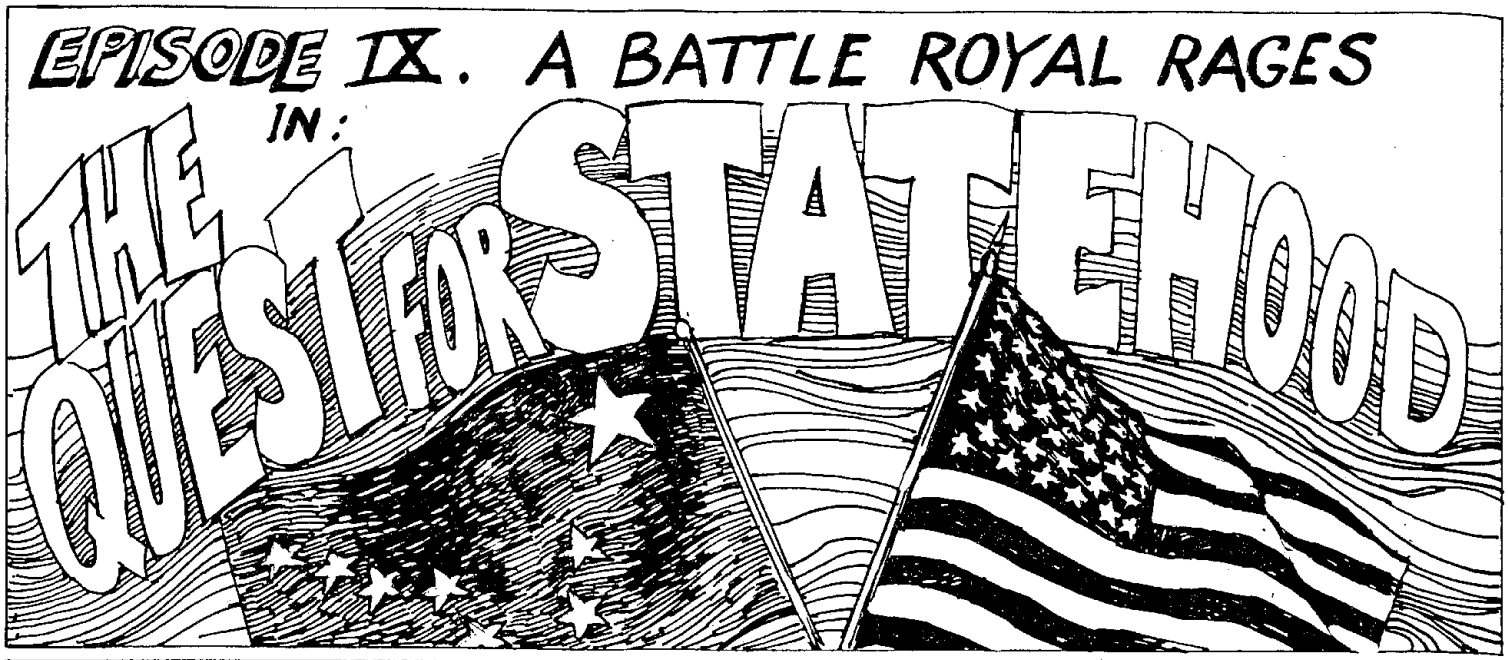
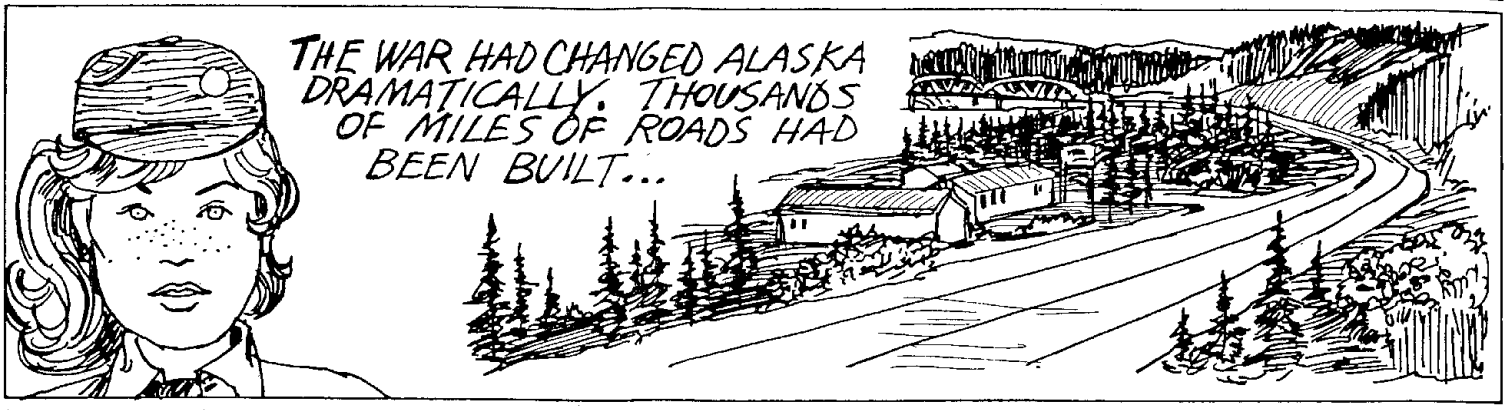
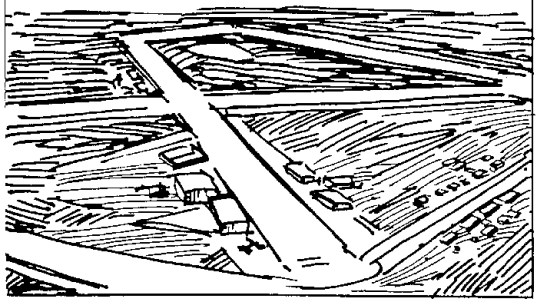
EPISODE IX. A BATTLE ROYAL RAGES IN: THE QUEST FOR STATEHOOD

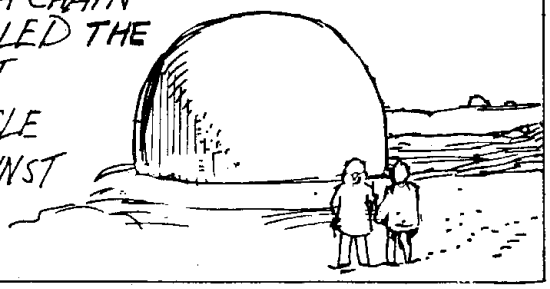




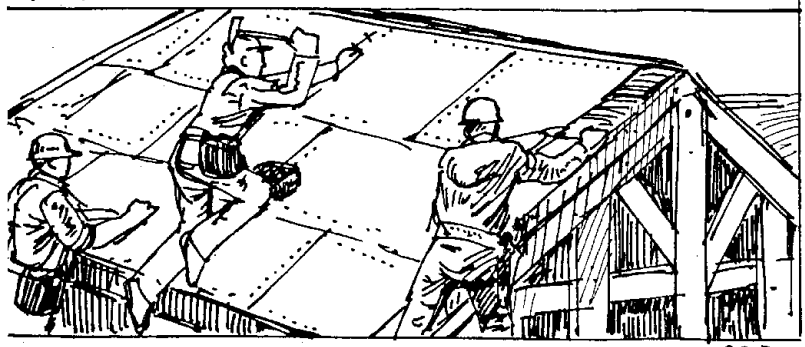
AIRPORTS AND DOCKING FACILITIES HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED...



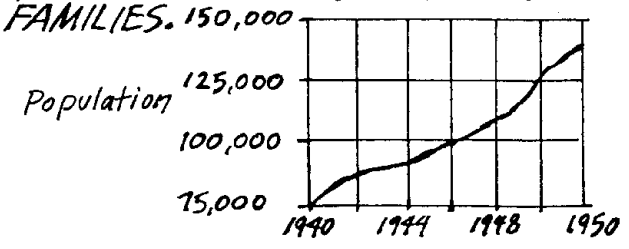
AND IN THE LATE 1940S ALASKA FACED A NEW WAR THREAT - THIS TIME FROM THE **SOVIET UNION**. THE SO CALLED "**COLD WAR**" WITH THE SOVIETS FORCED A CHANGE IN STRATEGIC DEFENSE. A CHAIN OF RADAR STATIONS CALLED THE **DEW LINE** WAS BUILT ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE TO PROTECT THE U.S. AGAINST SURPRISE MISSILE ATTACK.



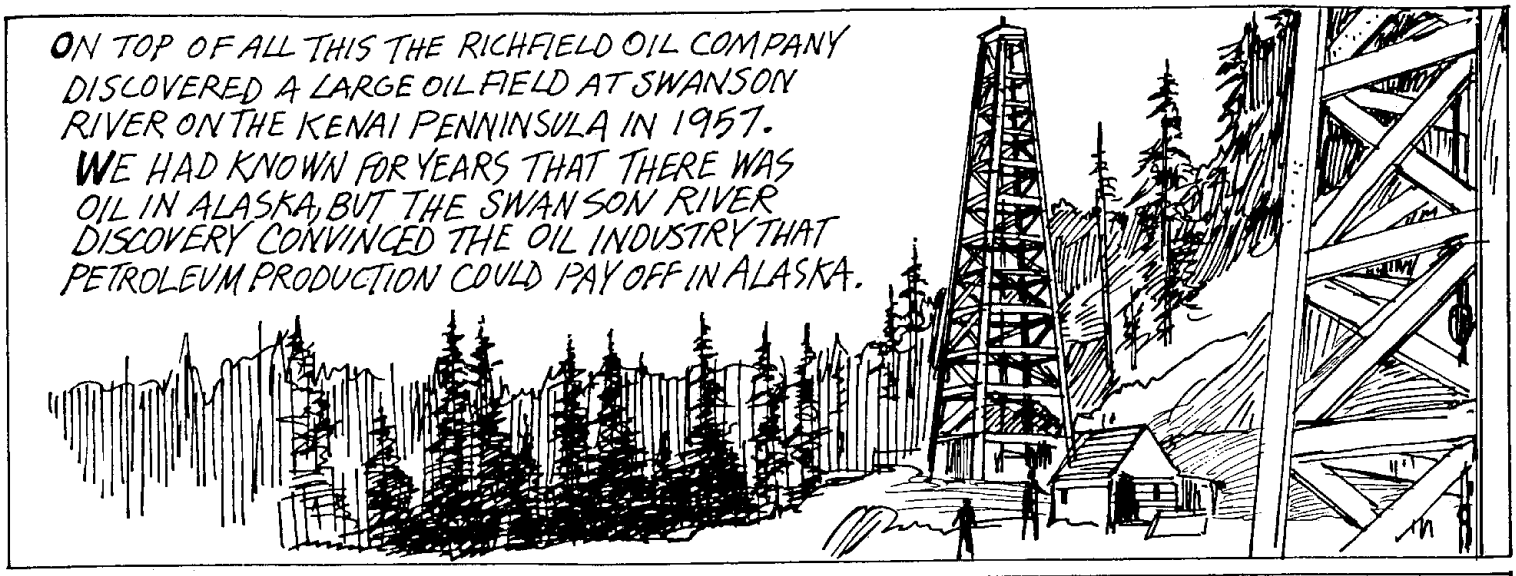
THOUSANDS OF OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND I WORKED ON IMPROVING AIR FORCE AND ARMY BASES IN FAIRBANKS AND ANCHORAGE...



WHILE OTHERS BUILT NEW HOUSING FOR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES.



THE POPULATION HAD GONE FROM 75,000 IN 1940 TO 138,000 IN 1950 - AN 84% INCREASE. **ALASKA WAS BOOMING!**


ON TOP OF ALL THIS THE RICHFIELD OIL COMPANY DISCOVERED A LARGE OIL FIELD AT SWANSON RIVER ON THE KENAI PENNINSULA IN 1957.
WE HAD KNOWN FOR YEARS THAT THERE WAS OIL IN ALASKA, BUT THE SWANSON RIVER DISCOVERY CONVINCED THE OIL INDUSTRY THAT PETROLEUM PRODUCTION COULD PAY OFF IN ALASKA.


THE HOTTEST TOPIC OF CONVERSATION IN THE 50s, HOWEVER, WAS STATEHOOD. MOST ALASKAN'S WANTED STATEHOOD...
MY FELLOW ALASKANS, WE MUST HAVE STATEHOOD.


THOUGH SOME WERE OPPOSED.
...AND SO WE MUST OPPOSE STATEHOOD AT ALL COSTS.


WHILE CONGRESS DEBATED THE ISSUE OF ALASKA STATEHOOD, HAMADA AND I DECIDED TO HAVE DINNER AT ANCHORAGE'S HOTTEST NEW RESTAURANT.
BBQ
ROY'S WAGONWHEEL
ENTER


NICE PLACE HUH?
YEAH, IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM ALL THE HULABALOO ABOUT STATEHOOD.


AT A NEARBY TABLE
OH YEAH?
YEAH! ALASKA SHOULD BE A STATE.
YOU FOOL, ALASKA'S TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE REST OF THE U.S. IT'S NOT EVEN ATTACHED TO THE OTHER STATES
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING. STATES DON'T HAVE TO BE CONTIGUOUS — LOOK AT HAWAII. THEY'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN AND THAT DOESN'T STOP THEM FROM ASKING FOR STATEHOOD.
YEAH, BUT HAWAII HAS FIVE TIMES MORE PEOPLE THAN WE DO.
POW!
SO? OUR POPULATION IS GROWING. IT'S NEARLY DOUBLED SINCE 1940.


... AND OUR ECONOMY IS TOO WEAK. WE CAN'T TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES.
KITCHEN
THAT MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE BEFORE THE WAR. BUT THE CONSTRUCTION BOOM, LARGER MILITARY PAYROLLS, AND NEW OIL DISCOVERY MEAN THAT ALASKA HAS A BRIGHT ECONOMIC FUTURE.
STATEHOOD BAH! THE LAST THING WE NEED IS A NEW LAYER OF GOVERNMENT. STATE TAXES WILL CRIPPLE BUSINESS.
BALONEY! REASONABLE TAXES WON'T DESTROY BUSINESS. IN ANY CASE, WE OUGHT TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE THAT ISSUE FOR OURSELVES.
BUT SIR, MY PIES!
SELF-GOVERNMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION ARE THE RIGHTS OF EVERY AMERICAN.


THE WINNER.
EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT. ALASKA BECOMES A STATE.
EXTRA ANCHORAGE TIMES
WE'RE IN
ALASKA BECOMES 49TH STA
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER SIGNS STATEHOOD
YAY!
YO!
YOU KNOW, HAMADA - WE'RE ALL WINNERS.

EPISODE IX

Quest for Statehood

Alaska became a state in 1959, eighty-nine years after it was purchased by the U.S. from Russia. The road to statehood, however, was rough and rocky. Many problems had to be overcome.

When former Secretary of State William Seward, who had engineered the Alaska purchase, visited Alaska in 1869 he told Alaskans that self-government would soon be a reality and that statehood was inevitable. Few Americans—or even Alaskans, for that matter—shared Seward's enthusiasm. It was not until 1884 that Congress passed the First Organic Act, providing Alaska with basic government, led by a governor appointed by the president. Under the act, the laws of the state of Oregon were to apply in Alaska.

With the discovery of gold in the Klondike and later on the Seward Peninsula and the Tanana Valley, Alaska's population grew. Even more people came to Alaska as the salmon industry grew and flourished. Between 1890 and 1900 Alaska's population doubled, from 32,052 to 63,592. Alaskans wanted greater self-government and a voice in the U.S. Congress. Alaska's population surge and growing economy led Congress to pass a law in 1906 that gave Alaska its own delegate to Congress. The delegate was to have all the privileges of other congressmen except one—he could not vote.

Self-government took another step forward in 1912 when Congress passed the Second Organic Act, which made Alaska a territory of the U.S. and established a legislature. Alaskans could now make their own laws and levy taxes, although Congress could disapprove any action by the legislature.

In 1916 Alaska's delegate to Congress, James Wickersham, introduced the first Alaska statehood bill. It failed, but served to ignite controversy over whether Alaska should become one, two, or even three separate states. Most residents of Alaska's southeastern panhandle wanted to secede from the rest of Alaska and become a separate state. The panhandle generated the bulk of territorial tax revenues and residents saw no need to share those revenues with the rest of Alaska. Still others suggested the creation of three states—the panhandle, the interior, and the Seward Peninsula. Several plans for

with the rest of Alaska. Still others suggested the creation of three states—the panhandle, the interior, and the Seward Peninsula. Several plans for partitioning Alaska were put forward, and the partition movement gained momentum when President Warren G. Harding came to Alaska in 1923 to tour the state and commemorate the completion of the Alaska Railroad. President Harding was sympathetic to statehood for Alaska, but suggested that the panhandle be set apart and made a state before the less populous and less prosperous parts of the territory. Harding, however, died on the trip back to the White House, and Congress took no action on partition.

Alaska's drive for statehood languished until World War II alerted Americans to Alaska's strategic importance as a bridge between North America and Asia. The war had created another population boom and war-time construction had added immensely to Alaska's ***infrastructure*** of roads, highways, bridges, docks, and airfields.

After the war Alaska's Congressional Delegate, E.L. "Bob" Bartlett, and appointed Governor Ernest Gruening fought hard for statehood. President Harry S. Truman actively supported Alaska's admission to the union as soon as it could be determined that most Alaskans wanted statehood. At the next election Alaskans voted 9,630 to 6,822 in favor of statehood.

Powerful interests, however, opposed Alaska statehood. Many Americans thought that Alaska was too far away, too poor, and had too small a population to become a state. Most of the canneries, mines, and steamship companies that operated in Alaska were owned by companies whose headquarters were outside Alaska. They did not like the idea of having to submit to state regulation. They lobbied hard in Congress against statehood. In 1954 the U.S. Senate passed a bill that would have made both Alaska and Hawaii states but the measure died in the House. Frustrated Alaskans decided to take matters into their own hands and held a constitutional convention to write a state constitution in 1955. The voters overwhelmingly approved the constitution the following year, and in 1958 President Dwight Eisenhower came out in support of statehood for both Alaska and Hawaii. Both houses of Congress passed the statehood bill, and Alaska became the 49th state on January 3, 1959.