CHAPTER 2: FIRST YEARS IN ALASKA, 1949–50

After driving up the Alaska Highway in 1949 I worked a bit as a laborer, and then signed up as an agriculture student at the University of Alaska (U of A) in Fairbanks. I spent the winter living in a little back room at the College Auto Service, just down the hill from the campus, where I was on call for gas or wrecker service at night.

McKinley Park Adventure, 1950

I was painting the ceiling of the garage at the College Auto Service one Saturday in the spring of 1950, when in walked Grant Pearson and introduced himself as Superintendent of McKinley National Park (since renamed Denali NP). The congressional delegation from Ohio, home of President William McKinley, has prevented several efforts to officially restore the Indian name Denali to the mountain itself. Yes, I had applied for a summer job at the park through the dean's office at the university. In a cheery, booming voice characterized by a slight lisp, Pearson asked a few questions, told me a little about the park, then said, "Well you've got a job," and away he went. I felt that being caught at work was good luck for a student having a job interview.

Three weeks later I was in the park, working with hammer and saw, renovating some old tent frames abandoned by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) a decade before, so that a construction crew could use them. I knew something of the old-fashioned work ethic gained during my summers on New England farms. I had no concept of what management of natural resources on public lands might require or what was ahead for the summer. I envisioned various labors in a scenic setting. The place and the people of the park were immediately likable. The carpentry seemed a natural enough beginning.

Several mornings later Ranger Pete Peters called me to go with him to make some repairs on the phone line that paralleled the park road and connected the ranger patrol cabins. We loaded a stake truck with wires, cutters, insulators, climbing irons, and other paraphernalia and away we went for my first trip out the park road.

Pete was a moderate driver attuned to a top speed of 25. We proceeded up the gravel road, emerging from the spruce forest a few miles from headquarters, into the sub-alpine tundra that is characteristic along much of the park road. Our first stop was just east of Savage River to see if the gyrfalcons were attending their nest on a nearby rock pinnacle. They were present. Pete made

notes in his pocket diary and gave me a little lecture on the need to make wildlife notes anytime I was out in the park. Second stop was near Sanctuary River to watch a cow moose with calf. All well.

The third stop near the Teklanika River bridge was to watch some short-billed gulls (since renamed mew gull) perched on top of white spruce trees 50 feet above the ground. We agreed this was an unusual view of a bird normally associated with the sea, but not so uncommon in McKinley Park. These gulls are reputed to nest sometimes in trees, but we failed to find a nest. The Teklanika is a muddy glacial stream that meanders across a wide gravel flood plain. I was told the translation of this Athabaskan Indian name is “big river, very little water”— a name that seems appropriate. Fourth stop was near Igloo Mountain to count a band of 43 sheep high above. Fifth stop at Sable Pass where a sow grizzly with three cubs (a large family) ambled across the hillside. The mom had the distinctive blonde color typical of the bears of this region. Adolph Murie, the famous McKinley wildlife biologist, was parked here watching with telescope. He had names for the bears he was studying, and this one was Nokomis. Later in the summer Murie watched this bear in a savage battle with another female during which two of the cubs were killed. He later described this bear and her problems in a book (Murie 1961).

Sixth stop Polychrome Pass to count 36 caribou grazing across the flat below. Polychrome Pass is not really a mountain pass but the road is hung across a colorful cliff for a spectacular overlook of the valley, where big animals can often be seen. Much of the park road meanders to provide optimum views and to avoid nice trees, interesting rock outcrops, and such. Highway engineers and maintenance supervisors were said to regard this road as an abomination, but sightseers love it. Between stops we had the treat of the ever-changing panorama of trees, tundra, streams, and mountains, with an occasional glimpse of Mount McKinley in the distance, larger each time as we got closer.

Seventh stop Toklat ranger cabin, where we sat on the grass to eat our lunch. A cross fox lurked about with little fear. There are two reasons why a wilderness fox might behave this way. It could be rabid, in which case one should be very wary in case of actual attack, or it could have been fed by previous picnickers and hoping for a handout. We concluded feeding was the most likely, but we didn’t gratify the little fellow further because it is contrary to park policy to feed wild animals. The eighth stop we finally found some telephone poles that had collapsed at Highway Pass. Because of the permanently frozen soil (permafrost) the single phone line was hung on tripods that sat on the surface of the ground. I learned it was more necessary to have the wire strung above where the caribou could entangle it in their antlers than to have the communication. The University of Alaska museum has some caribou skulls with remarkable bundles of wire entangled in the poor creatures’ antlers

from areas where phone lines were not carefully installed. The 20-foot poles were not hard to re-raise, and we soon had the wire strung at a safe altitude.

Ninth stop Camp Eielson over-looking Muldrow Glacier and the stair steps of rock, ridge, snow field, ice fall, pinnacle, and peak leading up the great mass of Mount McKinley. The mountain, which had been partially hidden under clouds for much of the day, broke out for us to see in all its glory. Eielson Camp had been a construction camp during road building and is now the site of a fancy visitor center, but at this time the only remaining building was a weathered outhouse of standard design. This lone outhouse invited occupancy in a way no other such facility offers, for there it sat protecting its occupant from the wind on three sides and facing the most massive view in North America.

Several northern wheatears were foraging and flying about. This spectacular whitish songbird with black wings, black tail bar, and a black wedge through the eye was a new bird for me. I learned later that birds return from winter quarters on all continents to nest in Alaska and Africa is included by virtue of this species.

The trip back went about the same way. We stopped to look at and record everything and added to our list some pintail ducks, some upland sandpipers (the wader that perches in trees), a long-tailed jaeger, and a horned grebe. Back near Sanctuary River, Pete stopped to study a distinctive patch of orange algae on a cliff and a golden eagle's nest just above the algae. Pete explained seepage from cliff nests nourishes this form of algae, providing a good means of locating them. I have found many raptor nests this way since.

"I have been wanting to get a picture of that nest," said Pete. "Would you mind walking down there now? The light is just right, but it's nearly five and I don't want to keep you working overtime if you'd rather not."

What could I possibly rather do than just that? We walked down along the sandy bed of the river that proved a virtual dictionary of the tracks of Alaska Range animals. There were the pointed tracks of moose looking something like the tracks of large cattle, and the curved hoof prints of caribou looking like nothing else in nature. We studied a large bear track with claw marks extending far ahead of the paw print — a grizzly. A black bear track would have the claw marks much closer to the toe, Pete pointed out. He provided an exciting narrative of nature as we walked.

There was a convenient rock slide, so climbing to the eagle nest was not difficult. The two adult birds circled above as we got near. The two rather shapeless young in the nest watched us skeptically. Pete got a little above and concentrated on his photography while I watched the soaring parents to warn him if an attack seemed likely. We walked back to the truck in the soft light of a May evening in the Alaska Range.

I was rather contemplative that evening. What a day! Pete Peters had a nice family, a nice home, and a good income. The idea of a Park Service career had

never entered my head until now. I began to wonder, why settle for anything less? The attractions of construction work, the business world, or a professional career seemed very pale. My life changed that day and I knew it had. I began to tell people that if I could become a park employee I would never go back to work. I never did.

Summer Ranger

My McKinley summer continued in an idyllic fashion in no way anticlimactic to that great first trip into the park with Pete Peters. A few days later Les Viereck showed up to fill the second seasonal ranger position, and we became regular companions in work and in enjoying the pleasures of park life. John Rumohr, chief ranger and our immediate boss, was a Norwegian who had come to Alaska as a young man. He had worked on construction of the Alaska Railroad and other jobs before joining the park staff. He was a great dog driver and a great woodsman of the old school. For many years John had patrolled the boundary of the park to ward off winter incursions by the undisciplined trappers who lived just to the north. We didn't think of John as elderly because he entered into the fun of repair projects, hiking, fishing, and other activities with an enthusiasm undimmed by his years. His love for McKinley Park was always evident. We could get him tired, though, and when this happened a story would conveniently come to his mind. Tales of trappers, miners, colorful characters, exciting trips and, lusty adventures would begin to unfold. This would cause a lull in whatever activity we were at and often seats would be found on convenient log or mound and smokes would be lit. When he was sufficiently rested John would lead off again.

We saw less of Grant Pearson, who was busy at his superintendent duties in the office, but he was always genial. He also radiated an unqualified love for the park. John was the woodsman, but Grant was the mountaineer and was glad to talk about his historic trips to McKinley's top. He was a member of the third party to ascend the mountain (1932) and the first to top both peaks. He described his romance with McKinley in his book, *My Life of High Adventure* (Pearson 1962). Grant had experience climbing outside as well, and he was able to advise climbing parties and, if need be, manage rescues. After retirement he became a popular state representative from Nenana and maintained a voice for conservation in the development-dominated legislative halls.

Grant was a diamond willow artist of considerable talent, making canes, lamps, nameplates, and other decorative carvings. "Nothing to it" he told Mary Lou, when we visited him in Nenana some years later. "You find a nice willow then get a sharp knife, some small chisels, and some sand paper, also some plastic wood and a box of Band-Aids for taking care of your mistakes."

Adolph Murie was the third of the well-known old timers of McKinley Park at that time. He was a soft-spoken, patient person who had set records for continuous observation of wild animals. Taking advantage of the 24-hour daylight in early summer, he could follow the activities of wolves, bears, or sheep through their entire daily routine, sometimes from a single vantage point, making copious notes the whole time. His book, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley,* (Murie 1944) is an enduring wildlife classic that continues to be reprinted and read by a wide range of professional and amateur natural scientists. Ade worked alone and we would see him now and then driving his pickup, but more often the pickup was parked along the road and he would be nowhere in sight. His lonely work style didn't affect his sociability at home. Les and I had a number of good meals in the home of Ade and Louise Murie. More often than not there would be moose or caribou on the table as Ade was a bit of a hunter in season, utilizing some of the ample game outside the park.

Les and I took advantage of the round-the-clock daylight too and made some monumental hikes. On one trip we started from Wonder Lake for Turtle Hill after work on a Friday. We walked across the McKinley Bar into the Clearwater Valley, more or less following a route used by some of the early climbing parties heading for McGonagall Pass and the mountain. In the soft light of midnight we sat on a small hill and watched hundreds of caribou scattered across the rolling tundra all round. It was a memorable sight, inviting comparison with the huge herds of buffalo of the Great Plains, never more to be seen. We continued to explore until well into the next day. By afternoon as we plodded back toward the road, in a state of quiet fatigue, a light rain developed. Walking in deep moss, through a small grove of spruce along the river, I was ahead with Les just behind. He broke the silence of the past hour with some comment and not ten feet away a cow moose leapt to her feet, took a quick look, and crashed through a thicket and away. Our startlement was no less than hers.

There was no road to McKinley Park in those days. Most tourists arrived via the railroad, stayed in the nearby hotel, and took a one day bus tour 90 miles out the park road, seeing lots of animals and possibly a view of the mountain. McKinley is rather ephemeral in summer, tending to be lost in cloud during a good part of the day even when the rest of the sky is clear, fairly regularly making an appearance at night, catching the sun while the lowlands are in evening twilight. A few tourists would take the trouble to ship their car on the railroad from Anchorage or Fairbanks and spend a week or more camping and enjoying the park. Part of our job was to keep in touch with these people to make sure they had no problems or caused no problems. They tended to be pleasant folks that we enjoyed visiting with.

Other work was not burdensome. We replaced roofs on several of the ranger cabins formerly used for the winter dog team patrols. Bears liked to use the cabins. We cleaned up several that had the appearance of being the site of great

bear revelry. Bedding and bunks would be shredded, all cans and metal containers punctured with huge teeth marks, windows broken, and stoves battered to pieces. We built heavy wooden shutters for these places then pounded buckets of large spikes through them so that any bear trying to claw its way in would scratch its paws.

When at park headquarters we stayed in a little compound of tar papered tent frames. There were several summer maintenance workers there as well. One of these 8- by 10-foot structures had a large wood-fired cook stove and a table where we prepared our meals. There was also a light bulb by which we could do our evening reading. This cookhouse was way too small. One Saturday we went out and got another of the old tent frames abandoned at the Savage River camp and hooked it onto our kitchen, doubling its space. The preceding week a well-indoctrinated ranger from a park down south had arrived. He came by and was mortified to see summer employees doing unauthorized construction in a national park — and he said so. He went away and we decided we should make our new building a little less obvious by planting a tree. The 8-foot white spruce we dug up didn't come with much root, but we figured it would last the summer anyway. As we arrived back with our new tree, John Rumohr loomed over the horizon, alerted no doubt by the new ranger. John sized things up immediately and looking at our tree said, "Are you going to make another trip for the roots?"

In midsummer my older sister Jane came to visit. I had been in Alaska for a year now with no expressed sign of coming home. I guess my mother was wondering what was going on. I told John Rumohr she was coming and that I would put her up at the hotel. "No," said John, "she will stay with us." The Rumohrs treated her like a favorite friend for several days and then we were sent to the Wonder Lake cabin, which John liked to keep occupied during the peak of summer.

The Wonder Lake cabin is some 90 miles west of headquarters and is the area from which most of the calendar and travel folder photos of Mount McKinley are taken. This was actually a frame house with several rooms that had been built by the CCC. A few days later John Rumohr showed up, with orders emanating from the governor's office in Juneau, to entertain an important party. Shortly a small floatplane arrived on the lake. We assisted a very portly gentleman in a tweed suit and his elderly wife to the shore and across the deep sedge tussocks to the road. The fat man had a great deal of trouble negotiating this rough terrain but he won our respect through the gales of laughter that accompanied his awkwardness. A jolly time was indicated and a jolly time we had.

The pilot was Jim Magoffin, who later built his float plane operation into somewhat of an aviation empire in Fairbanks. As oil prospecting developed he built the largest fleet of privately owned Hercules aircraft in the world. But at

that time he was just getting started hauling sportsmen and tourists in single engine bush planes. He was one of the World War II pilots that made a success of postwar aviation in Alaska (Magoffin 1993).

The fat man turned out to be an important Boston lawyer, a friend of Governor Gruening but, unfortunately, not so important that I can remember his name.

After a lively supper we went off out the road to Kantishna. A gold rush had occurred there in 1905, attracting a community of 2,000 miners who had their own post office. It was just outside the north park boundary, and the road terminated there. The remaining permanent population of Kantishna consisted of Little Johnny Busia (pronounced BushAY) a Croation, now an elderly man who survived on the products of his garden, the nearby tundra, the wild animals of the area, and what he could get from leasing his mining claims. Johnny lived across Moose Creek from the road and used a cable with a little cart on it to get back and forth to the road. An auxiliary rope allowed for extra people to pull the cart across. As we sent the first person over, watching the cable sag towards the turbulent waters, our tweed-dressed companion began to laugh. "I'm going to get wet," he announced with increasing hilarity. We pulled him through the riffles anyway, and no spirits were dampened, though the tweed suit suffered some.

Barking dogs announced our arrival. We were met on the far side by Little Johnnie, who acted as if he had been eagerly expecting us. After perfunctory introductions he began a rapid fire monologue about the wonders of life in Kantishna. His speech was somewhat complicated by the fact that he had learned what English he knew on the site, and being the only resident, his practice was limited. He led us into his little cabin, then disappeared briefly through a hole in the floor to pass up bottles of what was then known as Kantishna Champagne. Emerging, he produced tin cups, and lusty, somewhat unintelligible, toasts were proposed. It took a cup or two to become accustomed to the Busia homebrew, but shortly barriers of economics and education vanished, and good fellowship reigned.

The privations of life in the wilderness were not lost on me, and I enjoyed this "assignment" as much as any. This was also my first experience with the men who had elected to live out their lives alone, except for occasional company, sustained by the land in the Alaskan bush. Later I was to learn that there were more of these men, remnants of gold rush adventurers and fugitives from depression or alcohol or instability of various kinds, who learned to live in dignity, alone, in the Alaskan wilderness. They were a noble bunch of resourceful men, sad perhaps in their loneliness, but admirable in their independence, resourcefulness, and stamina. Some wound up at the Pioneers Home in Sitka, but many died under unknown circumstances, alone in their cabins or along their traplines, dying as they had lived, in complete

independence. I have wondered since how it was that these men could defy man's inborn sociability and learn to live alone like that. They have not been replaced in this time in spite of renewed preoccupation with the joys of wilderness living. But more of that later. We returned to Wonder Lake, wet tweeds and all, in a convivial mood.

John Rumohr, devoted Alaskan and Norwegian expatriate, had a view of World War II that was new to me. He had watched the panic as Alaska was bombed and invaded in the war and after the war he had visited relatives in Norway and learned of their efforts to subvert the invading German enemy. In 1950 America was already embroiled in the Korean conflict. When the Chinese hordes joined the fray John decided it was time to get ready in case of disaster. What he could do, if worse came to worse, was dump the Alaska Railroad into the Nenana Canyon. It seems strange now, but Les and I became involved in this scheme. We hauled several truckloads of dynamite and gasoline to caches along the western part of the park road. We rehabilitated the Savage River ranger cabin several miles south of the road, and rebuilt the cache. We packed in hundreds of pounds of flour, sugar, beans, rice, and other staples, which we stowed in galvanized garbage cans and suspended in the cache and in the gables of the cabin, safe from bears and squirrels. When we left the park that fall John was ready for the invasion. He was planning to live rather well, at least for a time.

Another thing that seems strange in the context of today was the fact that when Les and I arrived at McKinley Park we were issued Army surplus 30.06 rifles and ammunition and told to protect ourselves from bears and to kill wolves on sight. Without analysis of other considerations we were eager to help out by slaying wolves. We carried those silly rifles all summer without opportunity for a single shot. I learned later there had been a raging controversy for nearly 20 years about McKinley Park functioning as a sanctuary for wolves on which there was a bounty everywhere else (Rawson 1996). At this time mountain sheep numbers were a fraction of the population they had been a decade or two earlier. Though not well documented, there is evidence that the abundance of large dogs imported to Alaska during gold rush days had brought distemper, mange, and other canine diseases with them. The wolves had no tolerance for these afflictions and were greatly reduced in number. Game, particularly Dall sheep, increased enormously to the delight of the Fairbanks market hunters. From a high of 20,000–25,000 on the north side of the park they dropped to some 500 at the end of World WAR II (Murie 1944). As the wolves built up in the 1930s, hard winters forced the sheep to lower elevations where they were easy prey for the carnivores. In deference to the overwhelming public opinion in Alaska, the park rangers shot wolves when they saw them. The Park Service agreed with Doc Murie that wolves should not be exterminated from the park but should continue to be a part of the fauna. Murie remained ambivalent.

Shooting a few wolves in deference to the public might help the sheep rebuild. A few years later the killing of wolves in the park was stopped except by the rare poacher. But wolf controversies continue unabated in Alaska to this day.

Adolph Murie and Grant Pearson had each been associated intermittently with the park for more than 30 years by the time I knew them and John Rumohr had spent most of his career there. Remarkable people to begin with, each was molded by life in such magnificent surroundings. Each retired from there in subsequent years. They each were widely known and respected, and it was a treat to spend time with any of them. Unfortunately, the Park Service no longer allows people to make a career in a single park, and their much-moved employees never seem to gain the stature of the old-timers who could concentrate on understanding a single area.

We had had a memorable summer. We had been welcomed into a wonderful Park Service community in an unforgettable way. My sister's report to our parents was most favorable. The direction of my life had certainly changed. Perhaps the most important part had been the association with Adolph Murie. He showed in a very elemental way that success in life was not dependent on the political and bureaucratic parameters, even in the government service, but rather that hewing to a path of excellence was the road to independence.

At the end of this summer I returned to the University of Alaska and signed up for a pure stand of wildlife courses. Les went back to Dartmouth but returned later to make a prestigious record as a Forest Service botanist stationed at the University of Alaska. Les's diagnostic book on Alaska's trees and shrubs and his vegetation maps of the whole state have become the standard work on which major land management decisions have been based in recent years (Viereck 1972).

University of Alaska

The University of Alaska in 1949 was not that typical of American land grant colleges. It was founded in 1922 in the tiny gold mining town of Fairbanks, in a sparsely populated part of the huge, sparsely populated Territory of Alaska. It was conceived by a determined group of Fairbanksans urging congressional delegate James Wickersham to take advantage of applicable federal legislation. It survived because of the strength and ability of its first president, Judge Charles E. Bunnell. The campus was partially taken over by the military after Alaska was invaded in World War II, and the fledgling university was almost crowded out of existence. These events are well described by Bill Cashen (1972) in his book, *Farthest North College President*.

Arriving in Fairbanks after traveling over the Alaska Highway, I spent the summer of 1949 working on a track crew for the railroad and later on a harvest crew at Creamer's Dairy. Creamers was the most complete dairy I had ever seen, with 100 cows, a pasteurizing plant, a bottling plant, an ice-cream plant and a great delivery truck, with an oil stove in the back whose chimney pipe protruded from the roof. Creamers had some 150 acres of fields where a combination of peas and oats were grown for silage and where manure was spread on the snow in winter, causing early snow melt. These fields had become a mecca for spring migrating ducks, geese, and cranes — a phenomenon that was always popular with winter-weary Fairbanks residents. There was always a flock of 15 or 20 sandhill cranes feeding in the field when I was there in August. Charlie Creamer liked these birds and I'm sure would be pleased that his farm is now a very popular state bird refuge.

In early September when I inquired about admission to the university, I was asked if I had the World War II G.I. Bill. No other educational materials were required. The university at that time had two classroom buildings, four dormitory buildings, a library-gym and a power plant. The campus buildings, all painted gray, looked a lot like the gray installations of the big mining company at nearby creeks. The student body was about 300, over half World War II veterans and only about 5 percent female.

The campus had a fairly lusty reputation then. Many of the vets had fought and visited in remote places around the world and had decided to seek their fortune in Alaska. They were breaking into the fishing industry, mining, construction, and various business prospects. Some special rules had been established to maintain order. The first postwar washing machines, ringer-type consisting mainly of a large tub with a cover, were perfect for a brewery. The story went that some pantywaist had complained to the dean about not being able to do his laundry, prompting the rule prohibiting manufacture of home brew beer in Vets Dorm washing machines. There was also a rule against hanging frozen moose or caribou from the fire escapes on the Vets Dorm. Mining students in the thirties had built a system of tunnels under the campus, and there were rumors that concubines had been kept there, illicit liquor manufactured, gambling devices used, and other sinning happening right below the normal campus scene.

I was only superficially aware of the extracurricular campus activity, as I lived down the hill at the College Auto Service, where I met and pumped gas and serviced cars for most of the faculty and the more opulent students. I did my studying at the library and quickly discovered the little room where Alaskan books were shelved. There was a fascinating array of old accounts of great ventures and adventures, reports of exciting explorations and investigations, and a broad spectrum of personal narratives. There began my continuing romance with Alaskan literature. For some reason people living in

Alaska and the Yukon are prone to think of their own life experiences as important enough to warrant the writing of a book. Alaskan bookstores always have a big section of new and reprinted Alaskana. Few if any other states can boast so large a continuing flow of nationally published regional literature.

The most interesting class I took that year was Introductory Ornithology, and it was some of the students rather than the instructor who made it exciting. Student Dave Walsh was a subscriber to several ornithological journals, had a federal bird-banding permit, and had made all sorts of novel bird banding traps. Tom Cade was an even more academic birder, who had compiled the best list of Alaskan bird species available at that time. He went on to become a famous professor at Cornell University and has been internationally recognized for his efforts to breed peregrine falcons in captivity and re-establish their young in the wilds of big cities. Ruth Blankenship, a lovely part-Eskimo girl from Kiana, knew the birds of the tundra of her western Alaska home as only the Eskimos do. She went on to become an outstanding high school biology teacher before settling down to raise a family. Others in the class had some experience with birds in various parts of Alaska, and the class discussions were often exciting. It was one of my most memorable college courses ever.

Alaska is a transition zone between Asia and North America that has sometimes been separated from both continents by great ice sheets, though most of the Yukon Valley has never been glaciated. This northern Pleistocene oasis for birds, plants, and other 1ife also included the Bering Land Bridge between the continents. Botanists first described the unique interrelationships for this area and it was Eric Hulten, the Danish botanist who coined the name Beringia for this biological refugium from the ice (Hopkins 1967).

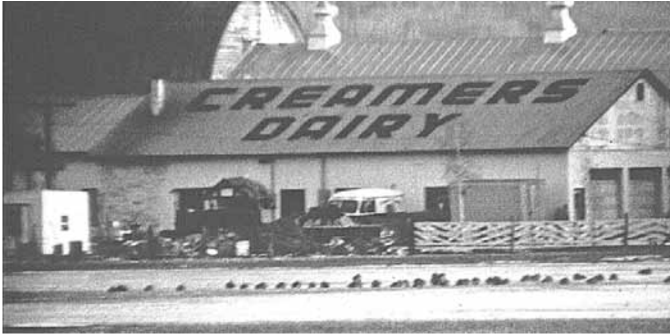
With publication of the monumental *Birds of Alaska* in 1959, it became much easier to learn the rudiments of the fascinating Alaskan ornithological story. Ira Gabrielson, director of the Bureau of Biological Survey from 1935-40, then under its new name, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to 1946, had assigned himself to leave Washington and spend seven of the 11 summers of his directorship in Alaska. He rode the Service vessels along all the coasts and islands, toured the entire road system, and after World War II flew all over with game agents. En route he often had the chance to spend hours, even days afoot, always recording bird notes. Teaming up with senior ornithologist Frederick C. Lincoln, recently retired first director of the Migratory Bird Banding Laboratory, to produce the classic, *Birds of Alaska*. This book includes a detailed 29-page history of Alaskan ornithology, 56 pages of references including many from Russian times, and 380 glowing species accounts. Though there is new information on many species there is no need to look farther for early history.

During my second year at the university I lived and worked at the university experimental farm, where I tended coal fires. I walked the one mile between the farm bunkhouse and the university classrooms each day. The

temperature reached 65 degrees below zero on a number of nights that winter, so my morning walk was a bit of an adventure. I learned a good deal about cold weather doing that. The Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit had arrived during the summer. I took courses called Wildlife Management Techniques and Waterfowl Management from a new instructor named Jim Rearden, who told us he hoped to become an outdoor writer. We were assigned to read Aldo Leopold's text, *Game Management,* and his brand new book, *A Sand County Almanac*. Was Jim ahead of his time? Jim fulfilled his dream later and became Alaska's foremost biographer and outdoor magazine writer. He told me recently that he had 23 Alaska books in print. The concepts of wildlife management and the principles of Aldo Leopold, whose books we used, were new and exciting to me.

My wildest youthful fantasies had never included the role of game warden, but it did happen. After the superlative summer at McKinley Park I was eager to try for a permanent Park Service job when I got through college. After Christmas I wrote Grant Pearson asking for a job for another summer. March faded into April with no response, so when the wildlife unit leader, Doc Hosley, asked if I would be interested in a summer position with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, I said yes. One of the jobs, I was told, would be a goose banding study at Shishmaref on the coast of Western Alaska and that sounded great to me. Doc wasn't sure that I would get the goose study, but he said there were other good positions open. When I received an employment application from Grant Pearson a few days later with an apology for having misplaced my letter, I had to write and decline a second summer in the park. Though I didn't recognize it at the time, this was another permanent course change for me. A few days later, in early May, Doc Hosley advised me to report to Holgar Larsen at the federal building in Anchorage as soon as possible. Dashing off after my last exam, I was cheerful in my expectation that Anchorage was the gateway to Shishmaref.

FAIRBANKS, 1950s



Creamers Dairy, showing early spring migrant geese. This is now a popular state wildlife refuge.

Cushman Street in Fairbanks and a parade passing northern Alaska's only traffic light.

Bachelor pad, circa 1950, where I was part owner.

MORE FAIRBANKS, 1950s

Creamers Dairy. It is now a state wildlife refuge in urban Fairbanks.

Chena River in summer. It is still a transportation corridor.

Chena River in winter. It is a community playground, but the ice is no longer strong enough for such a gathering.

SUBSISTENCE LIVING, 1950s

Malcolm Greany at an Anaktuvuk larder.

Wolf hunter Homer Mekiana was Anaktuvuk's first post master.

Fishing for tom cod on the sea ice in front of Kotzebue.

LIVING OFF THE LAND
We all had to try it.