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Ben Falls

Harrie Hughes, interviewer

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Fairbanks, Alaska

Ben Falls is 83 years old and still gold mining. The largest clean up he has ever done was about \$17,000. He didn't leave too much in the boxes for any length of time because it was risky especially in the fall when it was getting dark at night. If you didn't have a good dog to bark then you might lose your whole clean up. He usually didn't wait until it got too big. He talked about the hard pan. He uses a Hungarian riffle. He talked about some problems with gold mining. Harrie asked about magnetite and tin. Justus said they don't use any magnetic process to catch the gold. When he cleans the gold up he might use a magnet to pull out the iron. He flips a pan of gold to remove unwanted materials. He has shown other people this method. He has had a lot of antimony, iron and cinnabar in his gold. He said it is all heavy stuff. He burns off the cinnabar from the gold. The sulphite of iron will burn off, too.

Harrie asked about his mining in the Livengood area and wanted to know if he prospected on the hills for hard rock in addition to his placer mining. Ben said he does have some hard rock. He has found gold in the hard rock. Harrie asked what kind of geological formations he has in his area. Ben said he had white quartz and another ore that is like zinc ore. He talked about fissures that contain placer gold. Harrie asked if gold is found in chimney formations. Ben said yes that is what some of his outcroppings are. Harrie asked about the different places he has mined. Ben said he mined on Vault Creek. They didn't find any gold there. Harrie talked about the discoveries in that area in 1910-12. Ben talked about the problems mining on Treasure Creek. It was wet ground. Harrie asked about gold mining on Tenderfoot Creek. Ben said his brother went over to that area. His brother almost drowned coming back from Tenderfoot Creek in the spring. Dan McCarty's father made the strike up there. They also had a strike on Fairbanks Creek and in the Livengood area.

Harrie asked when Ben came into the area. Ben said he came into the area in the winter of 1902-1903. He had come over from the Koyukuk country and came overland. He came up the Tanana River and crossed over from Rampart. He had worked on a steamer out of Whitehorse and got off at Bettles. He had helped to build steamers and scows.

Harrie asked about Max Reddy. Ben said he didn't know him until he came to Fox. He had a store at Fox.

Ben describes where his property is located in the Livengood area. He talked about some of his mining activities. Harrie asked who else was mining in the area. Ben said Carl Parker mines on Olive Creek.

Harrie asked if he ever went to Nome Creek. Ben said yes he has been on Nome Creek. He was there in the summer of 1903. He stayed at Cap Anderson's cabin. Harrie talked about the dredge on Nome Creek. Ben talked about trying to buy a dredge from the NC Company. He still manages to mine with a bulldozer. Harrie asked about the costs of supplies and fuel for a year. Ben said you aren't running steady all year so it isn't a lot. Ben talked about how he bought his bulldozer. He started off by renting it with an option to buy it. He was able to buy the bulldozer and pay off his debt before thirty days. Ben

talked about George Preston who worked for the NC Company. Harrie asked him if he found anything on the Koyukuk. Ben said they found some flake gold.