Colonists return to Palmer

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

From page 2 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 cordiality 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 "bingies" was handed out to each colonist by committee member Larry Vasanova. The bingies were metal coins manufactured by the federal government for use in the colony as money. "Everything was bought on credit in the colony," Vasanova said. The bingies were used for one-and-a-half years and saved the committee department and stores from a lot of work in keeping track of every purchase made on credit, Vasanova said.

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