

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Roy Peratrovich interview, 1988 August 16. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.  
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: This is the interview with Roy Peratrovich. And I'm Don Mitchell. And we're in Juneau. And I guess maybe the beginning would be to maybe give me some information about yourself, like, when and where you were born and how you grew up and things like that.

MR. PERATROVICH: My name is Roy Peratrovich, Sr. I was born in Klawock, it's a little village. I attended grade school there. And since we -- we didn't have a high school, when I was ready, I went to the government boarding school in Chemult, Oregon. I spent four school years. When I say school years, we used to come back up and fish. Those days, we paid our own fare to Seattle and then bummed rides just so -- down to Chemult, Oregon.

MR. MITCHELL: Did --

MR. PERATROVICH: It took a long time to realize that there was first (indiscernible) passage besides (indiscernible) that's the way we use to travel because we didn't have the money. So -- and then I decided to move up from Chemult, and then my last two years I spent in Ketchikan and went to high school, graduated from there. I worked my way through those two years. I worked at the Piggly Wiggly store, those, you don't see them anymore. But it's amusing when I think of it, that I was getting \$10 a week working at the store. I used to put up the vegetables in the morning at 7:30, and then go to school, 8:30; 3:30, I'd come back and help fill orders and so forth. But it was quite an experience. After, I went to Bellingham (indiscernible) for a while, thought I'd become a teacher and realized I didn't have the temperament. So, I did a little of that, but I -- I went broke. Those days you didn't have educational loans or grants. If you were broke, you were broke. So at the same time, my wife would be -- she knew her family couldn't support her anymore that school year. So -- somebody told us that two can live as cheap as one, but we found out that -- that's not true, it's expensive. So we got married. So then I came to Klawock.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, what year would you have gotten married?

MR. PERATROVICH: 1931.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, I -- and what year were you born? Do you --

MR. PERATROVICH: What's that?

MR. MITCHELL: The year that you were born? I don't think you mentioned that.

MR. PERATROVICH: What year was I born?

MR. MITCHELL: Uh-huh.

MR. PERATROVICH: 1910. I'd be first. So --

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MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Also, the other -- the other question I had, how many other kids in Klawock got to go on past grade school? Were you an exception or were there many kids going to Chemult?

MR. PERATROVICH: Oh, no. There were quite a few. There was one time going to Chemult there was 17 of us. So -- so it was (indiscernible) so we -- we didn't have the money to attempt school in Ketchikan and -- and so at least we had free lodging at Chemult. The only expense when we went there was buying your own clothes and paying our fare on -- on one of those -- I call them tramp ships -- half freighter, half passengers.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, so then you and Elizabeth got married in 1951? I'm sorry, you and Elizabeth got married in 1931; is that right?

MR. PERATROVICH: I --

MR. MITCHELL: When -- I was just trying to pick up from when did you say that you and Elizabeth got married? What year?

MR. PERATROVICH: I -- in '31 I was busy around Chemult trying to make a living. I -- doing deck pier at the time. I -- I found I could -- learn I wanted to be a captain. Those days it was good money, you know, fish packers. And, you know, I guess I wanted -- I'd like to stick my head out of the pilot's house window and give orders. No, it was a good paying job. So I took a -- I took a little training on a missionary boat called the Princeton, I think it was Princeton (indiscernible). The minister on there, Swanson (phonetic), was a noted navigator. So I spent three months with him, close to four months, and -- and learning navigation. My dad told me I -- I would say, people talk about the working for the lord, I did. I was getting \$20 a month. Hadn't it been for my inlaws, my wife wouldn't have a boy, Roy, Jr. Now he has an engineering firm. I stayed with them in Petersburg. That's after I learned that I got -- got to get a job as a fish packer captain. Then I was appointed postmaster, which it was a little income. But my wife handled it while I worked on boats. So I think we did all right. And I got elected to my first term as Grand President for the ANB in 1940.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, actually let me back up a second. When did you first join the ANB?

MR. PERATROVICH: 1935.

MR. MITCHELL: 1935.

MR. PERATROVICH: I have -- I still have that first card. I paid only \$3. I didn't have the \$6. Six was tough those days.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. So you would have been about 25 then when you first --

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

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MR. MITCHELL: You would have been about 25 years old when you first joined ANB?

MR. PERATROVICH: I forgot how (indiscernible) about that. That was the first time I joined it. And then -- then they elected me to the local president a couple times. And then the 1940 convention, I had no idea that (indiscernible) crazy fool that nominated me.

MR. MITCHELL: Who -- who nominated you?

MR. PERATROVICH: I forgot. Some young fellow. They nominated me to -- as a candidate for grand president, twice. It turned out that the opposition was Louie Paul, William Paul's brother, powerful man to beat. My poor wife was carrying my -- the girl, and then she told me, (indiscernible) at the time. She says, (indiscernible) at the time, you're not only going to embarrass me, but you're going to embarrass the family, your own family. I told her, well, I'm sorry I (indiscernible) to her. When you first came back from school, I was busy working. Anybody who had a job could dig a ditch at 50 cents an hour. I took it to make money. She used to say, "You better help your people. This is your people." And so I say, "You preach that to me. I didn't ask for this. They nominated me. I'm not going to withdraw." That's obviously what happened. (Indiscernible) I won three -- three to one, I beat him.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now, there was -- I guess there had been a lot of controversy at that point about the Indian Reorganization Act and --

MR. PERATROVICH: Oh, yes. Well, the two -- two Paul brothers were on opposite sides. Louie, who I defeated, was afraid that -- that the Indian Reorganization Act, under that section that (indiscernible) the Secretary of the Interior set up reservations that -- his argument was, oh, that they'd corral us. You know, that we would -- wouldn't be able to move. Under that (indiscernible) this BIA agent gave us permission to -- that's a strong argument in to scaring people.

MR. MITCHELL: Sure.

MR. PERATROVICH: He tried to get me to sign into this. Now, I didn't ask to be in those positions.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, what -- what did William think of reservations? Did he have a different view?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, at the time, I wasn't too sure. But on -- you know, Monday morning, quarterback. If we had -- if there's reservations or said -- some of them were real good. All of these big land claims would have been avoided. So, like Winston (indiscernible) had the largest.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

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MR. PERATROVICH: But at the time, Governor Gruening was sympathetic. If he was on our discrimination, he was deathly against the reservations. So he sent Bill Bells up there, being an Eskimo, to talk his people into turning it down, and they turned it down.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, were you at the 929 --

MR. PERATROVICH: No.

MR. MITCHELL: -- convention?

MR. PERATROVICH: That was before my time.

MR. MITCHELL: That was before your time?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. But I was told that the man that really pushed it up to that point, prior to 1929, there was another Tlingit or Haida (indiscernible) Peter Simpson.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: He married to a Tlingit woman from Sitka. And I would facet- -- facetiously always say, "Well, he picked a smart Tlingit woman." She really educated him. But he -- he pushed -- I said (indiscernible) he was a wise old man. You folks are going to lose your land if people don't move and do something. So -- in my keynote address to one of those conventions for Tlingits, I -- I recommended strongly that his -- a picture of him be placed in a conspicuous place at the (indiscernible). He was the one that taught us (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, he's in the conference room. I mean, he --

MR. PERATROVICH: He is in -- well, I -- no. I wanted him as you get in that entrance there. I really (indiscernible) get the first place.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, actually, that -- that reminds me of something I -- I've actually forgot to ask. And that is, do you have -- have any information from talking with Peter Simpson and others about how ANB got founded back in 19- --

MR. PERATROVICH: I didn't hear you. Talk up.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh. I mean, have you ever -- did you ever have a chance to talk with Peter Simpson and others about how ANB got started back in 1912?

MR. PERATROVICH: No. I didn't have the -- the privilege of getting really acquainted with Peter Simpson. He died either before or just after I was elected. So now, he served for five successful terms. Normally, a candidate that has been sort of reelected by acclimation four times, they wanted me to run for the sixth term and I told my wife nobody's that good. Even your friends get tired of hearing you.

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MR. MITCHELL: Now, did --

MR. PERATROVICH: So I declined, and I supported L. Whitmore.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, did -- when you were President of ANB, did -- was that a salaried position?

MR. PERATROVICH: No.

MR. MITCHELL: Did you get paid for that at all? Or --

MR. PERATROVICH: No.

MR. MITCHELL: What --

MR. PERATROVICH: No. We had to use what little money we had when we -- when we lobbied for the antidiscrimination bill. Now, how we kept Tlingit/Haida alive, I don't know if I mentioned that. After I became grand president, Andrew Hope was elected President of Tlingit/Haida (indiscernible) Frank Johnson, secretary. So they both approached me and they said -- they said let's come to some agreement. He says we're all one and the same people. I said we can all get together at an ANB meeting. We got two sides put (indiscernible) Tlingit/Haida. I says, why don't we start having the ANB and (indiscernible) delegates -- also delegated by their villages as they're representative to Tlingit/Haida. Well, that's -- that's what makes sense. I went along with it. So during the week of our convention would give them an opportunity -- nothing else to do then but just to give progress reports. So I -- I reelect officers. That's how ANB kept it alive. We could have been the central council. I -- I didn't advocate. William and Paul and them did, that ANB designated a central council. But we ran into this problem, we have a provision in our constitution that would require us \$12 membership dues, that knocked us out entirely. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Now, when -- when you took over as grand president in 1940, at that point, the -- the suit could have been filed for five years and there had been no -- no suit filed. What was the problem with that?

MR. PERATROVICH: What's that?

MR. MITCHELL: How come the -- the land claim suit had not been filed by the time you took over? Was -- was that a problem of getting attorneys or what --

MR. PERATROVICH: We had -- we had another -- there was a problem there. 1938, I'm in the conflict with one of the fellows who, in his late years, wants to be remembered for something he hadn't done, you know. As you grow older a lot of -- I've never looked for awards or honors, it was given to me, fine. I don't give a darn. You have work to do, do it. So that's the way I thought for it. But everything I have, it's recorded. My son and his daughter, we worked it for (indiscernible). And now we have all -- all the information I saved on antidiscrimination. You

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know, I have a book -- call it a book form, that (indiscernible) field, you know, pictures, articles, letters. He made enough that he gave one to the governor of Alaska, one to the state library here, and one up at Anchorage. So just as recorded as what we had to do to get that. Well, anyway, the problems they were having was from '38, that people couldn't agree as to who attorneys would be -- excuse me. William Paul's sons had just received their -- their law -- passed their law exam or whatever you call it. He wanted them -- they had no experience, he wanted them to have it. But a lot of our people wisely saw -- said they didn't have the experience nor did they have the money. So William Paul came forth and costly decided that unless you pay \$10 each, you're not going to benefit. And that's where he and I parted company. That was his opposition, I guess. He billed me up to it. And so he used to attack me for no reason. People began to wonder who is this group (indiscernible). So -- so it just held up the whole thing. So 1940, when I was elected in November -- and he got elected as grand secretary. In January, we were invited by BIU to Washington to receive -- or get the land claims off that center. So we went down first part of January at government expense. And fortunately, we were there three weeks before the historic event that happened there, inaugurating Roosevelt for the third term. You know, it was a big deal. So we had a hard time getting a hotel. We finally found an old one near the White House, I even forgot the name of it. I think it was built right after the Civil War. It was very old. And the only room we could get was in the basement. It was clean. The sad part about it, a double bed. He and I used to argue before committee all day, and then we would sleep together. And then we were allowed three meals a day, but no other expenses. So one time, John Paul told me, he says, "We can beat this Roy." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "We -- we start claiming four meals, the extra meal we'll use for" -- we both liked (indiscernible). The first time we submitted to our general superintendent, who is now known as Erick (indiscernible), the voucher department hit the ceiling. They called him at his hotel, what's the matter with these Indians from Alaska? They're only allowing three meals to everybody, but they're claiming four. Our general superintendent got (indiscernible) immediately and said, "Oh, that's nothing." He says, "Those Alaskan Indians eat three, four, five, six meals a day and think nothing." So we got by with it. So my wife and I talked it over. We couldn't do our people any good living in Klawock because you're isolated.

MR. MITCHELL: Let me ask, how -- how long did you spend back on this trip in Washington, D.C.? Did you get anything settled?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yes. Six -- okay. We were there for six weeks altogether. We contacted different attorneys. And we -- we didn't know who to contact but the list was made up by the Bureau, listing attorneys that were successful, you know. And we ran -- they referred us to a greedy little -- he was part (indiscernible) in Oklahoma. He was very successful in land claim. So we talked to him and we -- we did -- we agreed -- he said, okay. I'll take this. You don't have to worry about raising money, I have the funds. So I guess he was pretty well off. Well, things -- things were -- we thought they were going pretty good until William Paul told him that he wanted his oldest son to be the chief attorney in Alaska representing him. And Ricky (indiscernible), said no. If I need an attorney, I'll get it. And so William Paul wouldn't give (indiscernible) we're screwed, he says, (indiscernible). In the mean time, we were referred to Cobb Wiseboro (phonetic). And Wiseboro left, he had a brother (indiscernible) three of them were working together. We went to talk to them and I immediately spotted that Cobb didn't show

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too much interest. I -- you could tell it on people, their reaction. But Lefty (phonetic) was. He was all ears ready (indiscernible). Shortly thereafter, the firm broke up and Cobb left them, and so ended up having Lefty Wiseboro and his brother Hamlet. In the interim though, when we were without an attorney, Ruth Bronson, who is a part of the state, and really was a sharp woman, representing NCAI, she had an attorney that we were talking about (indiscernible). I can't seem --

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, Jim Curry.

MR. PERATROVICH: Jim Curry. It's funny when you reach my age.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, let me actually -- let me back up a second. So you interviewed a number of people on this trip to Washington.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yep.

MR. MITCHELL: And then you came home. And at that point, did you think -- did everyone think that Grady Louis (phonetic) was going to be representing you, or when did he -- when did -  
-

MR. PERATROVICH: He wasn't representing. He was (indiscernible) right off the bat.

MR. MITCHELL: Right off the bat.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yep.

MR. MITCHELL: Because I know at one point --

MR. PERATROVICH: That's the reason we went to Cobb Wiseboro and Wiseboro. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Because I know at -- at one point, the -- the Paul brothers did file a -- a petition that I know was -- was turned down by the court. Do you remember that at all?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, when he couldn't get his sons to represent the Tlingit/Haida, they filed their own. So -- but everybody knew they wouldn't get to first base. So you couldn't -- couldn't -- couldn't damn him too much because he wanted his son to get there. But when you don't have anything -- no experience, no (indiscernible). But in the interim, we had Ruth Bronson, done -- we -- we could have the service of Jim Curry.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Now, how did you first meet Ruth Bronson? Did she write you or did you hear about NCAI?

MR. PERATROVICH: No, we met her. But she came up to try to help organize different things for NCAI. She and my wife were real close friends. So -- that's how she got interested. So -- so she told us at that time, we have an attorney who -- who can help. He could have been our attorney, right, all the way through. But I think I mentioned in my letter or -- to you, that he had

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worked previously in the Solicitor's Office and he apparently stepped on some sensitive toes. And those toes were paying him back. Everything he proposed, good or bad, they were throwing up roadblocks. In addition to that, Governor Gruening, who didn't believe too much in what I'm saying, our delegate to Congress, Bartlett, and you (indiscernible) director, three of a kind. They picked on Jim Curry and was -- you couldn't get anywhere, you know? That's the reason I think you -- you mentioned some, when I talked to, that -- that -- or was it somebody else? That Ketchikan, our ANB Convention, that Governor Gruening, Delegate Bartlett and (indiscernible) Wade attend, that came to our judgment (indiscernible) executive committee meeting. Our executive committee meeting was with our attorney, she was going to brief us, bring us up to date. But you know the minute he opened his mouth, I wanted to jump him, it's our meeting. So I -- and of course, William Paul hated their guts. But anything to -- to show his disapproval of what I do. You know, I -- so I finally says, this is supposed to be our meeting with our attorney. That we were here for over an hour, we're not getting anywhere except throwing things at one another. So I'm going to make a motion that the governor and our delegate and area director be excused. That -- that didn't go over very good. The only one that voted against my motion was William Paul.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now, I guess you ended your presidencies of -- of ANB in 1945. And was that about the time you went to work for the Bureau? How -- when -- when did you go work?

MR. PERATROVICH: I started working for the bureau in '46, September. Prior to that, I was working the territorial trader's office. I started as a file clerk, license officer, chief enforcement officer, chief tax collector. And I was the first director of land registration. So, you know, half of the lands had not been registered up to that time (indiscernible). About that time, BIA was after me because they were calling me all the time on different things on (indiscernible) called me, we've got a job coming up. And he says, "We want you." I says -- so I asked him, "What's the basic salary? I'm a director, I'm my own boss and if I make the same money, it would be foolish for me to quit a job that pays me the same." "Give us two or three days." A couple days later I got a call and says they upped it. So I couldn't turn it down.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, was this Don Foster or who was --

MR. PERATROVICH: It was Don Foster.

MR. MITCHELL: It was Don Foster.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. He was the one. I'm glad I listened to him. He told me -- at that time, when I became a director of land registration, I could feel the political pressure. I got the (indiscernible) of Governor Gruening, and it was -- it was time to get away. He -- he failed to file his registration form before the deadline. The law is very specific that a late file is \$5. So imagine over \$5, he didn't want to pay it. He was two days late.

MR. MITCHELL: This was on his taxes?



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MR. PERATROVICH: No, it was Gruening.

MR. MITCHELL: Right, but on Gruening's taxes? Or what was the registration form for?

MR. PERATROVICH: (Indiscernible) his patent land.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh. Oh. Oh, okay.

MR. PERATROVICH: So Brooke Riley (phonetic), do you know him?

MR. MITCHELL: Uh-huh, sure.

MR. PERATROVICH: He brought attention to (indiscernible) accepted. It's my job, I hate to do it, but I need you to take it back to him, unless there's a \$5 attached, I'm not going to accept it. Then there was Ralph Rivers, who was Attorney General then, he -- he talked to me. I paid it -- (indiscernible) I didn't know this was going to do well, but a week before that, I discussed it with Ralph. I says, "I guess the law, there's no leeway for anyone that may be late in filing (indiscernible)." He says, "If they don't file on time, they have to pay that penalty." So after the Governor raised hell with me, he -- he says, "Roy, I think the old man has a point." And I says, "Oh, bullshit. I'm going to go by your first opinion." So -- so he paid the \$5, but I lost a friend. Oh, he did everything under the sun except murder me. And that's when I decided -- and Don Foster had a real fatherly talk with me, "You're still young, Roy." He says, "You have no future up there." He says, "You're at the top level, but they're going to cut your throat. Here you'll be under civil service, you'll have retirement." And I'm enjoying it. So that's the reason I know an awful lot of Don Foster.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, what was Don Foster's attitude about all this? Was he in favor of reservations or supporting the land --

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, he was in the -- in the sort of a peculiar spot. He -- we never got into detail on that. But I -- he respected my position that -- he knew that I'm an Indian and I'm going to represent our Indian people. I don't think I ever detected that he was ever against. Nor was he advocating it because on big items, you know as well as I do, direction -- direction comes from the top. So whatever they do -- I mean, whatever the bosses think he has to care about. So we didn't have any problems with that.

MR. MITCHELL: Because the reason I ask is, you know, he -- he got accused of -- of going over to Hydaburg and encouraging people to vote for the reservation. You know --

MR. PERATROVICH: I was the one that went to -- I was delegated to attend it. No. I don't know when he went there. He may have afterward but he sent me down there. So the -- at no time did we ever say, "Go for the reservations or go against it." We try to be fair and give information on both sides. I was extra careful on that.

MR. MITCHELL: All right.

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MR. PERATROVICH: But the opposition, preached this, "You folks are going to be corralled in an area that you cannot leave unless you get permission from BIA representatives."

MR. MITCHELL: Well, as you said, that was a pretty strong argument, and that certainly a lot of trouble --

MR. PERATROVICH: Well you -- you couldn't, you couldn't -- you couldn't tell them. So -- and I didn't blame our people they were definitely -- well, they didn't want it. Hydaburg would have been (indiscernible) no other choice for spots. They wouldn't be experiencing what they're experiencing now, that they got cut short on a lot of things. So --

MR. MITCHELL: And now, you went to work for the Bureau in -- in what, October of '46 now -

MR. PERATROVICH: It was in September, '46.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, September '46.

MR. PERATROVICH: September 16th, I remember that.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, shortly thereafter was when Ruth Bronson made her first trip up, right? And did you travel with her?

MR. PERATROVICH: Up through Haines and those places, yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. What was -- what was -- what was she doing on that trip?

MR. PERATROVICH: Just explaining the implications on the -- on the bill. I think that's what it was. No, I traveled with her up there. So --

MR. MITCHELL: And -- and she was the person that suggested that Jim Curry might be someone who could --

MR. PERATROVICH: She did say you folks should have -- we have an attorney that could help your folks. That's the way she approached it. So -- and those of us that met Jim Curry was impressed with his sincerity. And how much background he had, I don't know, but he apparently knew what he was doing.

MR. MITCHELL: Did -- did he come up, then, to visit with you?

MR. PERATROVICH: I mean, he came up and William Paul was just like those pit bulls, you know, and go after him all the time. So he couldn't say anything in public that William Paul was barking at.

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MR. MITCHELL: And this would be because Paul viewed that he was going to be taking away some of his power do you think? Or --

MR. PERATROVICH: Because he -- Jim would never -- wouldn't -- wouldn't hire his son. So his whole thing was trying to get his sons in on that.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, what was -- what can you tell me about Jim Curry? Was he -- do you remember -- do you remember what he looked like or how he acted? Was he loud or did he have a good sense of humor or --

MR. PERATROVICH: Who, Jim?

MR. MITCHELL: Jim.

MR. PERATROVICH: He was (indiscernible). He was very polite. As -- as heated as William Paul was, he never once raised his voice. He was a gentleman. So -- I never heard -- I can't think of any -- any time where he raised his voice or shouted back. He could have, but he politely answered Paul. So -- he knew his law. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now I know that in, what was it, I guess '49 and '50, when the first statehood bills were going on, that there was an attempt, I guess, that -- that Bartlett made to, like, compromise land claims in the statehood bills; do you remember that at all?

MR. PERATROVICH: I don't recall that. I really don't. See, I -- where was I in '49? I had a fellowship, I took education, I believe, for a year. And I was stationed in Oklahoma for over two years. And so (indiscernible) -- so there are periods of time where -- I'm not about to guess and tell you unless I know.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Do you remember when you left, then, on that fellowship? When?

MR. PERATROVICH: Let's see, I remember that. I received two fellowships, one was from the United Nations, I'm the first Alaskan to receive it. In fact, there was only two. The second one went to (indiscernible) for education. I -- I was -- I think it's '52 or '53 (indiscernible). At the same time, I received one from John Haywood Foundation to study banking. I was interested in cooperatives, credit unions under the United Nations. So I was sent up to Nova Scotia. That's where I studied. And for my bank training, I went through Denver at the Central Bank and Trust Company. In that respect, Ruth Bronson was very instrumental to getting me in there. So the bank was so -- I was enthusiastic about the whole thing, but they just treated me like one of the employees. In fact, when they gave out bonuses on Christmas, they gave me a check, too. And I was supposed to be just student. And the university decided not to charge me anything. The courses were outlined for me by the bank that would fit into my training. So they didn't charge a penny for that.

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MR. MITCHELL: That's great. Well, now, one thing when you were still ANB President, I noticed that it was in 1944, I guess, that Andrew Hope and was it Frank Johnson were -- were both elected to the legislature that year?

MR. PERATROVICH: I forgot what year, but (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. It was 1944. Now, do you recall how that happened? Did everyone at ANB get together at all and decide that they were going to elect these guys or --

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. They -- we supported them. I remember on Frank Johnson, he replaced Frank Price. Frank Price had been elected, but he died before his service. So we went there and (indiscernible) committee and we have authority in between conventions on emergencies. So we -- we all supported Frank Johnson. There were several of us Democrats on the committee but we -- that's the way we operated in our own membership. We -- we don't care what party you belong to, just as long as you were with ANB.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Now, was Frank Johnson a Republican then?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: And -- and was -- Andrew Hope was a Democrat?

MR. PERATROVICH: Democrat. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Also, you don't -- I mean, ANB didn't -- other than supporting them, did you engage in any attempt to, like, organize the villages to get out the vote or --

MR. PERATROVICH: The campaign -- but, of course, we -- we were not that sophisticated. But word of mouth -- and that's about the way we handled it. So -- and the beauty of it at that period of time, too, we had the balance of power. We either go with labor or capital. We -- we're -- our (indiscernible) was labor. At that time AFM -- I mean -- AFM -- AFL and what's the other one?

MR. MITCHELL: CIO?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. They were competing to get ANB to go with them. So we had good support from both sides.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, that's good. Now, what was -- what was your assessment of William Paul, Jr.'s lawyer? Did those -- I mean, I know they wanted to be involved in ANB activities.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well --

MR. MITCHELL: Did -- did they have a different reputation than their father? Or how did that work?

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MR. PERATROVICH: It was hard to overcome their dad. He -- no matter what the boys did -- I'm speaking very frankly and honestly. He dominated his children although they were over 21. His son, Fred, and I were classmates at Ketchikan High School. So -- I hate to say this about him, but William Paul, he -- when he was -- son was having a time trying to make both ends meet. We used to pay our grand secretary \$125, he wanted it, you know, and we supported him. But the old man ran against his own son. No, his son needed that money. He came to our room in Ketchikan, we were at a convention, Bill Paul, my wife and I had retired, it was about midnight he called up and said, "I just have to talk to you." He came in crying, he felt that bad. His father knew he needed the money but (indiscernible) running against your own son.

MR. MITCHELL: What -- what year would that have been?

MR. PERATROVICH: I think (indiscernible) my years get mixed up, so I don't. I forgot.

MR. MITCHELL: But it would have been the Ketchikan convention while you were President?

MR. PERATROVICH: No, I wasn't President at that time. Somebody else was serving. I forgot who. (Indiscernible). I forgot who. No, I wasn't there but I was (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: But -- but it was after -- it was after --

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah, it was after that. Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Would that have been -- did -- did William need the money, too? I mean, what was --

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

MR. MITCHELL: Did William Paul need the money as much as -- as William, Jr. did, you think?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, his wife was teaching. I don't know if he had the money or not. But he liked the owner and he liked the position of grand secretary because he could (indiscernible) if he wants so probably. That's how he attacked me, when he first came back from school. And I was busy working at the dock trying to get a few dollars. Pretty soon (indiscernible) calling to our attention where William Paul was attacked and we happened to know the man. My wife, being with us, to start (indiscernible) Roy, we need to stop him. I says -- I told her, "Don't worry. I don't mind." I says, "That's the cheapest publicity I'll ever receive. (Indiscernible) people don't know me. But he's going to build me up, you just watch." So -- so people begin to wonder who's that crazy (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Well, that's surprising he would have -- why do you think he would have done that --

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

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MR. MITCHELL: Why do you think he would have done that since you obviously were --

MR. PERATROVICH: I don't know. I still can't figure it out. But they all treated me as though I -- I had something to offer. I -- I -- I never pushed myself. His brother was after me when we sided with him. I never asked anybody to or tried to impress people. I -- I knew my own limitations. I learned the hard way. I listen to people such as you, good background. I try to pick up things from here and there. So -- I read an awful lot and so I know my limitations. So -- MS. JONES: All right.

MR. PERATROVICH: I did take law though. I paid for three years. Sounds like bragging but I was (indiscernible) three days with my -- when my wife came down with cancer, when that happened, I just felt -- world collapsed around me, so I just dropped everything. What do you think I could have done?

MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

MR. PERATROVICH: But I think I would have ended up poor as an attorney because I can't charge anybody.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, were you -- I know in the -- in 1944 was the year that they had the hearings on Hydaburg and Kake and Klawock.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: Were you involved in that at all? Did you go to the any of the hearings?

MR. PERATROVICH: I was at Klawock. I didn't go to Kake. I went to Klawock and Hydaburg. It was really amusing at Klawock. We were playing it smart by -- I was dealing with the Klawock group using a -- some of those older fellows, who -- who could understand English, could speak it. So we drilled them, don't pretend you understand English, we will have an interpreter. So we had to be careful. We had one fellow, his name was Fred Thomas, he could speak fluently almost, and understand. And Judge Arnold; do you remember him?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, WC Arnold?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: Bill Arnold.

MR. PERATROVICH: Of course, he was representing (indiscernible), he was questioning, you know, Fred Thomas was (indiscernible) as interpreter. But that was -- Arnold moved he -- so he was doing a recess when everyone was marching out, he caught up with Fred Thomas. "Well, Fred, how are you doing?" "Well, Mr. Arnold, I'm doing all right." Damn, he was supposed to tell him he couldn't understand.

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MR. MITCHELL: Well, that's pretty funny. What was -- what did you think of WC Arnold? What was --

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

MR. MITCHELL: Bill Arnold, was he a dominate --

MR. PERATROVICH: Oh, he was very fair person. He had a job to do, but he did go beyond it. He wasn't nasty, he was a clever fellow. He will be smiling, and he'd still pull your leg. So he was smooth. I liked him because although he didn't have to, when we were having troubled with our antidiscrimination bill, he said, "Roy, I'm going to change that amendment for you folks. If you have it like that, you're not going to first base." It didn't weaken -- it was on school matters. It didn't weaken the bill, but it made -- made it -- (indiscernible) call it for those that opposed it. But he was good like that. When I was tax collector, he found out I was going to Bristol Bay. He says, "I'll make an arrangement for you to stay over Red Salmon Canneries." He had a big place for me. But he was like that, he -- he never once was nasty.

MR. MITCHELL: Just business.

MR. PERATROVICH: Just business. A hard man to -- even though you -- you throw some hard rocks, he still did it in a very (indiscernible). He talked real -- real smoothly.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now, what can you tell me about George Folta? I know that he was -- he was the fellow that was the judge that threw out the Hydaburg reservation.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, unfortunately, you know, I liked Judge Folta, I liked him, he was nice. I think I'm the only -- as I was told even when (indiscernible), Bill calls me into his private chamber, (indiscernible) and say -- and he'll tell me funny things that happened in court, you know. I guess a lot of things do happen. And he'd just roar laughing about those things. But he always treated me good. But he -- he disliked William Paul with a passion. And he said William Paul is such a damn crook, he should have been behind bars. You know, but stuff like that. But the biggest mistake he made here is criticize but not too much so. H.L. Faulkner, you know that attorney, he was -- was opposing everything Indian. But then when that case was up, him and the judge used to contrast (indiscernible) it didn't look good to anybody -- everybody. That's the only fault I had with Judge Folta. I -- my understanding of the situation (indiscernible) doesn't go out with anybody. Like -- like he was having (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Well, did -- did you get the feeling that he was sort of anti-reservation or anti-Native before?

MR. PERATROVICH: I think -- my guess is although he covered up, he was anti-Native. But I'm pretty sure he is. And then the case could have been better handled. Pat Gilmore was just an attorney's assistance (indiscernible).

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MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: It had just gotten a -- a greenhorn, you know. Didn't know a thing about it. But when that case came up for debate in court, Matt took off on vacation. He left, that's how he was badly beaten. Ed Merdies (phonetic) didn't know enough about it. He did his best, but he was no match for Arnold and those guys.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. I've read the transcript of that trial.

MR. PERATROVICH: Did you?

MR. MITCHELL: And Bill Arnold really does just tie him up in knots.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. He's smooth.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, he was a lot -- and he'd been practicing law for 20 years at that point as opposed to Merdies. Now, did -- somebody told me that Pat Gilmore had a cousin or a brother in town who was a fish lawyer or a cannery lawyer?

MR. PERATROVICH: Who?

MR. MITCHELL: Pat Gilmore's cousin or brother? Was -- was there another Gilmore in town that was a lawyer?

MR. PERATROVICH: No. No. There was another Gilmore, a younger one, that came up. But not related. Pat had only one -- (Brief interruption.)

MR. PERATROVICH: -- called me this morning.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, did she?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. I sent her a couple of your letters that showed -- I underlined the first paragraph. And -- and said Juneau -- she said, he's -- he's there, you know, from Juneau. She's a nice girl.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, no. She's -- I've worked with her at AFN, you know, for years.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. That's what she said. And she told me about that other case coming up so --

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Let's see, as long as I have you, how about telling me a little bit about the antidiscrimination case. Could you maybe go back and tell me a little bit more about Elizabeth, where she was from and --



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MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. Elizabeth was born in Petersburg and grew up in Sitka. She went and graduated -- we graduated together from Ketchikan High School. And then we -- we tried Bellingham, but we went broke. So --

MR. MITCHELL: But that -- the two of you met when you were in high school at Ketchikan?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. So she -- right after I first got elected, I told you we decided, if we were going to be of any help to our people we can't stay in Klawock, you're isolated more or less. Now, you've got (indiscernible). So I applied for every job that I heard was open. I finally got a job as file clerk in a Trader's Office, 50 a month or some thing like that. And I had three children and a wife to support. So we came up -- just anything to get started. But we put up a lot of food, my wife was a good manager. She put up a lot of meat and fish and all that stuff. Boy that cut down on your -- but things were kind of cheap in those days though. So -- so that's how -- the first thing we noticed here --

MR. MITCHELL: What year did you come to Juneau then?

MR. PERATROVICH: 1941. 1941. And we saw these signs on the South Radcliff that had no natives allowed. We cater to white only. Some places were more insulting as in, "No dogs. No Indians allowed," you know. It was all that, we decided then (indiscernible) Italian place. Not Mike's. Mike, never was -- he never discriminated. Found out, that I never did pinpoint it, but somebody told us that he, my dad, our dads, were shirt-tail cousins from Yugoslavia. But a few times when we used to go across with my wife, he used to treat us to steaks and stuff like that. He was really a kind man. You had those signs all over here. And we called on the governor, ask for his help. So he says, "I'm going to contact for progress." He did and I guess they all thumbed their nose at him. So -- so they even blackballed him from the Elks when he applied for membership because he was sticking up for Indians.

MR. MITCHELL: This would still have been in 41?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah, we couldn't even push a button on that Elk's hall for those days. But anyway, so he called us in again, and says we'll have to go legislation, is the only thing I could see. He says, suggested for contact, our delegate to Congress and Anthony Darmond (phonetic), you know, swell fellow. Asked him to see if we can collect copies of antidiscrimination, no matter how weak it may be, give us an idea. So he sent us 26 (indiscernible) a week so just -- just to say that we have (indiscernible) but we picked up good ideas from that. And that's how we had that. In 1943, those days, in the territorial days, the legislature met every other year and they had only -- let's see, eight senators and 16 representatives. They met for 60 days. We had that introduced in '43. And when I say that -- that it attracted -- I won't say (indiscernible) middle of the year. A few (indiscernible) and mind you, we were at war, our boys were shedding blood. But they treated us badly.

MR. MITCHELL: Who -- who introduced the bill for you?

MR. PERATROVICH: What?

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MR. MITCHELL: Who introduced the bill for you in the legislature? Did you have some -- who -- who is the -- the legislator that introduced the bill? Did you --

MR. PERATROVICH: Anderson.

MR. MITCHELL: Is he from down here?

MR. PERATROVICH: I don't know. I don't know. Well, any way, talk about your opposition. You had fellows like L.J. Faulkner who's supposed to be a church killer, you know, a good attorney. My -- I couldn't believe my ears when he testified against us. My wife and I were the only two. I contacted one or two of our own people. William Paul laughed at me over the phone. I called him and see if he could help us. "We don't need it, we get along with them." So another one to swallow us up. They smile and politely say (indiscernible) minister then, but we'd only stepped up on that witness stand and a lot of people admired him. It would have helped us, I think.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, did -- was William --

MR. PERATROVICH: He and I -- he and I had it out the other day about it. He wrote to me saying that he did testify. So he used his own letter to send it. But you ought to see it, he spelt my name insulting. So I spelt his name too, Z-A-B-O-L-F-F-F.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, was William Paul subjected to that kind of discrimination? I mean, were they --

MR. PERATROVICH: They lived under it. You'd be surprised how many more people paid no attention to it. It was his own insults. Some of these places like the Baranof Hotel, my wife and I were never turned down. It would have been easier for us to say, "Oh, we're accepted, it's fine." We were worried about our people. We were up to Baranof that -- those days they called it a bubble (indiscernible). It was all young Indian -- whether the couple (indiscernible) boyfriend. (Indiscernible), handsome couple. They just ignored them. This was (indiscernible). We couldn't take it anymore, so we left. The next morning, my wife was on a phone call to the governor -- O'Brien was manager of the (indiscernible), and he was a good friend of Elizabeth. And the governor just chewed his butt out. So he promised it'll never happen again, so it didn't happen. He didn't put a sign up. But the waitress and we -- and waiters were the ones that ignored Indians. I guess they were instructed to do so. So we went -- our bill was defeated on a tie vote. I was promised by a fellow named Vitasmith (phonetic) from Anchorage, he was a key. I needed his vote. And he told me just as -- I walked with him after the -- the door, the chamber was in his (indiscernible). And I was so tickled, that was a vote that would -- sweet. On a roll call vote, I told my friends since we couldn't, he voted, switched and killed it on the tie vote. You know who voted against us, too, those day?

MR. MITCHELL: Who?

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MR. PERATROVICH: Bill Egan.

MR. MITCHELL: Really? When he was -- he was in the house?

MR. PERATROVICH: He was in the house from Valdez. He was just a young fellow. Next time around, though, he supported us. So I don't hold it against him. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Now, so you asked William Paul to testify and he --

MR. PERATROVICH: What's that?

MR. MITCHELL: You asked William Paul to testify?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: And he --

MR. PERATROVICH: On the phone. And he just, we -- we're all right. We don't need to -- so I went -- Walter was like (indiscernible) you don't need me. You and Elizabeth are doing fine. Anyway, he had -- he and I had it out the other day. And I told him point-blank, I -- I wrote him that note. I asked you to testify but (indiscernible) just remember that. I've never told anybody. I hate to, you know, open up an old wound. But anyway, you couldn't get a foot in -- in that hallway in -- in the legislative chambers. People -- I didn't realize there was so much hatred against Indians. Not only that but at USO, the military was ordered to prohibit the military people mingling with Indian girls, even if you were related. Kind of (indiscernible) on all the letters on that if -- if you -- if you're stationed -- where are you stationed?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, I'm in Anchorage. But --

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, maybe -- if you can get ahold of my son, he fixed it up and all the letters, things we did, and trying to bring that about.

MR. MITCHELL: Now, you said he has donated one of those to the library here do you think?

MR. PERATROVICH: Library here, one in Anchorage. Maybe you'd want to read it some time.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, yeah. I think that -- well, maybe some day what we'll do is I'll -- I'll go through all of that and then I'm sure I'd have a bunch of questions after.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, but just ask -- be sure to ask him if he has an extra, I don't know. He and his daughter are the ones that put it together. They did a beautiful job. I'd put it together myself, but I know how clumsy I am. But I saved some documents, not everything. I lost some, we had a fire. Then when you move around like I do, and being an old bachelor, well, you're bound to miss something. But what I put together is what started the whole ball rolling again.

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But anyway, in '45, we had the bill reintroduced again, but this time the bill passed. So that's when my wife did a beautiful job.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: In -- in the senate, they guessed wrong. I'm glad they did. They thought I would be the hard one to handle. So -- and that my wife would be easy because -- they got fooled.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: So I was only asked a few questions, and they waited for her. So I'll never forget Senator Shattuck asking, "Ms. Peratrovich, do you believe that by the passage of this law that discrimination will be eliminated from the minds of people?" We had discussed that the night before, how we were going to answer it. So we talked about all this capital punishment. And so I held my breath, and boy, she hit it off. And said, "Senator, I'm going to answer by asking you a question. The fact that you have passed bills making it a crime to kill someone, have a hanging," or whatnot -- I forgot the term she used, and says, "do you think that will show us you've erased the thought of murder from people's minds." He just sat there. So when she got through -- I'll never forget it (indiscernible) we went through tough -- tough times.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, that was a very --

MR. PERATROVICH: When -- when she got up, she got her -- there wasn't an individual sitting, there was (indiscernible) that opposed us -- the gallery, everybody was on their feet applauding. We never saw anything like it.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, it was a major achievement, you know. I mean, particularly to do single handedly, you know.

MR. PERATROVICH: She did it so beautifully, you know, she wasn't nasty. But she had an answer for everything. Yeah. They thought she'd be the easy one.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, of course we're always underestimating women. That's our problem, you know.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. So -- no, that's how we got the -- the thing I tried to help people to -- discrimination wasn't confined to (indiscernible) they tried to make it (indiscernible), up at Nome, in the theater, they had -- they had imaginary line down the middle of the theater. Eskimos and minorities on one side, whites on the other. One Eskimo girl who had some schooling decided to test that. She deliberately sat on the white bench side a usher came and asked her to move, she refused. They asked her several times. Finally, two of them came, picked her up, and threw her on the street, that's a fact. Odie Cockrin (phonetic) is who is mentioned in the (indiscernible) was an attorney, he knew all about that from Nome. When he spoke in favor

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of that bill, you could hear a pin drop. He was a wonderful (indiscernible), he recited all of those things how Eskimos were treated. He and my wife were the ones that really put it over. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Now, did -- how did -- that was in '45 when it passed. Did things change, then, immediately, or did it take a while --

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, the signs were taken down. And our -- one of our things I said is that (indiscernible) we want this -- these -- degrading signs down. We're not going to rush to these places where you don't want us to be. We know where we can enjoy ourselves. But we want you to know that if we want to go there, we will go there. And then other -- up at Anchorage they had, right on Fourth Avenue, it's a Greek -- they had a big restaurant. That had -- Governor Gruening gave him hell, "You are a foreigner, why are you" -- "why are you discriminating against" -- the (indiscernible) of our children got turned away from public schools. R.E. Robinson, you've heard of him, an attorney, he was chairman of the board. I -- we knew it was going to come up when the school board was meeting. So I went up, since I was grand president, to testify. Mind you, there's a (indiscernible) down the hallway, and the door was open where the meeting took place -- he had the school board -- he looked up, saw me, and he jumped -- that's a fact. He ran to the door, I was about that far when he slammed it. So didn't -- you didn't have to guess that I wasn't wanted.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. This was back in the era when you were grand president?

MR. PERATROVICH: I was still grand president. And so the next day, the headlines -- I'm going to -- trying to get a copy of that. I want -- a lot of our people don't realize. The headline was that the chairman of the school board will resign rather than be a member of a board that admits Indian children. Then it goes on that it will lower the standards and so forth. Ironically, one -- one of the 11 students of that became valedictorian of the graduating class.

MR. MITCHELL: That's amazing. What -- what year would have that have been?

MR. PERATROVICH: Oh, '40 -- must be '42, '43, something like that.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. And that would have been the Juneau newspaper?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. Yeah. I'm going -- I'm going to try to get ANB to hire somebody. You know, I -- I get tired. I -- oh, I feel fine (indiscernible). But I have this arthritis, and I think I -- I've devoted all my time to our people and sometimes you get a little bit tired. I think -- I've been trying to get them to hire some students and go through the, you know, library. Either '42 or '43, somewhere around that timeframe. All it is, is really amusing. I had an Eskimo fellow working for me up at Anchorage (indiscernible). I don't know if you remember, Miles (indiscernible). And, you know, why he ever got that is beyond me, you know. So we were sitting around in my office after lunch. And we were (indiscernible) bologna and I think green peas. I think (indiscernible) folks of the ANB taught us, nothing. You want to order, order. You order, order (indiscernible). So I told them, listen, and then said -- I said (indiscernible), if it

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hadn't been for the ANB you poor Eskimos would still have been thrown out of theaters. I said you remember that.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, it's true. And there wouldn't been a land claim, either, as near as I have been able to figure, if it hadn't been for --

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. It was under pressure, the U.S. Marshal called me, and I knew him from Ketchikan. He says, "Roy, you and your wife, what you're doing, I hope it never backfires on you." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "When that bill passes, you're going to have to agree to this influx of blacks and all that," that's what happened. So when we testified on the bill they (indiscernible) fewer that came forth. And then old Blanch tried to give credit to Luisa King (phonetic) for correcting things for Alaska. Hell, we passed it the way before Luisa King even got out of his diapers, I said. And then, what burns me up is this, why do the white people go crazy to name something after Luisa King, he didn't do a damn thing for us in Alaska, we did it ourselves. Yet, I know (indiscernible) holiday on that day (indiscernible) I know it's going to cost a lot of money. But if it had been a black, they'd go crazy. But I'm satisfied she got recognition.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, you know, a lot of it, I think, is very few -- it's amazing how little history people really have up here about what happened, because people are very ignorant about a lot of these events. What -- what can you tell me about Frank Johnson? I know he and William Paul didn't get along either, right?

MR. PERATROVICH: No. They didn't, because Frank was a -- a student. He was not too much on public speaking. And he conveyed something, you know what I mean, he lacked a little something. What he could have done behind a typewriter, I'm not sure if that guy was forceful. He was smart, and he was forever catching William Paul off base on different things. So anyone that disagrees with William Paul, William Paul hates them.

MR. MITCHELL: You know, actually, that's -- I -- I've read a lot of the original papers in the library and things, and I've never been able, based on the papers, to decide how I feel about William Paul. You know, I mean -- do you -- what's your view about whether he was dishonest and that kind of stuff?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, I -- he was disbarred, you know?

MR. MITCHELL: Right. I -- I've read all that.

MR. PERATROVICH: And --

MR. MITCHELL: And Folta was the guy that did it.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. They had a lot of things on him so it could -- he could have been worse off. But he -- his son, Fred, came up to see me when I was working for BOA and wanted me to sign the statement that -- to reinstate his father, that he was a changed man. Although Fred

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and I are classmates, I'm afraid I won't do it. He says, "Why?" "Your dad hasn't changed. I like him, but darned if I'm going to put my name to it and say that he is (indiscernible)."

MR. MITCHELL: Well, it's sort of funny, you know, because he really does seem to have done over the years a lot of --

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

MR. MITCHELL: He seems to have done a lot of things over the years that really did help Native people, and on the other hand he sort of had this other part to him, you know?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, if he handled it right, we would have been still carrying him on the pedestal. But he's -- I think -- didn't I write you or talk to you about -- they gave recognition (indiscernible) Paul is a history teacher from Anchorage. But I give him a lot of credit. Those two brothers, from the time they joined ANB, I think in '22 or '24. I think '22. They made the general public aware of the potential political power of ANB. At that time (indiscernible) nobody knew the potential. But they made sure that the public became aware. Those days our ANB, our Indian vote was a balance of power, so everybody went after it. In fact, those days, some of the villages didn't have telegraphs or telephone. So when it's a tight election, the papers all the same, were all awaiting the canoe vote to come out. No, I give him a lot of credit and it brought recognition to ANB. Not only that, they were instrumental in starting us to learn about parliamentary procedure and preparing documents and so forth. They have done a lot of good. I don't discredit them. I disagreed with them on a lot of things, but that -- they did contribute.

MR. MITCHELL: How about Andrew Hope? How --

MR. PERATROVICH: Andrew Hope was a really deep thinking and smart man. He -- he was not the kind that would become heated up like William Paul. I've seen him only once or twice get firm, but it was for a good reason. He was -- I shouldn't say smooth operator, but he knew how to handle people. He was smart, nobody could fool him. I worked with Andrew quite a while. But -- so I know we were more or less -- I didn't know tribally, we were both equals, and there was such -- he was my uncle. It's his cousin, (indiscernible) my wife. So under that, he used to call my wife his daughter to (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: So no. He was -- he was a great man. First time I heard him get mad was at the 937 convention that was my first convention. That was when Louie was playing up to me. I didn't know a darn thing. I was a young fellow. But Al Whitmark (phonetic) asked me that one time. I (indiscernible) I had nothing to give. But they began to attack me and treat me like I know something. So -- so (indiscernible) Bill, I didn't. So I have nothing to offer. So -- but things got a little rough at that meeting, and William Paul was kind of ganging up on our side and Andrew Hope got up. I'll never forget it. He says, "Listen, if you fellows want to play rough, we'll play rough." That's all he said, and that put a stop to it.

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MR. MITCHELL: Is this in '37?

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

MR. MITCHELL: This would have been in 1937.

MR. PERATROVICH: (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Because I know there was, I guess, a big argument over how to implement the IRA in '36 and '37.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. It was at Wrangell so some things developed there. I don't know. But I was trying to stay out of it because I didn't know enough about it. And Louie wanted me to be with his side and William -- of course William had an angle, like everything he did. He had already committed himself to support Anthony Diamond for reelection, although William Paul was a Republican. It was a condition that Diamond support him as the first credit officer (indiscernible), so he was committed to --

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I guess he had that job for a while until he got disbarred.

MR. PERATROVICH: Right. Yeah. But I had it all screwed up. He encouraged several organizations so they could fight one another. So he did that to Klawock, encouraged three organizations. He almost broke it up but --

MR. MITCHELL: How about Louis Paul? Was he -- what was he like? Was he sort of in the shadows of William or did he -- was he ever on his own?

MR. PERATROVICH: No. He didn't have to take (indiscernible), he was an old man, he was polite. He'll disagree, but he's never nasty like -- William was nasty, but not Louie. I used to get up to (indiscernible) letters I used to write to executive committee members, I -- some idea I have. I would not make -- before -- made -- made moves, I'd write to the committee and see what they think of it. I used to get a kick out of Louie's replies. They said, "Dear Roy" -- it says, "I'll go along with it, you have (indiscernible) you've just about convinced me, but" -- but you couldn't get mad at him. He was always polite with me.

MR. MITCHELL: When -- when did he die? Do you recall when he passed away?

MR. PERATROVICH: When did he die?

MR. MITCHELL: Uh-huh, Louis.

MR. PERATROVICH: I don't remember. I was -- where was I? I'd been in and out and off and on. Incidentally, when William Paul passed away in Seattle, the family called me. Then Walter Dubalof (phonetic) was our grand president, and he was going down to give the eulogy, but they didn't want him. They had called me up and wanted me to come down to give the eulogy. So



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well -- I made all sorts of excuses but (indiscernible) it wouldn't look right for the Grand President being backed down. But they wanted me to come. So we got to be pretty good friends towards last -- but we still disagreed, but he began to respect me a little bit in a few things. So we were never -- we never reached a point where we hated each other so much we wouldn't talk. We may have heated argument on -- like that beautiful ordeal and acrimonious (indiscernible) but during recess, we'd have coffee together.

MR. MITCHELL: Of course, you Tlingits are famous for that.

MR. PERATROVICH: What's that?

MR. MITCHELL: You Tlingit's are famous for that, for yelling at each other and then having coffee.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. Well, you have to -- if you disagree, that's a privilege everybody has. We can't say we all agree on everything, but you all tried to chase the same woman. So we all have different tastes.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, do you have any other thoughts that -- about the land claims movement or anything that I've sort of left out the story?

MR. PERATROVICH: Huh?

MR. MITCHELL: Do you have any other things on your -- that come to mind about the land claims era that you think might be important?

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, to begin with, I'll go back a little bit. One of the things that we disagreed on, too was -- the bill, was that when it was made known -- of course, everybody knew (indiscernible) didn't have any money for -- then he was trying to get law changed. So unless you paid \$10, you would never have benefits. I argued (indiscernible) \$10 if I gave it, it would have to be voluntarily, you can't force people. I got a bill in the Washington (indiscernible) talk about this. I mean, he hated my guts for that but it's -- a lot of our old people during that period of time didn't have \$10. \$10 meant a pair of shoes for the kids or something.

MR. MITCHELL: So he tried to get that changed on your trip to Washington or what --

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. He wanted that changed, so that would have made things a little easier for his sons, didn't (indiscernible). He was good -- you know him, don't you?

MR. MITCHELL: Who, William Paul?

MR. PERATROVICH: Yes.

MR. MITCHELL: No. Actually, he -- I started getting involved, actually a couple years after his death. He had died, what, early '70s?

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MR. PERATROVICH: He was -- in my book, during that period of time, I have -- two men that I thought were outstanding (indiscernible), I said were Gruening and William Paul. William Paul was (indiscernible), but you always have to watch his words.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. PERATROVICH: He -- I said, you want (indiscernible), he says -- John Freeman, an old fellow I knew from high school in Ketchikan is telling me you're a Democrat but it was (indiscernible) a little paper column. I don't know what you call it, but it was John Freeman. We had a big meeting at Redmond's Hall in Ketchikan, with all the candidates, Republicans, Democrats. And -- and -- and next few days he published everybody's speech but William Paul. So John Freeman was telling me (indiscernible) fellow -- I was blessed in getting acquainted with old people. I use to sit and listen to them, you know, tell me all these things. I -- William Paul came up to see him the next day after the publication, mad as all getout. I said, "John, what the hell is the matter with you?" He says, "I gave the best speech, but you didn't print it. You printed everybody else's but mine. Everybody says I did an outstanding job." And John Freeman says, "Bill, I know it." He said, "You did a good job. That was a good speech. But you know what," he says, "I ran out of capital I's." Oh, John Freeman used to laugh about it. William Paul had to live with -- the day when William Paul asked me twice to nominate me for grand president. He hated my guts but he -- he came up to (indiscernible) like nominate for some thing. I've already been asked by others, so it's a free country, go ahead. So (indiscernible) on their feet before. All in all, it was disappointing besides that. I still have disappointments. The problem I'm having now -- I shouldn't say a problem, but bothers me is that some of the men that are around my age, they had an opportunity to do something for our people and didn't do anything. Now, in their ripe old age, they want to be noted for something. And still just see some of these people trying to claim, you know. I never, never in my life have ever gone up to ask some of the (indiscernible) people to recommend them for (indiscernible) I (indiscernible) recommend. They give me recognition, that's fine. I don't ask for it. People don't (indiscernible). If you deserve it, they will -- you don't have to tell them. But you know, I have a couple like that and I have no problem. Why do they do (indiscernible) blowing minds. The biggest satisfaction that I -- I'm enjoying is that the good Lord had helped me to help our people to -- to -- to some extent, that's a big satisfaction to know that our people have gained (indiscernible), they don't care about dollars or anything. You see our people happy.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, how do you -- what do you think of how the claims act has gone? Do you think it's worked out okay in the end, any problems or what?

MR. PERATROVICH: I'm a little bit afraid of it. So I -- I just -- I -- I just -- the thing that bothers me is that we're going to lose all those lands. (Indiscernible) superintendent of Anchorage, when they first started, I recommended to some of the leaders, when you folks start getting this money, going to regions, depending on how much you folks have seen, why don't you folks start off by putting 200,000 from each region into a pot, just let it grow interest. At the time when we are getting our lands, if we don't have the funds to pay for our tax, we are going to be taxed (indiscernible), they can draw on that. So Roger Lang (phonetic), who -- poor fellow

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passed away -- disliked me because I -- I'm not going to sit there and try to figure out where I stand. I'm going to lay my cards on the table. So I've always dealt that way. So it doesn't make you many friends, but it's -- at least people know -- know you -- you start telling some -- (indiscernible) pay no attention to him, he's a (indiscernible). He didn't know the BIA employee got fired for an hour one time. Got suspended for two -- two weeks without pay. The moral of that one, to never tell a commissioner to go to hell.

MR. MITCHELL: Actually, that reminds me, when -- when you were -- when you took your job in -- in 1946, were there other Natives working at the BIA and that kind of --

MR. PERATROVICH: (indiscernible) we -- we had just a few there. So I'm not saying I brought them in. But it seems to have kind of opened up the door. So I've never heard of Indians being turned down. They may have been, I don't know. I can only tell you from when I observed from the time I got in. One that managed BIA had a good -- whether they used it -- I used it, I know, after I was in the -- at the -- right in the (indiscernible) Indian -- Indian Reorganization Act. There's -- there was -- I still remember Section 12, it permits the Bureau to hire any Indian applicant for any position that they meet the minimum requirement without civil service test. You'd be surprised how many people filed it. But an individual has to show that they have -- meet the minimum requirement. I used it as superintendent, but with this condition, you call in the girls or boys, being hard under Indian preference, (indiscernible) except you will be -- you have met the minimum requirements. But I said, you're going to be stuck here unless you prepare yourself for civil service and you can join the place you want. I figured that was a start, give them a training test, you know, a lot of people. I know, I like, (indiscernible) I mean, all -- some of the answers, but if you give me a piece of paper and close the door, and I'm lost.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Right. Well, I think -- jeez, I can't think of any more questions that I have. I actually -- can you tell me a little bit more about Ernest Gruening? I mean --

MR. PERATROVICH: Who?

MR. MITCHELL: Ernest Gruening. I mean, I know he was very, obviously, in favor of the antidiscrimination thing. What was his attitude?

MR. PERATROVICH: He -- he supported us all the way.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. What about -- what about land claims and reservations?

MR. PERATROVICH: Reservations he was against. Now, I'm not too sure about the land claims. I don't know where he stood. Of course at the time, it -- on it wasn't so pronounced as the reservation was. And well, it's right under that Indian Reorganization. Well, the first act -- no the second act was called Wheeler Howard.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

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MR. PERATROVICH: Another thing that bothers me now too, you know, you're an attorney. Is a lot of people -- I talked to my son, he's the head of Tribal Operations. You are correct, everybody now that talks about the Indian Reorganizations, the 1934 Act, we don't come under 1934.

MR. MITCHELL: Thirty-six.

MR. PERATROVICH: We had the Alaska amendment in 1936. There's certain sections of 1934 act that was omitted from '36, as I recall, there's a 16 and , that's the section. That's been a long time, I'm testing my memory.

MR. MITCHELL: No, that's pretty close. That's what happened.

MR. PERATROVICH: So -- so but it always bothers me, when we amended the '34 act, we got (indiscernible). That's the reason we called it Alaska amendments so --

MR. MITCHELL: All right. What -- what about Bartlett? Did he -- was Bartlett in favor of land claims or -- or where was --

MR. PERATROVICH: Bartlett was real politician. So I never could figure out where his loyalty -- of course, Gruening tried to nominate him, you know, so I don't. I really can't say for sure. He was a very attentive person when you talked to him about Alaska matters because -- and Indian matters. So based on that, I'd say he wasn't against it. So anything that could help our people.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. So he wasn't a problem then?

MR. PERATROVICH: No.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Okay. Well, actually that pretty well does it. I'm sort of out of questions.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, if you think of any, I -- it's been my life. Like I said, I've enjoyed it. And now that this professor is writing up stuff about the history of the ANB. You know, I spent time with him, we were at the apartment here, last Sunday.

MR. MITCHELL: Is this Haycox (phonetic) or who --

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. How do you pronounce it?

MR. MITCHELL: Haycox.

MR. PERATROVICH: Yeah. Right. I chewed his butt out when (indiscernible); do you remember? For the (indiscernible) first ANB was --

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, I read that in the papers.

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MR. PERATROVICH: Yes.

MR. MITCHELL: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MR. PERATROVICH: I told him, come on down there, I'll give him a liberal education. He was real nice. He wrote me a good letter after that. He --

MR. MITCHELL: Right. No, I thought that was a -- a pretty good letter. I read that in the paper, I thought --

MR. PERATROVICH: He's a typical (indiscernible), I think I said. But he's -- perhaps now he's getting ready to write a book on Alaska. The -- I -- I like to keep the record straight on ANB. Too many of, oh, we did this, we did that. You know, if I wasn't there and I don't know it, I'm going to tell you. I'm not just going to say, "Oh, this what happened." And it was hearsay, I'll tell you like -- quite often, I'll tell people I wasn't there at the 929 convention, but I got the information from Andrew Hope, William Paul, and Joseph (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: All right.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, I enjoyed this.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. No, I very much appreciate it. I certainly have learned a lot.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, if you have questions, there may be some things I forgot to mention. But it's --

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I was particularly --

MR. PERATROVICH: That's the only thing about -- excuse me.

MR. MITCHELL: No, go ahead.

MR. PERATROVICH: That bothers me is that what is going to happen to our land after the 1991 (indiscernible) that bothers me too is this -- too many of our leaders are agreeing that we are going to place our land into restricted status, that's going to have to take an act of congress.

MR. MITCHELL: Well -- no. You see, we did -- as part of the 1991 amendments.

MR. PERATROVICH: (Indiscernible.)

MR. MITCHELL: Right. What -- what's in there -- this -- the good thing is that, so long as the land remains undeveloped, so long as people use it to hunt and fish on and pick berries and the kinds of things --

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MR. PERATROVICH: For subsistence.

MR. MITCHELL: Right, that kind of stuff, the land --

MR. PERATROVICH: But -- but beyond that --

MR. MITCHELL: Right. So long as it's used for that, even past 1991 now, congress has said that it can't be taxed and people can't lose it. And so everybody -- I mean, we put a lot of work in to get Congress to do that. The trouble is, and the way that people, like Hydaburg and others have gotten in trouble down here, is that that does not apply if you either mortgage your land or if you develop your land, like starting to cut trees on it and stuff like that. And if -- if the villages go out and do that -- I mean, that's what -- that's how Hydaburg got in trouble. You know, they went out, they borrowed money, and they put their land up as collateral, and then they started cutting all these trees, and it was a bad business situation and they almost lost all that land, you know? And unfortunately, that was not something we could get Congress to take care of. You know, and that's the major wave that's left but in the years ahead it's possible for people to lose the land.

MR. PERATROVICH: Well, that's going to be different from the (indiscernible) convention, we met for two nights at Klawock, there was a poll (indiscernible), they wanted the boys, but those of us are against it. But the first night, we met until midnight. And at a small village like Klawock, staying up until -- that's just uncalled for. The second night, we were going all the way up to midnight again, still no agreement. When my uncle (indiscernible) finding out (indiscernible), he generally is a hot-headed person but this time was very calm. He says, it's your last night with you folks until midnight. The hall was packed, everybody was interested in the land claim. I says, no, we didn't do anything. Tonight, we're nearing the midnight again, and you folks haven't decided as to who you want as attorney. I'll tell you the attorney you folks should contact, he's a good attorney and he's good Indian friend. I said, he knows the law real good, and I know he'll help us. I says, but you folks ought to go call on him, his name was Joe Wickerstand (phonetic). So it wasn't until the guys got up and says we all know that Wickerstand was our friend, was our friend and a good attorney. But he died four years ago.

(End of audio recording.)