

The POWDER MAGAZINE

15. EDITION

ELSA, YUKON TERRITORY

MAY, 1975

THE WAY WE WERE

By PATTY PAKVIS

When Frank and Lil Schroyen came to Elsa twenty-six years ago, life was quite different from what it is today. The work was much harder, the pay lower, even by those days' standards, and generally it was a very rough existence, with few of the modern conveniences.

Then, the men were working seven days a week, eleven hours a day and eight on Sunday. The wage for first class work was \$1.25 per hour with room and board costing \$2.50 a day. Today, first class pay has quadrupled, however, a bunk-house room and food is only slightly more at \$2.75 a day.

There was no running water in the mine dry, which was built of rough lumber and held only a big tin trough for washing up. The water came from the mine in barrels which were heated all day long and when the water was ready a bell would ring to summon the men. Often, by the time the slower ones arrived, all the hot water would be gone. Not very pleasant.

Mealtime was another situation of the "survival of the fittest". The cookhouse, run by a Chinaman named Tom, was so small that meals were served in three sittings. When the food was ready, Tom would go out back and ring the triangle whereupon all the men would make a mad dash for the

door to try and get in for the first sitting. The stampedes were so bad that once a man broke his arm in the rush.

There was no steam heat in the fifties, except in the doctor's office. Most of the houses, including the manager's had wood stoves for heat and for cooking, and a few used coal. All had "outdoor" plumbing. Elsa had eleven families, two bunk-houses, and six tents.

Since Elsa had no market then, all the food was shipped in. The women would get together and order their supplies — usually enough for a year. Meat could be obtained from the cookhouse but sometimes that was risky. As Lil Schroyen says, "I would ask Tom the Chinaman what he had for meat today, and he would take me in back to the freezer, but as I walked in the smell (and it wasn't a good one) would hit me, and I would thank Tom, tell him I didn't need any, and leave."

We live a comfortable life in Elsa now. Steam heat, running water, and all conveniences make it easy to exist in the hard cold nature of the Yukon. But, twenty-six years ago there was little of this, and the people who came, like the Schroyens, and stayed, in spite of all, who worked hard and persevered, are the people who have helped make Elsa what it is for us today.



Lil Schroyen choppin' wood
... circa 1950



Early fifties baby carriage with bicycle wheels for better traction in the mud. Harvey Schroyen getting "shoved around" by secret admirer — his sister Judy!

FOUR LONG-SERVICE EMPLOYEES RETIRE



(PHOTO: C. HOEBERECHTS)

THE MEN TOGETHER . . .



Lilian and Bryn Mills



Jack and Agnes Andison



Ira and Vera Clark



Frank and Lil Schroyen

AND WITH THEIR GALS

Four employees, whose service . . . the Company totals more than 70 years, are retiring.

They are, as seen from L-R in the photo at left, Frank Schroyen, Transport Supervisor; Jack Andison, Surface Supervisor; Bryn Mills, Fire Marshal; and Ira Clark, General Mines Foreman.

Frank Schroyen has the longest service record in the Company. He joined U.K.H.M. June 11, 1949 — 26 years ago.

Bryn Mills has been with us for 22 years, Jack Andison, 19, and Ira Clark, 11.

The four men were honoured recently at a Company banquet during which each received an engraved silver paper-weight from U.K.H.M. President Don Delaporte. The silver for the paper-weights came from Company mines.

To each of the men — and their wives — we wish every joy of retirement, including that indescribably beautiful feeling that comes from being able to sleep-in on a Monday morning — with a CLEAR CONSCIENCE!

Diary of an "Overboredom" Driller's Helper

Uuummmmm . . . Snug as a bug
i a rug. Should check the alarm.
Nah — it can't be more than 5:30.
Lotsa sack-time left. Well, maybe
I'd better. C'mon, ole eyelid, elevate.
Ah, there it is . . . a cute little 0, now
what's next . . . lemme see, ah, a
sassy little 3, just as I thought —
must be 5:30 . . . let's just check,
now where's that 5 in front of you,
oh sassy little 3. There's that curvy
old . . . what — it's an 8!! It's 8:30!!
Aaaaahhhhhh!!! Shift started at 7!!
#%*\$%\$!! Why didn't I hear my
alarm? Uuuuhhh, I forgot to take off
my Overboredom Noise Muffs, Mo-
del 89-4-Z!! Yo-Yo Dingaling!

That was how the day started,
but as it turned out it was just the
proverbial beginning — what fol-
lowed was classic chaos. This is
how it unfolded:

8:32 — Can't find my UNDER-
WEAR. Without it my jeans rub and
I get a rash.

8:33 — To hell with underwear.
Shower. No Time. Damn. Well, if I
stink at least the mosquitoes 'll
leave me alone. But without my
underwear if they DO bite, ooohhh!

8:35 — Out the door, have to take
y car, hope there's enough gas.

8:42 — Down the road. #%*&\$!!
Forgot my safety glasses. Where's
reverse on this damn thing anyway?

9:10 — Got glasses. Morocco's
Corner c'min up. Everybody gets
stuck there — Morocco always did.
Not me, not today, PLEASE. Thanks!
Now how the hell am I going to get
out. Walk? — NO WAY. Gun it. Hah,
MADE IT.

9:11 — Oh no, out of GAS. Walk?
— no choice but to.

10:52 — #&%*\$%\$!! Only half-
mile to go.

11:11 — At LAST. My partner

looks at me kinda funny. Doesn't
say a word. Must be bummed out
that I'm so late. Well, better late
than never Mac!

11:30 — Hotter'n'hell out here
today — and the noise. Why did I
forget my Overboredom Noise
Muffs, Model 89-4-Z?

12:00 — GREAT!! Lunchtime. Oh
no, no lunch. Didn't go to breakfast
this morning, so missed out on
makin' one. God my partner's sala-
mi and mosquito sandwich looks
good. He's on his last mouthful —
won't he offer me just one little
nibble? Aaahhhh, don't you dare
swallow that gorgeous bit of salami,
you turkey. He did — I'll kill 'im.
With my bare hands I'll rip open his
esophagus and snatch that salami
before his stomach even knows
what it's missed. Too late, it's 12:30.
Couldn't eat it now even if I got it.
He'll never know how close he came
to . . . oh well, be philosophical, at
least all my blood won't be tied up
digesting the food in my stomach
and I'll have more energy for work.
Right! Garbage!! I've never met a
philosopher yet who was a driller's
helper — so how would he know.

1:48 — Gad, my kidneys are
burstin'. Gotta go take a pi...fft —
oops, this is for the Company news-
paper — gotta go HARMONIZE
WITH NATURE!!!

1:52 — Harmonizing nicely. Such
relief. Zounds, the snow crust is
breaking.

1:53 — Buried to my chin in snow.
Still harmonizing — I think. Or am
I? I am. Harmonizing on my pant leg.
How the hell am I gonna get out of
here?

2:15 — Thank my partner for dig-
ging me out — but did he have to
use the CAT? Thought he was
gonna decapitate me. And judging
by the look on his face he was
thinkin' of it. I'll get him. I hope his
salami was rotten and he gets
ptomaine.

2:16 — Ooohhh, my — — are
freeezzzzin'. Wish I had my under-
wear.

3:20 — Ran out of drill rods. Part-
ner reams me out for not makin'
sure we had enough. Told him I'd
had enough. Well, admittedly, I only
thought of telling him I'd had
enough. He's six-three and 280
pounds. Partner says I'd better walk
down to the other rig and see if I
can borrow some rods. But that's

two miles. However, I don't dis-
agree. Afterall, he's six-three and
280.

4:30 — I must have a double
hernia. Carryin' 90 pounds of rods
for two miles, and 149 pounds of
mosquitoes twice as far. I must be
out of my mind. Consolation: only
half-an-hour to go. Surely nothing
more can go wrong in that short
space of time.

4:32 — Dreamer!! Drill Bit Wore
Out. Have to Pull 4,839,342½ feet
of pipe to change it — and by five
o'clock. #%*\$%\$!!!!

5:10 — Done, and done in. Thank,

5:15 — Hah, Morocco's Corner
c'min up. Hope we get stuck. Teach
my partner not to talk to me all day
— I'll get out and walk and let the
turkey dig himself out.

5:16 — He's gonna make it, oh
no . . . look out — that's MY CAR!!

5:17 — #%*\$%\$&*!!

5:18 — Actually I didn't say that
— you know how big my partner is.

5:43 — We report accident in-
volving Company vehicle to Terry
Levicki. His comment is unprintable.
Not that he swore — he spoke
Ukrainian.

5:44 — Terry asks me what the
hell I was doing working today?

5:45 — I ask him what the hell
he means.

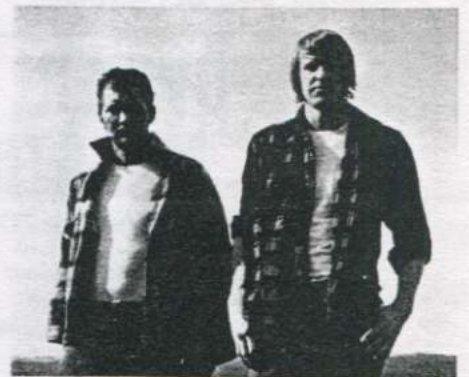
5:46 — He says I am supposed to
be on NIGHT-SHIFT!! AND I'M
LATE!!!

5:47 — I look at my "PARTNER".
Oh no, underneath all that muck —
he isn't MY partner. I AM supposed
to be on night-shift!!!!

5:48 — I tell Terry that before I
darn well go back out to work I'm
darn well going home and put my
underwear on!!!



Look, Lady, I'm sure you would make a
GREAT Driller's Helper, but I've already
got one . . . The "Wild Irishman" Gwenn
Moore informs job-seeker as partner Gary
Putland looks on.



MINERS OF THE MONTH for April, Moe
Melancon (L) and partner Jan Martenson
advanced their No Cash Drift 104 feet in
17.5 shifts, an average of 5.94 feet per shift.



*THERE'S A CHANGE ROOM, THERE'S A HOIST ROOM, THERE'S A POWDER ROOM, THERE'S A LUNCHROOM — BUT WHERE TH' HELL 'S THE BATHROOM!!!

Mmmmoose

Now we all know that in certain parts of the world chocolate-covered grasshoppers, preserved octopus tentacles, and sea slugs are considered delicacies. But what about the Yukon? Why it's . . .

BOILED MOOSE NOSE!

To concoct this little bit o' heaven, build a fire and singe the nose. That is, after you've bagged your moose. Scrape and repeat singeing until all the hairs are removed. Heat a twig and singe the nostril hairs. Pull all the burned skin off and boil for three hours. Good hot or cold. (Right Chef Boy-Ar-Dee!!)

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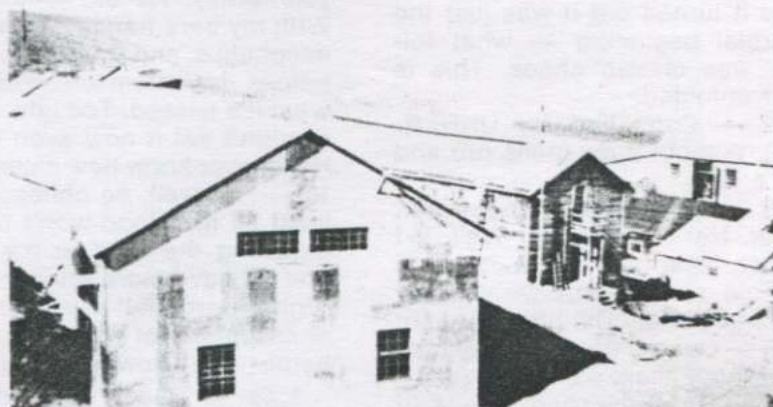
United Keno Hill Mines Limited
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Editors: Don & Anne Percifield

ELSA: THE EARLY FIFTIES



The old cookhouse, approximately where the new one stands today.



Elsa, looking down from where the Pool Hall is now. The building in the front left, which is the warehouse and personnel office today, was Main Office then.



Elsa, looking down the road towards the Mine Dry from approximately where the Market now stands.