

H75-17 Lester Bugby, Hjalmer Nordale, and Fred Durocher are interviewed in Anchorage and Fairbanks in 1947, w/ an unidentified interviewer and Al Bramstedt

SIDE 1 Lester Bugby is interviewed by an unidentified male interviewer in Anchorage, AK in 1947. He's got a piece of gold hanging on his shirt, observes the interviewer, that he got here in AK. In 1914, when he was 18 years old, he came up to AK from Jackson Hole, WY. He registered in Anchorage in 1917, and then served in WWI until 1920. He's been outside twice since then. He spent 3 months going from New York City to San Francisco, and says he was glad to get back because people in the States "have no sense": They're always in a hurry to get somewhere and then when they get there they say "Now what do we do?" Bugby stumbled into gold above the Arctic Circle accidentally, he says.

When he first came up, he was not a miner, he was one of the first employees of the AK Railroad. The road for it was started in 1916. From there he moved to Fairbanks, where he fished in the summer and trapped in the winter. He traveled much by dog team. He mentions how he killed his 7 dogs behind the Parsons Hotel in Anchorage in 1917 before he went to the war. He killed them and threw them in the river because they'd worked for him and he broke them, and wasn't going to chance selling them to anyone else who might mistreat them. He lost his right shoulder in the war. He comments that he's been offered \$90 for the gold nugget around his neck.

In 1920, when he got back from WWI, he worked salmon fishing in Kodiak (purse seining), and trapped in the winter. He prospected, trapped, and fished for a good many years. Bugby tells how he once found a little moose; he was sure that wolves had killed the mother. He took it home and fed it canned milk. It was very expensive to get this milk (it had to be freighted in by dog team from Fairbanks, 300 miles to the south--Bugby used up to 27 dogs in his freight team). The moose was all over the place, except where he was supposed to be, says Bugby. After three winters, he disappeared into the wild.

At one point he took a trip out of Fairbanks lasting 3 years. He wintered first at the head of the Noatak, north of Kotzebue. The next winter he was at the head of the Colville River. The third winter he was east of the Colville River. The following spring he pulled back into Fort Yukon, the first town he'd seen since he left Kotzebue. He said it was pretty tough, but he never considered that he wouldn't make it. Last winter, he drove a dog team in November to Pt. Barrow (he traps between Fairbanks and Barrow). It took him 9 days and not one house along the way. He always goes well provisioned on these trips.

In 1934 he went broke in hard rock gold mining, so he stopped doing that. In hard rock mining, you take the rock and mash it, grind it, pan it, float it, and remove the gold from the rock. He is going to look the creeks over again next spring. Bugby states that what he's seen of the States makes him think he doesn't want any part of it.

Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK interviews Hjalmer Nordale, the mayor of Fairbanks at this time, in 1947. He was born in the States; and came north in April of 1896 when he was 2 years old. He was led up the gangplank at Juneau by Gus Nor, master of the old Willowpaw. Nor later became the senior master for the AK Steamship Co. Nordale has been in AK for 51 years.

Nordale and his mother came to join his father, who'd been in AK for a few months previous. They stayed in Juneau until the winter of 1896 when the father continued to Dyea and over the Chilkoot Pass to Dawson. The mother, Nordale, and a new little brother returned to Seattle at a point during this time. The father was reported missing in Dawson country; they didn't hear of him for several months. Nordale went into Dawson in August of 1896 with his mother. They took the Yukon White Pass Railroad as far as they could, then walked into Whitehorse.

NOTE: According to Hjalmer Nordale's niece, Marilyn Nordale Stacy, he got some of the family history incorrect in his interview. Hjalmer's brother, Arnold, was born in Juneau in 1896, after which event the boys and their mother returned to Seattle until 1899. By that time, when they returned north, most of the White Pass Yukon Railroad was completed, but they did walk an unfinished portion of it around the summit.

Dawson was well regulated by the Northwest Mounted Police back then, now known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. There was not much rip-roaring activity evident on the street to a little boy, says Nordale. It was a bustling camp; they spent some time on the creek and got to know the miners. They left Dawson in the fall of 1901 to move out to the creeks. In 1904, they moved to Fairbanks. They left on the last boat of the season, the Monarch, on October 3rd. There were 190 people aboard for the 23-day trip. They stopped at many sandbars, to load and unload barges, and to "live off the country."

Fairbanks was a very busy place in 1904. It was being converted from a cabin frontier town into a modern city, says Nordale. The population was spread out in mining camps throughout the Tanana Valley. Several communities thrived on the gold-bearing creeks: Fox, Gilmore, Fairbanks Creek, Cleary City (first known as Gates City, from Squatter Bill who mined just below the town), Chatanika, and Ester. Chena had hopes of becoming the metropolis of the Tanana Valley. When Nordale came down from Dawson, they froze in at Chena. At that point there were plans for a Tanana Valley Mines Railroad, so they walked the right-of-way slashings. Chena had restaurants and hotels and was quite the town, tells Nordale. He says E. T. Barnette's landing at the site of Fairbanks caused miners to come there to trade. Once the federal court was established in Fairbanks, the doom of Chena was spelled. Nordale says Chena had many advantages that Fairbanks doesn't have, though. It's more accessible by water, and a prettier spot, says Bramstedt.

The "Tanana trolley" of the early days was originally constructed between Chena and Fairbanks, then projected to go to Gilmore. In the fall of 1906, rails continued out to Chatanika. It stayed in operation until after the building of the AK Railroad in Fairbanks. Much of the F. E. Company's construction material was carried over that roadway, says Nordale.

Since he arrived in Fairbanks, Nordale has worked in photography, as a game warden, in newspapers, and later in airline accounting. He worked on the Fairbanks Times as a printer's devil, but started news writing at the Daily News-Miner, under W. F. "Wrong Front" Thompson. His time as a game warden was a year and a half spent in game census work. He was able to travel all over the Interior, in the summer by boat and in the winter by dog team. He thinks he was the first game warden to work in McKinley Park after it was established. He says he's very prejudiced against the wolf in the matter of wolf vs. caribou. He started airline accounting work in the spring of 1930, with AK Airlines, a subsidiary of American Airlines. When Pan-American Airlines took over, he continued to work for them for 14 years.

As mayor of Fairbanks, Nordale believes that the city has a big task before it, as it grows rapidly during the future years. He thinks a program of modernization must be implemented. Material shortages hamper this greatly. The city must have water, for example, a sewage system, a utilities system, and streets.

Nordale wouldn't trade his time in the north. He has great respect for the pioneers in the Klondike and Fairbanks. He thinks there should be a monument to the forgotten man, though, who followed the stamperders and worked 12-hour days.

SIDE 2

Fred Durocher, former postmaster of Council, AK is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK in 1947. Durocher is just in town for a few days, waiting for transport to Valdez Creek. He's staying with a friend, Arthur Johnson, since he couldn't get a hotel room. Durocher has been in AK for 45 years. He grew up in Dover, MA. The Klondike gold strike was in the papers, which painted a brilliant picture of the riches to be had. So he headed to Seattle, where he worked for Seattle Logging Company on Fort Crescent for a while. (He had no logging experience but he'd done a lot of woodchopping in MA.) The steamer Humboldt took him to Skagway in 1902. They walked 110 miles of the Yukon White Pass Railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse, to save money, instead of riding the train. He traveled with A. J. Dayton, a druggist from Saginaw, MI, and Ernest Hinkelmann. He read recently in the AK Weekly that Dayton is now in Vancouver, B. C.

They stayed 4-5 days in Whitehorse, then got 7 men together and bought a boat to float down the Yukon River. They arrived in Dawson on June 22nd, after about 3 days (this was in 1902). Five Finger Rapids was the only danger in the river trip, as Durocher saw it. A German man was steering the boat, Durocher never

knew his name. Two other took turns rowing. Everyone screamed different instructions at the German man on how to get through the rapids, so he got angry and swung the oar into the boat and said, "Take it through yourself." A young Englishman took the oar and they got through all right. Wink Rapids was another tricky one to get through. When they reached Dawson it was about 12,000 people strong, says Durocher.

The first mining Durocher did was on Moose Creek , a tributary of the Fortymile River, about 60 miles from Dawson. Bramstedt asks him to compare mining then and now. Durocher says that individual mining (putting down a shaft, prospecting with a pan, making a rocker, testing ground thoroughly) has not changed. With new machinery though, like dredges, larger scale operations are more profitable. There was a dredge on Montcrieff ground in 1901 or 1902 on Bonanza Creek, Durocher remembers. It was moved to Flat Creek near Iditarod or Anoka a few years later. He talks briefly about the modern process for thawing the ground. In Dawson they're working over ground that's already been mined using new processes.

Durocher spent from 1902 to 1912 in Dawson. Then he moved to Council, 70 miles north of Nome, where he was the postmaster for 13 years. There was not ever much of a population there, and now it's even lower. Around 1925 or 1926 he recalls seeing Noel Wien flying an open-cockpit airplane over Council.

Durocher did a little trapping in the Hudson Bay Co. area, but never made a living from hunting or trapping. He's now interested in the Carlson ground on Valdez Creek, with Guy Voss (?). They have a small company and want to put a dredge on this ground.

He went Outside in 1941 for the first time in 33 years. He's been Outside twice since, but would not go there to live "on a bet." He enjoys the blizzards and snowstorms that we have here.