

**02-00-114**

**George Gilbertson. Also, council comments**

**March 11, 1962**

**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen**

**Date of summary's creation: 10/24/13**

**Series: Harrie Hughes Collection**

**Notes: Original on 3-inch tape, master copy on CD.**

Harrie Hughes says that it's March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1962. Harrie and Frank Young are talking with George Gilbertson who owns the oldest roadhouse in the Fairbanks area that is still operating. It's on South Cushman Street. George starts telling that he arrived in Ketchikan in May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1924. [Unclear speaking.] He came to Fairbanks in 1934. [Break in the recording.] Harrie says they'll start all over again since the recording was "out of time."

Harrie says the introduction again. George is still waiting on the customers himself after all these years. He'll tell a little bit about himself. He tells again that he arrived in Ketchikan in May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1924 and worked there as a mechanic for that summer. From there he went to Juneau and took a position in Haines as a plumber. After that he returned to Juneau and worked for [unclear] Company and also for [unclear] who had a couple of dump trucks there. He went mining up at Windon Bay in 1932 with John Green and Goodman Jens who was Birdie Jens' father. They were prospecting there and in 1934 George came to Fairbanks. Since then he has prospected and mined at Gilmore, on Hill Creek and has been mining in the Chicken –area for 4 years as well as on Alder Creek near the Gulkana Glacier and now he's over on Boundary. He had to give up on Mosquito Fork because of a washout problem last year, but will be returning there this spring.

He was born in 1904, January 22<sup>nd</sup> in Minnesota, 96 miles out of Minneapolis. He left that place when he was 8 years old and moved to Montana from where he came to Alaska. He joined Igloo no. 4 in 1955 and is a lifetime member. Most of his summers are spent prospecting or mining. Prior to going to the Fortymile country, he bought a Pioneer Hotel that burned in 1952.

At 4:16 Harrie asks George to tell about some of the incidents that happened at the Pioneer Hotel. He says they had some great times there. If that place could

talk, they could have made several movies out of it. George says Alaskans need to get their resources going and if they don't, they are going to go downhill. Harrie asks about the history of the bar at the Pioneer Hotel. George tells that it went over the White Pass trail and that Bob Bartlett's father moved it from Skagway to Whitehorse and to the Yukon River. It went to Dawson City and went to M&M Bar there. Then Dawson City folded up and Charlie Petersen and Bill Keller purchased that bar. They purchased it to ship it down to Circle City. Bob McComb brought it to Fairbanks and it was installed into Pioneer Hotel. It is one of the oldest bars at the Territory of Alaska and originally it was a hand-carved deal from France. George never saw anything like it since. It was very antique and it was a great loss to lose it. Harrie asks the value of the bar. George says that he's heard several estimates: Some say it was \$25,000 dollars but doesn't know what Petersen and Keller paid for it. Harrie says he has heard that the freight cost as much as the purchase price and George says he's sure of it and gives an account on its route from France through Skagway to Dawson. Freight from Skagway to Whitehorse was at that time \$1 to \$1.25 per pound.

6:53 Harrie asks how many bartenders they had simultaneously working. George tells they always had at least two bartenders working. They took over the bar in December the 1<sup>st</sup> in 1944 from Keller and Petersen. Prior to that, the military had a lease on the hotel. Petersen and Keller wanted to get out of business and so George and Olaf Gannell [sp?] took it over. [Harrie asks something unclear, asking about Tibbits.] George tells that Tibbits is now living in Seattle and that Keller and Petersen purchased the bar from Tibbits. [Harrie says something unclear.] Then Harrie says George needs to wait on a customer. [Break in the recording.]

Harrie asks if George remembers the incident when [unclear] shot the bar full of holes. George says he remembers. The shooter shot one man three times but the man lived. The man who did the shooting disappeared and George doesn't know where he went. Harrie says he came out of blue and shot the bar full of holes, to which George says that they had some bullet holes on some stools and that that was the second shooting during his time. "They do get gun-happy here sometimes." Harrie says they did in the past.

9:14 Harrie says he wants to ask about the time of the fire. George says he was in Montana at that time, recuperating from an airplane wreck. His son called 4am in the morning and he was awake since he couldn't sleep. His son told him what had happened and George started making his way back up to Alaska. He used his connections, and made it back by the afternoon.

Then Harrie says George is on the Pioneer Welfare Committee and asks George's opinion on what could they do to aid recognition of the homes of the past. George says that Pioneers have to take a few things into consideration, and two Ordinances: 10:15 and 1100. "These people" [meaning the City employees] are able to walk in, inspect and condemn a man's home or a business property. The men who do the condemning don't even live within the city limits. He says the Pioneers need to get together and do something. Harrie says it's an invasion of privacy that has taken a hold in past few years.

George says it all comes from the Junior Chamber of Commerce who forced NC-Company out of electricity business and who sell more expensive electricity and steam for people. [Break in the recording.] Harrie says George had to wait on a customer.

At 12:04 George says that the NC-Company had a special price for power, such as electric stove, they'd start one off with \$0.07 cents but lights were \$0.10 cents. Pioneer Hotel, for example, paid steam bill of \$40 dollars of month until 1<sup>st</sup> of October and from thereon it was \$400 dollars a month during the winter months. When the city took over and got their steam from the FE-Company, the Hotel's steam bill ran \$1750 for a month. George says they could have had the FE-Company's power plant for about \$2 million dollars. It produced 4 times more electricity than they get from their new plant but now the City of Fairbanks property owners are in debt between 17-18 million dollars with their equipment that can't produce the electricity that they need.

Harrie says that that might change in a few months if they can elect some responsible property owners to the City Council and to be the mayor or if they recall the City Manager's form of governance. The City Charter was written by a group of individuals and there were very few people at the hearings. Harrie was there and opposed to the City Charter. Charlie Cole took the tape-recordings while Harrie was talking and now the City has them. The City Charter doesn't respect the constitution.

George says he was in the Council in 1951 but at the time council members didn't have anything to say. The people and the tax-payers need to do something for the city managership government. They have today 370 city employees. George got a list of all of them last spring and there were 302. As of today, 62% of the City employees live outside of the City limits. In most cities, the employees have to live within the city limits. [More talking about what Pioneers are doing about it.]

George is worried about what will happen when large corporate chains will come in and take business from the local shops.

At 17:41 Harrie asks George what the opportunities are for younger people “to get out and make something.” George says that the younger fellows don’t think about prospecting too much because they are all into construction that they do 3 months a year. It’s almost impossible now to go into mining and hire help because of a tax-program. Gold hasn’t increased value since 1932. There should be subsidies to mining. Canada is giving subsidies for their miners and help along miners who lose money.

Harrie says George has had his misfortunes. George tells that he just lost a cabin in Chicken because it burned down. Harrie asks about the modern methods of mining and George tells that they use bulldozers to get the dirt on a slick plate. They have riffled sluice boxes. George was at Mosquito Fork but it was almost impossible to mine there because the gold is too fine and “they” haven’t found methods to save it. McComb has tried it, Birdie has tried it and a number of other people have tried it.

Harrie thanks George and explains him that the tapes can’t be used without his waiver, and explains other laws that were pertaining to oral history recordings. Present are: Andrew Wicken, Andy Anderson, Bell West. Harrie says that they are visiting at Old Ranch Roadhouse on Cushman Street.

[Break in the recording.]

21:06 [A copy of 02-00-106 begins.]