: ...in Kotzebue and that's where we had our bomb shelter.
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
35
36Margaret Stenson: They – the, uh, men had dug – uh, actually they had dug a tunnel betw-, uh,
37 right – so we didn't have to go over the snowbank to get to the hospital...
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40
41Margaret Stenson: ...and then they had enlarged that tunnel so that it became the bomb shelter
42 and we had, uh, tsk, uh, we had drills...
43
44Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.

1
2Margaret Stenson: ...uh, with the schoolchildren where we went out and, uh, and had a – we
3 had the bell – the bell would be rung and, and all of the children, uh, went
4 out of the schoolhouse and into the bomb shelter...
5
6Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
7
8Margaret Stenson: ...and then, um, tsk, uh, and then the all-clear sign would, would clear and,
9 and give us th-, they'd ring the bell, I suppose that was it. I can't remember
10 how, w-, how they did it, but, um, tsk, then we'd all go back into the
11 schoolhouse. So, we did have, uh, we had bomb shelter drills and, and, uh,
12 um, tsk, then, uh, they, uh, organized the Alaska – tsk, let me think now
13 what it's called. Uh, [sighing] the, um, Alaska Native, Alaska Native, uh,
14 not Signal Core but...
15
16Elsie Hornbacher: [27:21] Guard?
17
18Margaret Stenson: ...uh, guard.
19
20Elsie Hornbacher: Uh-huh.
21
22Margaret Stenson: Yeah. National Guard, that's it.
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: Okay.
25
26Margaret Stenson: The Alaska Native National Guard.
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
29
30Margaret Stenson: And, uh, Mr. Stenson was one of the officers in the Alaska Native National
31 Guard...
32
33Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
34
35Margaret Stenson: ...and a great many of the, of the, uh, uh, boys – uh, they, uh, tsk, registered
36 for the draft and, uh, a great many of the Eskimo boys went into the Army,
37 and I always think it's rather interesting that, uh, tsk, uh, they sent the
38 Alaskan boys to Alabama and North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana,
39 and then they – the, uh, army that – uh, the army units, they came up to
40 Alaska, came from the deep south too. [laughter] So they, they, [laughter]
41 they sent our boys out and they sent other Southern boys in.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
44

1Margaret Stenson: Uh, but, uh, now, there were – as far as, uh, shipping was concerned, there
2 were no ships that came into the Arctic because – uh, at that time of the
3 year, no ships came through the, uh, tsk...
4

5Elsie Hornbacher: [28:42] Bering Straits?
6

7Margaret Stenson: ...the Bering Straits...
8

9Elsie Hornbacher: I see.
10

11Margaret Stenson: ...until, until, uh, summertime the next summer.
12

13Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. [28:49] What did you eat up there?
14

15Margaret Stenson: Well, in Kotzebue, we ate food – canned food...
16

17Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
18

19Margaret Stenson: ...a lot. In Kotzebue – you remember I told you we had three big trading
20 posts...
21

22Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
23

24Margaret Stenson: ...and those trading posts had all kinds of, of, uh, food.
25

26Elsie Hornbacher: [29:08] By big, do you mean... [laughing]
27

28Margaret Stenson: I mean – I'm – uh, let me think. Uh, uh.
29

30Elsie Hornbacher: Not as big as a Kroger's store or Meijer's store here! [laughter]
31

32Margaret Stenson: Ah ha. [inaudible 29:18] D-, the, uh, depot – the Michigan Central Depot
33 downtown?
34

35Elsie Hornbacher: Yes. Mm-hm.
36

37Margaret Stenson: As big as that.
38

39Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, I see. [29:26] And you had lots of food there...
40

41Margaret Stenson: And we had lots of food.
42

43Elsie Hornbacher: ...so you didn't have to worry about eating, then.
44

1Margaret Stenson: No. And, and in...
2
3Elsie Hornbacher: Except the monotony of it.
4
5Margaret Stenson: Yeah. Now in those days when we lived there in nine-, in Kotzebue...
6
7Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
8
9Margaret Stenson: ...from nineteen – uh, I'd like to back up a little bit...
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: Go ahead.
12
13Margaret Stenson: ...because, uh, um, out here where Shishmaref was, our first station on
14 Seward Peninsula, there were several reindeer herds...
15
16Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
17
18Margaret Stenson: ...uh, and, and, uh, we had a, a very excellent, uh, man, uh, who was, uh,
19 um, a rancher from, uh, Montana, I believe, and he told the government – he
20 was a government man, and he had charge of this as-, this area and he said
21 that if they did not, uh, kill off, uh, more, uh, or, what should I call it, lessen
22 their herds...
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
25
26Margaret Stenson: ...that they wouldn't have any reindeer in a few years.
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: Right. They'd die in the winter.
29
30Margaret Stenson: Th-, huh, that they – yes.
31
32Elsie Hornbacher: Food supply.
33
34Margaret Stenson: It was – they – there was plenty of food supply for summer grazing...
35
36Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
37
38Margaret Stenson: ...but reindeer eat reindeer moss...
39
40Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
41
42Margaret Stenson: ...and – in the wintertime, and when they dis-, when they've eaten up and
43 have no more reindeer moss, then there were – then they either migrate or
44 they die.

1
2Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
3
4Margaret Stenson: And so, we went in 1933, uh, to Shishmaref. Plenty of reindeer. By the
5 time we got up to Kotzebue in 1939, the herds had been depleted 'til there,
6 there were hardly any herds left. Now the Noorvik, uh, village had a good
7 herd. Kivalina had, uh, still had a herd. So, you're asking what we ate, we
8 always had reindeer.
9
10Elsie Hornbacher: Meat.
11
12Margaret Stenson: All – reindeer meat all the time.
13
14Elsie Hornbacher: [31:29] How does it taste? I ate it. It was dried the time I had it.
15
16Margaret Stenson: Reindeer meat – uh, rein-, that's right. Because, uh...
17
18Elsie Hornbacher: Like beef, only dried.
19
20Margaret Stenson: ...the fat, the fat on a reindeer lays just under the skin.
21
22Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
23
24Margaret Stenson: And it isn't...
25
26Elsie Hornbacher: Marbled.
27
28Margaret Stenson: ...marbled like beef is. S-, you have to know how to cook and you have to
29 add spices and you have to add, you have to add some extra fat because as a
30 rule, um, it is dry. It is drier than most meat, but it tastes like, it tastes like,
31 uh, Michigan deer.
32
33Elsie Hornbacher: Yes, I would say so, too.
34
35Margaret Stenson: Yeah, it does. Uh-huh.
36
37Elsie Hornbacher: [32:16] Did you have milk of any sort up there?
38
39Margaret Stenson: No. We had canned milk...
40
41Elsie Hornbacher: [32:20] But you didn't have [inaudible 32:21].
42
43Margaret Stenson: ...but we had no cows.
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: [32:22] No cows up there.
2
3Margaret Stenson: No, no cows. Mm-hm. They had...
4
5Elsie Hornbacher: [32:25] There weren't any babies up there, were there?
6
7Margaret Stenson: What?
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: [32:27] There weren't any babies up there, were there?
10
11Margaret Stenson: Baby what?
12
13Elsie Hornbacher: Baby children.
14
15Margaret Stenson: Oh, yes.
16
17Elsie Hornbacher: They would need milk but they would have to nurse'm [inaudible 32:35].
18
19Margaret Stenson: They didn't – that's right.
20
21Elsie Hornbacher: Or they could have the canned milk.
22
23Margaret Stenson: Oh, I see...
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26
27Margaret Stenson: ...what you mean. Yes.
28
29Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
30
31Margaret Stenson: But there were cows in Nome...
32
33Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, I see. Then you could have gotten some [inaudible 32:43].
34
35Margaret Stenson: ...and there – yes, in Nome there were cows.
36
37Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
38
39Margaret Stenson: So, uh, you could buy milk but, uh, i-, after you live in Alaska for a while,
40 you get so that you like canned milk.
41
42Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
43

1Margaret Stenson: And, uh, uh, wherever the native people could afford to buy canned milk,
2 they bought it, uh, especially in Kotzebue because Kotzebue was more of a,
3 of a place where people had opportunities to work and to make, uh, money.
4

5Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
6

7Margaret Stenson: They didn't have to do it all by the fishing and hunting.
8

9Elsie Hornbacher: [33:21] Did you get out of Kotzebue very often?
10

11Margaret Stenson: Out of there?
12

13Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
14

15Margaret Stenson: Well the first...
16

17Elsie Hornbacher: [33:26] Did you travel, I mean?
18

19Margaret Stenson: Yes. Uh, the, the first summer that we lived in Kotzebue, we went, um, uh,
20 we went on a, a trip up the Kobuk River, uh, to, um, to Shungnak, and I
21 stayed with the government teacher at Shungnak and, uh, Mr. Stenson went
22 on with two other men and he went on up into the, uh, the Colville River on
23 a, a hunting trip, uh, a, uh, tsk, oh, a sheep hunting trip.
24

25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26

27Margaret Stenson: Dall – he was hunting for Dall sheep. And, uh, then, uh, the other summer
28 that we were there – full summer we were in Kotzebue, we had, um, a
29 nursery school, uh, or a preschool. A summer school. Uh, and we – well,
30 we had that – every summer that we were in Alaska we had – teaching in the
31 Native Service. We always had summer schools, and we did other things,
32 fun things rather than, uh, than the regular school curriculum.
33

34Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. [34:38] What – uh, how many children did you have in school up
35 there?
36

37Margaret Stenson: Well, in Kotzebue, we must have had around, uh, a-, a-, approximately 90 to
38 100 children, and there we did have an extra teacher.
39

40Elsie Hornbacher: [34:51] You had three teachers?
41

42Margaret Stenson: We had – uh-huh. We had, uh, three teachers. One time – one year, we had
43 four t-, uh, four teachers and all Mr. Stenson did was to be the principal and
44 then the other three, uh...

1
2Elsie Hornbacher: Taught.
3
4Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh.
5
6Elsie Hornbacher: Oh.
7
8Margaret Stenson: Because there's a tremendous work in Kotzebue to be done.
9
10Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
11
12Margaret Stenson: Uh, since it was the hub of all of the business of the upriver stations. There
13 was Noorvik, Selawik, Kivalina, Kiana, Shungnak, uh, did I say Noorvik?
14 And all those, uh, all those stations came downriver to – in the summertime,
15 there were approximately 15,000 people in Kotzebue in the summertime.
16
17Elsie Hornbacher: [35:37] You said there was a lot of work up there. What do you mean by a
18 lot of work?
19
20Margaret Stenson: Well, just, uh, just the kind of – well, for instance, if supplies came in, they
21 came into our warehouse. All of those supplies had to be redistributed and
22 go upriver by, uh, by, uh, riverboat.
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: Oh.
25
26Margaret Stenson: And that, uh, that kind of business.
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: [36:00] You mentioned, uh, being in the second story. D-, you lived in a
29 house. A wooden frame house? Or a brick house?
30
31Margaret Stenson: Yes.
32
33Elsie Hornbacher: [36:06] What kind of a house?
34
35Margaret Stenson: Lived in a great big barn of a building, and we had – uh, one end of it was
36 our house and the other end of it was – uh, downstairs was the s-, the
37 schoolroom for the upper grades and then upstairs was my, my r-, my room,
38 my, uh, schoolroom for the, uh, the elementary – I mean the lower ones.
39 Lower grades.
40
41Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. Oh, I see.
42
43Margaret Stenson: And I had Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd...
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
2
3Margaret Stenson: ...uh, uh, I think I usually had the 3rd grade and the other teacher in another
4 building, in another building had, uh, the 4th, 5th, and 6th, and then they –
5 we'd have 7th and 8th. It depended how the, the number of, uh, children per
6 grade worked out. We kind of fixed it so that around 30 children in the – in
7 a room.
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: [37:03] Did you have help or did you have to do all your work yourself in
10 your home?
11
12Margaret Stenson: I had a maid.
13
14Elsie Hornbacher: You had a maid.
15
16Margaret Stenson: Yes. In Kotz-...
17
18Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. [37:10] She made your bed and did some cooking for you?
19
20Margaret Stenson: In, in, Kotzebue I had to have a maid because c-, uh, my, my government
21 home was the only place for travelers – for the government people that, that
22 came, uh, back and forth. They, uh, supervisors and people from the Juneau
23 office and people from Washington, and even I have had the governor of
24 Alaska at my home in Kotzebue.
25
26Elsie Hornbacher: [37:40] So you had to entertain them, too, in addition to being a teacher.
27
28Margaret Stenson: Uh, yes. Mm-hm.
29
30Elsie Hornbacher: [37:44] You had to act as an official host.
31
32Margaret Stenson: Yes. And I had...
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. Hostess.
35
36Margaret Stenson: ...to – I had to have, uh, help there, but, um, I, I should've had help every
37 place wherever I lived but I, I didn't. When I lived at Shishmaref, I didn't
38 have help.
39
40Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
41
42Margaret Stenson: I didn't have maid service.
43
44Elsie Hornbacher: [38:03] Did your experience take you out of Alaska?

1
2Margaret Stenson: To go to something outside of Alaska?
3
4Elsie Hornbacher: Yeah. [38:10] Did you ever go to any other country?
5
6Margaret Stenson: Well, uh, I've been outside of – I've been outside the United States but not,
7 not for any reason...
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: [38:20] Not for government service.
10
11Margaret Stenson: No. Not for government service, no.
12
13Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
14
15Margaret Stenson: The only other government service that I did outside of Alaska was the year
16 that we lived on the Navajo Indian Reservation.
17
18Elsie Hornbacher: [38:31] Oh, that was in, uh, what state?
19
20Margaret Stenson: That was in ariz-, Arizona.
21
22Elsie Hornbacher: Arizona.
23
24Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. But that, uh, that, um, tsk, uh, that was in 1950, '51.
25
26Elsie Hornbacher: [38:44] Then you were in Alaska for a total of how many years?
27
28Margaret Stenson: Well, I – we went there in 1933...
29
30Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
31
32Margaret Stenson: ...and we took, we took a year's leave of absence to go to the university.
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: [inaudible 38:59] college. Right.
35
36Margaret Stenson: And then another time we took a year's leave of absence and went to, to
37 Europe.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40
41Margaret Stenson: And, uh, uh, so, the years that we were in Alaska added up to 19 years.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Nineteen years.
44

1Margaret Stenson: Wait a minute. Uh, I, I'm wrong. Uh, 18 years.
2
3Elsie Hornbacher: Eighteen.
4
5Margaret Stenson: Because the thing that we did, we – when we, uh, tsk, uh, went to Europe in
6 1950 for our year's leave of absence, then when we came back, instead of
7 going back to Alaska, we went to the Navajo.
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
10
11Margaret Stenson: Then from, from the Navajo, uh, then we went – w-, we did go back to
12 Alaska but when we went back, we didn't go into the Government Service,
13 we went and taught in the Territorial Service...
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
16
17Margaret Stenson: ...because Alaska was a territory all of the time that I ever lived there.
18
19Elsie Hornbacher: I see. [39:57] You never lived there, uh, when it was a state.
20
21Margaret Stenson: I never have lived there since it was a state.
22
23Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. [40:01] Uh, how did you, uh, take the end of the war in, in Alaska?
24
25Margaret Stenson: Well, this is what happened. I don't – I, I've never believed that, um, tsk, a
26 woman should work [laughter] as long her husband had a job.
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter]
29
30Margaret Stenson: I thought there were other things that were important for a woman to do.
31 But when I went to Alaska, I started working, and I, I continued to work
32 from then on. [laughter]
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter]
35
36Margaret Stenson: But, um, uh, I, uh, I had sort of promised or said that alright, if I worked
37 then we'll save what I make and we'll use that for travel and education.
38 And, uh, so we had a little plan in our mind when we went that we would
39 stay in alas-, in Alaska and work for four years then we, we'd go out for
40 four years on s-, on a trip. Then we'd go back in for four years. And that
41 worked fine until the war came along and when, when, uh, we were
42 supposed to have our, our year off in 1942, we wrote to the office in Juneau
43 and asked them if, uh, th-, if we could have a year's leave of absence and,
44 uh, told them what we wanted to do; that we wanted to go to Europe. And

1 the, the, um, uh, office wrote back and wanted to know if we didn't know
2 that there was a war on and nobody was taking [laughter] vacations. And
3 we said, well, then they – uh, we wrote back and we said alright, if you want
4 – if you don't want us to take our year's leave of absence, then, uh, i-, we
5 will be glad to take a station in southeastern Alaska. So, they, they
6 transferred us from Kotzebue to southeastern Alaska to a, a school at
7 Klawock and actually, we were then in Klawock during the rest of the war
8 years and that's down in southeastern Alaska. Um, tsk, uh, just, just west of
9 Ketchikan...
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
12
13Margaret Stenson: ...eh, uh, on Prince of Wales Island.
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: [42:30] And that's south of Juneau? Mm-hm.
16
17Margaret Stenson: Yes.
18
19Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
20
21Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. And so, we were there during the rest of the war and it, uh, the
22 Japanese had even invaded some of the – this area, uh...
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: [42:44] By invaded, you mean they had [captured] [inaudible] 42:45].
25
26Margaret Stenson: Uh, they had, they had come ashore. They had come ashore and had, uh...
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: [42:50] And taken the buildings the Americans had?
29
30Margaret Stenson: Yes.
31
32Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
33
34Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. Now, um, uh, when they attacked out here in the Aleutians, they
35 killed the schoolteacher at Attu...
36
37Elsie Hornbacher: Hm. I see.
38
39Margaret Stenson: ...and they took his wife – captured. They captured her, took her captive...
40
41Elsie Hornbacher: Oh.
42
43Margaret Stenson: ...and she was interned in, uh, Japan for the rest of the war. Then she was
44 returned after the war.

1
2Elsie Hornbacher: I see.
3
4Margaret Stenson: So, they, they, they actually had a battle here.
5
6Elsie Hornbacher: When I was in Japan, uh, someone in Hokkaido told me that they believed
7 that Japan had invaded half of the United States.
8
9Margaret Stenson: Hm.
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: Well, [laughter] if one considers these limited...
12
13Margaret Stenson: Yes.
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: ...islands – I probably shouldn't say limited, but, uh, in size...
16
17Margaret Stenson: Yeah.
18
19Elsie Hornbacher: ...and so forth, it actually does cover half of the United States, so maybe
20 there was a bit of truth in that.
21
22Margaret Stenson: Well, they...
23
24Elsie Hornbacher: A [mite 43:46] of truth...
25
26Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh.
27
28Elsie Hornbacher: ...let's say.
29
30Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. They, [throat clearing] they did. They did have, uh, some
31 skirmishes...
32
33Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
34
35Margaret Stenson: ...in this area, but in the Aleutian area, that's where, that's where the, uh,
36 uh, attack really took place as far as Alaska.
37
38Elsie Hornbacher: I know I, I wrote to someone in Adak, uh, at that time...
39
40Margaret Stenson: Yes. Adak's the [inaudible 44:08].
41
42Elsie Hornbacher: ...and I remember, I remember reading the article in *Reader's Digest*.
43
44Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

1
2Elsie Hornbacher: I was told to read it.
3
4Margaret Stenson: Yes. Uh-huh. And, and all during, all during the war, this, uh, area along
5 the Aleutians was, uh, was protected and, and, uh.
6
7Elsie Hornbacher: I stopped on Adak t-, at Adak too...
8
9Margaret Stenson: Yeah. Uh-huh.
10
11Elsie Hornbacher: ...one time when we came back from Japan.
12
13Margaret Stenson: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I had forgotten about Adak. But, uh, uh, actually though
14 the thing that I think that, uh, down in Klawock, the thing that I remember
15 the most about the war period was that, uh, our food – our fresh food was
16 limited. Uh, the coast guard boats used to, uh, be in there. Uh, they didn't,
17 uh, they, they didn't, uh, dock s-, so much at, uh, Klawock but at Craig.
18 They were stationed at, at Craig.
19
20Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
21
22Margaret Stenson: And, uh, all of our fresh fruits and meats and things like that went to the
23 Coast Guard rather than, than to...
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26
27Margaret Stenson: ...be available for us.
28
29Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
30
31Margaret Stenson: So, we ate a lot of canned meat and down in Klawock, the farmer had, uh,
32 cows and, uh, we had meat and milk. Uh, regular beef.
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
35
36Margaret Stenson: And lots of fish. Lots of fish. Wherever we lived in Alaska, we had l-, a lot
37 of fish.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: [45:38] Uh, did you find any adjustment when you came back to the lower
40 48?
41
42Margaret Stenson: Tsk, no. Uh, the o-, [laughter] the only adjustment I really ever had to make
43 was driving a car...
44

1Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, yes, [inaudible 45:51] up there. Right.
2
3Margaret Stenson: ...because I lived, I lived without a car.
4
5Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
6
7Margaret Stenson: Um.
8
9Elsie Hornbacher: [45:56] Did it seem kinda good to get off those, uh, big bulky clothes you
10 had to wear up there?
11
12Margaret Stenson: [laughter] Well, really and truly, tsk, um, I d-, I never did, uh, uh, wear, um,
13 heavy, heavy clothes. I did have, uh, a parka...
14
15Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
16
17Margaret Stenson: ...and the parka, uh, uh, was given to me. Uh, the, the traveling nurse,
18 Mildred Keaton, had, uh, brought the parka down to Shishmaref from
19 Kotzebue. It had belonged to an Eskimo that had died and she [laughter] –
20 it was a sweet little thing, uh, made of, uh, ground squirrels and so – and she
21 says, “We’re not gonna put that in the casket with him!” So, she brought it
22 and that was the only parka I ever owned as far as a fur parka is concerned.
23 And then, uh, I had – uh, I always wore shoes...
24
25Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
26
27Margaret Stenson: ...uh, and, uh, then I had, uh, mukluks made, but they – uh, almost like, uh,
28 like what we wear now days. Galoshes.
29
30Elsie Hornbacher: Like bedroom slippers. Mm-hm.
31
32Margaret Stenson: Galoshes!
33
34Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm. Yeah.
35
36Margaret Stenson: And I have a zipper in the front of it and, and it came up to my knees and all
37 I did was, um, just wear my shoe in it.
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
40
41Margaret Stenson: Stick my shoe in just like, uh, like I could in a big galosh.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
44

1Margaret Stenson: And, uh, the thing that you had to have was a hood, and we had –
2 everybody, everybody, natives and everybody wear cover parkas.
3
4Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
5
6Margaret Stenson: The – and then the – even the fur or the skin or your coat just doesn't get
7 soiled. You wear a cover parka and then the cover parka goes into the
8 washing machine or into the – uh...
9
10Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
11
12Margaret Stenson: ...to the – to be washed. And it's made out of white denim and, uh, usually
13 it has, uh – and it has a pocket in the front, a big pocket so you, you can put
14 all kinds of things in it – in your pocket, and you don't carry things in your
15 hands. And then, uh, uh, it has a – uh, the important thing is the hood and
16 the fur that goes around the face. My, my cover parka had, uh, polar bear
17 skin on it. Polar s-, bear ruff for a...
18
19Elsie Hornbacher: [48:21] Did you have a polar bear rug by your bed, too?
20
21Margaret Stenson: No, but I had a black bear rug in my home.
22
23Elsie Hornbacher: Oh, you had a black bear rug.
24
25Margaret Stenson: I had a black bear rug...
26
27Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
28
29Margaret Stenson: ...that came from the Kobuk River area.
30
31Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.
32
33Margaret Stenson: I, I said I'd never live again without a bear rug...
34
35Elsie Hornbacher: [laughter]
36
37Margaret Stenson: ...in my house, but [laughter]...
38
39Elsie Hornbacher: [48:37] Down in Florida, you probably don't have one now, do you?
40
41Margaret Stenson: ...I d-, [laughter] I don't need a bear rug anymore.
42
43Elsie Hornbacher: You appreciate...
44

1Margaret Stenson: Yes, well, I appreciate belonging to the WOLS group even though I was not
2 in a military, uh, organization of the government. I was with the Alaska
3 Native Service Schools, sometimes called the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and
4 it was in the w-, within the Department of Interior. And, uh, uh, although
5 during the war I was not in a war – a typical war zone, I still was i-, I always
6 felt that we were in, in, uh, dangerous, uh, areas because we had no way of
7 knowing what the Japanese, uh, people were going to do or what they
8 intended to do, and I do know that the, the government schools out in the
9 Aleutians and down in the, down in the, uh, um, southeastern Alaska were
10 in, in, uh, what we considered in war zones.

11

12Elsie Hornbacher: N-, go ahead.

13

14Margaret Stenson: Uh, I, I didn't tell about, uh, Mr. Ito, who was a Japanese man who lived in
15 Kotzebue. He had a little, a little house, little shack, and so far as I know, he
16 was – i-, I don't know if he was married to this Eskimo girl or whether she
17 just lived with him; anyway, when he – when, uh, Pearl Harbor came, uh,
18 then the U.S. Marshal took him to, uh, uh, out to Nome and then he was sent
19 to a, a concentration camp down in the Unites States, uh, lower states and I
20 remember that Mr. Stenson and, uh, and the U.S. Commissioner and then it
21 must have been the U.S. Marshal had to go to Mr. Ito's house and they
22 searched his house and, uh, with – in those – in – at that time, they were sure
23 that the Japanese people who were up in Alaska in all of these different little
24 villages had some connection with Japan and they, they didn't know what
25 they'd find, but my husband said that the only thing that he had in his cabin
26 was just an ordinary radio. Nothing special. And he had just a, a, an
27 ordinary gun, uh, such as all people in Alaska had.

28

29Elsie Hornbacher: Mm-hm.

30

31Margaret Stenson: So that, um, tsk, but he was never returned as far as I, as I know, he never
32 came back to Kotzebue.

33

34Elsie Hornbacher: I see. [51:42] Is there anything more, Pauline?

35

36Margaret Stenson: N-, uh, I think that's it.

37

38Elsie Hornbacher: [51:45] You think that's it? Well, thank...

39

40Margaret Stenson: Mm-hm. I think that's it.

41

42Elsie Hornbacher: Well thank you very, very much. We have enjoyed this, uh, recording of
43 your experiences in a-, Alaska.

44

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2/ad