



Looking down Main Street in Valdez in 1937. It was no longer a boom town, but as one visitor put it, "Civic pride has by no means died out in this town out on the toes of a glacier."

Photo from *Historic Photos of Alaska* by Dermot Cole.

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From the *Valley Frontiersman* – 1950

Mr. Egan was elected Mayor of Valdez this year.



C. J. (Truck) EGAN

Welcomes You to Valdez

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PINZON BAR

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ESTABLISHED 25 YEARS

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*Serving the Best
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C. J. (Truck) Egan
Welcomes You to Valdez
and the

PINZON BAR

Established 25 Years
*Serving the Best
of Cocktails*

Entertainment • Billiards in Connection

From Lou Jacobin's *Guide to Alaska and the Yukon* - 1957

Tourists . . .

from near and far . . . thousands of them . . . have through the years visited the PINZON BAR. Many of them have photographed the ancient bar and fixtures which date back to the early days of the romantic Valdez Trail (now the Richardson Highway). On your visit to the "Switzerland of Alaska" be sure to drop into THE PINZON, see this old bar of the yesteryear . . . and add another thrill to your exciting Alaskan trip. Shoot as many pictures as you wish.



PINZON BAR AND LIQUOR STORE

Recreation Parlor • Billiards • Lunch Counter

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

C. J. (TRUCK) EGAN welcomes you to Valdez and the Pinzon

From Lou Jacobin's *Guide to Alaska and the Yukon* - 1961



“TRUCK” EGAN SAYS:

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PINZON BAR and LIQUOR STORE

Est. 1930

and owned by E. J. (Truck) EGAN

A life-long Alaskan

VALDEZ, ALASKA

Pinzon Bar Etiquette

Now that the cocktail hour has become the most important time of the day, and drinking possibly second in importance of our major indoor sports, it is not only perfectly natural but also the most earnest desire of lounge frequenters to acquaint themselves with the properly accepted lounge etiquette. These rules as set forth have been prepared after careful study of the more and department of patrons in the better cocktail lounges and bars throughout the country, and after close observation of all classes in all stages of intoxication.

On entering, in case of a gentleman, do not fail to stare long and hard at every unattached female in the place, she is enjoying her drink in the cool, calm atmosphere of the place, so your calculating, cataloguing stare will be a most welcome interlude and there is also a possibility that her boy friend might be close by with every chance of precipitating a first class war.

On seeing yourself at the bar ask for a highball. There are many different kinds of highballs and the bartender is a mindreader. So if he gives you the whiskey and soda, watch him mix the drink, have him set it in front of you, then say angrily, "I want gingerale." Never lay your money on the bar or have it ready when the drink is served, that precludes the possibility of one of "I did pay you," or "You did not pay." Always remind the bartender to put some liquor in it; he is working for the house and is under observation so he will not mind jeopardizing his job by giving you fifty cents worth of liquor for a quartet.

Be sure to ask the bartender his name, age, nationality, where he was born, where he has worked, and how long in the business. He will appreciate the personal touch and the affirmation is absolutely essential to good service and good drinks. If the bartender is busy at the end of the bar, slap loudly with your hand or hammer on the polished surface with a coin or a glass, better still whistle or call to him: "Hey you," or "Hey Bartender."

Don't be backward. Assert your presence. If you are smoking a cigarette never place the lighted stub in the ashtray, place it on the edge of the bar, the management abhors your wood burning affairs; and by all means any cigarette ashes dropped on the bar should be blown away immediately. It will fall on the ice and fruit on the bartender's workbench and add greatly to future drinks. After you have purchased and consumed your first drink, speak loudly: "When does the house buy a drink?" You're probably in the grocery business and give away a dozen eggs free with every dozen purchased and there is no good reason the liquor business should not be conducted in the same way.

Complain to the bartender that the drinks are not as good as they were the last night from another bartender. He is probably laboring under the impression that he is "tops" in his profession and will welcome the disillusionment. Then it is a very good idea to copy some drink recipes or better yet memorize several drinks that no one ever heard of except the individual who prepared them for the book, then order one of these concoctions; of course the bartender never heard of it and you will

have the opportunity of adding to his embarrassment with "You're a hell of a bartender."

Order a bowl of potato chips, pretzels, peanuts, popcorn, or whatever else is served in lieu of a free lunch, then dip in deep so as to scatter it all over the bar, and when the supply is exhausted wait until the bartender is busy then loud and clear call for "More potato chips down here." Insist on the bartender listening to your views on politics, the war in Europe, oil-drops strikes, job hunting or your family troubles. Never lose track of the fact the price you pay for your drinks entitles you not only to rapid and first class service and palatable drinks but it is your privilege to occupy the bartender's time and demand his undivided attention to your latest story, secure his views on the current events and sporting news, and after the fifth drink acquaint him with your intimate personal and business affairs. Bartenders are engaged not only for their mechanical ability but for their worldly knowledge, understanding, and sympathy.

Tell your dirty stories and execute your four letter words loudly enough for everyone in the immediate vicinity to hear. "What lady or gentleman does not appreciate a good joke," and if some misguided individual should take exception to the general trend for your stump speech, report him to the bartender.

For the ladies: Permit a gentleman, a total stranger, to spend his money buying you drinks, knowing all the time just where the campaign is leading, and then when the fog, bad wolf, thinking you are sufficiently stoffish, suggests the most natural thing in the world, create a disturbance and make it good. "What do you take me for?" or "What do you think I am?" "You can't say those things to me and get away with it."

When you have your message, stagger up to the bar and loudly order a drink, disregarding the bartender's interest in your welfare evidenced by his daring to suggest that you might have had enough. Assert your rights: "Who is hell are you to tell me I've had enough? Give me a drink." In all probability he will take care of your demands by acquainting you with a "Mickey Finn," a very active agent on two fronts. Insist on injecting your dynamic and liquored personality upon some stranger or party at the bar. Then when you are the receiver of a first class punch in the nose, demand that the bartender protect you or call the police.

When ordering, gruffly and importantly demand to see the bottle from which your liquor has been poured. You don't know one from the other anyway, but it lends a wordly air and those deft touches help the bartender put in his time.

Don't evidence your appreciation for the cheerful service, the tasty drinks, the fact that the bartender has been a patient stooge for your drunken whims and caprices and the recipient of your abuse by leaving a tip. Bartenders have notoriously weak hearts and the shock might be fatal to him.

By following the following rules carefully one has Open Sesame to any Cocktail Bar.

The Pinzon Bar* C.J. Egan, Prop.
Valdez, Alaska

* Now in The Valdez Museum, Valdez, Alaska

Copied from the Valdez Museum

<https://www.valdezmuseum.org/pinzon-bar/>

OBITUARIES

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - Saturday, October 8, 1988

Author: Staff

CLINTON " TRUCK " EGAN

A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Monday for Clinton " Truck " Egan, 91, who died Oct. 4 at Valdez Community Hospital.

The service will be held at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Valdez with Archbishop Francis T. Hurley of the Archdiocese of Anchorage officiating.

Mr. Egan was born Aug. 13, 1897, in Niehart, Mont., and moved to Alaska in 1902. He had served on the Alaska Draft Board in Valdez, and received commendations from Presidents Roosevelt and Truman.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Gov. William Egan. He is survived by his sister, Alice Horton, of Palmer.

Burial will be in Valdez. Local arrangements were by Evergreen Memorial Chapel.

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SNOWED UNDER IN VALDEZ TOWNFOLK COPE WITH WINTER IN SNOWIEST CORNER OF ALASKA (see page 21)

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - Sunday, March 22, 1987

Author: George Bryson; Staff

Twelve days before Christmas, Thompson Pass began to snow. It snowed intermittently all day long. Then it snowed heavier the next day. And the day after that.

Some days it snowed as far downslope as Valdez, 25 miles west. But every day it snowed at Thompson Pass. It snowed through Christmas, and it snowed through New Year's.

"It seemed like it was never going to stop," says Steve Hood, a snowplow operator stationed at the pass. "We worked around the clock for two weeks."

The snow intensified as the year drew to a close. On the morning of New Year's Eve an avalanche thundered across Richardson Highway at 29mile. Then another crossed the road at 25mile. Then another at 21mile and 52Mile. and 53Mile. When the mists settled, Valdez was thoroughly cut off from the outside by land.

And still the snow fell at Thompson Pass. It snowed steadily through mid-January, culminating with a seven-day blizzard.

Then it was over. Thirty days after the storm began, the clouds at the pass lifted. A snowplow operator in an orange tractor stuck his head outside his cab and considered his surroundings. The snowpack at Thompson Pass stood 12 feet high.

Below the pass, residents of Valdez spent most of February digging themselves out of one of their snowiest winters ever.

Edging out Whittier for title of snowiest town in the state, Valdez annually receives an average of 20 feet each season about four times as much snow as Anchorage.

But 30 feet had already fallen in Valdez by the end of February, nearly eclipsing the "new town" record 31 feet in 1976'77 with two months of winter still to go.

(The town of Valdez was moved 3 miles west after the 1964 earthquake; the record snowfall for "old town" 42 feet in 1928'29 still stands as the record for any community in Alaska.)

"It would take some kind of major miracle for us not to surpass the (new town) record," said Lynn Chrystal, a weather man at the National Weather Service office in Valdez.

Signs of the deluge were still evident in town by early March. Unattended cars and drydocked boats lay smothered in the snow. Huge drifts sloped gently to the tops of roofs. First story windows stared blankly at walls of ice and snow. In some places, powerlines barely cleared the snowpack.

Driving around town required a person capable of finding his way without the help of signs or landmarks, which were frequently buried. Steep corridors of snow bordering streets blocked the view. Out-of-town drivers nosed up to blind intersections, cautiously attempting corners like mice in a maze.

Valdezians tend to take their winter in stride. Storms that would bring Anchorage to its knees are expected. Snowfall that would overwhelm Fairbanks is 'dozed off the roads almost as quickly as it settles. Helping matters, of course, is a city center that measures only a mile square. But most of the town's 3,800 residents praise their oil-tax-funded road crews for a job well done.

"You get up in the morning after it snows and you go to work," Chrystal says. "The roads are always open."

The schools are, too. Valdez has never closed its modern-day schools because of snow, Chrystal says. "Never."

But even Valdez seemed caught unaware by this year's winter. Particularly when it came to coping with the snow-load which was made all the heavier this season by intermittent rains.

Valdez building codes require that local rooftops be built to withstand loads of 90 pounds per square foot a standard twice as stringent as that required in Anchorage. Usually the standard is sufficient for Valdez. But this winter the snowpack exceeded 100 pounds per square foot. Spread over a 1,500squarefoot roof, it added up to 75 tons of snow the rough equivalent of 12 adult African bull elephants sitting on the roof.

Most residents began shoveling their rooftops in January, when the city first began issuing warnings about excessive snow-load. But some of those who didn't lived to learn about the "elephant effect" firsthand.

In minor cases, windows popped out of their frames, plaster fell from the ceiling and doors refused to open. In more serious cases, the roofs caved in.

On the edge of town, a Lynden Transport warehouse buckled inward and collapsed. Next to the harbor, a local contractor's 24foothigh asphalt storage tank did the same. On city property, a warehouse as large as a hangar collapsed at one end an incident the local newspaper ridiculed as a case of city officials failing to heed their own advice.

City crews had begun to shovel the warehouse on a Friday, Acting City Manager John Thorp says. Then they had knocked off for the weekend. The building partially collapsed the next day crushing a \$90,000 vehicle in the process.

The primary cause of the collapse, Thorp says, wasn't the snowload but a contractor's failure to meet roof design specifications while building an addition to the warehouse. Only the area near the addition collapsed.

Still, the explanation didn't ease the embarrassment. Particularly in a town that prides itself for its snow management. Thorp estimates that repair to the building will cost \$125,000. "The local editor had his pound of flesh over it," he says.

But while some mourned their losses, others managed to make money out of the situation. Roof shoveling in Valdez last month had the look of a growth industry. The city paid out an unexpected \$25,000 to shovelers. And the local school district paid out thousands more.

The price of a roof shoveler this winter began at \$7.50 an hour. But that quickly shot up to \$10. Depending on whom you spoke to in town, the increase was either a result of (1) an increased appreciation for backbreaking labor or (2) a sophisticated price-setting arrangement by the shovelers.

Thorp suspects the latter. "When they found out how urgent it was the price went up," he says.

But after spending 12 hours removing 80poundsquarefoot snow from his own residence, local bank manager Rick Maitland suggests that \$10 an hour might be a bargain.

He waited too long to shovel, Maitland says. The snowpack on his roof got to be nearly 5 feet high. Much more than that and he would have been in trouble.

"If you don't keep it off, you're lost," he says. "You can see places that haven't."

Darlene Deyo has two natural elements to keep an eye on this winter. The snow falling on her houseboat and the waterline rising on the hull.

The homemade vessel she and a companion share at the Valdez Small Boat Harbor isn't designed to be watertight, Deyo explains. It's meant to float 16 inches above waterline which it doesn't when the mounting snowload pushes it lower in the water.

So her first concern is making sure the snowload topside doesn't force the hull below down so far as to flood her living room. Beyond that, she says, living in the harbor is pretty nice. Particularly the rent she and her partner pay \$288 a year for their 32foot slip.

They lived on the same boat for four years in Whittier, where the winters are a little more wet and windy, the rent's a little higher, and slips are much harder to come by. By comparison, Deyo says, Valdez has many more amenities to offer.

"There's a really nice library and civic center here," she says. "And the tennis courts and bike paths in the summer. But it still has that small-town lifestyle. It's pretty nice."

The houseboat couple and four other families living on vessels in the harbor this winter comprise a small community within a community the remnants of a boating population that fills the harbor's 525 slips come summer.

In wintertime, most of the vessels are either removed to dry dock or transported home. A few hundred remain in the water under the supervision of caretakers.

Among those shoveling snow off other people's boats this winter are Rodney Walters and Katherine Bigger, residents of the 36foot wooden ketch "Orion." Both of them laugh now at how they figured their flat \$75 monthly boat maintenance fee on the basis of last year's snowfall.

"We had to put in a lot more work (snow shoveling) than we anticipated," Rodney says.

Katherine figures they've worn through about 12 plastic snow shovels so far. "Really, I've gotten a lot stronger this year," she says. "You want to arm-wrestle?"

The couple also tries to excavate some of the nearly buried boats that were parked and forgotten last fall at dry dock some with so much snow on top, they've been driven through their supports.

"I know of four boats for sure where the blocking has already been shoved right through the hull," Rodney says.

"We call them up and say, 'Hey, you've got 8 feet of snow on your boat at more than 100 pounds per square foot of area, and it needs to be removed.' And they're totally surprised."

One of the bigger surprises in Valdez this winter was the news that lifetime resident Owen Johnson lost his asphalt storage tank. Johnson had always been one of the earliest people each season to shovel. He kept a careful eye on his tank ever since he'd moved it over from Old Town after the earthquake.

But not this year, Johnson says, suppressing a guilty smile. He was vacationing in Las Vegas when it went. He simply forgot to leave someone in charge.

The owner and operator of Johnson Sand and Gravel Co. is in the middle of his 66th winter in Valdez. "Yeah, that's long enough, isn't it?" he asks. "Oh, they're not that bad. This is good country. Good as any place, I think."

Johnson's dad arrived in Valdez in 1907, immigrating from Sweden to join the gold rush. It was a town bustling with 10,000 people in those days, located east of its present site, in the drainage of the Valdez glacier.

He recalls the old town as being somewhat snowier. But he wonders if that isn't just the impression of a boy.

"When you're younger, maybe it looks worse," he says. "More snow, I mean because they never kept the streets open back then. There weren't any plows anyway. I don't think I'd even seen a tractor until the '30s."

But Johnson is impressed with the present winter, too. He maintains a snow-stake in his construction yard which showed the Valdez snowpack at 51½ feet in early March.

"That's an accumulation of 30 feet of snow right there," he says. "That's why it's so heavy. Because it's all there. Nobody took it away."

Locals say that Thompson Pass the snowiest weather station in Alaska receives about twice as much snow in a winter as Valdez. And the same was true this season. While the snowiest town in the state recorded roughly 30 feet of snow by early March, the unpopulated pass showed about 60 feet.

But there was a difference. What figured to be a record for Valdez will most likely fall short of a record for Thompson even though the pass did have one of its snowiest years ever.

"This is the biggest winter since I've been here," says Thompson Pass Maintenance Foreman James Britt, having worked at the station for 14 years.

But it's still only second-best in the Thompson Pass record book. The remarkable winter of 1952-53, when it snowed 974 inches roughly 81 feet still stands unchallenged.

Britt says the record came at a time when local trucking firms were trying to convince the state to keep the road to Valdez open year-round. The truckers offered to do it the first year just to prove it was possible.

The weather conspired against them. But the road remained opened in spite of 83 feet of snow. Then the year after, the state assumed the operation itself and has kept the pass open, more or less, ever since.

Nearly everyone who lives in Valdez has stories about Thompson Pass. Its weather usually determines whether they make their destination in Glenallen, Fairbanks or Anchorage, or have to turn around and return home.

Most recently the Valdez High School crosscountry ski team was prevented from attending the state championships due to high winds at the pass.

Valdez weather man Lynn Chrystal recalls a closer call six years ago involving the high school swim team, which was bound for a meet in Anchorage inside a Winnebago. An avalanche near the pass swept their motorhome off the road.

Seeing a snowplow driver, the team's chaperone exited the motorhome and began walking toward it for help. As he did, a second avalanche roared down the mountain directly at him.

"(The chaperone) dove under the snowplow," Chrystal says. "The avalanche roared over the top of them."

The snowplow operator was all right, but his rig was trapped in the snow and the chaperone was trapped under the snowplow. The operator turned on the engine to provide warmth for the trapped man, then walked back to camp for help.

"This guy spent the night underneath that rig," Chrystal says. "The warmth of the engine running kept him alive."

The next day everyone was rescued and the team returned home to Valdez.

The political life of Valdez this year had grown a little unsettled by midwinter and not just because of uncertainty over the construction of the town's on-again, off-again oil refinery.

The city council's impending 43 vote of "no confidence" in the performance of City Manager Jim Watson was superseded by Watson announcing that he had already resigned.

That prompted an effort to recall Mayor John Devens and three council members, accused of muscling Watson out of a job for the sake of power.

Which was contradicted by news that Devens was a finalist in the competition for an education post in Juneau.

Followed by word that Acting City Manager John Thorp was not at all interested in accepting the city manager's job.

"Like any city, there's always a little argument between the government and everyone else," Owen Johnson explains. The trick is to somehow make it to softball season.

Softball is one of the passions of Valdez. As many as 40 teams play on a weekend at a stadium that residents claim is the finest in Alaska.

But the four-diamond complex was still covered by a 6foot layer of ice and snow by early March, which was showing no sign at all of melting away.

Athletes and outdoor sports specialists can turn to other pursuits during the long Valdez winter. The crosscountry skiing at Thompson Pass is exceptional. The ice climbing is considered some of the best in North America. The new school has a rifle range and swimming pool.

But more sedentary types sometimes get cranky. The Vanguard dismissed the recent recall effort as just a manifestation of "the recall season," noting that the same thing happened last winter. Others blame a strain of cabin fever that locals call "Valdisease."

Clinton James " Truck " Egan, the 89-year-old brother of the late Alaska Gov. Bill Egan, looks beyond present political disputes with the perspective of a man who has lived in Valdez through 81 winters.

"They were all pretty much alike," he says. "Some winters have more wind."

Egan came to Valdez as a 9-year-old boy in 1906. He remembers the streets bustling with gold miners. He remembers winter trips by dogteam over the old Abercrombie trail.

"See, there wasn't any Seward then," he says. "There wasn't any Anchorage. This was the main gateway to the Interior of Alaska in those days."

He laughs. "I always tell tourists, 'I've been here so long I helped build the Valdez Glacier.' "

In fact, Egan has what may be the oldest continuing liquor license in Alaska a permit he received as soon as President Roosevelt signed the bill ending Prohibition in 1934.

But he notes that others got an earlier start. Even during Prohibition, he says, they weren't short of liquor on Prince William Sound.

"The old fox farmers, when the price of foxes went down and then Prohibition came in that put them in business again. They all put in stills and started making moonshine."

When the sale of alcohol became legal, Egan went into business himself and opened a local liquor store. By that time, the population of Valdez had settled down to about 500.

"It's a beautiful place to live," he says. "You should be here sometime in the summer and you'll see it's beautiful here."

Valdez is beautiful in winter, too. But some folks in town are beginning to worry about just how long it's going to stay. The present snowpack looks invincible. One snow storage area near the fire station got so high that firefighters sprayed water on it then began using it to practice alpine ice climbing techniques.

Where it's been piled the snow might linger well into July, acting city manager John Thorp says.

But he adds quickly that the city has no intention of allowing any of the snow to linger that long on the softball fields. Nothing will get in the way of opening day of the softball season.

"That's the big thing," Thorp says. "We'll have equipment out there clearing those (fields) off if necessary."

Snow might sometimes linger on the tops of city warehouses too long. But it may not linger on top the softball diamond.

"That's important," Thorp says.

George Bryson is staff writer for We Alaskans. Bob Hallinen is a Daily News staff photographer.

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SHOOTOUT AT KEYSTONE CANYON THE KEYSTONE KAPER

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - Sunday, August 10, 1986

Author: LINDA BILLINGTON Daily News arts editor; Staff

Truck Egan was 10 years old when he and the rest of the kids in Valdez were sent home from school. Rival railroad factions were battling at nearby Keystone Canyon, several men had been shot, and residents feared a riot in town.

Now, 20 miles and 79 years away, that battle is being reprised six nights a week at the Valdez Civic Center. Melodramatically. With music.

"Shootout at Keystone Canyon" is Valdez's answer to such regional summer dramas as Kodiak's "Cry of the Wild Ram." Written and directed by professors at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, it's in its second year and features a young cast recruited largely from colleges Outside.

The actors sometimes drop into Egan 's liquor store to chat. Egan, brother of the late Gov. William A. Egan, is 89 this year, and retired. But he'll sit and reminisce about how his family came to Valdez in 1906, and what he can recall of the 1907 shootout. "I have a faint memory of the excitement," he says.

It was an actual artifact, not a faint memory, that drew Michael Hood to the story of the battle. Three years ago, Hood, associate dean for the UAA College of Arts and Sciences, saw the remains of a railroad tunnel cut into the rock of Keystone Canyon.

In 1905 the Guggenheim Syndicate started work on a railroad from Valdez through Keystone Canyon to the interior. The work was stopped when the syndicate decided to run a railroad from Katella instead. But the people of Valdez still wanted the iron horse.

On Aug. 10, 1907, a speculator named H.D. Reynolds formed Alaska Home Railway and said he'd build a railroad -- on the syndicate's unused right of way. On Sept. 25, about 260 Reynolds supporters marched on the unfinished tunnel, which was guarded by a handful of Guggenheim employees. In the clash, six men were shot; one died several days later.

Struck by the idea that something so dramatic had happened within memory, Hood told Leroy Clark, chairman of the UAA Theatre Department, "Hey, I've got a great idea for a play!"

But the idea lay fallow until Hood was approached by James and Andy Leitch of Valdez. The brothers wanted to produce a summer play in the pipeline terminus city.

Clark researched Valdez history for several months, then penned "Shootout." The show, directed by Hood, opened last summer for 54 performances. It returned this year for 48.

"Shootout" may be based on history, but it's presented as light entertainment. It has all the stock melodrama characters: the hero, mining engineer Dutch McLellan; the villain, H.D. Reynolds; the saloon owner with the heart of gold; the sweet young thing; the spitfire, and more. Their antics are accompanied by a string of authentic songs from the period: "My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon," "After the Ball," "Don't Go Into the Lion's Cage Tonight."

This year's cast is mostly new, although a few of the original actors have returned. Clark has doctored the script, rewriting the first act, combining scenes, editing speeches.

But one major change, as far as the performers are concerned, has nothing to do with the script. This year, several of the lead actors "swing," or alternate roles.

Thursday through Sunday, Tracy Hinkson plays the slick promoter H.D. Reynolds. On Tuesday and Wednesday, however, he steps out of the spotlight and into the much smaller role of Spider Legs Mike, a railroad worker.

"This gives the leading characters a chance to take a break," he explains. "It's a little more pleasant."

More pleasant than last year, when he played Reynolds for all 54 performances. "It takes on a whole different flavor when you get to swing. It gives your voice a chance to take a break, too."

Hinkson came back, he says, because "Shootout" provides a good financial opportunity -- cast members are paid \$10 per performance plus a food stipend -- and the chance to work with a new cast. To supplement his "Shootout" income, he paints, both houses and pictures.

"It's a great place to spend the summer," he grins. "Fishing, and the break from Anchorage, getting out of the city. It's like a little resort: fishing, camping, climbing, bonfires on the beach."

Wanda Marie Geist is back, too. She's reprising her role as Russian Rosa, a faded opera singer/pianist who provides musical accompaniment for the show. Geist, a UAA student, is one of the actors who don't swing -- she can't, because she's the only one who can play the piano.

In fact, the original script didn't even have a character named Russian Rosa. Hood had hired Geist simply as an accompanist. Geist wanted more.

"Leroy, sweetheart that he is, heard me groaning and wrote Russian Rosa in," she says.

Before last summer, Geist had never played piano in public, and she faced the show with apprehension. By the end of the run, she had overcome her uncertainties enough to get a job at a Valdez piano bar. She'd play for happy hour, then head straight for the theater.

Most of the cast members have taken day jobs to supplement their pay. This summer, Geist has made extra cash as a temporary legal secretary.

"Valdez is a neat town," she says. "You get to know the people." She indicates her costume, a mass of black and red frills and flounces topped by a pompadour wig and the makeup that turns her into an older woman. "I can go into the grocery store after the show looking like this and nobody says anything."

The actors will leave at the end of the summer and, if the show returns next year, a new batch will arrive. Those who wander into the liquor store where Truck Egan sits will be able to find out first-hand what Valdez was like 'way back in '07.

Egan saw the first performance of "Shootout" last year. "I enjoyed it very, very much," he says, "They're putting on a very, very interesting show."

SHOOTOUT AT KEYSTONE CANYON runs nightly except Monday at the Valdez Civic Center. Show time is 8:30 p.m. The show will run through Aug. 17. Admission is \$6.

NOTE BOX GOES ON WHITE OVERLAY:

Story by Linda Billington Photos by Frances Lautenberger

Our hero, far right, discusses the growing conflict with picnickers at a railroad tunnel. The actual tunnel still exists in Valdez.

Tempers flare at the Port of Valdez Hotel and Saloon.

FOR K5:

SHOOTOUT: A bit of Valdez history brought to life on summer stage

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