

Anchorage
226 Miles

Homer

YAH SURE CLUB

Homer, Alaska

OLDEST BAR IN HOMER
COCKTAIL BAR — LIVE MUSIC

D. V. Jim CHILDERS

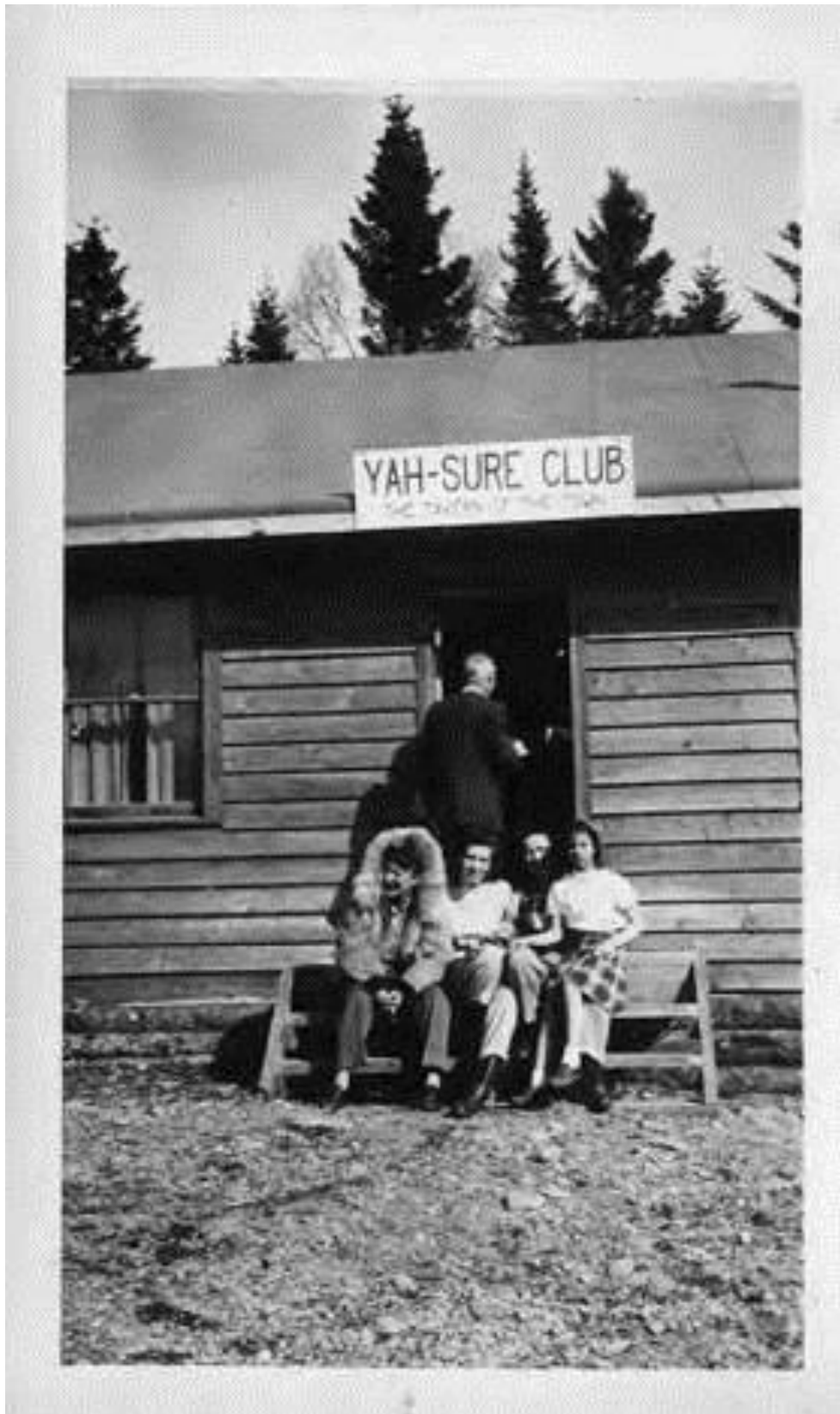
From *Alaska Highway Sketches* by Connie Silver - 1962.

The following photos are from the Alaska Digital Archives

<http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/search/searchterm/Yah-Sure/order/nosort>



Shirley and Ray Lentz at the Yah Sure Club.



Shirley Lentz, seated left, her daughter 'sis' far right.



Probably 1947 or earlier 1940s, before larger bar was built by co-owners, Ray and Shirley Lentz, posed in doorway.



Shirley Lentz with friends or patrons of her bar, Homer, late 1940s.



Man wearing apron stands in the doorway of a small wooden building. Sign on post in front of building reads 'Yah-Sure Club, The Tavern of the Town.' Truck parked next to building

No place like Homer : ED REHDER

"I was going back to Alaska, where the going wage was a dollar an hour. My dad could hardly believe that. To him that was an amazing amount of money."

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - Sunday, January 19, 2003

Author: Interview by SHARON BUSHELL

I was born in 1915 in a little town in Iowa called Gladbrook and grew up in Fort Dodge.

From the time I was little, I always wanted to fly airplanes. The first one I ever rode in was an old Ford Tri-Motor. We'd frequently get barnstormers that would come through Fort Dodge. My friends and I would run out to the field and offer to wash their airplanes. They'd usually tell us OK and then give us a ride up and over town. It all seemed very glamorous, and it led to me taking flying lessons after I left college.

I went into the Army in 1939. I started with the 93rd Bomber Group and was transferred into the 23rd Air Base Group, which was sent to Alaska. I was very disappointed about the idea of having to go to Alaska.

We arrived in February of '41 and rode the Alaska Railroad from Seward into Anchorage. It wasn't all that inviting at first, but when you got out and took a look around, it turned out to be a pretty good spot. It wasn't just the country, it was also the job potential. So I changed my mind about Alaska right away.

We had a temporary hangar on Elmendorf Field; at that time there was only one runway poured. All our airplanes were shipped up by boat, and we'd put them together. I was a mechanic and part of a salvage crew.

When the war first broke out, the Air Force in Alaska didn't amount to much. We had eight B-18s and 30-some P-36s. In Fairbanks we had a B-17 and a couple others. They moved in more, but they were just up there for cold-weather tests. Then they moved in the 77th bomb group,

which was B-26s. Five of them ran out of gas and crash-landed coming up over Canada, so we spent a bit of time over there.

Whenever they'd build a base in the Aleutians, they'd send us down there. We were all over the place, on almost all the islands. We'd get back to Anchorage and hang around for two or three days, just enough time to get into trouble, then they'd send us off someplace else.

We went to Nome to fix an airplane and ended up staying there over a month. It was the cheapest place we'd been in Alaska. We could get a reindeer steak dinner for a dollar.

We'd just come from McGrath. The Army was ferrying P-39s to Russia as part of lend-lease, but they got lost and set some of them down in the boonies around McGrath. We had quite a home there, and we even got to do a little moose hunting. One drawback was, beer was \$2 a bottle. But instead of paying full price for it, we bought home brew from a bootlegger across the river.

I made two trips down to Homer to fix up the same airplane, once in '42 and once in '43, and I really liked the place. I spent a seven-day furlough there with two guys from my crew, Johnny Johnston and "Punchy" Falkenberg.

We had a ball in Homer . We stayed at Bunnell's, which was a trading post and hotel; they had rooms upstairs for \$2 a night. There wasn't much going on in Homer, but we knew Waddells from having worked in Iliamna. They had moved back to Homer, and we also knew Ray and Shirley Lentz. The West Hill road only went up as far as the horseshoe curve; it was really just a trail. We waded through snow waist-deep to look at an old homestead up there.

When the war ended, I was discharged at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri and caught a ride to Fort Dodge; I wanted to stop there before I headed back to Alaska. An old friend of mine reacquainted me to a girl I had known in high school, Lolly. We got pretty interested in each other, and I told her I'd be back when I made \$10,000 in Alaska.

My folks were living in California by then; they wanted me to move there, but I said no, I was going back to Alaska, where the going wage was a dollar an hour. My dad could hardly believe that. To him that was an amazing amount of money.

I got to Anchorage in January of '46 and went to work at the air depot. My partner from six years in the Army, Punchy, was living in Homer . For a hundred bucks, he'd gotten the relinquishment on the homestead on top of West Hill.

At that time there were two liquor stores in Homer but no bar. To have a bar you had to have 50 percent of the signatures of the people who lived within a two-mile radius of where the bar would be. So far no one had been able to get enough signatures, but Punchy had quite a personality, and he went around and got enough.

After that he looked me up and told me, come on down to Homer. You can live with me, and I'll give you half the homestead. He was determined he was going to build this bar along with Ray and Shirley Lentz.

So I came down, and we went to work building the Yah Shure Club ; that's how I got started in Homer . The place got its name because someone would say, "You want a drink?" and Ray would always say, " Yah, sure!"

Punchy and I had our fingers in lots of pies. Along with another guy, we bought a boat and the cold-storage plant out on the Spit. After a while I went to work for the road commission and Punchy went fishing. Eventually he went back Outside.

Lolly got tired of waiting for me to make that \$10,000, and in February of 1950 she came up to see what I was doing. She loved Homer right away and moved into the Heady Hotel. Old Mrs. Heady took her under her wing, and she also became good friends with Flora Banks, who later became Flora Moss.

Lolly and I married on the eighth of July, 1950, in the little building that is now Cafe Cups. We rented a little place where the bowling alley is now and later bought a house across town. We had four children between June of '51 and November of '57.

I remember thinking, when Lolly was pregnant with our last child, Charles, I won't even be alive to see him graduate from high school. I was worried because my dad had died when he was 64. But I did make it to see Charles graduate. In fact, I was on the school board then, and I got to hand him his diploma.

We had a lot of fun with the kids. We'd take them fishing from the shore out on the Spit. Green Timbers was a regular little park, with baseball diamonds and lots of trees. Later on I got a little boat, and we'd go fishing and throw out shrimp pots.

There were dances and parties at the American Legion and the Elks. Lolly and I belonged to a pinochle club for many years; there were six couples that met on Saturday nights at each other's homes. Lolly and I went out to breakfast every Sunday at the Sterling Cafe.

In the mid-'50s I helped open Land's End, and I worked there as a bartender. I did some other bartending around town, but I was always working for the road commission and, later on, the Division of Aviation.

Power came into Homer in 1950. I wasn't on the original (Homer Electric Association) board of directors, but I came in pretty early. I was on the board for 23 years and served as president for 18 years.

For two years I was on the Kenai Peninsula Borough advisory board for the schools, and I learned a lot. Then I was elected to the borough school board. I was on the board for five years, two years as vice president and one year as president.

After I retired, Lolly and I traveled around the U.S. in our motor home. We put a lot of miles on it. When we were driving around we were kind of thinking we might find another place to live, but we never found a place we liked better than Homer.

Ed Rehder died in 1998. This story was excerpted from a larger work produced by Mr. Rehder and Sharon Bushell in the months before his death.

Caption: Photo 1: 19 alaskana_011903.jpg

Photo not credited. Ed Rehder, left, and "Punchy" Falkenberg in Iliamna, 1946. They eventually split a homestead in Homer and became business partners.

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