

Call number: 02-00-124 SIDE B

Pioneers of Alaska Grand Igloo Convention in Anchorage, Alaska.

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Series: Harrie Hughes Collection

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

The recording begins with music. At 9:11 somebody [later identified as Bill Cashen] says he's talking with somebody and wants Harrie Hughes to meet Carl Erickson who danced at his mother and father's wedding in Douglas, at Almond's Hall, in 1901. He's playing trombone with the band from Ketchikan and it's been the highlight of Cashen's trip to see him.

Harrie [?] says there is a recording of Ketchikan band which has 9 members. They are at Elk's Hall for the Pioneer convention.

At 10:45 music continues and at 17:04 somebody says he'll tell Harrie [?] all about Alaska. Harrie wants to know his name first and he says it's [unclear]. He's [unclear]. He's looking for oil and if one would ask what his intentions are for Alaska, he'd say it's far too big [unclear]. [Unclear talking.] [Break in the recording.]

[Recording resumes with better quality.] Harrie and the interviewee are talking about planes: Harrie asks what his impression was on airplanes. He says his impression was that the pilots were [unclear] people. They have difficult jobs. "We" [His company] have 18 geologists in the field. They take off in the morning and sometimes the helicopter picks them up in the valley. The helicopter pilots have to find them and that's interesting. The speaker thinks it's an unbearable strain on the helicopter pilot to look for the people because they are the lifeline between the man and the camp. The speaker talks about tents and how he once

hitch-hiked 1200 miles to [unclear]. [The recording fades out during Harrie's next question.] [Break in the recording.]

19:52 Harrie Hughes reads out the list of the Delegates for 1961 Pioneers of Alaska Grand Igloo Convention: Sig Wold, George Bojanich, Collin McDonald, Jim [James] McDonald, Stanley Oldziesky, Andrew Wicken, Harrie Hughes, Paul Greimann, Jack Crook, Harrie Avakoff, Ted Loftus, Frank Chapados, Edby Davis, A. E. "Andy" Anderson, Robert Sheldon, Tom Jones, Henry Brockman, Otto Geist, Bill Cashen, Martin Victor. Someone says that Robert Sheldon is working hard in his job [as a delegate]. Another person says that Paul Greimann is Paul Greimann, Sr. because there is a junior too who is a member of the Igloo. [Break in the recording.]

Harrie says he's in a meeting with Bobby Sheldon's Committee on Pioneers of Anchorage. Present are: President Forbes Baker, Bobby Sheldon, Frank Young and Paul Greimann, Andrew Wicken and Harrie Hughes. [Break in the recording.]

Harrie says it's September 20th[1961] [Break in the recording.]

At 21: 41 Harrie says it's Saturday, September 23rd in Fairbanks, Alaska and he has a long-time friend who is a member of the Pioneers of Alaska, Jack Corbett [sp? Couldn't find him from the record]. Harrie wants to record Jack's history for the pioneer record. Jack says his full name is Jean Etton [Etienne?] Corbe. He's born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1892. He learned electrician's job when he was 17 years old and has worked in the electrical business ever since. He started to travel and do outside work for contractors when he was 19 years old and became a journeyman. Then in 1918 he went into Army, got out in 1919 and then he started working for the Rock Island Railroad. From there he went to the West Coast, to Los Angeles where he stayed for 3 years and from there he went to Seattle in 1924 until in 1929 his boss told that he has no more work around Washington but that Alaska would be a possibility. The boss asked if Jack would like to go to Alaska and Jack thought it was nothing but icebergs and glaciers. His boss told that there was green grass up there.

The first job he got was in Skagway, the next year he went to Juneau and then on to Fairbanks. He worked on the Courthouse and on the big post office building and the next year he worked on the new Fairbanks High School. Then he went mining on the Circle District but that flopped. From there he went back to Fairbanks to electrical business and has been in electrical business until he retired 3 years ago.

At 24:07 Harrie asks what Jack thinks about Alaska. Jack thinks Alaska has been very good to him and that he has made good in Alaska and that young people from Lower-48 should come to Alaska since it's a pioneer country and there is a lot to be done.

Then Harrie asks about fishing to which Jack tells that one could go to any of the creeks and catch their limit in half-an-hour. That time they didn't have official limits so they took enough home to feed their families and friends. They didn't waste any fish. Today it's hard to find any fish anywhere. There used to be thousands and thousands of caribou on the Steese Highway but today one can hardly see one. The game commission says they are increasing but Jack doesn't think so. Jack says there will be a time when people have to stop shooting the animals or they won't have any. He can't understand why they make a bear a game animal since they are one of the most destructive game animals in Alaska. If it was up to Jack, he'd shoot them and leave them there.

Harrie asks Jack to tell about his gear when he goes fishing. Jack tells he takes his poles, a few sandwiches for lunch and a couple of bottles of beer. He catches his fish and has his fun; sometimes he stays for the night or 3 nights and goes home with fish. Harrie wants to know if he could do that anywhere else in his life and Jack says he could do that back in Minnesota in the early days. Now he's heard that it is fished out. West Coast used to be good up to about 1925 and 1926 but after that it's hard to catch any fish. They used to catch salmon in Valdez and down at Chitina. Now things have changed: Laws prevent one from taking the fish they need to preserve for winter use and it's hard to get them anyway so it makes no difference.

27:21 Harrie asks about Jack's plan to retire and go to States and wants to know why. Jack tells that he is going to retire and go to lower states because he broke his back about 21 years ago, which has affected his foot so it can't stand the cold weather like it used to. The doctors told him to go to a warmer climate. Otherwise he'd stay and be buried at Birch Hill. Her wife is buried at Birch Hill, and Jack's wish is to be buried next to her and the pioneers. Harrie says they have too little information on too many members and that it's a hardship for the organization to contact the heirs and the relatives and the interested people. Jack says there will be enough money provided for burial purposes so that the Pioneers wouldn't be out of anything. There are many pioneers who are now interested in burial politics because they couldn't possibly get enough money to bury all the people who they have had in past 2 or 3 years.

Jack says that next week he's going to States to settle his wife's estate. It may take a year or so and he'll be making trips to Alaska as long as he's alive. Harrie asks who is going to go on the trip with him. Jack tells that his sister from Seattle is in Fairbanks and that it'll be her first trip on the highway. This will be Jack's 7th time so he knows where to stop and what to find. His sister's name is Carolyn Patrassic [sp?]. Her husband is a plumber and also wants to make the trip to Fairbanks by Alaska Highway. Jack thinks that when the Alaska railroad will be paved it'll be the biggest tourist run in North America.

Harrie asks if Jack has other relations alive that he'd like to mention. Jack tells that he has a sister in Seattle, whose name is Francis and he has two brothers and one sister in St. Paul, Minnesota. Harrie says he's recording for Igloo no. 4, Pioneers of Alaska and that he wants to wish Jack best of everything. Closing the interview. [Break in the recording.]

At 31:06 Harrie says it's September 26th and they left Fairbanks in the morning. It's Andy Wicken, Frank Young and Dahlia Young on their way to the Pioneer Convention in Anchorage, Alaska. They are in Richardson Roadhouse, with Mrs. Adriana Coyle. Frank says that things are good so far. [Break in the recording.]

Harrie says they are having coffee at the roadhouse and that they'll be on their way in few minutes. Now he says the time is 8:54 and they are leaving the

roadhouse. Mrs. Adriana Coyle is feeling blue for not being able to make the trip but Harrie told they'll stop by on their way back to Fairbanks.

Now Frank [?] says they are on Tenderfoot Creek that falls into the Tanana. The road crosses the creek, there's an old boiler house left from the early days. In that location was the richest ground found on the Tenderfoot. The old-timer had to give up mining there because the river of the Tanana started coming there. It could still be a rich ground and it's just waiting for a day when the price of gold will be good and modern methods of mining might start to [Harrie cuts Frank off.] Harrie says that they are at mile 76 and will shut off the recording. [Break in the recording.]

Harrie says they are at Shaw Creek Bridge, overlooking the Tanana River and the scenery. Frank gives a report on weather. Harrie asks what he can tell about the Shaw Creek Roadhouse and Frank tells that the Shaw Creek Roadhouse was built in the early days of the old Valdez Trail by One-Eye'd Tony. Frank can't recall his last name – it's been too many years. That was about 1906 or 1907 when he built the roadhouse. Then Tony went insane and was taken to Fairbanks and then committed to Morningside in Portland, Oregon. In the days of Sheldon and Gibson and the men that drove stages from Fairbanks to Valdez, Shaw Creek Roadhouse was quite the stand-by. Harrie thanks Frank and talks about how, prior to having the steel bridge, they probably used piling and planking. [Break in the recording.]

Now Frank says they are passing the Old Sullivan Roadhouse that stood along the Tanana River on the Old Richardson Trail that went along in the very early days, around 82-miles. Harrie says the next place is a bridge at Burton Mary's old place and asks Frank to tell something about it. Frank says he doesn't know too much about that place but in the early days, Rick Wallen had the roadhouse down at the crossing. Right across the ferry there was a [unclear, type of a vessel] where cable stretched across and the current took the old [unclear] across. That was in the early days. Rika [Jacobson] Wallen is an old lady now but she's still located at the same roadhouse. She lives there yet. Harrie says that Burton Mary's old place has been abandoned and is for sale. They are taking over the Black Rapids Roadhouse on the road up to Summit.

Harrie says they are approaching the Big Delta Bridge and have passed Burton Mary's old roadhouse. The bridge has been repaired from being damaged "not too long ago". [Break in the recording.]

At 37:18 Harrie reports about a beautiful view of the early snow and the mountains on the Big Delta Bridge. Right there Harrie once saw a herd of buffalo. They used to hang around in the area. Harrie was going to see a fellow named Forbes who had a post-office at the Big Delta. There is quite a few people living along the road now. Haines Pipeline is mentioned.

Frank says that crossing the bridge brings back memories of the days when Frank and another old-timer stampeded onto Chisana –country. On their way back in the fall when the grub was low and the ground was all staked, the only thing left to do was to get out of there. They started off and ran into an Indian who sold them a boat. They got down the Tanana and below Tanana Crossing [Tanacross] they ran into some bad water and drift wood piles and they swamped the boat. They went to the Native Village where they stayed for 2-3 days and started on foot, following the Tanana. "Them days" there was no road like there is today. As a result of their journey they made it to Rika [Unclear's] place. She had a roadhouse not too far up river from where the bridge is located now. Rika rescued them and put them in a barn with hot water and some clean clothes and relieved the lice situation. She wouldn't take more money than lodging and food cost. That was the hospitality of an early-day Pioneer such as Rika. Rika is still alive and living in a same place although she has a new home near the old roadhouse. Many old-timers who are in the vicinity are still around to go to that part of the country where Rika is and they visit her.

Among the boys that were with Frank was Walter Fisher whom he met there. There was a fellow named Eugene Travor [sp?] that Frank also met in Chisana. That was a long, hard trip to do from Fairbanks. Harrie says Frank has about a minute. Frank says that was in about 1916 but is not too sure and it might have been in 1914.

[End of the recording.]