

Call number: 02-00-73

Trip from Anchorage to Fairbanks, Hughes' personal memorandums, Interview by Harry Hughes and Frank Young with Iru W. Purkeypile

10/2/1961 & 10/22/1961

Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

Series: Harrie Hughes Collection.

Date of summary's creation: 9/9/13 Notes: Original on 7 inch reel, master copy on CD.

Harrie Hughes' voice says this is second side of the tape and Mr. Purkeypile will continue his story [about gold mining at Nome, and Frank Young will question him. Frank Young asks what Mr. Purkeypile means when he speaks about 3rd and 4th Beach. Mr. Purkeypile explains that long ago the Bering Sea was at the 1st beach instead of being at the present beach. It concentrated the pay streak there. As the sea receded, it concentrated the third beach, which was the richest beach and probably one of the richest pay streaks in the world. Most of the gold should have been found from the 3rd Beach. Then there is the Intermittent Beach which was not nearly as rich as the 3rd Beach, about a mile closer to the sea than the 3rd Beach. There is the 2nd Beach. All these beaches were formed when the sea receded, each probably taking thousands of years to form. On the second beach was the first inland beach find. It was a ½ mile back from the present beach. Then there was the Submarine Beach which was only a ¼ mile back from the present beach and it was much deeper than the others but not big portions were made on it. It's called Submarine Beach because it's way below the present beach. Then the present beach, which started the gold rush to Nome, was worked out earlier even before Mr. Purkeypile arrived. People could take out \$2,000 or \$3,000 dollars' worth of gold in just a tiny strip of a beach. It was hard work too because there was so much fine gold in it. They made riffles out of old gunny-sacks or woolen blankets. A bunch of the miners started prospecting on the upper beaches and found the second beach. It wasn't a rich beach and nobody ever found much on it.

At 04:51 Mr. Purkeypile wants to talk more about the 3rd Beach. They worked there all winter during 1904 and 1905 and finally discovered that the gold had been washed out by Snake River. Speaking about the 3rd Beach, it was easy to see why there was so much gold: action of the ocean had concentrated the gold more than a creek would. The waves going back and forth concentrated the gold on hard bedrock. Many fortunes were made on the 3rd Beach. After they got through prospecting at the 3rd Beach washed out by the river, Purkeypile was offered a business opportunity. He knew something about cooking, so he [un-named person] staked Purkeypile to start a café in Nome where they expected a big rush to come in. Purkeypile says he probably had the highest [unclear] in Nome, in fact he went out too big and before the summer was over, he was broke and the big rush that they expected never showed up. He went back to Salmon [River] and took a job there for a year.

At 7:46 Mr. Purkeypile tells that in summer of 1906 he went to Deering to work on the [unclear] mining company. He worked there for 2 weeks doing that [unclear]. Another fellow there said he would go

prospecting and Purkeypile decided to do that too. They knew they weren't too far from Candle, about 40 miles so they didn't even draw their pay but just got supplies from the cook and started across the country. They went across the Kugruk River (sp?) and down the river. There were two other old fellows in a wagon and they were staking claims on the river. They asked if they would like a ride to Candle and they took the offer. The fellow who was with Purkeypile was called Bill Willow. They got a job at Candle, shoveling in at Candle Creek, on one of the benches there. They worked there for 3 weeks and went down to Kiwalik (sp?) and after a while they went back to Candle to see if they could get another job there. Bill Willow got a job hauling coal from the coal mine that was at the Kugruk River. As it happened, they were there during the first election of delegates to Alaska. Frank Waskey was running and Thomas Cale. Mr. Purkeypile knew Wasky personally but didn't know Thomas Cale who was from Fairbanks. They [unclear] first gold in, in Candle. Talking about the railroad.

At 10:55 Harrie wants to direct discussion back to mining on the beaches of Nome. He wants to ask a question that might appear a bit foolish: where did all the gold come from? Mr. Purkeypile doesn't think it came from the ocean. They found from the place where they were mining, little stringers of quartz with gold in it. All the way from the Anvil Mountain to the beach, every once in a while there were little stringers on bedrock. The action of the waves, over all that time, was washing the stringers out and that's where the gold came from. It came from the Anvil Mountain and the Anvil Creek itself was a very rich creek, producing millions of dollars. In fact, there was \$2-3 million dollars coming out from just one creek at Jafet Lindeberg's claim. He was the one who first discovered gold. Of course they found it from the beach first, but Jafet Lindeberg, Lindblom and the one other. There were three of them. They were Laplander [reindeer] herders who had come from St. Michael, having heard gold being at the beach of Nome. They left the ranch to go to Nome and they happened to be the first ones there.

Mr. Purkeypile has heard stories of the first man who found gold from the beach [of Nome], but not much is heard of him. Then the Laplanders went to Nome in a hurry and started prospecting on the creek. They didn't have to go further than Anvil Creek. Further down on the flats, on the beach they found the first gold in 1898 or 1899. There wasn't another big strike after that. [Something unclear about the 3rd Beach.] Anvil Creek was very rich but there were two other creeks that were rich: Dexter Creek which was named after Dexter who was one of the first pioneers there and then there was Glacier Creek. Dexter Creek ran into the Nome River and Glacier Creek ran into the Snake River. Neither one of them were as rich as the Anvil Creek although both were rich and none of them were as rich as the 3rd Beach. [Unclear, quiet recording.]

At 15:18 Harrie asks if Mr. Purkeypile remembers the Native Village. When he first came to Nome, there was not many native peoples there and the nearest village was at Shinroff [sp? Sinrock?] but the Natives came to Nome to sell their wares, skin and ivory. They were pure Eskimo. Harrie asks if Mr. Purkeypile was there during the high water, or the flood. He remembers when the water washed out quite a few buildings on Front Street. This was the seaside. They would [unclear] them up again and then the fire came along. There were two or three fires: One was in 1905 that got one side of Front Street and burned the restaurant Mr. Purkeypile used to own. The big fire was in 1934. Purkeypile had just been there, attending a school of the teachers there in Nome. When they got back home they heard that Nome was wiped out. A big breeze came along and swept the town [feeding the fire]. Harrie asks about his life as a

teacher. Mr. Purkeypile tells that shortly after he married his wife and him and Harry Hughes interrupts and asks her full name. Her name is Sarah E. Whitehead. They met in Cantwell and married in 1919 in Nome. After they married, they went Outside and spent there quite a few years. Before that, Mr. Purkeypile had sold his quartz mine for a large sum of money. At the end of the year they refused to make any more payments and Mr. Purkeypile was left "high and dry" with a family started. He had to go work at the Navy Yard there, and in different places. When they came back, he was going to open the quartz mine again and he had a job there with the Kiwalik Mining Company as a master mechanic. They stayed there for 3 years. His wife got the postmastership.

Before they left Seattle, they had put in applications to become school teachers in Alaska Bureau of Education and fellow by the name of [unclear] was there. The second time they went visiting, they had these two babies with them. He [the fellow from ABE] said they couldn't send them with those babies so the Purkeypiles thought that the deal fell off. In fact, he had a job [opening] at a village in Kuskokwim and was ready to send the Purkeypiles there [but didn't]. They went back to Cantwell and stayed there from 1925 to 1928. They had forgotten all about the application until the superintendent of schools George Morlander (sp?) made a trip to Cantwell and asked them if they wanted to teach. He told that he had one school opening but he can't get any teachers to go up there. It was one of the hardest schools, and one of the largest, and it was in Point Barrow. He said that he would move them into another school after one year, and Purkeypiles agreed.

21:27 They left in the fall. [Unclear, quiet] moved everything through Kotzebue, Kobuk Lake, Selawik [?] Lake. The Selawik Village itself is situated about 12 miles from the mouth of the river. They stayed there and the Eskimos gave them a good reception. Harrie asks if he remembers any names of the school teachers up there, and asks if Purkeypylie knew Mrs. Brown. She is Howard Brown's mother and Howard is a sheet metal worker. Mr. Purkeypile says he doesn't know Howard Brown too well, but would know him if he saw Howard. Howard was an officer of an Igloo for a while before moving to Nome and coming back. Frank says his mother taught a school in Nome in 1920s. Purkeypile says he knew several Browns in Nome. [Long break in the recording.]

At 23:50 Harrie says it is reel no. 4 and they are just below the Black Rapids Roadhouse on their trip from Pioneer Convention in Anchorage and back to Fairbanks. The road is dry and they are almost down onto the Stanley Flats but not quite. Frank says they are down on the Donnelly Flats and Harrie made a mistake but they will be going up Donnelly Dome in just a short time. They are going to move onto their next location and Andy [Wickens] doesn't want to say anything to the tape.

They just passed the Donnelly Road Roadhouse and they passed a buffalo and tried to take a picture of it. They are at a Donnelly Pass where they met a cow moose with two calves. Harrie took a couple of telephotos. Dahlia Young will describe what she sees looking at the moose. She says they were probably 6 months old and that they were built like bulls with big neck and shoulders. Harrie [?] asks how long the calves stay with the mother and Dahlia tells they stay until the next spring when the mother slips away while they are asleep, leaving them on their own. Harrie asks where she learned all this and Dahlia tells that she doesn't remember but has heard these things from different hunters and trappers. Harrie

suggests that the old Natives might have told about these things to which Dahlia says it's possible, but she doesn't know.

At 26:48 Harrie says it's now 3:30 and they are passing through Delta Junction [break in the recording.] Around 27:30 the recording with Dahlia plays again from where Dahlia says having learned about the moose from various trappers and hunters.

At 29:16 Harrie says it's now 3:30 and they are passing through Delta Junction and they are 96 miles from Fairbanks according to Milepost. There has been no traffic on the road to speak of. They have seen a number of nice little campgrounds and on the latter part of their trip they had had good, overcast but dry weather. Now they move along to the [Unclear] Roadhouse about 72 miles from Fairbanks. They are visiting with Mrs. Adriana Coyle and her daughter. Harrie says that he brought Mrs. Adriana Coyle an envelope of the programs of the Pioneer Convention. [Harrie asks something unclear, quiet] to which Adriana replies by saying she probably will as time goes on. Maybe next time. [Unclear discussion.] Harrie says Jimmy McDonald and George [unclear] caught up with them and are "here," having a good time.

At 32:06 Harrie says they are 39 miles from home and they are passing the Aurora Lodge and now it's starting to rain a little. They have had a wonderful trip and have no complains. There used to be a chicken ranch at "this location" at 38 miles. They raised quite a few thousand chickens but now it's just an old ramshackle building. Montana Creek has a beaver dam and the pipeline crosses there. Now they are approaching a dike from years ago. On that location, they used to [unclear]. Harrie has been fishing there many times to get a [unclear] in few minutes. Now it's fished out and one is lucky if one gets enough to eat.

Somebody asks what Harrie remembers about the dike and he says that many years ago the waters of Tanana used to go through there and flood the country. It flooded the old town of Fairbanks them days. He went up Cushman Street to the Tanana River on a rowboat when it was flooded. That was about 35-40 years ago. They've been enjoying their trip and it's getting dark. It's 5:39 on October the 2nd, 1961 and they are less than 18 miles from home.

At 34:53 Harrie reports on having completed the trip and having delivered Frank Young and Andrew Wicken to their homes. Now he is in his car. October 2nd, 1961.

At 35:43 Harrie says that a law concerning the Pioneer Park of Alaska has been passed. He's reading from the law that says a piece of land in a central location in Fairbanks will be given to the Pioneers of Alaska Museum and Park. The paper was passed by the House on March the 7th, 1961 and by the Senate on April 1st, 1961. Harrie Hughes read it on the tape for Igloo no. 4's permanent record.

Personal memorandum: October 19th, 1961 Tanana-Yukon Historical Society met [unclear] recreation hall and they had a speaker, Dr. Herbert L. Heller of the [unclear] University in Anchorage, Alaska. He talked about the life of Lynn D. Smith, an early day jeweler and U.S. Marshal in the Fairbanks area. William Cashen of the Historical Society and the University recorded Dr. Heller's talk. There was a very good crowd at the meeting and the hall was full. Cashen ran early day pictures of Lynn Smith [unclear] on a

picture projector. He [Dr. Heller] is from Indiana and has been very active in historical organization and educational work in both Indiana and Alaska. He gave an excellent talk and encouraged the preservation and acquiring more knowledge and the protection of that residue data in a safe place. He said that the greatest loss to history is the historical society basements and flood. Knowledge has been lost after it's been accumulated through poor judgment, negligence and through acts of God.

At 40:44 Harrie tells that the Historical Society had a business session and Professor Kain [sp?] gave an excellent talk on composition of historical magazine or book that is being formed. Harrie states that this was his memorandum about attendance to the meeting.

In this recording snippet Harrie reports that House Bill 97 passed in Alaska Legislature of 1961. It establishes a tourist attraction development program, providing [unclear]. Harrie reads the law that says that a non-profit organization who wants to develop a tourist attraction may receive money from the state for the development of a project that is deemed worthy by the Commissioner of Commerce and the Director of Tourism. Available money will be divided by applicants. Then the law explains what kind of projects are eligible and the organizations responsible for development must also make reports on what was done. It was approved on April 18th, 1961.

44:58 Harrie Hughes says it's October the 22nd, 1961 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Frank Young and Harrie himself are at the house of Mr. Purkeypile at Hamilton Acres. It's Sunday afternoon and Mr. Purkeypile is going to talk about pioneer history. Mr. Purkeypile says that his name is Irus W. Purkeypile and he was born in Michigan on July 14th, 1883 and their family moved to Alaska about 3-4 years after he was born. His father farmed there for 6-7 years after which they moved to Seattle. That's where Mr. Purkeypile got his formal schooling. In 1904 he came to Alaska. He went to Salmon [River] first, and got a job there rather than going straight to Nome. Then towards the end of the summer of 1904 he went to Nome and there was big excitement on the 3rd beach. Purkeypile tried to get on it too. An old man who had just lost a son wanted Mr. Purkeypile to live with him and offered to stake him so he had lots of claims out there on the 1st Beach-line. The old man wanted a 50/50 deal. The first beach was pretty well started towards the end of the summer and there were camps as far as you could see on the 3rd Beach. His property was west of Anvil Creek and they found the hard way that the 3rd Beach-line didn't extend west of the creek. They were unlucky to have the claims there. They worked there for two winters and they realized that all the gold had been washed out by the Snake River. Other people made many fortunes. A man called Brown who made a discovery at the Little Creek and was called Little Creek Brown got \$1,000 dollar pans and when he got into the heart of the paystreak, on the clay-sand bedrock, there were places where there was ¼-inch of gold lying there on the bedrock.

[End of the recording.]