

Alaska State Legislature House of Representatives

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SPONSOR STATEMENT HB94

The naming of Chena Flood Channel Crossing Northbound Bridge #1364 as the Nellie Miller Bridge; and the Chena Flood Channel Crossing Southbound Bridge #1866 as the Con Miller Bridge.

Conrad "Con" and Nellie Miller were some of the early settlers of the City of North Pole, arriving there in 1950. Con joined the Navy after leaving home at the age of 15 and served in China from 1927 to 1931. He worked on the construction of the Hoover Dam after a brief stint as a sheriff and private investigator. He later re-enlisted in the Navy during World War II, serving in the South Pacific.

Nellie was one of 15 children raised in Idaho Springs, Colorado and married Con in 1938 at the age of 15. Like many of Alaska's early pioneers, Nellie and Con moved to Alaska in 1950 with \$1.40 in their pocket and seeking a new beginning for their small family.

Con and Nellie Miller built their first business, a clothing store, in Fairbanks and Con travelled to rural communities to sell his wares. When he travelled, he often donned a red crushed velvet Santa suit, part of the stock the couple brought north from a previous business. As they began to build their store in North Pole in 1952, a child of a customer from Northway asked Con if he was building a house for Santa Claus and the name stuck. The store became Santa Claus House.

Con and Nellie were known as Santa and Mrs. Claus and their family store brought worldwide attention to the City of North Pole, Alaska. The store has grown and evolved over time into the icon that stands today, including the 42-foot, 900 pound Santa Claus statue outside that entices visitors from around the globe to celebrate Christmas year-around.

Con was the longest serving mayor of North Pole, dedicating 19 years of leadership. In 1952 he carried the city's incorporation papers to Juneau. He also served as North Pole's postmaster and civil defense director for 20 years as well as serving as the fire chief. Nellie served on the local school board, as the postmistress and as the town's magistrate and marriage commissioner.

The Millers raised three children: sons, Terry and Mike; and daughter, Merry Christmas Miller. Their two sons served in both the Alaska State House and the Alaska State Senate and hold the distinction of being the only two siblings in the United States to have presided as Senate President. Terry Miller also served as Lt. Governor.

For their commitment to Alaska and their role in developing the City of North Pole, it is fitting that the Chena Flood Channel Bridges be named for these two distinguished Alaskans. The Northbound Bridge #1364 shall be known as the Nellie Miller Bridge and the Southbound Bridge #1866 shall be known as the Con Miller Bridge.