

# The PAYSTREAK

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The Newsletter of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF)

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## Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation New Inductees

### AMHF Inducts Three Successful Attorneys and Statesmen, and a Civic-Minded Woman Important to Interior Alaska Mining History



**Luther and Harriet Hess** For philanthropy and civic service, it is difficult to name any early Alaskan couple whose contributions met those of Luther and Harriet Hess. Luther was regarded as a first-rate mining lawyer, but Harriet's contributions to the Alaska Agriculture College and School of Mines (now UAF) equal the contributions of her husband. The couple was married in Dawson on September 11, 1911. They called Fairbanks home several years later. Luther and Harriet were pro-development Democrats that strongly supported the mineral industry. Luther helped organize the 1939 meeting that created the Alaska Miners Association. Harriet served on the Democratic National Committee from 1944-1946. Upon their deaths in the early 1950s, the Hess estate was largely donated to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.



**Ernest B. Collins** E. B. Collins had a long and very successful Alaska career beginning in 1904, when he "came into the country", the Fairbanks Mining District, and pursued small scale mine ventures, a private law practice, and decades of public service. He served as Speaker of the House as a Republican in the First Alaska Territorial Legislature during 1913-1915. Collins was a four-time Mayor of Fairbanks during the 1930s, when the USSR&M dredge fleet was maturing and the School of Agriculture and Mines became the University of Alaska. Listing his occupation as 'Lawyer and Miner', he held an honored position as one of the delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention during 1955-1956, where he gave an opening address at Constitution Hall. He died in Fairbanks at the age of 94 and was buried at Birch Hill Cemetery.



**John 'Johnny' McGinn** The 1955 Golden Days Edition of the Fairbanks Daily News Miner described John 'Johnny' McGinn as "one of the smartest mining lawyers in the business". J.L. McGinn first landed at Nome in 1900 and would work for James Wickersham as a federal prosecutor. Although later compromised by his close relationship to Fairbanks founder E.T. Barnette, he would help develop and finance gold and silver mines throughout the North Country and oil in California, often with his close associate, Frank Manley. McGinn was a perennial snow bird for more than 50 years, commuting from his winter home in San Mateo, California and his summer residence at the Nordale Hotel in Fairbanks. His wife, Elsa, was a noted civic achiever in California.

**Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation**  
Induction Ceremony, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
East Gold Room, Westmark Hotel, Fairbanks, Alaska  
**Program**

**The General Public is invited to the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF) induction ceremony from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008. There is no charge for admission. Refreshments will be served.**

**Introduction and Purpose of the AMHF**

President Mary Nordale.....7:00-7:10 PM

**Presentations of Inductees**

Luther and Harriet Hess, by Charles C. Hawley..... 7:10-7:30PM

Ernest B. Collins, by Thomas K. Bundtzen.....7:30-7:50 PM

John L. ‘Johnny’ McGinn, by Thomas K. Bundtzen..... 7:50-8:20 PM

**Refreshments and Coffee Break..... 8:20-8:30 PM**

**Recollection of Inductees From The Audience..... 8:30-9:00 PM**

**Acknowledgements**

The March 20, 2008 induction ceremony of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF) will feature four mining pioneers involved in Alaska early legal profession who also participated in the mining industry, public service, and civic achievements. All four inductees, Luther and Harriet Hess, E.B. Collins, and John McGinn largely based out of Fairbanks, although McGinn in later years spent most of his winters in California.

Data sources for the compiled biographies are numerous. The AMHF Honors Committee utilized the published sources listed in each biography as well as cited digital photographs made available from the Alaska State Library and other sources. The biographies of Luther and Harriet Hess were written by Charles C, Hawley. The biography of E.B. Collins was written by Tom Bundtzen and Hawley. The biographical sketch of J. L. McGinn was written by Bundtzen, Hawley, and Cristina R. Laird. Laird also acquired almost all of the photographs for all four inductees through research of mainly digital files from the Alaska State Library, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives collections, and the San Mateo County, California Archives. AMHF Secretary Tom Bundtzen edited this newsletter.

## Previous Inductees, Alaska Mining Hall of Fame

### *National Mining Hall of Fame Inductees*

Six charter members of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation were previously elected into the National Mining Hall of Fame in Leadville, Colorado.

**Stephen Birch:** Founder and developer of Kennecott Copper Mines.

**Frederick Bradley:** Successful manager of Treadwell and A-J Mines, Juneau.

**John Treadwell:** Founder of Treadwell Mines, Juneau.

**Alfred H. Brooks:** Chief Geologist of U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska.

**Earnest Patty:** University of Alaska, and manager of Placer Dredging Venture.

**Clarence Berry:** Prominent Klondike and Interior Alaska miner.

### *Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation Inductees*

#### Fairbanks Spring 1998

#### **Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Yukon Basin Traders and Prospectors**

**Alfred Mayo:** “Captain Al” well-known Yukon River trader, prospector.

**Jack McQuesten:** Known as the “Father of the Yukon”, grubstaker for prospectors.

**Arthur Harper:** Well known and respected trader and prospector and promoter of the Yukon.

**Howard Franklin:** Fortymile prospector, discovered first “bedrock” placer gold in Alaska.

**John Minook:** Creole-Athabaskan prospector who discovered Rampart district.

**Felix Pedro:** Discoverer of Fairbanks district in 1902.

#### Nome Summer 1998

#### **Induction Ceremony Honoring Pioneers of Nome Gold Rush**

**John Brynteson:** A ‘Lucky Swede’; an experienced hard-rock miner, discoverer of the Cape Nome district.

**Erik Lindblom:** The eldest of the “Lucky Swedes”, a tailor.

**Jafet Lindeberg:** The Norwegian of the ‘Lucky Swedes’, president and manager of the very successful Pioneer Mining Company.

**Charles D. Lane:** Tough, honest, and wealthy miner who helped the Lucky Swedes in their legal battles.

Juneau Spring 1999

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Juneau District**

**Joe Juneau:** Native of Quebec, a California 49er, co-discoverer of gold in the Juneau district.

**Richard Harris:** Irish immigrant, co-discoverer of gold in Juneau district.

**George Pilz:** German immigrant who sent and financed the Juneau and Harris prospecting ventures in the Juneau area.

**Kawa.ee:** Tlingit leader who brought rich gold samples from Gastineau Channel area to George Pilz

**Livingston Wernecke:** Geologist-engineer for the Bradley companies of Juneau.

**Bartlett Thane:** Promoter-founder of the world's largest gold mine, the Gastineau at Juneau.

Anchorage Fall 1999

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Mining Pioneers of Southern/Southwest Alaska**

**Andrew Olson:** Swedish immigrant, innovator at Flat; the original organizer of the platinum mining complex in the Goodnews bay Mining District.

**Evan Jones:** Welsh immigrant; the true father of Alaska coal mining industry.

**Wesley Earl Dunkle:** Kennecott engineer and innovative geologist, co-founder of Star Air Service, predecessor of Alaska Airlines.

Fairbanks Spring 2000

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Interior Pioneers**

**Emil Usibelli:** Italian immigrant and founder of Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc., Alaska's only and historically largest producer of coal; civic benefactor in Fairbanks.

**John B. Mertie Jr.:** Leading U.S. Geological Survey geologist; outstanding earth scientist, mathematician, and world expert on platinum.

**Fannie Quigley:** Prospector, renowned for her bush skills, legendary Kantishna character.

Juneau Spring 2001

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Government Role in Mining**

**Benjamin D. Stewart:** State and Federal mining administrator, Alaska constitutional delegate at Alaska Statehood Convention in Fairbanks.

Fairbanks Summer, 2001

**Induction Ceremony Honoring the Pioneers of the Large Scale Gold Dredging Industry of Nome and Fairbanks Districts**

**Norman C. Stines:** Visionary engineer that planned and supervised original USSR&M activities in Fairbanks district.

**Wendell P. Hammon:** Installed the first three dredges in Cape Nome district; helped design financing for what became USSR&M dredge fleets in Alaska

**James K. Davidson:** Designed and built Miocene and Davidson ditch systems.

Anchorage Fall 2001

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Flat District**

**John Beaton:** Co-discovered Iditarod district with William Dikeman.

Fairbanks Spring 2002

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Successful Miners and Engineers of Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Frank G. Manley:** Highly successful miner in Fairbanks, Hot Springs District, and Flat. Founder of the First National Bank, Fairbanks

**Herman Tofty:** Norwegian immigrant who worked prospects near Manley Hot Springs.

**Chester Purington:** Acclaimed international mining engineer; wrote treatise on Alaska placer fields.

**Thomas P. Aitken:** Arguably the most successful small scale mine developer during the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush; worked both lodes and placers in Alaska and Yukon.

Anchorage Fall 2002

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Immigrant Pioneers**

**Peter Miscovich:** Croatian immigrant who settled in Flat, Alaska 1910. Pioneered the use of hydraulic mining techniques.

**David Strandberg:** Swedish immigrant who joined the Klondike gold rush in 1898 and the Iditarod rush of 1910. Built placer mining dynasty Strandberg & Sons, Inc.

**Lars Ostnes:** Norwegian immigrant who mined in the Iditarod district and developed placer mines in remote western Alaska for over 50 years.

Fairbanks Summer 2003

**Golden Days Induction Ceremony (also recognized during Fall AMA convention)**

**Kyosuke “Frank” Yasuda and Nevelo Yasuda:** Japanese immigrant and his Eskimo wife, discovered Chandalar gold and founded the community of Beaver.

Anchorage Fall 2003

**Induction Ceremony Honoring Early and Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Placer Miners**

**John Gustavus (Gus) Uotila:** By 1915, Gus Uotila was known as a tough Iditarod teamster. He mentored placer mining operations throughout Alaska and became a respected overland freighter.

**Simon Wible:** He mined gold, built water canals, and became a wealthy man in California. When the time of the gold rush came along, he pioneered hydraulic mine technology on the Kenai Peninsula.

Fairbanks Spring 2004

**Honoring Early Pioneers Associated with USSR&M Dredge Fleet**

**Roy B. Earling:** Built pre-World War II FE Company into one of the efficient and successful dredge mining firms in the world.

**James D. Crawford:** Well organized manager who acquired new dredge properties and guided FE company into successful post-World War II period of gold mining.

**Jack C. Boswell:** Engineered the development of the rich Cripple deposit; and helped build giant FE machines used to dig deep placer deposits. Published historian of USSR&M era.

**Genevieve Parker Metcalfe:** Breakthrough woman mining engineer who developed initial plans for FE Fairbanks operations, wrote a landmark thesis on Alaska placer mining, and was a champion athlete and scholar.

**Earl Richard Pilgrim:** First Professor of Mine Engineering at University of Alaska. I Independent Kantishna miner and FE consultant, “Mr. Antimony” in the US.

Anchorage Fall, 2004

**Honoring Those in the Mining Legal Profession,**

In Cooperation with the History Committee of the Alaska Bar Association

**William Sulzer:** Bill Sulzer became a prominent New York attorney and politician and briefly served as Governor of New York. The ever-optimistic Sulzer mined copper in southeast Alaska and developed gold in the Chandalar district.

**Joseph Rudd:** Shortly after Statehood, Rudd drafted the State's mining law on state Lands and was sought for his expertise on Natural Resource issues throughout his career. He was killed in a plane crash in Anchorage upon his return from Juneau after discussing with other Alaskans challenges to President Carter's Implementation of the 1978 Antiquities Act.

#### Anchorage Fall, 2005

#### **Honoring the Discoverers and the Developer of Platinum Resources at Goodnews Bay**

**Per Edvard (Ed) Olson:** Born in 1898, Edward Olson was born into a large farm family in Sweden and immigrated to the United States in 1905. In 1934, assumed the position of general manager of the Goodnews Bay Mining Company (GBMC), the largest supplier of platinum in the U.S. during 1934-1975.

**Walter Smith:** In the summer of 1926, Yupik Eskimo Walter Smith and his young apprentice Henry Wuya found placer platinum in a stream draining a remote, uninhabited coast of southwest Alaska. The GBMC eventually purchase Smith's claims. Smith and Wuya are recognized as discoverers of Goodnews Bay platinum.

**Henry Wuya:** Henry Wuya was born to Eskimo parents in Quinhagak on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Wuya, was proficient in English when few Yupiks knew English. He mentored with the older and experienced prospector, Walter Smith.

#### Fairbanks March 2006

#### **Honoring Two Pioneers Important to Both Canadian and American Mining Communities**

**Ellen (Nellie) Cashman:** Ellen (Nellie) Cashman was a quintessential gold stamper that participated in many gold-silver rushes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Nellie's final home was Nolan Creek in the Koyukuk district of northern Alaska. Cashman died in 1925 at St. Anne's Hospital, Victoria, British Columbia, a medical facility she helped found several decades earlier.

**Jack Dalton:** One of the premier horse freighters of the Alaska-Yukon gold rush era, Jack Dalton opened up the 'Dalton Trail' for prospectors and trades from Haines to Central Yukon, Canada. In later years he worked as a freight engineer for the Alaska railroad. The Dalton Highway is a tribute to the Dalton family in Alaska.

#### Juneau June 2006

#### **Honoring the Mining Legal Profession, in Cooperation with the History Committee of the Alaska Bar Association**

**Frederick (Fred) Eastaugh:** Nome-born Fred Eastaugh was an Alaskan accountant, a ship's officer for the Alaska Steamship Company, and an Alaska mining attorney. Eastaugh was appointed to the Alaska Minerals Commission in 1991 by Governor Walter Hickel. Upon his death a year later, Hickel ordered state flags flown at half mast.

Anchorage November 2006

**Honoring an Outstanding Statesman and an Outstanding Prospector Active in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Alaska Mining Industry**

**Charles F. (Chuck) Herbert:** Chuck Herbert was one of the premier miners of his generation. Educated at the School of Mines in Fairbanks, he mined placer gold deposits, sought metalliferous lodes, and served with distinction in several public roles. During early years of Statehood, he played a crucial role in the selection of Alaska's North Slope Lands. Later as DNR Commissioner, he revitalized the State land selection process.

**Rheinart M. (Rhiny) Berg:** Berg's strength and stamina were legendary during most of his 86 years of life. He worked as an underground miner in the Wrangell Mountains and Fairbanks districts, as a trapper and prospector, and he found the Bornite copper-cobalt deposit. He later developed the Candle placer district on the Seward Peninsula. He gained great wealth, which he mostly gave away.

Juneau March 2007

**Honoring an Outstanding Statesman and Mine Attorney Active in Southeast Alaska's Mineral Industry**

**Phillip R. Holdsworth:** Phil Holdsworth's professional career extended nearly seventy years. He was a practical miner at the age of sixteen. Later he operated mines, assay labs, and mills. In World War II, he defended a Philippine mine as a guerilla warrior. After serving as Alaska's first commissioner of Natural Resources, Holdsworth became Alaska's elder natural resource statesman before his death in 2001

**Herbert L. Faulkner:** H.L. (Bert) Faulkner's law career extended for almost seventy years. He was a sheriff, U.S. Marshall and attorney. He would represent almost every major mining company operating in Alaska during his lifetime.

Fairbanks July 2007

**Honoring Two of Alaska's Outstanding Mine Educators**

**Earl H. Beistline:** Earl Beistline has had a distinguished career as mining educator at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. Beistline brought to the classroom a unique blend of theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of mining. During all of his adult life, he has been a tireless and outspoken advocate of Alaska mining industry interests.

**Ernest N. Wolff:** Ernie Wolff was a notable personality on Alaska's mining landscape for more than sixty years. During this time he prospected, mined, taught and administered at the University of Alaska, wrote a classic book, *Handbook for the Alaskan Prospector*, and served on public bodies; all of this always in his unique style with a kind of gentle truculence.

Anchorage, November, 2007

**Honoring Those involved in the Southwest Alaska's Quicksilver Mining Industry**

**Robert F. Lyman:** Besides operating small scale mercury lodes, he managed Alaska's largest mercury mine at Red Devil, Alaska, which, during the 1950s, produced nearly 20 percent of U.S. domestic requirements of the strategic metal.

**Wallace M. Cady:** produced, with other USGS colleagues "The Central Kuskokwim Region, Alaska", a geological framework of a large, 5,000 mi<sup>2</sup> area centered on Alaska's premier mercury mining region.

**Russell Schaefer:** was one of Alaska's 'tough guy prospectors' that accomplished much in the Kuskokwim Mercury Belt of southwest Alaska.



*From right to left: Luther Hess, Harriet Hess, Austin E. Lathrop and Andrew Nerland in the UAF library, circa 1930s; from the UAF digital archives.*

**LUTHER CONSTANTINE HESS  
(1865-1954)**

**HARRIET BELLE (TRIMMER) HESS  
(1881-1951)**

For philanthropy and civic service it is difficult to name any early Alaska couple whose contributions met those of Luther Hess and his wife Harriet. Luther dominated in mining, but in service to Fairbanks and the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines Harriet's contributions at least equaled those of her husband. Together they were an unbeatable team. Their backgrounds are remarkably similar. Both were raised in the mid-west and earned college degrees there. Each taught school in the Outside States. Luther stamped to the Klondike in 1898 through Dyea; Harriet arrived in Juneau not far behind in 1902.

Luther C. Hess was born in Milton, Illinois to William and Nancy (nee Smith) Hess on December 28, 1865. The family was prosperous. Hess grew up in a seventeen room home in Milton. He attended county elementary schools then one year in Perry High School, and



*Luther Hess in the Livengood district, circa 1930s; from the UAF digital archives.*

finished his high school years at Whipple Academy. He graduated from Illinois College, a Presbyterian-Congregational school, with an A.B., in 1891. Before he graduated from college, Hess taught at the county district school in Griggsville in 1886-7 and, following his graduation from college, was assistant principal and principal of rural district Illinois schools from 1891-1893.

Hess then read law in a private law office in Pittsfield, Illinois and was admitted to practice law before the Illinois Supreme Court on May 7, 1897. Shortly afterward, the young attorney must have been infected with gold fever, as he joined the gold rush to the Klondike via the Alaska port at Dyea in 1898. Three years later on June 3, 1901 he passed the Alaska bar and opened an office for business in Fairbanks. The first issue of the first newspaper (*Alaska Miner*) published in Fairbanks in May 1903, only months after discovery of gold, includes an advertisement for Luther C. Hess as Attorney-at-Law and as Assistant U.S. District Attorney.

Harriet Hess was born to Isaac and Lillian (Hunt) Trimmer in Winfield, Iowa in 1881. She

graduated and earned her teacher's certificate from the University of Minnesota in 1902; by the time of her graduation, she had already taught three years (1898-1900) in rural Minnesota. Something of the north must have called Harriet, as in 1902 she was in Juneau where she was high school principal from 1902-1907. Later in 1907 Harriet moved to Fairbanks into a similar position. Perhaps Harriet and Luther had met in Juneau, but surely she must have known her future husband in bustling gold rush Fairbanks. The couple was married in Dawson, Yukon Territory on September 11, 1911.

Luther Hess left the farming community of Milton, Illinois, where he had been school teacher, administrator, and a successful attorney, for the gold rush to the Klondike in 1898. In 1903 he stampeded to Fairbanks where he became one of the north's leading citizens. He was a miner, but more importantly he invested in mines and miners. By the mid 1920s, possibly no other individual Alaskan controlled as much mining property as did Luther Hess. His legal and organizational skills were assets that aided his election and reelection to the Territorial Legislature. Hess also was a founder and long-time director and officer of the First National Bank of Fairbanks. With his wife, Harriet, Hess was a major backer of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, the forerunner of the University of Alaska, and of his own alma mater, Illinois College.

The law and Hess's interest and skills in debate were almost certainly, in part, a product of his heritage. Hess received a degree from Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, which was the longtime home of two of the greatest American orators, Stephen A. Douglas and William Jennings Bryan. Abraham Lincoln, Douglas's protagonist, was no stranger to the Jacksonville courthouse.

Luther was successful in mining and mining transactions and as an attorney. He

returned briefly around 1905 to Milton where he shared his stories of the northland. He urged adventurous citizens of Illinois to come to the new mining camp at Fairbanks where he perceived abundant opportunity for both mining and business ventures. One who heard Hess's message was a neighbor, Georgia Anna Eldridge. Georgia was an attractive, fun-loving, intelligent young woman from a poor family, who was looking for a good opportunity. Author and student of the northern demimonde Lael Morgan ("Good Time Girls of the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush") casts Luther as Georgia's tutor and backer who urged Georgia to find out as much as she could in St. Louis about the prostitute's trade, then move to where an uneducated young woman could prosper. For Georgia Lee, the scenario may have worked. She became a successful business woman and left a \$100,000 estate when she died many years later.

The story seems quite at odds with the later life of Hess, and the evidence of his involvement is only circumstantial at best. Yet like all the northern stampede towns, Fairbanks had an abundance of energetic young men with money to burn. There were saloon keepers, dance hall girls, and all-manner of unscrupulous promoters who were more than willing to help them burn it, and crime flourished. The majority of the women in the north were in the lucrative business of providing physical services for the men.

Hess was aware that in some areas the issue of prostitution was managed by authorities as a business, St. Louis, not too far from Hess's hometown, was a city that had attempted partial legalization and regulation of prostitution. At one time, St. Louis had passed a Social Evil Ordinance that segregated the prostitutes, but also gave them police protection, health examination, and free hospitalization for treatment of venereal disease. Author Morgan speculates that Hess proposed the controlled

prostitution idea to Episcopal Bishop Hudson Stuck who bought into the concept. Hess then drafted regulations for a new segregated district where the women had a great deal of say about their own lives. As a result, crime decreased in Fairbanks and many civic leaders helped to make the program at least a short term success and Fairbanks a better place to live.

The scope of Luther's early mining ventures probably centered in the Interior near Fairbanks. A move to the Kuskokwim was the subject of a 1916 Fairbanks news article that copied a story from the *Iditarod Pioneer*. "Luther C. Hess, the Fairbanks banker and mining man is said to be contemplating installing a dredge on Marvel Creek [near Nyac] . . . Mr. Hess is said to have large holdings on Marvel Creek and is negotiating on other tracts." The Fairbanks paper also reported in the same year that Hess had just returned from a trip to the United States seeking funds to install a dredge on Cleary Creek at Fairbanks. The fate of the ventures is uncertain, but timing at the advent of U.S. involvement in World War I was not propitious for mining ventures. Hess had other obligations also. Hess was named Chairman of the Selective Service [draft] Board and, in 1917 he served as Speaker of the House in the State legislature. Hess then ran for the Senate. He was elected to the Territorial Senate in 1919 and 1921, and then in consecutive terms from 1929 to 1935. He was President of the Senate in 1931 and 1935.

The discovery of placer gold at Livengood north of Fairbanks in about 1916 occupied a great deal of Hess's mining efforts. A diary from 1924 kept by Hess shows meticulous record keeping about the owners of claims in the new Tolovana district. Hess owned extensive interests on Livengood Creek itself and also had claims on Amy, Gertrude, and Olive Creeks.

Hess, with scholarly and legal background, learned basic geology and prospecting in the mining short course taught creatively by Ernest Patty-- Patty had just been named Dean of the College of Agriculture and School of Mines. In the course first taught in 1925, practical prospectors mingled with banker Hess, paleontologist Otto Geist, and future mining engineers Hess used his knowledge in the acquisition of good mining claims, that were often leased out to others to operate the claims.

A lease that may have cost Hess more than he made was to a woman, Grace Lowe. Hess leased good placer ground in Olive Creek in the Livengood district to Lowe in about 1932. Initially, Lowe seemed a good bet. She was attractive, had completed two years of college, knew bookkeeping and had a knack for operating heavy equipment. In the first years of Lowe's operation she had good press as, almost uniquely, a woman successfully operating a placer mine. But Lowe was as hard as nails, possibly a murderess—there was a rumor that she once tried to drown Hess—and increasingly in her later years a perpetual litigant. In 1939, she sued Hess over the claims. Hess won.

In 1939, Hess also participated in the organization of the Alaska Miners Association (AMA). Miners were always noted for their independence, but had never organized. In the late 1930s, the U. S. Congress passed workers compensation and wage-hour legislation that applied factory type economics to almost unregulated miners. Alaskan Congressional Delegate Tony Dimond advised Alaska mining leaders that they had to get organized and send a representative to Washington to seek exceptions for their industry. Miners met in Fairbanks and organized. Two of the participant were Alaska Hall of Fame inductees Earl R. Pilgrim and Wesley Earl Dunkle. Luther Hess helped organize the meeting and was elected the first

President of AMA, which, incidentally, did send a representative to Washington, D.C.

Luther and Harriet Hess were Democrats, and both very active in party affairs. Harriet was on the Democratic National Committee from 1944-1946. Both also strongly supported the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines that later became the University of Alaska. Harriet served on the Board of Regents from the foundation of the college in 1917 to her death in 1951. From 1917 until 1947 she was the unpaid secretary of the Board. She was the first woman member. Harriet continued to serve as a member of the Board until her death in 1951. Perhaps because the Hesses were childless, they were active with orphaned and abandoned children. Because of her service with the University and interest especially in women students, the woman's dorm at Fairbanks was named Harriet Hess Hall. In 1951, the dining commons at the University was dedicated to both Luther and Harriet

Harriet Hess died in 1951, Luther followed her in 1954. Much of the Hess estate went to the University. Luther, to honor his wife, established a trust fund to subsidize the residents of Harriet Hess Hall. It evidently was a matter that Luther had considered carefully. His last will states:

*"It is my wish that the income be used not only for those who are needy in the usual sense of the word, but that it be used to help those who are in need of some comfort and facility that would assist them in acquiring an education."*

Hess wished the funds to be distributed as unobtrusively as possible, and that the University reach out and look for incoming students who would qualify.

In addition to the University of Alaska, a Hess inheritance went to a nephew in Illinois. Luther and Harriet Hess also left bequests to

Illinois College, the Pioneers of Alaska, Chamber of Commerce in Fairbanks, the Pioneers Home in Sitka, and the Boy Scouts of America.

*Written by Charles C. Hawley*

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[Ground on No. 5 Below on Little Eldorado lease— "...known as Luther Hess ground."]

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*Harriet Hess in the Fairbanks High School, circa 1913; from the UAF digital archives*



*The Harriet B. Hess Hall at UAF, circa 1958; from the UAF digital archives.*



*E.B. Collins at the First Territorial Legislature, March 1913; from the UAF digital archives.*

## **ERNEST BILBE COLLINS (1873-1967)**

E. B. Collins had a long and very successful Alaska career beginning in 1904, when he “came into the country”, and pursued small scale mine ventures, a private law practice, and decades of public service. Listing his occupation as ‘Lawyer and Miner’, he held an honored position as one of the delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention during 1955-1956.

Collins was born on July 19, 1873, at Farmland, Indiana to William John and Elizabeth *nee Robbins* Collins. He attended public schools in Indiana and graduated from college in California (now Chico State) in 1896. He read law at an attorney’s office in Chico from 1896-1904. He married May Imogene

Kimball in November 1900; the couple had one daughter, Margaret Henshaw (Mrs. Robert Cooper).

Triggered by news of the gold discovery at Fairbanks, Collins left California and entered the Alaska Territory. From 1904-1918, Collins was primarily a gold miner in the Fairbanks district. Collins did well mining placer gold on Upper Cleary Creek north of Fairbanks, but also successfully mined placer gold near Ester. He began to divide his time between mining and studying and practicing law. In 1915, he passed the Alaska Bar. Earlier E. B. began a public career and was very active in politics as a Republican.

E.B. Collins was elected as a representative to the First Territorial Legislature in 1913 and served as Alaska’s first Speaker of the House during 1913-1915. Collins was sensitive to discrimination whether it was sourced in gender or race. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1913, E.B. Collins introduced House Bill No. 2, “*To extend the elective franchise to women in the Territory of Alaska*”. House Bill No. 2 passed the Territorial Senate with Senate President L.V. Ray’s signature on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1913, and signed into law by Territorial Governor Walter Clark shortly afterwards. This brief landmark legislation granted women the right to vote in all elections held within the Territory of Alaska. Known as the ‘Shoup Women’s Suffrage Bill’, it is also known as the ‘Collins Women’s Suffrage Bill’, in recognition of the key leadership provided by the Speaker of the House, E.B. Collins. It is interesting that the First Territorial legislature sought to give women the right to vote in one of it’s first official legislative acts.

Collins served as U.S. Attorney, Fairbanks (4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District) from 1921 until 1933 when he resigned to co-found the law firm Collins and Clasby. He was elected and served as Mayor of Fairbanks from 1935-1939,



*The First Territorial House of Representatives at the Elks Hall in Juneau. Presiding officer E.B. Collins is standing in the center, circa March 1913; from the UAF digital archives.*

overseeing some notable advances to the interior Alaska gold-mining community, including the maturity of the USSR&M Company dredge fleet near town and the transformation of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines into the University of Alaska. Following the untimely death of his wife, May Kimball Collins, E.B. remarried to Mrs. Jenny Larson on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936.

While serving as Senate President in 1947, one summary of Collin’s long career noted that he was only one of three surviving members of the First Territorial Legislature. Collins was first elected as a Territorial Senator in 1921 and served subsequently as late as 1951, including the 1949 ‘Extraordinary Session’ of the 19<sup>th</sup> legislature, which created the official Alaska Statehood Committee. That year Senate Bill 49, the number of which was deliberately selected to promote Alaska as the future 49<sup>th</sup> State, was introduced by an outstanding native legislator, Frank Peratrovich of Klawock, and Victor Rivers of Anchorage. The bill passed both

houses of the Territorial Legislature, led in part by senior leadership, including E.B. Collins. In June, 1950, a Statehood Bill was introduced to the U.S. Congress by Collin’s long-time friend and Alaska Territorial Delegate to Congress, E.L. ‘Bob’ Bartlett. Although the more youthful Bartlett was a ‘New Deal’ Democrat, the senior Republican Collins worked with the fellow Interior ‘past’

placer miner Bartlett on issues ranging from sea wall protection at Nome to more funding for the University in Fairbanks. Perhaps they reminisced about previous gold mining days—both the Bartlett family and E.B. Collins had done very well mining gold on Upper Cleary Creek during the early Fairbanks gold rush years.

Collins chose to retire from the Territorial Legislature before the very contentious 1952 elections that swept in Dwight Eisenhower as President and a Republican dominant, territorial Senate and House—but an election that also saw the Democratic Delegate to Congress, Bartlett, incredibly, surviving by beating the highly favored, Alaskan aviator Republican Bob Reeves.

In 1953, Collins was chosen as one of the ‘Grand Officers’ of the Pioneers of Alaska, serving with 12 other distinguished Alaskan Pioneers representing various regions of Alaska. Collins represented Fairbanks along with James Barrick and C. J. Woofes.

From November 8<sup>th</sup> 1955 to February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1956, E.B. Collins served as a delegate to

the Alaska Constitutional Convention (ACC) in Constitution Hall on the campus of the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. By this time, he was, at the age of 82, one of three surviving representatives of the First Territorial legislature. Collins served as Chair of the Committee on Direct Legislation, Amendment, and Revision and as a Member of the Committee of Rules—both considered to be important positions during the ACC deliberations. During a cold Fairbanks winter, Alaska’s State Constitution was designed by E.B. Collins and, of course, 54 other delegates. The ACC produced a document so well written that many believe it helped convince a skeptical US Congress that America’s far north residents could take care of their own matters as the 49<sup>th</sup> State of the United States. Collins was asked by his ACC colleagues to give an opening address at the Convention. A tearful Collins briefly spoke:

*“Bear with me just a moment. I realize that this has been a great emotional scene. It brings back in my mind the organization of the First Territorial Legislature. We met there, as the members of the Convention are meeting here today, to organize a first session of the Legislature forty three years ago; it brings back to my mind that there are only three surviving members of that legislative body—the Honorable Henry Roden of Juneau, the Honorable Charles E. Jones of Nome, and myself. In that legislature, we formed a friendship that was enduring, and in all those years, that friendship has become stronger and closer between the three of us. I can see here today that the association and friendship of those within this Convention is going to bind the personalities of each and every one of you... for the time when we finally enjoy Statehood for Alaska”.*

Following his service as a constitutional delegate, E.B. Collins retired and entered the Pioneers Home at Sitka in 1961; he later moved

to the Pioneers Home in Fairbanks in May, 1967 and died there in September, 28<sup>th</sup>, 1967 at the age of 94. He was buried in Birch Hill Cemetery in Fairbanks.

Ernest Bilbe Collins was a man of quiet energy and ability, who retained the respect and affection of Alaskans for more than 60 years of professional service to the Alaska Territory. Although a gold miner and attorney at heart, he served with distinction in both the Territorial House and Senate during crucial decision making times in Alaska’s sometimes turbulent but always dynamic history.

*Written by Thomas K. Bundtzen and Charles C. Hawley, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

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*John "Johnny" McGinn, date unknown; from the Fairbanks Daily News Miner.*

## **JOHN LAPPE 'JOHNNY' MCGINN (1871-1959)**

The 1955 Golden Days Edition of the Fairbanks Daily News Miner described John 'Johnny' McGinn as "*one of the smartest mining lawyers in the business*". McGinn was a perennial snow bird for more than 50 years, regularly commuting from his winter home in San Mateo, California and his summer office residence at the Nordale Hotel in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he conducted mining law, and explored mineral development opportunities in the Alaska Territory and Yukon, Canada.

John L. McGinn was born in Portland, Oregon on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1871 to Charles and Anna *nee Hill* McGinn, and was formally educated in law, earning an LL. B. from the University of Oregon (Eugene) in 1893. From 1894 to 1898, he formed a law partnership with his older brother, the former U.S. Senator Henry E. McGinn, who later served as a judge in the Fourth Judicial District in Oregon. John and brother Henry practiced law together for five years.

In 1898, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, John L. McGinn went to the Philippines with the Second Oregon Regiment and served his country with distinction during his 13 month tour, participating in twenty-two engagements and skirmishes. After his honorable discharge, he practiced law in the Philippines from June to November, 1899.

McGinn returned to Portland in January, 1900, and in the spring of that year, sailed to Nome, Alaska, participating in that gold rush. For a time, he prospected and mined gold on Saturday Creek near Nome. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1900, McGinn was appointed assistant United States District attorney in Nome. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1901, he was placed in charge of that office during the tenor of Judge James Wickersham, the Chief Presiding Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District. For a time, McGinn served the district in Dutch Harbor.

While in Nome, McGinn secured the conviction of a murderer named Hardy, the first man ever hanged in Nome, Alaska. He also prosecuted several individuals during the published riots of Nome.

McGinn resigned from Federal Service in February 1903, prospected and practiced in Nome until 1905. He quickly became identified with important litigation, including the corrupt Judge Noyes case, and was known as a formidable adversary in 'forensic combat'. According to one contemporary law review,

*"His evidence is presented with the skill and precision of a military commander and his arguments are strong, logical, and convincing. He always follows the course dictated by conscience and honor".*

McGinn married Elsa S. Searing in Nome on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1904 and then moved to Fairbanks in 1905. He fathered Laura Edith (Mrs. Thomas

Relly Smith) and John W. McGinn. Son John attended the University of Santa Clara in California while daughter Laura Edith studied medicine at Washington State University in Pullman.

Elsa Searing McGinn was the daughter of noted 19<sup>th</sup> Century American author and poet, Laura C. Redden Searing (1840-1923). Laura Redden lost her hearing at age 12 as a result of a bout with spinal meningitis, and was enrolled in 1855 by her family into the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Missouri. After leaving that institution in 1858, Laura Redden published poems and articles in numerous outlets, including the St. Louis Republican, Harpers Magazine, the New York Times, and New York Sun under the penname *Howard Glyndon*. She studied and published in Spanish, French, German, and Italian as well as in English. Her 1862 book, *Notable Men*, a collection of biographies of Members of Congress before the Civil War, was a well-used reference of the day. During the Civil War, it was said that her book of poems *Idylls of Battle*, was carried onto the battlefield by Union soldiers. Laura published short accounts on Civil War battles during the conflict, and was so well respected for accuracy that she became personal friends of Generals U.S. Grant and W.S. Garfield, (later Samuel Clemens), and the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. After the War, Laura briefly studied under Alexander Graham Bell in 1870 and continued to publish poetry (i.e., *Sounds of Secret Chambers* in 1873), traveled to Cuba, the American West and New Orleans, and eventually married to a prominent New York lawyer, Edward Searing in 1876, with whom, she had one daughter, Elsa. But Laura divorced Edward in 1889, and the family was left destitute. After her daughter Elsa married John McGinn (her second marriage), Laura Redden Searing moved to Fairbanks, and stayed with the McGinns in Alaska for a number of years, before moving to California with Elsa and

John, who eventually established a permanent, winter residence in San Mateo County.



19<sup>th</sup> Century American poet Laura C. Redden, circa 1871; from Ellis Library, University of Missouri.

John L. McGinn's legal practice in Fairbanks was primarily focused on mining and sometimes he actively engaged in mining himself. While in Fairbanks, McGinn quickly developed the reputation for being the best mining attorney in the then booming camp. He represented dozens of small to large operators in disputes ranging from claim jumping to claim consolidations, and in many regions of the Territory, including the Iditarod, Nome, Wiseman, Innoko, and Ruby districts, in addition to Fairbanks.

One relationship, however, that John McGinn would later regret was his close ties with Captain E.T. Barnette. The acknowledged father of Fairbanks and a true con man, Barnette chose John McGinn to be his legal council "*on all matters*" because he was widely regarded as

*“the sharpest lawyer in Alaska”*. E.T. Barnette also knew John’s older brother Henry, also a well regarded lawyer in Oregon, but not under such friendly circumstances—John’s brother Henry had prosecuted Barnette in the States more than 20 years earlier, which resulted in jail time for E.T.

Barnette owned the Fairbanks Banking Company in Fairbanks, where many gold miners kept their gold dust and paper transactions. The Fairbanks district had reached an all time gold production high in 1909 of about 460,000 ounces gold, but by 1910, gold production began to decline. Then Barnette bought the Washington-Alaska Bank from businessman Falcon Joslin during the summer of 1910, who was only too eager to sell, sensing that the camp would soon decline in gold output. In October, 1910, Barnette suddenly resigned as President of Washington-Alaska Bank and withdrew more an estimated \$700,000 from the bank and invested it in California and Mexico ventures. The bank then folded on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1911, and never opened it’s doors again. Small customers in Fairbanks lost more than \$1 million and larger investors lost more. After several attempts were made to recover funds, E.T. and his wife Isabelle skipped town on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1911 and never returned to Fairbanks. In November, 1911, E.T. Barnette was arrested in Los Angeles, California on charges of bank embezzlement, but after being released in bail, was never successfully prosecuted.

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1913, a group of angry female citizens, organized by a woman attorney, Aline Baskerville, staged a dramatic conflagration on the frozen banks of the Chena River at Cushman Street, where they burned three effigies representing John L. McGinn, John A. Clark (another lawyer), and the last simply labeled “Justice”. Hundreds of Fairbanksans turned out to cheer on the women’s vengeful event. But McGinn and

Clark were respected lawyers, and some thought the demonstration should not have defamed their names. In any event, the First Territorial Legislature did react quickly by enacting the Territorial Banking Act of 1913, which put all Alaska Banks under strict Territorial regulations.

McGinn’s association with E.T. Barnette did not end his mining and legal career in Alaska. After the 1913 conflagration, many friends came to McGinn’s aid, including Frank Manley, E.J. Ives, Thomas P. Aitken, Sam Bonnifield, and M.L. Sullivan—all reputable operators and influential men in the Interior Alaska mining scene. He also had the strong support of James Wickersham.

McGinn participated in the Chisana gold stampede in the northern Wrangell Mountains of 1914-16. Shortly afterwards, he, along with Frank G. Manley, E.J. Ives, and Jack Price, known as the ‘Big Four From Fairbanks’, bought the Silver King silver deposit near Mayo, Central Yukon Territory, Canada, from Alaska Mining Hall of Famer Thomas P. Aitken for \$500,000. McGinn’s share of the purchase was \$110,000. The Silver King was originally located by Harry McWhorter of Fairbanks in 1913, who sold out to Aitken and left for the Iditarod and Ruby districts in Alaska. During 1914 and 1915, Aitken successfully mined nearly 3,500 tons of ore averaging about 250 ounces/ ton silver and made a nice profit off the operation. The ‘Big Four’ did not encounter the success that Tom Aitken did at Silver King, and eventually abandoned their operation. However, the early success of the Silver King mine drew the attention of the mining world, including Livingstone Wernecke and the Treadwell Yukon Gold Company, originally from Juneau, Alaska. By the mid-1920s, what became known as the Keno Hill Mining district was destined to become one of the largest primary silver producers in Canada, and produced high grade silver-lead-zinc ores nearly

continuously until 1989. In 2006, a new company, Alexco Resources Corporation, acquired the Keno Hill Camp with the intention of mining the high grade silver lodes again, and have plans to explore the Silver King Mine.

McGinn's gold-mining activities were not confined just to Alaska. In 1916, he financed a 1,400 foot long drift into a buried placer paystreak on the Stanislaus River, near Sonora, Toulume County, California, with long-time Alaska partner E.J. Ives. Early reports had values of up to \$75/pan in gold at \$20.67/ounce, and McGinn and Ives did find a new gold-bearing channel not known to the California mining fraternity. The '*If I Can*' mine did produce gold for several years although not at the levels hoped for by the McGinn-Ives partnership.

During the 1920s, McGinn's trips to Alaska were somewhat infrequent. He focused on the development of oil and gas deposits near Bakersfield, California with long time friend and Alaska Mining colleague Frank G. Manley. McGinn operated the partnership under the name 'Manley and McGinn, Inc.', at Fellows, California. John also became a corporate attorney for a number of small oil and gas companies based in Bakersfield throughout the 1920s-1940s. His son, John McGinn Jr., worked in the California oil fields and eventually took over the Manley and McGinn, Inc. business.

One Alaska mining operation, where McGinn turned a good profit was the Mohawk hardrock gold mine on St. Patrick's Creek, a small tributary draining Ester Dome near Fairbanks. In 1930, McGinn teamed up with mine veteran Joe Henderson and a crew of about 25 to begin drifting on a large gold quartz vein. McGinn was convinced of the potential of the area in a October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1930 interview with the Fairbanks Daily News Miner:

*"I'm beginning to believe that Ester Dome in the Fairbanks district is one of the best mineralized zones in the world.....I think so well of it that I'm coming back to my old love, Alaska, because she offers some of the best opportunities in the world right now".*

McGinn's crews would mine the Mohawk on a small scale continuously until World War II. The Mohawk was known for years as the 'Henderson-McGinn' mine. Although not a large operation, the Mohawk was probably was the most successful mining venture that McGinn engaged in during his long years in Alaska.

In 1936, McGinn became very active in developing a dredge field on the Seward Peninsula. An April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936 account published in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner indicates that McGinn and Sam Godfrey, a well-known Fairbanks investor, secured capital from Tacoma and San Francisco sources to build a floating, bucketline dredge on Midnight Creek, a tributary of the Kougorok River. The gold dredge was producing gold by the end of the 1936 season.

McGinn maintained a home in San Mateo, California, but during the mining season was always in residence with other pioneers at the Nordale Hotel in Fairbanks. Because he was involved in several complex mining ventures in Alaska and oil and gas developments in California, it made a good deal of sense to split his time between Alaska and California. In addition to the need to raise mining investment funds from State-side sources, he would spend a considerable amount of time in San Francisco attending to Alaska legal cases before the Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mention must be made of John McGinn's wife, Elsa Searing McGinn (1880-1963), the daughter of poet Laura Redden (Searing). While McGinn became heavily involved with Alaska mine properties, California petroleum fields,

and his highly successful legal business, Elsa was engaged in her own busy career. After finally settling down with John and family in San Mateo in 1916, Elsa held many positions in the municipal life of California, and showed remarkable organizational and managerial skills. During her long career, Elsa was at one time or another the head of the San Mateo Police Department, the San Mateo Fire Department, the Chief Custodian of the San Mateo City Jail, and the Executive Officer of the San Mateo Health and Safety Department. She served for many years as the President of the San Mateo Woman's Club, the Vice President of the San Mateo Peace Officers Association, and was briefly Mayor of San Mateo. Elsa McGinn chaired the San Francisco Public Health Department beginning in 1924. Elsa co-founded the San Mateo (County) Philharmonic. During World War I, Elsa headed up the California State Council of Defense and Chaired the Liberty Loan and Bond program for California. During her long years of public service, Elsa McGinn helped established some of the first municipal parks in the San Francisco-San Mateo area. She served on the San Mateo County Planning Commission from 1931-1952. Elsa S. McGinn has been described as:

*“One of the brightest stars in California’s constellation of women”.*

John McGinn offered his own services to philanthropic efforts. He was a member of the Pioneers of Alaska, the V.F.W., and Elks, and considered without question one of Alaska’s leading mining pioneers. At the age of 87, John Labbe ‘Johnny’ McGinn died in San Mateo, California on November 3, 1959 after a brief illness.

*Written by Thomas K. Bundtzen, Charles C. Hawley, and Cristina R. Laird, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.*

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**Distinguished Alaskans Aid  
Foundation as '98ers**

The Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation was incorporated as an Alaskan non-profit corporation on April 27, 1997. The Foundation was organized exclusively for educational and charitable purposes, including donations to organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. On September 17, 2003, the IRS confirmed the 501(c)(3) status of AMHF, and further categorized the organization under codes 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(6).

The foundation is a non-membership corporation that depends on services provided by its officers and directors, others interested in Alaskan mining, and on donations and grants.

The Foundation is especially indebted to eighteen (18) persons who have each contributed \$1,000 to become 98ers, in honor of the first stampeders to Alaska in 1898 at Nome.

***The 98ers***

Dr. Earl Beistline	John Mulligan
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Douglas Colp	William Stroecker
Wendell Hammon Jr.	Dr. Robert H. Trent
Dr. Charles C. Hawley	Mitch Usibelli
Dr. Walter Johnson	Joe Usibelli, Sr.
Wallace McGregor	Dr. William Wood (d)
James Moody	Dr. Kenneth L. Zong

(d=deceased)

Most of the 98ers are recognizable as miners of national or international reputation. The late William R. Wood was President, Emeritus, of the University of Alaska. Dr. Wood suggested the organization of the Foundation. The late Elmer E. Rasmuson was an Alaska banker and benefactor, long interested in Alaska natural resource history. Dr. Walter Johnson's career was mainly in Native public health, but he knew many pioneer Alaskans. His own research has taken him to Sweden and Norway in search of the true story of the so-called "three Lucky Swedes" of fame at Nome.

The Foundation is seeking about ninety more 98ers, but it welcomes contributions at every level. For further information contact:

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