

H78-43

Chilkoot Trail

Mike Dalton

Nancy Mendenhall

Cora Cook

Sue Lewis, talk show host

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#### Beeline Radio Show 165

Show host introduces Mike Dalton, Nancy Mendenhall, and Cora Cook who will be talking about their Chilkoot Trail trip. They are asked what inspired them to take on the Chilkoot Trail trip. Nancy said that she was inspired because Mike and Cora were interested. Mike said she had wanted to do the trail for a long time. She said last summer while in Dawson she met Marge Egan, Mary Cook, Pat Sathrop, Jerry Noram and Jim McCord who had come over the Chilkoot Trail and then canoed down the Yukon. That inspired Mike to do the trip. Cora said she was also inspired by seeing the hikers in Dawson.

The show host asked if they organized their own trip or were they part of another group. Mike said they went with an organized group out of Skagway. The name of the organization was the Klondike Safaris. Mike said they supplied everything that was needed for the trip. There were sixteen in the group.

The show host asked about the history of the Chilkoot Trail. Nancy said the trail starts at Dyea and goes along the Taiya River. It runs east of White Pass. It goes through the Chilkoot Pass which was used by the Indians. It ends at Bennett Lake.

The show host asks if Chilkoot Pass is the one that is in so many photographs with the long lines of people hiking up the steep hill. Mike said there were two trails that stampedeers used: the White Pass and the Chilkoot Pass. Nancy said the steep part is called the Golden Stairs and it is steep.

The show host asked how long the trail was. Nancy said that it was thirty-three miles long. Nancy said they started in Dyea on a Tuesday and arrived at the train station at Bennett on Friday. Mike went on the river and Nancy and Cora went on the train to Whitehorse.

The show host asked how many hours they spent on the trail. Mike said she could add it up. On the last day they were on the trail four hours and forty-five minutes for the last ten miles.

The show host asked if they carried all of their own gear. Cora and Nancy said they carried their own personal belongings and sleeping bags and it was about twenty-five pounds. They didn't carry their food. Mike said she took rocks from different areas on the trail so her pack became a little heavier. She carried them back in little baggies.

The show host asked if they did any training. Nancy said they trained two or three days a week and walked up and down on Ester Dome. Mike said she never had any sore muscles but did develop a blister.

The show host asked about the weather. Nancy, Mike and Cora said they had good weather with rain on one night.

The show host asked about tents. Mike said they fit three people in their tent.

Mike said she spent a lot of time taking photographs. She spent so much time with the camera that the guides would check on her.

The show host asked about the other hikers in their group. Nancy said that the rest of the group was made up of boys aged twelve to sixteen. Nancy said the first night they stayed in a bunkhouse and the boys questioned them about going.

The show host asked them about highlights of the trip. Cora said she enjoyed all the artifacts along the trail. Cora also talked about picking up bottles while they were on their practice hikes on Ester Dome. Mike said she would drive up later and pick up the garbage bags.

Mike said the highlight of the trip for her was seeing all the history along the trail. She enjoyed the summit, too. She said it was wonderful to be away from civilization.

Nancy said it was hard to pick out the high points. She said it was a thrill just to be able to actually walk over the pass. She said there were so many wonderful things to see on the side of the trail on the American side of the trail. On the Canadian side it is more barren, drier, and had lots of snow. She said there were other people on the trail going in the other direction.

The show host asked if the trail was well defined. Nancy said it is a well hiked trail and easy to follow. The rocky areas are marked with stone markers (cairns) and the snowy areas are marked with metal posts with flagging. Mike commented that there were some very deep snow drifts at the summit, but the wind packs it solid.

The show host asked if Mike's diary was going to be used for a book. Mike said she just wanted to keep track of what they were doing.

The show host asked if they did their own cooking. Cora said the guides did the cooking but they did help. Cora said all the supplies were split out by day and put in plastic bags. Mike mentioned that if she went again she would bring her own supply of candy.

The show host asked if they would go again. Mike said she would go again. She would like to go in late August or September. They talked again about the warm weather they had.

The show host asked if they have any other similar hikes. Mike said they hadn't talked about it yet. Nancy said they were in such good shape right now that they might do the marathon again. Mike said they did decide to take a day and visit the gift shops in Fairbanks because they enjoyed the gift shops in Skagway.

The show host asked about relics along the trail. Mike said anything that is small enough to be picked up has been taken already. Mike mentions talking with Forbes Baker about the Chilkoot Trail. He lived in the area around 1910 and remembers visiting the trail and seeing many relics alongside the trail. There are very few left. Mike talks about one group that picked up every relic and put it in a pile to take away.

The show host asked if there was anyone responsible for policing the Chilkoot Trail.

Nancy said she knew that the Park Service on both the American and Canadian side do make the trip up to the summit and back two or three times a week. So there are people watching. There were signs on the trail with warnings about no rescue provisions made for anyone who has an injury. So it is patrolled. Mike said that the National Park Service in Skagway did not have control over that area, but it is proposed to have a Klondike National Park. Mike said it was in legislation, but she didn't know the status of the proposal. She said the Canadians had a restoration program in Dawson. She talked about Fort Selkirk.

The show host talked about the trash on Mt. McKinley because of the hikers and asked if there was a lot of trash on the Chilkoot Trail. Mike said she thought the trail was clean. The show host asked about shelters. Nancy said there were two nice shelters made of logs at Canyon City and one at Sheep Camp. Inside the cabins there were eight bunks and a stove.

The show host asked about any cabins along the trail. Mike said there were relics of cabins. Nancy said Sheep Camp was once a thriving community and now there is nothing left. Nancy talked about reading a couple of books and being informed about the history of the area.

The show host asked about other people making the trip. Cora said she knew that the Jecklum family have returned from their trip and the Jack Meese family was also going on the trail. Mike talked about Phyllis and Jerry Church hiking the trail and then taking the canoe to Whitehorse. This year they will canoe from Whitehorse to Circle. Mike talked about seeing Claus Naskey's name in the sign-in book at Canyon City.

The show host asked about running into people on the trail. Mike said she ran into people at Whitehorse.

Nancy said she heard about several instances <sup>about the trail</sup> ~~that she heard about~~. A woman was hiking by herself over the trail. Earlier this summer there was a group that was aged 49-69. Cora said there was a solo hiker that froze at the Golden Stairs because she didn't realize it was so steep. Nancy said when you are hiking it and stop for a rest it looks very steep.

The show host asked how long it took to hike the Golden Stairs. Nancy said the Golden Stairs were actually cut into the snow. When the snow is gone you have to hike over large rocks. Mike said it is about eight tenths of a mile long. Cora thought it took about an hour and a half. Nancy said it was a relief to get to the top. On top of the ridge were prefab canoes. They slid down the ridge on the other side. The other side of the trail was easier walking but they did have to walk along the river.

The show asked what their families thought about it. Nancy said her family thought it was wonderful. Mike said her husband joined her at Bennett. Cora said her family didn't believe she was going. Her sons wanted to go, too.

The show host asked about advice for people who were interested in taking the same trip. Nancy said to go light and there wouldn't be any problem going without guides. Mike said one should be in fairly decent shape.

The show host asked about Mike's trip down the river after the hike. Mike said there were sixteen people on their hike and Nancy and Cora left the trip at Bennett. She said her husband, Jim and Skip Burns met the group at Bennett and they used four inflatable boats. She said they drifted on the rivers quite a bit without a motor. They camped at Carcross where Kate Carmack, her brothers and Bishop Bompas are buried. They went down Tagush Lake and Marsh Lake and down to Whitehorse where they had to portage over the dam. They stayed in Whitehorse for a day and a half. They were on the water for sixteen days. They stopped in Lake LaBarge for a day and at Fort Selkirk. Mike said there were a lot of cabins along the route. She said there were remains of some of the old sternwheelers along the way. A lot of the relics have been removed.

The show host asked if everyone took as many photos as Mike did. Nancy said Mike was the experienced photographer on the trip.

Mike said the river portion of the trip was very relaxing and historically interesting. She said most of the trip all the way to Eagle was very scenic.

The show host asked if other people on the trip were interested in the historical significance of the route. Mike said she though most of the people were there for the historical aspect. Nancy thought the hikers were there for a good time, too.