



Leland and Bruce Graham. Bruce opened Palmer's first service station in 1936. He worked for the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Commission as a machinist.



Louis Odsather, chairman of the Colony Days Committee, lived in Anchorage when the colony was formed and moved to Palmer to run the commissary. *Valley Press/Mike Raven*

50-year reunion

Colonists return to Palmer

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of years before returning to Palmer in 1951.

Bruce Graham moved to Ketchikan from Mt. Vernon, Wash., in 1925. He arrived in Palmer in 1936 and opened the area's only garage and

service station. He also worked as a machinist/welder for the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Commission.

He and Ralph Caruthers built the Valley's first swamp buggy, he said, and used it

for moose hunting. Graham later worked for the Dept. of Fish & Game "when there was only two of us in this part of the state." He retired at age 72.

His wife, Leland, has only

been in Alaska for 14 years and though she was not a colonist, she said she thoroughly enjoyed the reunion.

"It was wonderful to see the comradery and fellowship they felt for each other. They were so glad to see each other. They went through

some rough times — sad times, good times..."

A set of "bingles" was handed out to each colonist by committee member Larry Vasanoja. The bingles were metal coins manufactured by the federal government for use in the colony as money. "Everything was bought

on credit in the colony," Vasanoja said. The bingles were used for one-and-a-half years and saved the commissary department and stores from a lot of work in keeping track of every purchase made on credit, Vasanoja said.

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