

AN ALASKA PIONEER LIVES HERE

Bill Besser, 80 year old pioneer, has come to Brookings to make his home. He is a one-time Medfordite who has spent much of his life in Alaska.

He returned to Medford, but has decided that it would be better to live by the sea.

He said that he picked out a blue spot on the map—Harbor—and then moved over. He currently is caring for some of the Stout property, which takes care of his lodging.

Besser, whose 80th birthday if not far away, still feels sturdy and active, although perhaps not quite so spry as in the days he cleared by hand nine acres of land on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, hauling topsoil for his garden on a yoke on his shoulders.

HONEST DIRT

The Anchorage paper quoted him as saying, "Don't be afraid of blisters and getting honest

dirty on your fingers."

Besser's early years were spent as a sailor, knocking around the world. He was hospitalized in San Francisco when the 1906 earthquake struck there and he got out of bed to help rescue a number of children trapped in an orphanage. He later worked as a laborer chipping mortar from bricks knocked down by the quake.

After his stay in southern Oregon, he went to Alaska, working for the Alaska Engineering commission, which started the Alaska Railroad. He bought a homesite in what then was a tent city near Anchorage, and lived on the same location until his most recent trip "outside".

"The winters in Alaska are so long", he said. He added that nights in Alaska are already cold and that "I feel better already since arriving in Oregon.

Besser has been called an "Alaska pioneer" by the Anchorage Daily Times, which recorded his adventures since arriving in Alaska in 1914 when he left there recently.

BORN IN ARGENTINA

He was born along the Pilcomayo river in Argentina, the son of a Swiss mother and a German father, who himself had been born in Montreal, Canada. "My family traveled much", he explained, "and maybe that's why I have a wander lust, too."

Besser lived in Medford for about two or three years, starting about 1910. He helped clear land for fruit ranches during the time of the arrival of "colonists" and later helped build some of the first sidewalks in Medford.

ROWS TO HOMESTEAD

In addition, he had the homestead on the peninsula, and for



12 years he reached it by rowing across the swift waters of "treacherous Tunagain Arm, and down the twisted ebb and flow of Cook inlet," according to the Alaska paper.

He also was a fisherman for a time, and recalls one day when 36,000 salmon were caught in a handtrap.

ENGINEER VISITS

Paul Corak, engineer from the Soil Conservation Service area office in Grants Pass spent July 31 working with Donald C. Greeves of the local office in Gold Beach. A number of drainage and irrigation projects in the Wedderburn, Langlois and Floras Creek areas were checked during this visit.

MCKENZIE WORKS OVER LIBRARY LAWN

Tom McKenzie, local sand and gravel man, and a member of the Brookings Library board worked over the Library lawn this Sunday, to prepare it for a landscaping job that the Azalea Garden club will arrange in the near future as a project of the club.

SURPRISE PARTY

Hap Lewis was really surprised when a group of friends, and his woods crew held a surprise birthday party in his honor Saturday night at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Barnes.

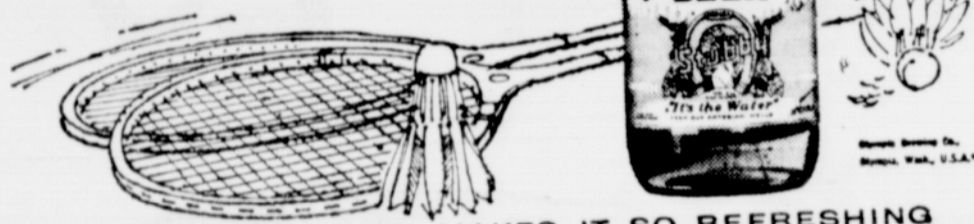
About 26 were in attendance at the party, and Hap was presented a custom made bow, quiver, and a dozen arrows.

ENLISTS IN ARMY

Milan J. Boon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Boon, box 98, Brookings, has enlisted in the U.S. Army Engineers under the "Reserved for You" program for high school graduates, according to SFC Richard L. Johnson of the Coos Bay Army Recruiting Station.

Boon will take basic at Ft. Ord Calif. and then will return home on leave before reporting to his next station for a course in construction equipment operation.

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