

July 15, 1985

Cynthia Toohey
Chairperson
Board of Supervisors
Girdwood, Alaska

Dear Cynthia:

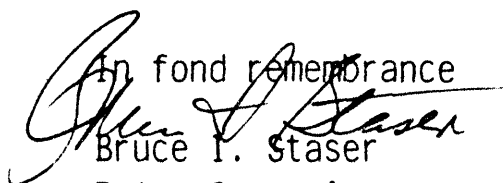
As a way of introducing myself, I have long-time, you might say, life-time, attachments to Girdwood. Although I was born and raised in Anchorage, I spent every summer of my youth, at least from 1926 to 1939, in and out of Girdwood. More specifically, at our family mine, the Monarch. During those years, the population of Girdwood consisted of three old timers: the two who owned the old hotel (and wore celluloid collars, cuffs and eye shades) and Gene, the frenchman, who ran a sometime restaurant adjacent to the hotel. There was a small saw-mill on California Creek and the Erickson family on their placer claim on lower Crow Creek. And that was about it as far as people were concerned. Up in our area, there were two single prospectors: Clyde Brenner, below us and Henry Bromberger, above us. I learned the skills of a hard-rock miner and in 1939 worked as a miner at the Independence Mine. In 1941, I received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and my younger brother, Beverly, went to Annapolis. After 32 years in the Army, I ended up, by chance, as Second-in-Command of U.S. Army, Alaska and subsequently as State Adjutant General.

When I returned to Alaska in 1972, I immediately looked up Joe Danich in Girdwood. He then held the seven claims to our old property. He told me they belonged to me and to take them. I refused. Since then, I have made it a point to visit the old mine every summer. In poking around Girdwood, I discovered a street named Agostino. Since I knew that Agostino had little

if anything, to do with Girdwood, it made me wonder why a street was named after him. Then I started hearing references to the "Agostino" mine. The Monarch. I admit that it bothered me.

There seems to be a misconception that Bruno Agostino owned the mine. The mine never passed out of control of the Staser family until my father's death at the mine on February 8, 1940, when it subsequently passed to his sister from whom he had borrowed money. She (Louise 'Lula' Beck of New Mexico) tried to operate the mine after WWII and finally sold it in the late 40's. In 1930, my father made a deal with Agostino and three of his miners to drive a tunnel from the mill level, through the slide-rock to try and intercept the vein, if it extended down that far. During the two summers that Agostino tried to drive the tunnel (without success), we continued to operate the gold-producing vein on the upper mountain. The deal fell through. Agostino later made a deal with W.E. Dunkle, developer of the Golden Zone Mine out of Colorado, Alaska, on the Alaska RR., to dig a large ditch. This project also failed. Agostino was in Alaska maybe four or five years altogether. My father came to Alaska in 1909, my mother, in 1904. He was a member of the Territorial Legislature (1923-1925). He is listed in the Alaska Historical Commission's compilation of Who's Who in Alaskan Politics (1884-1974).

As you can surmise, I have a very sentimental attachment to Girdwood and the Monarch. Not only because of the beauty of the place, but because we had poured out so much blood, sweat and tears in developing the mine and the fact that my father had died at the mine. About all I have left, besides some pictures of the mill building, is this 1933 newspaper article written by my father, and of course, many fond memories. It is my hope that you will accept this small remembrance and, if you find it appropriate, hang it in some public place in memory of the man who was most closely associated with the Monarch Mine and with Girdwood.

In fond remembrance

Bruce I. Staser

Brig. General

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