



AN UNLIKELY SECOND CAREER

Jim and Sue Manzella moved to Grayling, Alaska, an Athabascan village on the mighty Yukon River, in 2003.

“This ministry of serving people is a gift to us,” said Jim.

Although there is often reason for discouragement—such as a friend’s recent beating—they also see God at work. Like last July, when Jim baptized three new believers in the mile-wide Yukon.

“The banks of the Yukon were full of people observing the baptism,” Sue said. “Many asked me what was happening, and I answered, ‘This is how Jesus was baptized!’”

Jim gets excited just thinking about that baptism service. “I love everyone in Grayling, not because they are always lovable, but because of what Christ has done in *my* life.”

Both Jim and Sue are recovering alcoholics, so they know what many of their friends are going through. They also know what it’s like when Jesus takes them out of that addiction.



“I’ve been there,” said Jim. “But my life is changed now because of Jesus Christ!”

“People can’t believe that I was an alcoholic,” said Sue. “They just think I look like a sweet grandma. How could I have had that kind of a past, they wonder?” Jim and Sue came to faith in Christ later in life. Almost a decade ago, on Easter Sunday, they heard the gospel message in Oregon and Jim was “hit with lightning.” Sue followed at her own pace.



Jim helped net eels which migrate up the Yukon River every winter.

They went to Alaska that summer with a church team to help at Kokrine Hills Bible Camp and connected with InterAct missionary Russ Arnold (who’d started the camp). Then they met InterAct’s general

director, Gary Brumbelow, who challenged them to prepare for ministry by attending Bible school for one year.

“We were the Grandpa and Grandma of Ecola Bible college (on the Oregon coast) that year,” chuckled Sue. “I dragged my heels about going, but that year really helped my faith grow.”

The Manzellas are thankful for the foundational ministry of InterAct missionaries who previously served in Grayling, and they continue a needed ministry with children. Their home is known as a safe house for all.

Sue helped four people attend a Beauty for Ashes conference in Anchorage. She flew from Grayling to Shageluk to encourage two ladies to apply for the five-day meetings led by Native believers.

“One of the ladies roomed with me at the conference,” remarked Sue. “It was a wonderful time of fellowship, and God worked in our hearts through the speakers and small groups. Since then, one of the ladies has helped start support groups for women and children in her village.”

Recently, the chief honored the Manzellas with special tribal elder jackets after a village meeting. Jim was just leaving the tribal gathering, when he heard a whistle calling him back inside.



“Normally, white people aren’t given these jackets,” the chief told him, “but this is how we want to thank you for what you do in Grayling.”

Another friend, a traditional chief in the village, said, “The reason you’re so effective here, Jim, is that you deal with people no one else will.”

“It’s hard adjusting to a different culture,” said Sue. “It feels like we can’t change people. But we’re young Christians, and I think that’s why Jesus can use us—because we know we need Him to help us everyday.”