

Call Number: 02-00-108

Harrie Hughes' personal memorandums of Pioneers of Alaska Sick and Visiting Committee

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Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

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Series: Harrie Hughes Collection

Notes: original on 3-inch reels, master copy on CD.

The recording begins by Harrie saying that it's December 17th, 1961 and that this is a memorandum report of Pioneers of Alaska Sick and Visiting committee with Andrew Wicken as a chairman. Harrie and Andrew visited St. Joseph's Hospital and Harrie gives a report of how Mike Ursing is doing. They also visited several old-timers in their houses and give their news on the recording. Mentioned are: Frank Mussano and Johnny Ehrland [sp?]. Andrew Wicken will give his report on the visitings on Monday night.

The temperature was -51 below in the morning, and about -45 below when they went for the visits.

Summary of a report about Pioneer Park and Museum –project: In the beginning there were plenty of people who were interested in building the park and the museum to be both educational and entertaining and that would preserve the true history of Alaska. There are very few of the old stampedeers alive anymore, and many of the [Pioneers of Alaska members?] are 2nd or 3rd generation pioneers, “having to carry on the true history and the true life in this barren North.”

Over the last 30 years the people have tried to improve the city by establishing parks and flower gardens to make it more attractive. The city of Fairbanks created a number of parks including Griffin Park for the youngsters. The Midnight Sun ball games were invented. Majority of the people lived in the walking distance those days but the town has grown. Anchor Park was replaced by a power plant and garages. Then there was a park close to the river, but it turned into a willow and weed patch and was abandoned. [Talking about how other parks, such as the Week's Field, have all dwindled.]

Harrie talks about the land that is going to be the Pioneer Park and discusses the issues in obtaining it. They were afraid that it would be taken over by the city and

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eventually turned into a commercial area alongside with the other recreation areas. Harrie thinks that when the Pioneers is entitled to receive it, the State should hold the title to the land. House Resolution 18 that was passed concerned their wishes in regards to the park project. They had dozens of meetings, but they didn't ask City to be involved before "this point" because the City Officials lack interest and experience.

The state is preparing means to set up a board to operate the project. In order to receive grants, annuities and federal monies, they must meet certain standards and requirements. They have appealed to the state, the University and the members of Pioneers organization to form a board that would meet the regulations for governing such an organization.

The original plans were handed to Harrie, who was a committee man 3 years ago. He made himself a nuisance to lots of the officials because he wouldn't give up on his job. Harrie talks more about the mission of the Pioneer Park: to alleviate misconceptions about Alaska. It's going to have a museum, an auditorium, a place to install Alaska Railroad, the riverboats, and a zoo. The vegetation life of Alaska should be represented, history of military, transportation and communications. None of the parts of the early Alaska are exempt from the park. The pioneers are the source of information and facts that help create the park. They need input from the larger community and they see the Pioneer Park project benefiting all of Alaska. Pioneers of Alaska Grand Igloo voted in 1960 to set up a committee to investigate the possibility to build a Pioneer Branch Home in each of the thickly populated parts of Alaska. Igloo no. 4 appointed Harrie to work along that line. The Pioneer Park land could have a ranch home located on the premises where the Pioneers could be close to it. They could help to install it, to get the true history down and work with writers and educational organizations, and so on. The Pioneer Park location is good and close to the Airport and the University could use the equipment in educational way. Many other States have historical displays of their history. [Harrie talks about the historical museums he has seen.] Closing the talk. [Break in the recording.]

18:00 Frank Young Sr. is trying to recall history of the early day parks Fairbanks: The first park that was established in Fairbanks was built by the people on land that was provided by Judge Noyes. Judge Noyes' house was on old Illinois Street. The park was a large park near the place where Standard Oil Garage is now on Illinois Street. It's close to the little slough and close to where Golden Valley offices are now located. There was a ball field and a grandstand. Ball games and horse races used to take a place there. The next park was on Mrs. Branch's homestead "over there" where the Samson's Hardware is located. Berry's Trailer Court took all that

land and cleaned the little slough that runs there. There was a grandstand there and ball grounds and races there too.

The first City-sponsored park, or rather it was sponsored by the people of Fairbanks, was the Week's Field. It was originally cleared for the Graf Zeppelin to land there but it got into a disaster in the Arctic and never made it to Fairbanks. Week's Field was built by the people of Fairbanks and then the City took over and made a ball ground, race ground and an auto track to race Model-T Fords. That was in 1915. The next park was Griffin Park and there was the Anchor Park where the powerhouse was built. There was the Little League Park built for children. The City spent some money to build it and is maintaining it at present. Harrie thanks Frank. [Break in the recording.]

At 22:33 Harrie says it's January 9th, 1962 in Fairbanks, Alaska. The recording is about the Pioneer Park –project. Harrie says that that morning he picked up mimeographed copies of the summary reports of the Park Project. He arranged with Mr. Lee Link [sp?] from the architectural company to get 6 copies of the proposed sketch of the park. Then he arranged with Ted Loftus to pick up papers regarding the state's proposal to set up the project from Jack Linck. Then Harrie arranged a meeting with a State Land officer at Dr. [William Ransom] Wood's office at the University of Alaska to discuss the project and its problems with Dr. Wood in hopes that the University will play a part in the project. [Tanana-Yukon] Historical Society might not be able to legally serve in the board since they haven't yet submitted their incorporation papers.

Dr. Wood indicated his interest in the project. Joseph Lawler [Sp?] from the State Land Office talked about the ideas presented previously in his office. Harrie left Dr. Wood the summary reports and information of the legal process and they also tried to impress him with the necessity of speeding up. The pioneers are passing on so fast that much of the true history will be lost as well as lots of the items. Dr. Wood says he's planning a large museum as a part of the Campus. Harrie says Dr. Wood hadn't realized the number of larger objects that were to be a part of the Pioneer Park project. In fact, the objects are so many that the Park grounds might not be big enough for everything.

About money: possible funders are Departments of Tourism, Agriculture and Education, different civic organizations, and outside of state sources of funding are possible too. Talking about money and donations from the military and from the railroad that should be saved. This is a summary of Harrie's meetings that took the whole day.

At 29:55 Harrie says that it's January 14th, 1962. The Pioneers Igloo no. 4, Sick and Visiting Committee visited the St. Joseph's Hospital with Andy Wicken, who is the chairman, and with Harrie Huges. They met Mr. Mohaimer [sp?], Chelan Thomas of Dawson [sp?], Axel Toloff, and Mr. Mickle [sp? Hickel?] who just became a veteran member of Igloo no. 4. Harrie talks about their health conditions. They also visited a number of non-members as well as nurses and sisters.

After leaving the hospital they visited Johnny Erland [sp?] in his house and Harrie gives an account of his health. They also visited Frank Mussano's house, but there were no lights and Harrie suspects he doesn't want to be disturbed. Lastly, they stopped by EdalenBenson [sp?], an old-timer character. Harrie remembers that they saw one more person in the hospital: John Perpataris who lives on 24-mile on the Richardson Highway. He was a woodcutter who came into the Interior in 1920s and is now 82 years old. He can't hear well, so Harrie wrote him little notes, asking if he needs anything. Harrie also asked if he knew Axel and the Singing Swede at the 17-mile and he said he did, and smiled. He was born in Greece and has several Greek friends in the area. [Break in the recording.]

At 34:05 Harrie reports that it's January 15th, 1962 and they had a regular meeting of Igloo no. 4 and Auxiliary no. 8 at Eagle's Hall. They had a short business meeting and the attendance wasn't very heavy. They did their customary report of all their projects and committees.

Harrie had had a meeting with the Kiwanis Club at the Travelers Inn. The club wanted to know more about the Pioneer Park and Museum –project and Igloo no. 4, with Adolph Stock, as a president, authorized Harrie to go and make the talk. Harrie presented the sketches and summary reports to the Kiwanis Club and they had a considerable discussion with 2 members of the City Council present. There were some objections to the Pioneer Park, such as the real estate interest and personal interest of three members of the Taku and West Gate –areas. Russ Simpson was the chairman of the guest committee of the Kiwanis. Harrie thinks it's a good organization made of good citizens. Councilman [Darrell] Brewington and Councilman Ted Robins asked questions. They felt that the Pioneers hadn't given them sufficient information on the project and Harrie tried to present the reasons why it was so, and thought that they would understand more of the project after reading the summary report. [Break in the recording.]

37:33 Harrie says it is January 18th, 1962 and he is going to give a memorandum report. He was invited to attend to a Borough study group, held in Sherman Noyes' [sp?] attorney's office on Steese Highway. Harrie and three other people appeared there and discussed Fairbanks Borough's study report and desirable changes. The

report was called Fairbanks –area Action Association and it was made up by a number of some 25-30 voluntary citizens who studied the bill. Harrie's opinion is that it was indicated by that law that some employed officials spent a great deal of time on it. Harrie didn't gain much knowledge on the subject and says that he couldn't make a sense of it without lots of study. He asked for a list of the people who have participated in the project and was promised to get it soon. He wants to study the people in it. Also, there is a petition for incorporation of an organized borough. Harrie reads the objectives on the petition, including: wish to provide to public health, prohibit conduct endangering public health, license and regulate dogs, auctions, transient merchants and so on. Among other things that Harrie reads aloud is that the borough wants to have power outside of the city.

Harrie believes that the influx of ambitious people is seriously retarding the country. When one can't go out and do for oneself without a paid or elected body standing over one, giving one directions, one decides to leave. Harrie has talked to thousands of people who have come to Alaska and will not tolerate dictatorial conditions. End of the report. [Break in the recording.]

[End of the recording.]