

Call number: 02-00-85 SIDE B

Young, Wicken and Hughes – Trip to Central

Date: September 2-3, 1961

Summary created by Varpu Lotvonen

Series: Harrie Hughes Collection

Date of summary's creation 9/27/13

Notes: Original on 7-inch reel, master copy on CD.

Harrie Hughes says that Frank Young, Andy Wicken and Harrie Hughes are on 95 miles on the Circle Highway. Prompted by Harrie, Frank tells that right along the highway there is a valley that is mostly cleared by nature and could be a fine grazing land for cattle. Many years ago some people from New York State came hunting up there and came up with an idea about raising cattle there. They started to build a corral in 1912 or 14 into which they were going to put the cattle in but the venture didn't materialize over the course of years. "Them days" there was no automobiles but just the old Circle Trail, which mostly followed the ridges. Then there were flats and the trail goes over the 12-mile and over the ridges to Fairbanks Creek. Harrie says that Frank Young went through there as a young man and is describing what happened there when Frank was a kid. Harrie asks what Andy thinks. Andy thinks that there are grand views and that the old trail should be restored by somebody. Harrie wants to have markers that tell about the incidents that happened along the trail.

Now they are stopping at the Central Lodge that is kept by Dell and Henry Chote [sp?] who have been there since May of last year. [Break in the recording.] Dell talks about how they came into the country, after which she recounts a story in which Frank Warren got lost in the wilderness and was found in poor condition, after which he was recuperating at the Circle Hot Springs. Henry went to see him [Unclear story].

Frank states it's September 2nd, 1961 on their trip to Circle. Now they are at Central, Alaska. George Parker knows Harrie Hughes but doesn't remember Andy Wicken who says he was just a cheechako. Andy Wicken talks about a lady from California who has lots of muscle because she pumps gas and says her name is Dell Chote.

At 7:20 Roy Olson says he'd like to introduce Jens Langlow from Switch Creek. Roy asks Jens how he came to Circle City and Jens tells that he went to Dawson in

1900 and stayed there for quite a few years. His brother-in-law [unclear] was in the lower half of Eldorado. Some people were coming "up here" to finish up because they didn't think there was much left since they had taken out [unclear]. They brought a team of horses and boiler into which they tied a pump. That was in 1901. Jens had a partner whose name was Auni [sp? Auli, Audvin?]. He was a Norwegian too. The people from Eldorado went to Tanana, which was the richest claim at the time. Jens and his partner decided to buy the place with \$4000 dollars.

Jens interrupts his story and asks how long he has. Answer is 12 minutes. He was born in Alesund, or Stranda, in Norway. Frank asks where he entered the USA. Jens says he came to New York, and is interrupted by Harrie [?] who asks what made him come to Alaska. Jens says he was just going to tell that. His brother-in-law decided that he was going back to finish his work [at Eldorado?]. He married Jens' sister and wanted Jens to come to Yukon too. They got to Great Northern Railroad and then got to Seattle. This was in 1898. Finally they got the passage on Steamship Nora and landed in Skagway where the railroad wasn't quite finished yet so they started on foot. On Lake Bennett they took a ferry. Harrie asks Jens to hold on while he puts in another tape.

Jens continues that after they got across Bennett, there was no road anymore. They got a ride with teams [dog? horse?] to get into Whitehorse where they took a steamer Nora which took them down river to Dawson. They got to Dawson on 1st of June in 1900. They worked on the creeks for the year. Mrs. Lou Langlow [sp?] was there and they had the pump with which they started sinking a 8x8 hole and she panned out \$1,000 dollars a pan, from that hole she panned \$13,000 dollars. Nobody will believe that. Jens worked with the dump box and it was very exciting to see gold everywhere. Soon he got over that and he realized he was at a gold camp, so one has to expect to see gold. Finally that year they had 12 men working for them and they took out \$150,000 but claimed only \$75,000. Jens bought the property with help. John Auni had enough so they bought the ground. They kept it for 15 years and money out of it. Jens recalls he was kind of reckless and spent the money. \$100 dollars a night was nothing, but they couldn't really have spent that much money. Then he sold the ground for \$4,000 dollars to McNamara so they got the money back. They had \$10,000 dollars apiece then, but that didn't last long.

19:40 Frank [?] asks Jens when he came to Circle City. That was in 1905. Jens starts telling a story [break in the recording.] Harrie says that was Jens Langlow and Jens helps with spelling the name.

Harrie states they are stopping at Birch Creek Bridge and they are having lunch in sunshine.

Now it's 5:45pm in Circle City. Frank says they are at the homestead of Henry Appelle, which was willed to the Pioneers of Alaska. Everything was taken care of and a native family by the name of Roberts has been living there. Harrie says they are going to give them a few dollars for their effort. Andy Wicken, their sidekick, is on his way to becoming a sourdough. They picked up some items for the future pioneer museum as well as some pictures. They are heading towards Frank Young Jr.'s cabin.

At 24:45 Harrie Hughes says they have stopped at Frank Young Jr.'s cabin and looking for a place to sleep. Nothing further to report.

Harrie gives an account of sleeping and says it's September the 3rd now. They are fishing at the Crooked Creek and if they don't get anything, they won't eat. Andy reports that he was in a bad fishing hole and didn't get any fish. Now they are in Joe Parker's place and heading towards Miller House.

They had a breakfast at Miller House. Mr. Miller is from Kentucky. [Unclear talking.] Harrie Hughes talks about a picture of a large cleanup of \$200,000 dollars. Carl Parker mentioned. They are looking at pictures. Talking about Bob Bloom's [?] claims in Sheep Creek and Gold Stream Creeks. [Someone walks in. Unclear cross-talking.] Mr. Miller talks about somebody below Sheep Creek.

At 35:40 Harrie states that it's September 3rd in Miller House, Alaska and he met old-timer McDonald. Mr. Bill McDonald introduces himself and says he was born and raised in Eyak Lake, Cordova, around Big Arm. There was Sullivan's Roadhouse at the McKinley Park and when they freighted there, there was the Malamute Kid, the Big Old Kid, the Spanish Kid, John Shern [sp?] and Bill himself. Jack Singleton had the roadhouse [mentioning the roadhouse keepers who took over after Singleton: [unclear who took it over afterwards] and after that was Andrew Dragish. Mentioning some other characters around the area, such as Otto the Finn, George Nelson, Tom Savage.] Tom was a guide and Old Bacon [sp?] was the engineer in charge and he was in his 60s at the time. Bacon was ready to pull out from the outfit and Tom had to go celebrate before they started. After about 3 days he was sober enough to start off. Tom and Mr. Miller started off from Nenana and pack animals were shipped from the States, mules mostly. They got out a ways and they were at the head of the outfit. Tom had sobered up and felt like an awful bum. He had found a road-sack into which he cut eye holes and pulled it over his head. He proclaimed he was going to go to sleep and if anything happened, he should be woken up. Miller continued on until they encountered a pack-train of mules. Miller woke Tom up and he came out with the sack on his head. He was a horrible sight and "those mules just went in every direction across that big flat!" It

took more than two hours from them to gather their pack-train. Tom did a good job from there on.

41:10 There was an old Frenchman and the three of them were the only ones who had been to Alaska. All the others were brought from the States and they were greenhorns, cheechakos. Everybody got along fine. Mr. Miller was a recorder for the topographer and the only one with an easy job. Tom and Miller wanted to go sheep hunting when they got back to Nenana in fall. They went up to Totatlina Flats [sp?] and stayed there for a week or two after which they went to the place that is now McKinley park. They went to Healy and up the Dry Creek, cut over the hill down on to where Tom had a cabin on Savage Fork of the Middle River. Then they went to Sanctuary Creek. Bill Haynes and Hungry Kid were going to trap in there; Miller and Tom were going to hunt, so they all built a cabin there. The cabin is still there. They hunted and got along fine. Bill Haynes and Hungry Kid left to Toklat.

43:15 Mr. Miller and Tom “pulled a fast one”. One of the packers from the summer had a hide [hideout, secret cache?] in the old Fish Roadhouse, which was 30 miles out from Nenana, and abandoned at that time. He made a case under part of the floor and every trip out he picked out little stuff from his loads and hid them under the floor. Miller says “we got wise to that.” He and Tom went on to two fellows who were heading towards Nenana. The two fellows knew about that one guy’s business too. [Unclear.] The men had gone to the cache two weeks before Miller and Tom did, and had cleaned it out. When Miller and Tom got there, they had expected to pick up a little grub there but the cache was gone. They started circling around the place, looking up in the trees. Finally they saw gunnysacks in trees and cleaned the cache out.

44:44 They [the two men?] built a cabin below Healy, at the Little Lake. Tom knew that they had raided the cache. Talking about how Tom went to have a talk with them beforehand and tricked grub out of the people.

Tom and Miller had a couple of weeks of grub left. Then Tom tried to sneak out and leave Miller there with a good amount of food, but got caught and so the two of them left together. They had to wait until Nenana flood subsided and had to subsist on rabbits for a couple of days before they got out through a bridge that was in scary state.

47:51 Harrie [?] says Tom Savage had a family of 8. Miller says that his wife and one daughter were “here” a year after he died. Tom was a half-Indian and half-Finn. His Indian blood was from the State of Washington, Snohomish tribe. In Dawson he freighted with mules. He freighted fine American Whisky by caseloads

to the creeks and was never short of whisky. Harrie says Tom used to visit him every once in a while. More talking about Tom. Harrie thanks Mr. Miller.

Miller thinks that "this place" [The Miller House] should be kept for the later years. When Fritz [Miller] was running the roadhouse, he'd wait on a person if he was there but if he wasn't, the guests were welcome to come and help themselves. It was kitchen, dining room and a bunkhouse all together. In 1902 J. Kelley came down from Dawson and took it over when Fritz Miller was out in Dawson. Miller was a prospector. His brother George Miller had a hotel in Juneau. Then Kelley came in 1902 and moved in and put up a store some 30-feet away from the Miller House. The case was later taken to court and Frank Miller's ownership was reaffirmed. Kelley ran the place, roadhouse and saloon until 1936.

Harrie says they want the location of the Circle Trail from Dawson through Fairbanks area. Miller tells he came from Dawson in December, 1905 and then trails during the summer weren't quite where the road is now, but close. [Talking more about the old trails: winter and summer.]

[End of the recording.]