

Aug. 30, 1973

EL 1

George Beck was born Dec. 17, 1905 in Barnum, Minn. He came to Alaska in 1928. Has lived in Eagle since 1934.

Reel 1 opens with discussion between George Beck, interviewer Mike Dalton and Mrs. Adriana Coyle of Fairbanks. Talking about the boundary survey work...being done now by U.S. and Canadian crews. Kidding Mrs. Coyle about mistake she made in crocheting... she made it the day before while she sat in the roadhouse talking to various people coming and going. She ripped it all out and corrected the mistake (near beginning of piece).

George and Mrs. Coyle talk about Vince James' new house that he is building out of old roadhouse material. It was a customs house in 1907 when Mrs. Coyle went through Eagle. She talks about women being frisked for gold as they crossed the Yukon and Alaska border on sternwheelers. George said that as many as 12 customs men were stationed at Eagle during the heavy traffice (river) years. Jack Hillard was one of those customs men. Mentions Jim Barrack as Caterpillar agent in Fairbanks. Hillard's partner eventually became vice-president of Caterpillar.

Beck came to Eagle in the winter of 1934. Had been cutting wood at Ester. He brought a tractor on a boat to Coal Creek for Ernest Patty. Working with Patty were Eugene Moore, Chuck Herbert. Crew came into Eagle that winter and tore down the old gymnasium for lumber and took it to Patty's mining operation at Coal Creek. He worked first on the southern coast between Seward and Seldovia. Came north on the Steamer Yukon which sank in 1928 or 1929. Worked for three years there and then to Fairbanks when he got a job in the Kantishna for the Quigley outfit.

He tells about Johnny Lake, engineer, smart. Ended up in Central and died in cabin fire. George worked at Coal Creek quite awhile (Gen. McRay's enterprise with Ernest Patty the vice president). George met his wife in 1934 and was married in Eagle. Two sons were born. One boy was killed in a car accident; the other lives (this date) in Eagle Native village...deserted his family in Minnesota and came back to the Indian village. George split up with his wife in 1958 when she got to drinking too much, George said. He had been up north working for Wien when the Distant Early Warning (DEW Line) started. Switched over to that and stayed throughout construction. Then went to work for the operations contractor (Federal Electric). Worked at Barrow and Barter Island.