

INA UOTILA and CHARLEY CREAMER at BPW

Meeting, Aug. 21, 1974 (Fbx)

(Introduced by Mrs. Marge Haggland)

REEL 1

Ina Uotila opens by telling about the six Fins who skied to Iditarod from Seward. One was her husband Gus and his brother Charley. It was the month of March in 1913. Ina followed Gus to Iditarod in June of that year (going by sea to Nome and then to Flat by river). She recalls Gus's wood cutting contracts. He cut wood and furnished it to the miners who used it for fuel in steam boilers in prospecting in Flat and Ititarod districts. She left Seattle June 1 (approx) and arrived in Ititarod June 25. Went to Nome and then to St. Michael. From St. Michael they went on a small boat and eventually into the Yukon to Holy Cross. Does not describe route from there but it is believed that another vessel took them up the Innoko River to Flat.

She describes her first Alaska home. Made dresser out of egg crates with a curtain over front.

Ina and Gus were in Fairbanks during the war years. Government took over their heavy machinery for military and defense work. They had started their own mining operations in 1932.

She describes her first trip Outside in 1919. Their boat was stuck in the river ice jam near 40 Mile River (on the Yukon). They returned in 1920 (spring). Went by sea to Seward and then by train to Wasilla. From Wasilla they took dog teams to Iditarod. She describes the roadhouse along the way. Slept in road houses every night.

Asked about food at Iditarod. She never had a garden, but there was plenty of vegetables from garden at Tokotna. Ate lots of reindeer meat...two bits a pound in the 1920's. Says they moved to Ophir where they mined.

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Charley Creamer Came to Dyea (near Skagway) in 1896. Father freighted to Sheep Camp which was about 14 miles from Dyea. It also was near the foot of Chilkoot Pass. Charley drove a team some times when his father needed another teamster. After the White Pass Railroad was built as far as Lake Bennett all the freight went that route and put Charley's father out of business. Charley went to Juneau for awhile and then outside. His fathr came to Fairbanks in 1903 and sent for his family in 1904. Charley lived here ever since (except for few years in the 1920's). In summers in Fairbanks (in his youth) Charley herded cattle. There would be up to 2,000 head of cattle here then. They were butchered in the fall after it was cold enough to freeze the meat.

Charley bought the Hinkley Dairy in 1928. Had 14 cows then, and Charley built the herd up to 80 cows (some times had more). He tells how he fed the ducks and geese for years and how the state bought 300 acres from him in 1968 to establish a bird stop-over (on spring and fall migrations).

(more)

Charley says he has only one sister living. She is Marion Wood and presently a guest at the Fairbanks Pioneers Home. He has one son and 6 grandchildren.

He enjoys Golden Days times when visitors come to Fairbanks and want to trace old relatives from early days. Talks about his old car. Says it is 1910 model and runs. Presently stored in his neice Marion Weeks' garage.

Charley was stationed at Tanana at Ft. Gibbon during World War I. Didn't stay there long, however.

He tells how he had heater in his milk truck. Smoke would pour out of stack. Was there to keep the milk from freezing.

REEL 2

Reel 2 opens with Charley talking about sale of his cows. He and Mrs. Uotila were the program for the Business and Professional Womens' Club meeting. They were just chatting about early days when one rell finished and conversation was interrupted (on tape).

Charley talks about Dyea again. Fourteen miles to Sheep Camp. Recalls the slide when 60 people were killed. One man who was found dead had tried to dig his way out with his hands and had no flesh left on his fingers when he was found.

Charley says he went to Juneau in 1899 (after White Pass RR put horse freighting to Sheep Camp out of business). Then he went to Tacoma. His father came to Fairbanks in 1903 and the family followed in 1904. In 1920 he went outside (he said his wife wanted to be near her parents who were quite elderly then). He bought a strawberry ranch but didn't like that work so he went into the chicken business. At one time he had 6,000 chickens. When he returned to Fairbanks in 1928 he brought 1,500 chickens with him. He hit Fairbanks at a good time. "They were chicken hungry," he said. Chickens sold fast!

Question: Opinion of Pioneer Home? Great, couldn't ask for anything better. Good care and good food.

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Ina Uotila Mrs. Uotila gets back into the conversation and tells about trips to wood camp from Iditarod. One trip she, Gus and two other men took three horses. Had to camp out on the trail so they all shared one tent. Gus and men put spruce boughs on ground and laid horse blankets over that for warmth. During the night a horse walked over Ina, hitting her in the face with its hoof. She screamed and the horse "passed" right in her face. They went that way many times. Tough trips, walking in the snow and getting her skirts frozen (wet from snow). Finally Ina got a pair of knee pants and boots and wore them. The heck with femine attire in snow and horse manure (that last not quote)