

Summary for H75-08

Ed H. Stroecker, Herman Webb, Jack Chisholm, and Arthur Lutro are interviewed by Al Bramstedt and Allan Walker in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1947

SIDE 1

E. H. Stroecker is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK on 1/21/47. Stroecker is a prominent banker in Fairbanks. His home in the States was San Francisco, CA. He was young and his mother thought it was a good idea for him to leave his home and travel to a different place. They left April 19, 1900. It took them 35 days to get to Dutch Harbor, encountering many storms and calms along the way. He stayed at Dutch Harbor for several days, since it was impossible to get up to Nome because of ice at that time. During a calm spell on the trip, E. H. and another guy dove off the ship and swam around in the Pacific.

Stroecker used to be a semi-professional ball-player, and once they saw him play in Dutch Harbor, they insisted he stay a few days to play ball with them. The harbor was full of ships of all kind, headed for Nome. Stocker's boat never made it to Nome, though.

When they sailed out, they followed the Peninsula and stopped at Port Moller and Herendeen Bay, where they saw some natives who lived in the cliffs, and lots of ducks, caribou, bear, and clams. They took in most all of the rivers in Bristol Bay, then went to Good News Bay, from there into the Kuskokwim, where they went as far as the Ik River. From there 3 of them went in a small boat to Bethel. They met Dr. Romig and the census collector at that time. Dr. Kilbuck, a Cherokee missionary with the Moravian church was going up to take census. They went with him in a Peterborough canoe 650 miles, to the Stony River and the Yellow River. Then they came back down, and got their own schooner, and went on down to Dutch Harbor and back to San Francisco.

Stroecker had a position as an accountant in the Hawaiian Islands that he passed up, since he had the Alaska fever now. He went into Valdez in the spring. He got caught on the Valdez glacier for 4 days, snowed in. He mined during the summer. When they got back to Valdez in the fall, his partner returned to the Outside.

Stroecker went to Slate Creek the second spring, and in the spring of 1903, after the big strike in the Nizina country, he went in with another fellow, Smith, and a couple horses. Another fellow staked them to go over to the headwaters of the White River. They packed over there all summer, he and 9 horses and Bob Falconson and 2 mules, until November. Five men wintered there that winter. They went back to Nizina in the spring, mined all summer, and in the fall, Stroecker packed over to the headwaters of the Sushanna River. Knowing the glaciers, the Skolai, the Frederika, and the Nizina, he then guided 14 people over to the headwaters. At the head of the river, they whipsawed lumber, built a boat, and went down the Sushanna River, arriving in Fairbanks on October 4. There were possibly 15, 000 people and 20,000 dogs in the town.

He dug a foundation in December for the California Saloon. After that he went to the creeks and got a job with Swiftwater Bill mining underground. Next he ran the water wagon for Jack Brisell, while he was on his "jamboree." Then he stampeded into the Kantishna and on his return to Fairbanks, R. A. Jackson was to survey the Chatanika River for Mr. Murphy, as in Murphy Ditch in Nome. He went out with them and stayed

until June. After this he went upriver with 2 guys and cut logs, and brought a raft 110 feet long of stove wood into Fairbanks. Ike Loomis, the superintendent for roads under Mr. Zugg, was starting to slash a winter road from here to Delta. Stroecker became the cook for them, then the packer with the horses until October 1.

Kinghorn and Loomis had the mail contract when Stroecker got back, and he was sent down to Tanana in a small boat with Fred Date. Before they got there they were froze in and had to sled part of the way. He kept at the mail run all that winter. After that he did various other things, including working for E. R. Peeples for 11 years, in the store where the Nordale Hotel is now. After he sold out, Mr. Wood got Stroecker to come work as a teller in the bank. In 6 months he'd become the cashier of the bank.

Stroecker gets great pleasure in going over what's happened in his past, and has hopes for the future. His children and all his interests are here, and he has no intention of ever leaving.

Herman Webb is interviewed by Al Bramstedt on 4/2/47 in Fairbanks, AK. Webb came from Tacoma, WA. His brother had been in AK, and came out to visit the folks. Webb followed him back to Valdez on Jan. 16, 1906. It took 16 days to get to Valdez; they ran into a storm off of Sitka and were held up for 9 days.

Bert Stevens, who was Fairbanks's Marshall at the time, was bringing eggs and 4 head of horses to Fairbanks. The horses died during the storm and the weather was so sever that they couldn't pitch them overboard so they had to wait until they got to Valdez. They were a pretty smelly outfit by the time they got in.

Webb stayed in Valdez for a while, freighting for Liddy and White, hauling freight from Valdez to Tonsina, where they were building a bridge. He hauled freight with a mule and a double-ender sledge. The trail was pretty rough in winter. In Thompson Pass, mules would bog down in the deep snow and going downhill they would dig deep ruts in the snow so that they would disappear, load and all. Thompson Pass was windy, too, particularly in Keystone Canyon. Wind would start whipping the sleds around and all the mules could do was to hold against it, so they would start going around in circles. One time the mule fell down and the wind slid the whole shebang, Webb, the sled, and the mule, down into the brush.

Webb's brother worked for the Marshall's office in Fairbanks, and he invited Webb to come to Fairbanks. Webb walked from Valdez to Paxson, where he ran into Bert Stevens. Stevens had gotten some more horses and eggs and was taking them to Fairbanks, so Webb came along as a camp cook. Webb got a job in April 1906 as a night guard at the Federal Jail.

The night guard job was largely a quiet one, although there were some jailbreaks from time to time. One time Webb sawed into a wall and found some saws and other tools the prisoners had cached there. The tools were being passed to the prisoners by one of the cooks.

Three of the best-known or most notorious prisoners at the Fairbanks Jail were Henderson (the Blue Parka Man), Tommy Thornton, and Vuco Perovich. Thornton wasn't so tough as he thought he was, and he got himself into trouble that way. He stole a horse over at the Twelvemile Roadhouse and was arrested for that. He was part of a jailbreak in which a man named Pete Peterson was badly cut up. Thornton got down river to a wood camp where he hid out. The woodcutters tipped off the Marshall's office

and George and Charlie Develuis? And Phil North went out to recapture Thornton. They found him in his tent, but didn't want to burst in for fear he had a gun. So George cut the tent open while Phil kept him covered. When they cut the tent open, they discovered Thornton was unarmed. He had tried to commit suicide by cutting his throat 3-4 times with a knife, but hadn't made a very good job of it and was still alive though bleeding. The officers bound him up and got him back to town, where he spent some time healing up in the hospital. Thornton was tried and convicted for attempted murder and got 15 years.

Henderson would put on a blue parka to disguise his face and hold up miners along the creeks. Henderson was caught after he tried taking a strongbox that weighed 150 pounds. Unable to run with the box after the shooting started, Henderson was captured and received 15 years for attempted murder. He was sent first to McNeill Island where he and some other prisoners tried to make a break for it, but the guards were tipped off. After that, Henderson was sent to Ft. Leavenworth, KS. There he broke out of jail in 1909-1910 and disappeared. He was never recaptured.

Webb talks about the fire of spring 1906. He was a guard in the jail at that time. The jail was an old log building on the same site as the jail is now (in 1947). Webb had been in bed about an hour when he was awakened by loud talk and shouting. Looking out the window, he could see the fire in the back of Brown's Jewelry Store. The fire burned that entire block clear down to Lacey St. and up to the Golden Gate Hotel, taking 4th Ave. with it. The fire jumped across, burning down the jail and the courthouse. Afterward, you could stand at the river and see clear back to the Golden Gate Hotel—there wasn't a building left standing.

People began clearing off the land and rebuilding right away. There was plenty of lumber and plenty of labor available. One could hear hammers and saw going day and night.

Webb joined the stampede to the Chandalar country. He paid \$150/each for 4 dogs and the fellow he bought them from threw in 2 other dogs. He took along a fellow named Percy Hunter for luck. He turned out to be more of an anchor than a help. They did not have any rich strikes in Chandalar. Chandalar needs development—a road from Beaver and a landing field at the same? Webb owns claims on Little Squaw Creek there.

Webb came out of the Chandalar in spring 1909 and went into the Koyukuk country with Ernest Median?, and a man named King, who had a freighting operation. He built the horse scow in Seattle, freighted all of the stuff across Lake LaBerge and lower LaBerge, then to Koyukuk station, then up to Koyukuk itself. Webb took the horses and 10 head of steers and went up the Dall River Trail, down just below where Hughes is now. The trip was supposed to take 10 days—it would up taking 24 days and they ran out of grub, the horses lost their shoes and their feet were pretty badly broken up by the time they reached Hughes.

Webb and company freighted all that summer on the Koyukuk River and then Webb went to Nome in the fall of 1909. He worked on dredges in Nome until 1917, when the U. S. entered WWI. Then he went to work in a shipyard in Tacoma, for 2 years, where he drove rivets.

In Jan. 1920, Webb and his partner built a garage out near Milton, WA, which they operated until 1935 when he returned to AK. The garage had a lot of business.

Webb, who was the mechanic, didn't feel that he did as well as his partner, though, who was the bookkeeper.

SIDE 2

John J. (Jack) Chisholm of Anchorage, AK is interviewed by his son-in-law, Allan Walker in Fairbanks, AK on 4/9/47.

Chisholm was raised in Seattle, WA. He arrived in Juneau in February 1894, and stayed there until 1897. He went to Skagway and then to Dyea to check the trails, in 1897, to take in a stock of goods for B. M. Behrens of Juneau. He decided to go over the Chilkoot Pass—he spent all winter of 1897 and spring of 1898 moving the goods over the pass. He currently works as a food distributor, mainly for WA businesses.

He worked for Martin Pinska for 5 years, while he was in Dawson. He came to Fairbanks in 1904 where he ran Pinska's Store (?) for a year. Then he went into business with Frank Hall in 1905, selling stationary and candy, etc. They had the first library in Fairbanks (?). Fairbanksans didn't have much ready money in 1904-1905—they bought goods and paid for them "on the finger"—that is, on credit with a promise to pay up after mining season.

In the fire of 1906, Chisholm was standing just across the street in front of his store, "sprinkling," when he saw the fire start and he gave the alarm. The N. C. Company had a good water pump. The priority for the firefighters was the save the N. C. Co. because that was their food supply. There wouldn't be another steamer up to resupply them for another month. Chisholm's store was destroyed in that fire.

The fire destroyed all the buildings on 1st and 2nd Ave. up to Lacey St. and up to the 3rd Ave. Hotel. It swept across almost the entire business district taking most warehouses and stores with it. It stopped at Sergeant and Pinska's store at 1st Ave. and Turner (the building got a little scorched but that was it). Pinska's store was at the same location since 1904. Chisholm swept floors in that store for a whole year.

Chisholm has been in practically every town in the territory during his travels. In 1904, a fellow put up cash to erect the first bridge across the Chena, in about the same general location the Cushman St. bridge is today. In 1947 they were talking about putting in a bridge at Wendell St.

By 1947, Fairbanks had more than doubled its population from its gold camp days. Chisholm says that people had more "real money" (gold) back then. Two-step Louis (Louis Schmidt) has just passed on. Chisholm comes up to Fairbanks 2-3 times a year. He also goes up to Nome. His daughter is Joanne Chisholm Walker.

Chisholm used to walk between Seward and Anchorage 2-3 times a year. Col. Ravell and Jack Chamberlain were mail carriers down there. Chisholm went on foot because he didn't have a dog team and he wasn't willing to pay anyone \$125 to take him over. So he put a pack on his back and hiked.

In Dawson in 1899 when he was working for B. M. Behrens, both Chisholm and a fellow named Ernie Admundsen each had a dog team. It took them 18 days to make the trip from Dawson to Skagway. Chisholm was due to leave for Skagway 2 weeks before with a party of men—Lynn Lelf, Mr. Clayson, and Mr. Olson—but he was delayed and they left without him. The fourth man in that party killed the other three men and didn't last long himself. He possibly was crazy. Chisholm doesn't remember the killer's name.

Chisholm estimates that there were 40,000 men , women, and children that went over the Chilkoot Pass.

Arthur Lutro is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK on 3/12/47. He is the president of the Fbks. Igloo of the Pioneers of AK. Lutro first came north July 4, 1900 from Tacoma, WA. That morning a streetcar had fallen through a trestle in Tacoma and a lot of people were injured. As a result all the hansom cabs were tied up. Lutro's mother was worried that they were going to miss their boat, but finally a cab turned up and took them down to the wharf.

At that time, Tacoma was the main port in WA and Seattle was just sort of a way station. They set sail on the City of Topeka. While they were going through Queen Charlotte sound, one of the stewards forgot to close all of the portholes in the dining room. The ship ran into heavy swells and the water leaked down from the dining room into the hold where it soaked the luggage. During the next bout of fine weather, the ship looked like a Chinese laundry with everyone's finery hanging up to dry.

Lutro's Uncle Olaf Lutro came to the Circle country in 1894. He returned to Norway in 1898 after he inherited the family farm. Lutro's father came to Dawson in 1897. Another of Lutro's uncle, Henry Lutro, came to Dawson in 1898. His maternal uncle, John Vik, came to Dawson in 1898 also. Uncle Tom Lutro came to Dawson in 1901.

Tom returned to Norway. Henry has a farm in Postville, WA. John Vik lives in Ruby, AK. Lutro is the only Lutro (with the name of Lutro) in AK in 1947.

The City of Topeka arrived in Skagway and took the White Pass Railroad as afar as it was completed. Then they took a boat to Whitehorse, and from there took another boat to Dawson, where Lutro's father met them. Lutro and his mother arrived in Dawson in 1900.

One of Lutro's earliest recollections was taking the stage from Dawson to Grand Forks. He picked up a rock thinking it was gold (it wasn't) and saw his first dance hall girl. Lutro feels that the children of Dawson were quite well behaved because parents supervised the kids more closely in 1900 than they do in 1947.

Dawson Amateur Athletic Association Pavilion (D3AA) was built in 1902-1903. It had a skating rink, a curling rink, and a swimming tank. It also hosted boxing matches. Lutro remembers having a great time as a kid in Dawson. Boxers he saw were Nick Burly, Joe Chewinsky, and Philadelphia Jack O'Brien. There were also traveling acting companies in Dawson. Marjorie Rambeau was one of the actresses.

There were two dancehalls in Dawson, the Floradora and the M & N. On Sundays, by law, none of the dance halls were allowed to serve drinks or conduct dances, so on Sunday nights they would pool their money and sponsor a vaudeville show at the Auditorium theater and the quality of the acts was quite good.

Lutro went Outside to finish school, then he farmed for a while in Mt. Vernon, WA. He returned to AK to Ruby in 1914. In 1918, during WWI, he joined the Army (Company B, 14th Infantry) and he was shipped outside. Company B is having its 28th annual reunion at Charlie Creamer's house in March 28, 1947.

Lutro currently works for the Alaska Road Commission. He has mining claims over in the Ruby district. He previously belonged to the Loyal Order of Moose in Ruby

and eventually became president of that chapter. There were 400 men in the Ruby chapter. At that time (1914), Ruby was a booming mining camp.