

Summary for H00-135-04

Eustace Paul Ziegler, Mrs. Jessie Mather, and Ed Farrell, are interviewed by an unidentified female, and Mrs. Rebecca Farrell is interviewed by an unidentified male, in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1954 and 1955

SIDE 1

Eustace Paul Ziegler is interviewed by an unidentified female interviewer in Fairbanks, AK on January 12, 1955. He's got an art exhibition in 10 days or so.

He first came to AK in January of 1909. He had training in painting in Detroit and at the Yale School of Fine Arts. He was attracted to AK by reading 2 or 3 books. He was living and painting in the Straits of Mackinaw at that time. He made a trip to AK, got a job other than painting at first, but began painting enough to support himself, and has painted ever since. As a young man, he was captivated by the drama, mountains, and colors of AK.

He arrived in Cordova during the building of the Copper River Northwestern Railroad, which led to the building of the Miles Glacier Bridge. He began painting there, and eventually has traveled all over the state. Sydney Laurence was the only other well-known artist that was in AK at that time. He cultivated the appreciation for painting among Alaskans. Ziegler knew him well and says he was a delightful character, sweet and modest. He thinks Laurence had been here for a few years before Ziegler got here.

Ziegler came to Fairbanks in 1919. When he painted in the Kennicott Regions there was no place to exhibit pictures. It was mostly tents at that time. Sydney Laurence got \$35 a piece for his pictures in those days, a very good amount. They didn't have trouble getting painting supplies there; the Kennicott Copper Co. had the steamship company running in and out 3 times a week.

Ziegler talks about the painting, "Doing the 'Sessment Work.'" He mostly paints AK landscapes but sometimes paints portraits, that is, people.

He talks about Dr. Gillespie, who once asked him to paint him a picture of "Horse Creek Mary." Then the doctor tried to trade him old suits for it, instead of paying him. Ziegler never sold him another picture, but gave him a couple. Horse Creek Mary was an "old girlfriend" of Dr. Gillespie, says Ziegler; she was "an Indian squaw about 104 years old." Gillespie is the father of Katharine Sacks, wife of Bob Sacks of Fairbanks.

(Interviewer thinks Gillespie and Ziegler have a bit of a feud going on.)

Ziegler knew Cap Lathrop in Cordova when he was sitting up nights taking care of sick horses, in the transfer business.

The painter feels that his work has been over appreciated and he's never had any hardship. He feels that he's received more than he's given in AK. Ziegler spends time in southern California when he's not in AK. He meets many ex-Alaskans down there. He is 73 years old at the time of the interview. (Sandy Smith, at 93, was also on the Pioneer show.) Ziegler mentions that he sees Alec MacDonald in CA. He was a prominent transportation man from the Anchorage district.

Mrs. Jessie Mather is interviewed by an unidentified female in Fairbanks, AK on January 12, 1955. She's on her way from Eagle to the Pioneers Home in Sitka.

She is responsible for the innovation of naming the day of the week on the radio show Tundra Topics; Mr. Bramstedt was kind enough to grant her request. Everyone in Eagle stays up until 9:30 to hear Tundra Topics and the news on the radio. They changed their time from Dawson time to Fairbanks time.

Mather had been in AK 41 years the 22nd of June. She's from Sheffield, England originally. She came to Eagle by accident. She, her mother, and her father had come to visit for 1 year. Her mother became ill and they had to leave the boat at the first stop over the border. Then the First World War broke out in England, so they stayed in Eagle, as her mother wasn't allowed to cross the ocean. Her father was a doctor, but they learned to manage until the war was over. Then her father got interested in mining, with a man named George Mathot.

Later, she was married to Mr. Mather; they mined [with Mr. Steele?]. She also cooked on several different creeks. After the death of her husband, she came to Fairbanks and kept house for Mr. Paul Tacket for a few months, and worked for Mr. Main, then found work in the laundry.

Frank Barr and other Fortymile dwellers have great love for Mrs. Mather. Her vision is failing rapidly from glaucoma and she will inevitably become blind, but she's always made an effort to take care of herself in Eagle. She's also an expert at falling and not injuring herself.

Last Saturday they had a goodbye party for her at the library in Eagle. Dr. Murphy came once with some youngsters who'd been fishing on Lake Tark, near Eldridge, and had collected a sort of library. They gave her all the data about it, and she took it to Mr. Hillard the customs officer in Eagle. They had a town meeting, and the Eagle Public Library Association, Inc. was created. Everyone with books contributed their books. The charge for membership was \$1.

The Fairbanks Dept. of Justice gave them the old Post Office in Eagle for a recreation hall and they have great Pinochle games there. Pinochle is the winter pastime of many. When a minister comes in, there is a social hour afterward, with coffee, cake, conversation, arguments, and music.

She says Eagle is very quiet just now, but she thinks it will build back up again. There's one very quiet spot in Fairbanks that she's been to, at the International Airport Terminal. She couldn't see, but it was very quiet.

SIDE 2

Ed Farrell is interviewed by an unidentified female in Fairbanks, AK on June 1, 1954.

Farrell was 14 when he first visited AK. It was just a short trip to Juneau with the boat he was working on, and then he returned to the States. In 1900 a friend of the family's was going to Dawson and Farrell persuaded his parents to let him go, too. Farrell's father said, "You're going to go broke. Don't go sending down to us for any money." So Farrell took him at his word and hasn't gone back to the States (to live) in 52 years.

In Dawson he saw two strings of people along the bank, about 300 yards long, with bags of gold, waiting to get into the bank. He stayed in Dawson until 1904, when he

came to Fairbanks. He met Felix Pedro, and mined on Pedro Creek a short way from Pedro's discovery. He stayed around Fairbanks until 1915.

In the summer of 1914, Farrell went over with the stampede to Livengood and staked claims. In the spring of 1915, he went to Ruby (the strike there had been in 1911). He put in about 10 years mining in Ruby. Then he went up to Mason Creek on the Yukon and put in 5 years mining. From there he went to Rampart, where he mined 3 years. In 1933 he went back down the Tanana 40 miles and he and his partner Jack Elliott staked Golden Creek. That creek is now being mined by Frank Edgington/the Iditarod Mining Co.

Farrell says he's been all over AK. In the fall of 1911, he and his partner bought a team of horses and a buckboard and drove to Valdez in 10 days. He said the Road Commission had done a little work on the road at that time. There were roadhouses in the winter every 20 miles. Less were open in the summer. They were fed pintail grouse at every stop. It was about \$2-2.50 a meal. That was a lot then, because miners would mine for 10 hours for \$5.

Farrell tells about once when he was stampeding up the Chandalar. There were 2 schoolteachers who wanted to get married, but there was no preacher. They had a miners meeting and elected Farrell to perform the ceremony. In those days, what they decided at the miners meeting was law. The interviewer reads the rhyming vows that Farrell wrote for Mr. Gillis and Agnes Dalton.

He was in on a kind of stampede at a fish wheel in 1949, about 25 miles from Ft. Yukon. Planes were landing on the bar and he counted 12 at once circling above trying to land.

He thinks his best years were in Ruby. He enjoyed the surroundings and the people. It's much quieter there now; not much mining is going on.

Farrell still holds many claims around the country. He gets royalties from the Golden Creek mine, and has interests at the quartz mine in Seward. Farrell is the uncle of Dan Redding, the theater manager for the Lathrop Company in Fairbanks.

Mrs. Rebecca Farrell is interviewed by an unidentified male in Fairbanks, AK on January 8, 1955.

In 1927 she traveled from Fairbanks to Nome with Noel Wien. It was a stormy trip and they had to land in Unalakleet to spend the night. They stopped at Charlie Trager's Trading Post. He didn't have any accommodations for women, so he made a bed for her behind the counter in the store. The cuckoo clock prevented her from getting a good night's rest. The next morning she was awakened by Trager clanging on a dishpan with a spoon, calling them to breakfast. Then men had been accommodated upstairs.

Mr. Henderson, the superintendent of schools at that time, was the other passenger on the plane. They took off into a murky sky. Wien followed the coast up Norton Sound to Golovin Bay, where Farrell met some friends, who heard through the "Mukluk Telegraph" that she was on the plane. They proceed to Nome and landed safely. She was the first woman passenger that Wien carried, as she later read in the Nome Nugget. The Mukluk Telegraph refers to the AK grapevine, possibly based on leaks from the actual telegraph.

She and her first husband had a gold dredge about 15 miles out of Nome. They went in every summer on the SS Victoria. The stewardess was worried about an ill family that had got on the boat in Seattle. After they reached False Pass, she asked Farrell to look at them, since she was a registered nurse. They had pox on the palms of their hands and feet. She diagnosed it as smallpox. They went to the captain and didn't tell any passengers until they got to Nome. The captain wired to Dr. Walsh on shore and the doctor said no one was to get off—the boat was quarantined. Word was sent to Washington, DC. They ordered a Navy hospital ship from San Francisco to bring vaccine to everyone. They had to wait about a week for it to arrive.

The infected family was taken down the coast to an abandoned army post, Ft. Davis, and was isolated there. An old-timer named Charlie Newhouse volunteered to go take care of them. Only one of the other passengers got smallpox; he had wiped the vaccine off his arm, says Farrell.

After Farrell and her husband were done mining on Sawman River, they were looking for a new place to put the dredge. They went ashore 50 miles east of Shishmaref. The mosquitoes were very bad there. They built a house out of the horses' hay. Two of the three horses swam out to sea and turned up a mile down shore.

Farrell returned to Nome on the freighter, since this was a new trip. The first mate decided he wanted his picture taken on a cake of ice, while the captain was sleeping. The second mate didn't get the picture, and the first mate became hysterical when he thought he was being left behind. He was thrown a line and finally got back on board, just black with cold, says Farrell.

There were a lot of people who used horses back then. There was a man in Nome with 18 horses who used to freight by team from Nome to Teller, as well as up the Solomon River and down to Solomon. It was expensive, however to feed horses, and to winter them.