

H97-175-16

Bobby Sheldon

Fairbanks, Alaska

June 23, 1960

An account of the shooting of Soapy Smith

Bobby Sheldon continues a talk about Soapy Smith. Soapy Smith was headed to the approach to the dock with a crowd behind him. The crowd stopped behind him. Bobby tried to get to the front of the crowd. He knew Soapy Smith and he knew Frank Reid. He wasn't sure wasn't going to happen. Soapy Smith put his rifle on his shoulder and aimed it at Frank Reid. Frank Reid grabbed the muzzle of the rifle with his left hand and tried to jerk it away from him. Bobby described the size of the bullets in the gun. Soapy Smith pulled the gun and shot Mr. Reid through his leg socket. It put Frank Reid to his knees but he still held the rifle away from him. At the same time Frank Reid grabbed his 38 revolver and shot three times. The photos of Soapy Smith's body show his injuries. Frank Reid was seriously injured. Bobby described the scene after the shooting and the way the men came running out of a warehouse. Frank Reid was taken to the hospital and all the doctors in Skagway worked on him. He stayed at the hospital for two weeks. Frank Reid wrote about the conversation between Soapy Smith and himself. Soapy Smith's body stayed on the street until four or five in the morning. No one dared touch him. No one showed any sympathy for the man. That was how intense the sentiment was in the town of Skagway. Finally the Presbyterian minister and two other people went to Cy Tanner. Cy Tanner was instrumental in keeping any further disgrace by the people of Skagway from happening. The rest of the Soapy Smith gang was rounded up. There were fifteen or sixteen of them. The gang was put aboard a Canadian steamer. The captain objected but he was told to take the people out and not to put them ashore in any Alaskan waters or the captain wouldn't be allowed to come back to Skagway. The three most notorious members of the gang were Old Daddy Tripp, Slim Jim and Bauers. Bobby Sheldon said there are two or three citizens that were left in Alaska still that were claimed to be supporters of Soapy Smith. Some of them were in business in other parts of Alaska. He ran into one of them in Anchorage. He saw another one at the hospital in Fairbanks. The sentiment against Soapy Smith was so strong that when they took his body up to the cemetery they didn't bury it in the cemetery they buried him outside the grounds. His marker was a wooden board with Jefferson R. Smith on it. When the tourists started coming to Alaska they were taken up to Soapy Smith's grave. Bobby Sheldon talked about the monument to Frank Reid. The tourists started chipping little shavings off of the Soapy Smith wooden grave marker. Mrs. Pullam would get groups of the tourists into her living room and tell the story about Soapy Smith. Bobby said she was capitalizing on the story. She gave the impression that Soapy Smith was a bit of a Robin Hood. Frank Reid had a large funeral in town. Everybody in town was at it. His monument states that he gave his life for the honor of Skagway.