

Jack Corey
"Indian Hank" Henry Cropkin
Kay Hitchcock, et al.

conversational interview
by Neville Jacobs
Palmer Pioneer Home
September, 1974

This tape is a strange mixture of conversation taken in Kay Hitchcock's room at the Pioneer Home. Kay, a retired University of Alaska English teacher, has been ill and recently moved to the home. Kay has a friend, Jack Corey, who lives in an apartment in Palmer nearby. He was visiting Kay when I arrived. Kay planned to introduce me to some residents of the home to interview, but as we had once been good friends we took time to visit briefly. Jack Corey kept telling me I could not interview him, although, he said, he could tell stories day and night--but he had already promised his several grandchildren that they would have exclusive rights to his tales. These of course, they would write into a book someday. So he couldn't risk the chance of his material being published elsewhere.

Because he is a natural storyteller and couldn't stop, I simply brought the tape recorder in, set it up and let it run in spite of his admonishments. As I was setting up the machine, Hank Cropkin came in. Cropkin is from Juneau, works for the state to generate vocational and alcoholic re-hab programs. He works out of Palmer and came in to ask Kay to do so typing for him.. he saw the recorder beneath Kay's desk, so stayed to join the conversation.

About the middle of the reel, some people arrived from the states unexpectedly to see Kay. At that time I left.

The first man's voice is that of Hank Cropkin, part-Thlinget, talking with Corey about preparing fish, food, and life in the "good old days."

Hank had the boat, the Thee Deuces, out of Ketchikan. He tells how he could outrun the Coast Guard during Prohibition, running liquor into Alaska.

Jack was in jail in Juneau once, tells how he got there; conversation turns to work and life in Juneau.

Jack's father was a professor of mining at the University of Washington and with the Bureau of Mines; he sent students to Alaska to work in the summer. Jack came up first for summer work; finally in 1922 he came permanently to Anchorage and to Jonesville to work at the coal mine. He went on to Flat and Iditarod to prospect; he mined for Cinnabar; had a friend who ran a sternwheeler on the Kuskokwim--Danny Parent--and traded goods along the river. Describes cord wood rafts floating down the river taking wood to Bethel--family laundry flew over the raft.

Jack moved to Chickaloon near Jonesville finally and raised a family there. He says he blazed the trail that became the Glenn Highway.

Jack tells how Chickaloon the coal town was discovered and developed; he maintained the mines after they were closed.

Jack talks fast, but there are many brief statements relative personalities and events over many areas of Alaska which may fill gaps in some other research.

The tape ends with Kay talking to her friends who just arrived; these were childhood friends, and conversation reveals that Kay was raised by a "Father Draper" who took homeless children and created a traveling band^(orchestra) which was a self-sustaining "children's home." The man who arrived, (and his wife,) was one of Father Draper's blood sons with whom Kay was raised. The tape ends as they are excitedly reviewing a family album.