

H74-02

Bentley Falls w/Harrie Hughes (interviewer), Judy Beatty (notes and photos), and Tom Radovich (recorder), no date, Fairbanks(?), Alaska, for Pioneers of Alaska

Side A of original tape is blank. Recording starts with Side B. Audio quality is poor. The summary is the best I could make out, but not 100% reliable.

Ben Falls, a miner from Livengood, talks with Harrie Hughes.

Falls talks about claim jumpers. At Wilbur Creek when it was first stamped, people put a good many holes down. Ben had three holes up on Twelve. There were at least 100 holes on Wilbur Creek. No one found anything. Ben covered his hole; he thought he might come back to it some time.

He and his wife stayed three different winters at Livengood.

Tony, one of the partners of the Goodnews Platinum Company invested some money in Circle, and when he didn't make anything, came over to Livengood to work with Ben on Wilbur Creek. Ben sold him his claim. The mouth of the creek had a little gold. The Brown brothers and Thomas Murty claimed it long after the first stampede. They dug up \$300.00 and started another stampede.

Ben continues on about sinking a more-than-100-foot hole. Gus Peterson...

It struck Ben that in the vicinity...

Mining during the summer was hydraulic; that couldn't be done in the winter. In the first years Ben was in the Fairbanks District, they had to sink a certain number of holes on some interest they had, in order to get 1/3 interest from Charlie Clark. This was Ben, his brother, and a man named Henry Cook.

There was nothing to melt the ground, no machines. They were on Dome Creek trying to sink 65 to 75-foot holes. They would start the hole by picking down through ice and muck. When they reached frozen gravel they couldn't pick any more. The frozen gravel could be 20, 30, 40 feet thick. They would take big rocks and heat them until red hot in a wood fire. Then they'd throw them down the hole, and throw some moss on top. Ben says never to go into a hole that you put a fire in. A person might do three holes at a time. At night, they'd put in the fires, which would burn while the men were sleeping. During the day, they'd clean out the holes. Carbon monoxide killed two men on Discovery Claim(?), who went down in the hole.

Harrie asks if Ben remembers any instances of claim jumpers being prosecuted. Ben doesn't know that he has, but talks about the law as it applies to claims...

Ben never wanted to jump a claim. A jumper staked his claim once, but Ben couldn't prove a discovery on it (to get it back?)...

Ben tells a story that I can't really distinguish, but it sounds like a good one. Sounds like it's about gasses in the holes again.

Harrie asks Ben to tell about his automatic dam. There are two ways of making those things, Ben says. You build a wide sluice box...whipsaws...a hard job...pressure in the dam...cannot understand his description. He talks about filling the dam. He built it all with an axe and a saw. He talks more about putting it together and how nobody else makes these anymore.

Ben says we can learn a lesson in dam building from the beavers. They work together just like people. He talks about cutting down a tree, and beavers—the oldest beaver cuts the longest stick. You won't get two lengths out of the same beaver...he talks more about the ways of beavers.

Harrie Hughes does a closing. Tom Radovich did the recording. Judy Beatty took notes and pictures. Harrie Hughes is doing this on behalf of the Pioneers of Alaska.

Falls comes back on briefly, talking about five little somethings about the same size. Sound of reel being recorded comes on loud—good to turn headphones down before this happens.