

November 17, 1993

Interviewer: Alvin Winston Rutledge, Jr.  
Kodiak Homesteader: Daniel Boone Reed

Winston Rutledge: This is Winston Rutledge of Kodiak, Alaska and I am talking with Daniel Boone Reed, a Kodiak homesteader. Today is November 17, 1993.

Were you born in Alaska?

Daniel Boone Reed: I was born at Keewaliak barge landing site for miners at Candle Creek.

W.R.: Where and what year were you born?

D.B.R.: Nineteen hundred and eight, December ninth.

A.W.R.: Tell us about your birth place.

D.B.R.: The birth place is Keewalik, there was a landing barge site at Candle Creek.

W.R.: How many people?

D.B.R.: There was, uh, I think five or six houses that accomodated the residents that took care of the barges and one thing and another at the landing site.

W.R.: Mainly native or white? Mainly native or white people?

D.B.R.: Those that were living there were Natives.

W.R.: Un Huh. What type of housing?

D.B.R.: There just uh flat boards.

W.R.: What did people do for a living?

D.B.R.: Uh, They, they took care of the landing site for the miners of Candle Creek?

W.R.: What made you decide to homestead on Kodiak?

D.B.R.: Uh, my folks moved to Iowa in 1920 and uh I uh left home when I was eighteen and I hadn't I was in the eleventh grade in high school and my mother died. My folks were all small children other than myself. There were seven of us altogether. And so to ease up pressure on my father I left home and went to Marshall town, got on a freight train to North Dakota to the wheat fields to do harvesting, and then to New York, and in New York I went to sea for a year and a half and then back to New York. I had a notion to ship out

on passenger ships that were going around the world, but I my last trip I stopped off at at San Diego and got discharged from the ship. I found myself in port where I joined the Army. Got in trouble. And married an Indian woman in 1929 and uh with smallpox she died in 1937. No, 1935. I went up to Canada to work for awhile and then got in trouble with the uh what do you call it--when you leave one country and go to another?

W.R.: Customs? Customs? Customs?

D.B.R. Customs, yea. I found myself back in Seattle and uh got a job coming up to Alaska and I've been here ever since. That was in 1937.

W.R.: Who else was on the homestead with you?

D.B.R.: I got into jail. One night drink--drunk--six months. Took me to Valdez. They took me to Valdez and uh, I figured there was something more involved than just putting me in jail. So I burned the jail down and found myself in prison. Uh, I was eight years in prison. Came back to Kodiak on my own instead of them putting me back. I came back on my own. And uh, McCarnigee says, "You need a job?" I said I sure do. And so he put me on a scow in Cook's Inlet and after fall season there, he said I got another job for you and uh I went out to West Point and worked for the man that owned the cannery, canning fish, and uh after the season he asked me if I wanted to winter watch. So I winter-watched for him for two years and in the summers was fishing. The last year I worked there, the cook, the regular cook was adopting a boy and she had to leave and there was another cook that came in and I got acquainted with her and uh she I talked her into staying the last two years of my work in the cannery as winter watchman, she stayed there with me. And come Spring, we decided to marry. And uh and that marriage ran into about thirty years. Uh, in nineteen fifty-five we went to the States to her son's graduation from West Point. And when we came back we decided to go into livestock. In 1952 to 1955 we were making arrangements with the territory to homestead and uh we took out a hundred and sixty acre homestead and then after I had gotten the hundred and sixty acres, Juneau said through the Native rights I could have another hundred and sixty if I wanted to and so I asked my wife if it's all right to get the hundred and sixty. She said, "Where would you go?" Well, I said I would go clear to the mountain top and start writing the different colleges and tell them I had a mountain top for astrological use. And she said, "Give me time to think it over." Six months afterward she said, "A hundred and sixty acres is enough to pay taxes on don't you think?" And uh so we didn't get the mountain top.

And uh, she was a tobacco smoker and tried quit and she did quit but in 1980 she started coughing blood and the doctors in town said she had lung cancer. In 1982, she died. And after she died well, I was old enough to be needing assistance myself so I moved into town. And moving into town I got acquainted with another

woman , married her (a Florida woman) and bought five acres and a mobil home and a car. My health was getting to where I had to have quite a bit of doctor's assistance and it was real expensive in Florida. Ever time you had to see a doctor it would be from 50 to 100 dollars. So I tried to figure out how to get back to Kodiak where I could have KANA to take care of me. And so I'm back here in Kodiak now but leaving Florida is a little hard to explain.

W.R.: How did you find out about homesteading on Kodiak Island?

D.B.R.: I didn't hear a word you said?

W.R.: How did you find out about homesteading on Kodiak Island?

D.B.R.: I had a friend--came over from Anchorage--and he was a Land Surveyor and he said it would do you people pretty good to take out a homestead if you intend to stay here the rest of your life. You might be able to have enough interest to keep both of you in your old age. And so, it took us a couple of years before we got the homestead and after we got the homestead Juneau said the native rights we could get another 160 acres and that's when my wife said, "A hundred and sixty acres is enough to pay taxes on.

W.R.: About how many homesteaders were on Kodiak at the time?

D.B.R.: I really tell you that ; you'd have to find out from the land office.

W.R.: What were the requirements for homesteading?

D.B.R. Homestead requirements were to have a home and a piece of land cultivated for a garden.

W.R.: How did you pick your site?

D.B.R.: Uh, we we were living in a tent at the place of the site. Years ago there was a fisherman that lived there and didn't use it any more. We were able to acquire it.

W. R.: Did it change at all from the beginning? Did it change at all from the beginning?

D.B.R.: The beginning was just a piece of land and small harbor. It was ideal for a fishing site. And then after my wife's son graduated we went to the states and bought livestock. And uh, after a bit of time there was quite a bit of excitement in acquiring the livestock. We went to every sale around Seattle and the whole state of Washington. We bought sheep in Oregon, goats, long-haired goats, donkeys, a dog, and uh two geeses and a gander and thirteen head of heifers and one bull. We were going to ship them up by Alaskan steam ship and we decided not to bring them. Next alternative was to fly them and there was a flying

outfit that had bought some planes from the army or the airforce and was using them to airfreight. And we put on 60 animals on that one plane and my wife flew up ahead of me to the Navy Base. The Commandant said, "You can't land them here, Rosie." And she said, "Well, it's too late; he's already in the air." And we landed at the Buskin River Airport and the Mission down here Baptist Mission accomodated us to leave them there for a week. By the time we got a barge to barge them out home. The wool on the sheep here was a losing proposition, because the cost of the wool in shipping is more than any settlement you receive in shearing the sheep and sending the wool out. It cost more to send the wool out than what you receive.

We got to writing around and there was the state of --a northeastern state, I forget which one it was but they had the wool yarn-making factory there. If you sent wool to them they would make the blankets for half the wool and that way you could get a little profit.

And then the mohair if it was longer than ten inches, they would make wigs out of them down in Texas. And they would give you from six dollars to prize long hair and long hair was twenty inches or over and for twenty inch long hair they would give you somewhere from twelve to fourteen dollars per pound. And we shipped one brought twenty-two dollars a pound. Mohair. So if you had mohair goats here on Kodiak Island where it was free of any dirt up in the hair, it paid to raise them. But to get the long hair it takes special care to; you'd have to braid their hair and you'd have to put it in a shock to keep from dragging it on the ground.

W.R.: What was a typical day like when you began the homestead?

D.B.R.: A typical day was waking up in the morning to see whether you had any livestock left. It was bear country. Once I got a letter from the outfit that was organized here the Livestock Growers Association invited me to come into one of their meetings and then I put the question up to them. I was in bear country and could I have any assistance. They said I was too far away and so I had to contend with the bear problem by myself.

W.R.: What were the communications like?

D.B.R.: The communication was radios...ham radio sets. And they are still using them as far as communications locally is concerned. The mail delvery was about once a week if flying was permissible.

W.R.: Who were your neighbors?

D.B.R.: When we lived out there after fishing season for about four or five years my wife and I were the only ones living there. Now there's quite a village.

W.R.: What were some of the personal changes for you when you moved back to town?

D.B.R.: My first experience coming back to town was a trying to overcome my eight years in prison. And that was one of the biggest handicaps of my life. Overcoming prison. In 1982, Governor broadcast worldwide that I was being restored to my civil rights. And still even with the restoration of my civil rights I still have problems now and then with it.

W.R.: Is your former homestead still privately owned?

D.B.R.: Our -- there are several people that owns it now. It was broken up into several sections and sold piecemeal.

W.R.: Thank you for sharing this information. It's been a pleasure learning about this history.

D.B.R.: I appreciate giving the information and if there's any problem in my bringing it to you, I am sorry for it. And I appreciate all the attention.

W.R.: Thanks.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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