

Call number: 02-00-122

Harrie Hughes about Pioneer Park

Date and place: April 4th - , 1961

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Series: Harrie Hughes Collection

Notes: Original on 3-inch tape, master copy on CD

Harrie Hughes says it's April 4th, 1961. [Break in the recording.] The Pioneers of Alaska have set up a tape-recording program to preserve and perpetuate the true history of Alaska. They have made many recordings in past years. Harrie talks about working ceaselessly and without monetary compensation to preserve the true history of Alaska and their American way of life. [Break in the recording.]

[Tape begins again from the beginning. Then it continues:] The Pioneers want to set up new Park and Museum eventually in each area [of Alaska] so that new people coming here could learn some things of the past and things necessary for life in the area. Last year in May the Pioneers [of Igloo no. 4] voted to attempt to have a permanent location [for the Park]. They have analyzed different possibilities in Fairbanks area for the possible Park Project. They want to give the people of Alaska the benefit of tourist interest, and welfare of people. One doesn't have to be a member of the Pioneers to benefit and anyone who has lived in the area for 30 years and who is of good character is eligible to belong to a Pioneer organization [They didn't, however, allow women or Native people in the Pioneers. Pioneer women established an auxiliary chapter].

They have located a 1,320 feet wide and 72 and 6,400 acres place at the Peger and Airport Road that would be suitable for the park. The project is between the [Chena] River and the Airport Road. It could have the Park and the Museum containing history of the railroads, the Eskimo, the sourdough, and some early Dawson history. They have applied to the US Government to get the land and have followed all the requirements of the Federal Land Office and applied for land in the name of the State and for the perpetual use of the Pioneers to create a tourist and development attraction that will give the new people some insight on

“our way of life.” The project is located into a residential development area. The value of the residential area would increase due to the park project.

At 7:25 Harrie says they'd like to inform the listeners about important developments. Pioneers of Alaska proposed a Park to preserve history. They selected a place from all the available areas in Fairbanks and made an application to the U.S. Reserve under the laws and rules of the Government for recreational uses. The 72 acres piece is suitable virgin land. The Pioneers of Alaska want to acquire the land as fast as possible to prevent the loss of historical objects. Harrie urges people to talk to people about the project and is sure they will come up with a good project for the benefit of Alaska. The local conditions and the local support is impossibility. Harrie hopes that this will clear some of the misconceptions that have circulated around in regards to the project. Harrie says his personal memorandum will not reflect opinions of the Pioneers of Alaska. [Break in the recording.]

At 11:12 Harrie says it's July 19th, 1962 in Fairbanks, Alaska. This tape is a greeting from a former Dawsonite Bill Sherwin and from Robert Sheldon who is from Skagway. Robert Sheldon will start the greeting for Yukon Order of Pioneers. Robert thanks Harrie and says it's a pleasure to visit Bill Sherwin who was born in Canada in 1878 and who came to Dawson as a young man. Bill is one of the senior pioneers and they have done lots of reminiscing about the old days. They are sorry they can't be in Dawson this year to celebrate the Discovery Day which they have both helped celebrate in years gone by. Harrie says the Discovery Day will be held August 17th-19th in Dawson City, Yukon Territory.

13:00 Harrie urges Bill to speak up. [Break in the recording.] W. R. Sherwin introduces himself and says he's from [unclear, Amber West?], Ontario and that he was born in Alisa Craig, which is north-west of London, Ontario. He was born August 13th, 1878 and he came to Dawson in 1898. He arrived there on June 29th, 1898 and stayed until June 20th, 1908 when he moved to Fairbanks.

Harrie asks what Bill did in Dawson. Bill says he used to work in the mines down in the holes but also hoisted in 2-3 places. He worked for the Bear Creek [?] Dredging Company which was known by the name Canadian-Klondike Mining Company. At the mouth of Bear Creek he worked for 3 years, drilling. He also worked for Charles Robertson at Gold Run and for a man whose name he has forgotten in 14 Eldorado. A woman's voice suggests that it was Z. A. Skaus [sp?] and Bill agrees that that was his name. Bill hoisted for him one summer.

Teddy Hecock [sp? Heycock? Possibly Heacock?] was long known in Dawson and Bill used to ride [bikes?] down some of the forks to Dawson [?]. They weren't doing their best but were trying to get a feeling of what they possibly might be able to do. That was before he won the Championship of Yukon Territory, riding from Dawson to Grand Forks on a bicycle. Then he won a \$50 dollar silver cup the same day, riding from the Forge [Forks?] up to 36 Above Bonanza and return. The Championship price was a \$50 dollar gold watch and it was nickel-work. Harrie says Mrs. Sherwin showed him the watch. Bill talks about other medals and cups he has won.

At 16:43 Harrie says that Bill Sherwin will continue his story about his early life in Dawson. Bill tells that they were coming down the river from Whitehorse. They came to the last bend in the Yukon River above Dawson, which is about 7 miles above Dawson, and as they came down the curve it looked like there was a large, white sheet spread over Dawson Flats. They got down and found out what it was: tents packed in so tight that the guy-rope of a tent went between guy-ropes of other tents to the base of the tent next to it. That was the day when Bill landed to Dawson. Four days later it was July 3rd and all of the sudden somebody up in the hill fired a gun, presumably a rifle. About 15 seconds after that another gun went off, then another and another. Then the dogs started to run towards the Saint Mary's hospital but couldn't go any further so they turned back and galloped, swimming out into the Klondike. Then they turned back towards St, Mary's. It was funny.

Harrie asks what caused the shooting. Bill says it was 4th of July and there were so many Americans, 10-15 per one Canadian, because they had all got the word from the coast and knew about the gold long before the people in Ontario heard about it. After the winter was over, Bill had decided to go up North.

At 20:24 Harrie asks what kind of a greeting Bill would like to extend to the Yukon Order of Pioneers. He says he'd like to extend a greeting to them even though he didn't belong to them. He belongs to the Pioneers of Alaska in Fairbanks and has a life membership. [Break in the recording.] Bill says he'd like to come to the celebrations but that he's not in a good physical shape. Frank Young, whom Bill used to know as a young fellow in Dawson offered to bring him up but Bill didn't feel like he could due to a bicycle accident that hurt his back 10 years ago. [He gives his address.] He'd like to welcome any visitors from Dawson. Harrie says he'll terminate the tape. [Break in the recording.]

At 23:23 the recording resumes. Harrie says he's with Billy Boucher who's another Dawson –area stamper who is in Fairbanks for a trip. He can tell highlights on the Bicycle-Bill story. He says his name is W. H. Gilcher [Is Harrie talking to Billy Boucher or Bill Gilcher? This portion is confusing] and he'll be 86 years old next month. He came to the country in 1898 and landed in Skagway the day of the big snow slide at sheep camp. The party he was going to go with was already at Sheep Camp. He came into the country with George Apple who used to run a sheet metal work in Juneau before moving to Dawson in 1897.

Billy arrived to Dawson in 30th of June, 1898 and worked for Guise and Apple whose shop was in the corner of Alley and King Streets and that was later moved to Second Avenue. Billy worked for them until 1904, after which Apple and Billy went to Fairbanks. They drove a horse. They arrived in Fairbanks in 13th of March, 1904 and Billy worked for Apple until they had a disagreement and Billy went to Dawson, bought an outfit, and has been off and on since 1904. He had a business in Fairbanks that he quit the day of Pearl Harbor. He was in the Iditarod Stampede and used to have a lot of fun with Bill Sherwin whom he calls Marathon Bill.

Billy says he's been into the country ever since 1898 and this is his 62nd year. He suspects it's his last trip because he's getting old and tired. He sold his interest to Fairbanks last year but came back anyway. He's a pioneer of the Igloo and the last member of the Eagles [Lodge?]. Harrie asks if he belongs to YOP in Seattle but he says he doesn't. Billy says he doesn't know if he'll make it to Dawson this year but that he might go there early because he's interested in the way they are building the [unclear] and advertisements that he worked on as a sheet metal mechanic for George Apple and Guys. [Unclear.] He says he could tell a lot about Dawson.

27:43 Harrie asks if Billy remembers Bob Geiser [sp? Keiser?] and he laughs that he does. Geiser ran the union up there that they once had. They met once a week and had a little party. Geiser was used for entertainment. Now Billy doesn't know anybody from Dawson since Bill Strappy, who was the last one, passed away a few years back. Billy was up in Dawson in 1946 and Bill was alive then. Harrie asks if he knew Van Bibber the trapper. Billy says he was a big dog man. Harrie asks if he knew Joe Kanadis [sp?] who died last year, June 9th, but Billy says he didn't. He says there are very few "Ninetyeighters" in Dawson anymore. Harrie says that Teddy Loftus is still there and Mike [unclear], who was an early-day friend of Hajdukovich. Teddy Mc[Unclear] is still there who was with Katie Keiser who married [unclear] after that. Billy asks if Harrie knew Kirkward who had a [unclear] on 3rd Avenue but he was out at creek for a while. Harrie says there's a fellow

named Corwill and asks if Billy knew him. He says he does and that Corwill was in Fairbanks for quite a while. Harrie says he's past 90 [years old]. His son married Miss Pilgrim. Kirball was on Wendell Avenue which is at the mouth of the bridge and he is still living in Dawson.

29:57 Harrie asks if Billy was in Nenana in the early years. He says he was in Nenana from 1916 to 1923. Harrie says that's when they assembled the railroad headquarters. Billy was in Ruby and Iditarod too. He participated in quite a few stampedes. Then he moved from Nenana to Fairbanks and though he'd never move again but he sold the business and moved to California to take it easy.

Harrie asks what kind of a greeting he would like to send to Dawson. Billy says he enjoyed himself when he was there and can verify the dog story Bill told on the tape. Billy tells that they had 5 dogs they used in freighting from the summit to Lake Bennett. They were loose like the rest of the dogs and ran up and down the alley as fast as Billy has ever seen them move before. That was the 1st 4th of July. Billy thinks they had a celebration the year before but there were very few people then. Harrie thanks for the recording. Billy gives his address in Sacramento, California. Harrie says this is the end of the interview and thanks Billy. [Break in the recording.]

At 31:54 Harrie says that Frank Young Junior, who is another "ninetyeighter" from Dawson will give his little story on the tape. Frank says it's Frank P. Young and that he has enjoyed listening to the early day stories of Billy [William] Gilcher and Bill Sherwin whom he knew when he was a young man in the Klondike. He came into Klondike in June 1898 with his parents and stayed there until 1902 when they moved to Whitehorse. From Whitehorse they moved to Fairbanks where Frank has resided ever since. He's been to many stampedes around the country, such as Iditarod, [unclear], Ruby, Koyukuk, down in the Marshal, and in many places in Alaska. When he was a young man in Dawson, Bill Sherwin used to be a champion in bicycle riding. He started Frank in a bicycle race for children at the old administration field. There were about 50 starters but Frank won the race. That was over 50 years ago and Frank is glad that he was one of the old Dawsonites and went to school there. He goes back to Dawson every Discovery Day. In Fairbanks he visits Bill Sherwin occasionally and all the other old-time Dawsonites. He talked with Billy Gilcher just yesterday and reminisced. [Break in the recording.]

At 35:00 Harrie says it's July 2nd, 1962 and that this is Pioneers of Alaska, Igloo no. 4 tape recording. They have a funeral for an old-timer by the name of Tom Fellow. Harrie will let Frank Young tell what he knows about Tom. Frank tells that he knew Tom from different places in Alaska. They first met in Iditarod and then saw each other again in Ruby. Frank knows he's one of the real old-timers who came to the country as a young man of 20 or 21 years old and he lived to be 92 years old. Today, 11th of July in 1962 the Pioneers of Alaska did the last rites for Tom and there was a good turnout. Quite a lot of old-timers and other friends of his were there and it was conducted in a short and brief way. He had a nice burial. Frank says he'll give the recorder to Harrie now.

Harrie says Tom came to Alaska in 1917 or 1919 and he's a famous mining camp cook around the area. Harrie asks Billy to say something about Tom. Billy [?] says he's been to Iditarod and to Ophir with his horses. He met Tom on 4th of July Creek in [unclear]. He never work with him because he drank 110-proof milk and he liked to gamble. Harrie asks if he ran a dog team and Tom says they had horses. Harrie Hughes says he's going to play the recording back. [Break in the recording.]

At 37:42 unclear discussion starts. Somebody is still alive, an old lady. Billy talks about how he went to Nordale Hotel that night and the boys told they are going to give him a room. [Unclear.] Then they rented him a room for \$200 dollars a month. [Unclear, the rent went up to \$500?] Harrie says he put the cots down at Nordale for old-timers and that Mr. Nordale let him do that. [Billie says something unclear.] Harrie asks how many nights they played cards "there" when Billie first got that. Billie says it was many times. Harrie says it was every night and when they got through, nobody was ahead. [Billie says something unclear.] Harrie says that during the war when there used to be a shortage of room in the Hotels and when he worked, he would call some hotels to see if there were extra room so if they didn't, he could send people elsewhere. [Billy says something unclear.] Harrie says that another thing happened after he left the hotel and bought the property where he is now, Harrie [?] used to work in a place called Rendezvous. [Billy says something unclear.] He's 78 now and his birthday is in 12th of May. He was born in Macedonia, on the Mediterranean. [Unclear talking about the location]. He'd like to go home for a trip but not to stay. Harrie urges him to go now before he dies. [Unclear talking.] [Break in the recording.] Harrie says that that was a visit by Bill Cinnatic [sp?] and Frank Young at Harrie's home.

[End of the recording.]