

IDITAROD TRAIL INTERVIEW - CHARLIE EVANS

September 12, 1980
Galena, Alaska

Interviewer:

Tom Beck - Bureau of Land Management

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INTERVIEWER:Charlie Evans of Galena, Alaska. The interview was conducted at Charlie's home in Galena on September 12th, 1980. The interview was conducted for BLM by Tom Beck.

Charlie grew up in Koyukuk, Alaska, where his father had a small store. In 1926 he moved to Galena. Charlie taught school in Galena and Koyukuk for nine years for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Charlie also was a river pilot for the CAA for 14 years. Charlie was a dog musher and participated in the 1925 diphtheria serum run from Nenana to Nome. Charlie ran the segment from Bishop Mountain to Nulato, a distance of 36 miles, at a temperature of 62 degrees below zero.

(Off record at Log No. 0078)

(On record at Log No. 0096)

INTERVIEW

- Q Tell you a little bit about what we're doing, just getting some of the history behind the Iditarod Trail and some of the mail runs. And, of course, you've talked a lot about the serum run, I know, to a lot of people. We're interested in, also, some of the mail runners and, you know, some of the history behind the trail.
- A I carried mail for a couple of months on the Nenana to Nome run; that's on the Yukon. But I had to run over from -- I guess it was McGrath, McGrath down the Kuskokwim to over to -- you come by -- from Nenana to McGrath, I guess it was. I don't know whether -- I think they did, from McGrath to Takotna and Ophir and down there.
- Q Did you have the mail run?
- A Had the (indiscernible) operated that. They fired all the contractors and mail carriers, and they got the -- and then from Nenana to -- along the Yukon here, they got the contractors, when they gave them the trouble, to the mail carriers over there, too.
- Q He ran -- at first he ran the mail run around the McGrath area, and then he came up here to the Yukon?
- A Me? No.
- Q Your father.
- A No. My dad wasn't -- he started Koyukuk village down there and then came about 1901 or something like that.
- Q Which village?
- A Koyukuk.
- Q Oh.
- A It's in mostly Koyukuk River.
- Q Mm hmm (affirmative).
- A And he got married there, and they moved to Tanana Station, which was a river by Deshla. He started the store there, and then the people moved into village. It used to be a pretty good size village once, but now it's dying off. They're scattered all over.
- Q How did he happen to come to Koyukuk?

A He come for gold (laugh).
Q Really?
A He came up on the City ship from Seattle to St. Michael.
Q Huh.
A And got a smaller boat and came on further. That's where he got froze in that Koyukuk. He come up the Koyukuk River to with his gunny sack on his shoulder to get -- gather up his gold.
Q Where was he from?
A It was Idaho.
Q Oh, really?
A Malad, Idaho, was where he was from. But his parents came over in the covered wagons, I guess, and -- Mormons.
Q Hmmm. And he settled and made a little store there at Koyuk.....
A Yeah.
Qat the mouth of the.....
A Yes. Yes. He never went down again to the states for, what, 20 years, I guess.
Q There was no village there at Koyuk?
A There was a village there, yeah, and a school.
Q Before he started the.....
A There was nothing there.
Q And then you were telling me he was running down by McGrath area. What was -- he was doing the mail contract down that area?
A No, I was on the Yukon.
Q No, your father.
A My father, no, he never carried mail. He was a storekeeper, and he cut wood for the steamboats. That's how he made his living for the first year or so.
Q Where did you grow up?
A Here. Koyukuk. And I got married in 1926, and I moved up here. My wife wanted us to live up here just for old time, just -- her home was at Louden. But there's nothing there now.
Q So when you were growing up, you were living at Louden?
A Me?
Q Yeah.
A No, I was in -- I lived here in Galena. They moved the village down here in 1920, and I lived here. As soon as I got married, then we stayed here for three or four years, and I lived up the Koyukuk River. I started this little village up there, too, a store.
Q What village was that?
A It's -- they moved it to Huslia now. It's -- it used to be about 15 miles from their cutoff. It's called -- just a little way to the cutoff to Shaktoolik on the Koyukuk River.
Q What'd you do there?
A Had a store. My dad.
Q You were talking about that -- the -- you said your dad had a contract now for -- somebody had a contract, you were talking about, coming down to McGrath, Ophir. Who -- was that you?
A No, that -- no, there's -- he was over in McGrath when

that -- that contractor was (indiscernible). He got that contract in Nenana, and then he had drivers all the way from -- let's see -- from Ruby to Kaltag and all the way over to Unalakleet.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A Over there.

Q What was his name.

A And (indiscernible) had contract up there. Derrick. He was an old-timer from Nome, dog musher. He was in the (indiscernible) over there too, and he came over with the surveyors, brought the surveyors over with him. He hosted n Whiskey Creek.

Q Did your father have any dogs? Did he keep a dog team?

A Oh, yeah. Everybody had dogs, a few. They never had the big teams (indiscernible). I was growing up, and then they'd have as high as 15 or 20 dogs there, kept around there. I drove them everyday. I didn't have any other transportation.

Q When did you first -- so you -- what did you do? Did you go to school outside?

A I went to school outside for five years.

Q Did you go to school here in the state?

A No. I would vacation up here.

Q Would you?

A Went to school for nine years.

Q Where?

A For the BIA. There at (indiscernible). I wouldn't have stayed in that long, but I was forced (indiscernible) staying where we were. Soon as I could get out of there, I got out of there and went to work first as a river pilot for the (indiscernible).

Q Where were you going, up the Koyukuk?

A I'd go up the Koyukuk far as Bettles, then down the river far as Marshall, and all along the stations along the river there.

Q I heard somewhere that your father was in charge of getting some of the dogs for the serum run. Was that.....

A No, he asked me -- he asked me to -- he asked a Native person. That Native had a pretty good dog team. I just came out of the Koyukuk River then with a dog team. And so my dad asked him if he'd meet (indiscernible) Bishop Mountain and get the serum to -- it was just a -- or that babies were sick in Nome. And this Native said, 'What can I do? How much they going to pay me?' And I got mad, so I said, 'Well, I'll take it.' I said, 'You don't have to pay me anything.' (Laugh.) That's how I got on that run.

Q Do you remember what time of the year? There were two serum runs; is that right?

A Well, it seems like I run in February. February 25th, I think, is the day.

Q What segment did you run? Where did you run?

A From Bishop Mountain to Nulato.

Q How long did it take you?

A (Indiscernible.) I just let them dogs take their time. It was 62 below zero when I took it. I'm talking

(indiscernible).

Q Is that about 25 miles or something?

A No, it's about 35, more like it. And they call it 36 miles.

Q Was it -- did you normally run dogs when it was that cold?

I mean, have you ever run.....

A Yeah, it was cold, I guess, 'cause I let them take their -- take their time, not speed them up, or they'll freeze their lungs.

Q And what was the -- whose team was it that you used?

A Hmmm?

Q Whose team was it that you used for the serum run?

A My own. I had seven dogs then.

Q And what was.....

A I had to come up to Bishop Mountain that night and wait there -- there's an old cabin -- till the team came down there about 4:00 o'clock in the morning. And I took it over from there and take it down to Louden, and then I had to come back to Koyukuk again.

Q Who did you meet at Bishop Mountain?

A That George Noyuk. That's (indiscernible). He took it from Bishop Creek to Galena. And it was really cold that time, so he -- his brother said he'd take it down, and that's how he brought it down to Bishop Mountain, and I took it from him.

Q So you had seven dogs, you said?

A I had seven. That's what I was running.

Q What kind were they? Were they huskies or.....

A They was -- call them malamute dogs. And that was before I start making hobby of raising breeds of dogs. You know, they're part wolf.

Q Oh, you started raising them.

A Yeah.

Q What are the best kind for sled dogs?

A Hmmm?

Q What are the best kind for.....

A It's what you get used to, I think. Bird dogs are -- the ones I breded, they're more willing, but they don't stand up under the weather.

Q So you just mixed them, mixed breeds? Is that what you used, basically?

A Hmmm?

Q You had mixed breeds?

A Mixed team?

Q Yeah.

A Oh, yeah. There -- I had two of them an outside breed I borrowed in Darby to make the trip down, and I used them. I put the two dogs in (indiscernible), brought them back up to Willow's land when I got back, they just died. I didn't know. I didn't know it at the time.

Q The harness was (indiscernible)?

A No, it's -- they don't have any fur on here. They're just skin, and that snow, I guess, it's -- freezes them.

Q The poles are on their -- or on your side?

A (Indiscernible.)

Q Hmm. You remember your lead dog, what your lead dog was

that run in the serum run?

A Yeah, it was a part wolf.

Q Part wolf?

A Yeah. I just started to raise those dogs at that time. I had about five of them of my own that I could (indiscernible).

Q How big a package was the serum? Was that just a.....

A About 10 by 10 or something like that.

Q How much did it weigh?

A I don't know. How did (indiscernible). There was a note came down with it that we bring it in and warm it up. And I had a rabbit skin robe in my sled then. I wrapped it with that and -- but it froze on the way somewhere, and it (indiscernible) very cold all the way from Tanana down to Nulato. And it froze, but it was all right. They used it anyways. But they made another run in April, but that was more for publicity, I guess. It was to see if we could beat our time. And they were way behind.

Q Did you run in the April one?

A No. I was back up -- I was living up at Darby that winter. I just happened to come down to -- I used to bring furs down for my dad to ship out.

Q Hmmm. What did you -- when you were breeding dogs and stuff, what did you look for? I've often been interested in how they decide, like for a lead dog?

A I tried different dogs. I had -- down at Nulato, I had five, five females, and I put them with the different -- different dogs to see how they'd turn out. They all turned out good.

Q What do you look for in a lead dog? I was talking to some people like Joe Redington or something, and I don't know what.....

A What I look at, the way they're built, what size dog they are, about 65, 68 pounds. The heaviest dog I had was 84 pounds, I guess. It was a little too heavy for a tough run.

Q Look for smart dogs for lead dogs?

A They're -- they were -- know how to follow a trail. Once they go on a trail, they'll know it, and then the next year, we had to go across the flats over here, and when I go along, I just make a little marker, a small cut in trees, make a mark on their (indiscernible). And the next day I'll go back over there, breaking trail, and just -- they go right from one tree to -- follow it right across the flats.

Q Hmmm.

A They follow. They follow right where they went before.

Q How was that trail marked from like Ruby to Nulato?

A Oh, they'd just stake a trail in the river. It was all in the river.

Q They put stakes down?

A Yeah, willow stakes. When I had trouble one year, I broke the trail there and staked it all the way down. That contractor had it, Kalpening, let me do it. It was 50 cents a mile to (indiscernible - laugh).

Q That's hard work, huh?

A That's how it gets little of -- we're working to take out --

to empty that sled, and you stop somewhere and pick up another sled load over someplace else.

Q And then you had to break trail, too; right?

A Had to break trail. I didn't have to too much. That leader I had that's been making that run the winter before, and he knew right where to go, and he almost followed in his same tracks.

Q When you were running dogs, did you mainly -- did you have to break the trail for them, or was that usually that trail?

A Oh, at times. At times, I'd have to break a little snow, the snow was too much.

Q How would you do that?

A Put on snowshoes and walk ahead of them.

Q That must have been really time-consuming, huh?

A Yeah. One year I went up from Koyukuk; I was breaking trail on the Koyukuk River, and it took me 14 hours to get up to the first camp.

Q From where?

A Koyukuk to (indiscernible), going up the Koyukuk River. Next day, I was -- go down, I had to break trail again, and it took me 14 hours to get back (laugh).

Q Did you ever use skiis?

A I used them when I was trapping, I guess. But we used skiis on the sled all the time when there's -- when we have good trailers. Sit down and haul the sled, have the -- and keep the runners in the sled tracks, and make it easier to pull it.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). What -- did you make your own sleds?

A Yeah. We make birch sleds.

Q What'd you make them out of? What kind of wood?

A Birch. We used to get rawhide from the coast from the Eskimos, you know, to lash the sleds, you know.

Q And then you'd use birch and lash it together with rawhide?

A (Indiscernible.) They're limber; they're not like hard wood. Hard wood is too stiff and hard to put it for our dogs. And birch wood, I guess (indiscernible).

Q A little give to it.

A Yeah. And it don't squeak like hard wood.

Q How about the runners? What were the runners?

A I used -- I used to use like the runners and, you know, say a half an inch thick, and we used the outside of the birch to protect that birch. They get in -- when it's accustomed to snow, they wear out that birch wood pretty fast, which was not good.

Q Hmmm.

A (Indiscernible). If they wouldn't get wood, they would use iron runners, steel runners.

Q Which worked the best?

A Steel runners were the best when it's warm weather, and that hickory is good for all winter.

Q Is there hickory around here?

A No, we have to order it. I'll just carry it, make a trip for hickory runners in (indiscernible) stores.

Q They did?

A Yeah.

Q How long did it take to make a sled?
A Well, it depends on the -- it takes quite a while to dry. So after you bend it and dry it, and it'll take about a day or so to put it together. I made a -- I made one 14-foot sled up to Koyukuk there in about less than two days.

Q Really?
A Yeah. It was bent and dried. And we didn't have electric tools in them days either (laugh). That's why we basically -- it took so long (laugh).

Q Was it -- birch is pretty easy to bend then, huh?
A Most of the time, if you get the right birch. But some of it'll splinter and (indiscernible).

Q What, do you heat it to bend it or.....
A (Indiscernible). I did with hickory. Hickory bends easy with a -- steam it with a out water, with gunny sacks and out water.

Q Did you -- you said you had a contract hauling wood, did you?
A I did once, one spring. That was down here at Galena.

Q Who were you hauling for?
A Oh, the Alaska Railroad. Pile it out on the bank, and I cut it and hauled it, 50 cords of wood.

Q And then you cut it here on the bank?
A It was right in there. Some of it was right in here, I think. There was an old lake down there, go back down the lakes and cut the wood and haul it out to the river bank.

Q And then.....
A Then they come out and measure it on the first trip, and then you get a -- you get a check in the next year (laugh).

Q The Alaska Railroad, you said?
A The Alaska Railroad, yeah.

Q How did it get down to the railroad?
A The steamboats, they had. There were steamers.

Q You remember some of the names of the steamboats that were running?
A It was -- the Nenana was the -- that's the one I sold the wood to. Before that, they had a steamer, Alice, too. It was a small steamboat.

Q Alice?
A Yeah. And they had a steamer Jacobson and a steamer Davis. They were the last boats on the river. They were steamboats.

Q What kind of boat did you have? You said you were a pilot on a boat up the Koyukuk?
A That was a diesel, diesel-powered tugboat.

Q Edgar Nollner run that boat with you?
A Hmmm?

Q Was Edgar Nollner on that boat with you?
A I only work about three years, I guess, on that pilot.

Q Where did you run from?
A From Nenana to Lake Mechuna (ph). Nenana to -- going towards Marshall a couple times. We mostly run for the Koyukuk, Mechuna (ph), and down far as Kaltag.

Q Were you hauling freight?
A There was (indiscernible), Merkoryuk or whatever stations,

they would haul all their groceries and all their equipment, tractors and everything.

Q How long did you do that for?

A Hmmm?

Q How long did you run that boat?

A Fourteen years.

Q What was the name of the boat?

A It had different names. They called it Sigurd 24C. I don't know what else they called it after that. They changed the name for that. It didn't -- it was just a boat, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: Let's turn this off for a minute.

(Off record at Log No. 2901)

(Tape Change - Tape No. 1 of 1, Side B)

(On record at Log No. 0045)

INTERVIEWER:by Tom Beck.

(Off record at Log No. 0049)

(On record at Log No. 0550)

A It used to be a town there right at the mouth of the Yukon River.

Q Where? Right at the.....

A Yuki River. It empties up there about (indiscernible). It empties into the Yukon.

Q What was the name of that?

A It was Lewis Landing. At Dishkaket Trail was. But that was where.....

Q One of the things we were wondering about, where was Lewis Landing? This was the trail that went down. We think it was somewhere up in this area, but we're not really sure. Do you remember?

A Mostly it was here. Here was the Yuki River. Here, the Yuki River empties here at Yuki's Landing. At Lewis Landing. In Whiskey Creek. And you can take it from Whiskey Creek to Nulato, and then George (indiscernible) took it from Nulato to Bishop Mountain.

Q This is a.....

A This is Galena way down here.

Q Yeah. Do you remember a village being there at Lewis Landing?

A Only to deal with the boats, the river boats, I think till 1950, I think.

(Interruption - Side conversation)

Q I was saying, do you remember.....

A Yeah, Yuki Landing. Used to have the store there and (inaudible) 1915.

Q Who ran that store? Do you remember?

A That was -- I used to go there by boat in the summer.

Q Do you remember who ran the store? Who was the.....

A Oh, Dave Lewis.

Q Was there any -- were there other people living there besides Dave?
A Yeah, there was about 40 or 50 Natives there, and they had a roadhouse in there, you know, that Yuki Trail, they called it, to go over to Dishkaket.
Q Yuki Trail?
A Yeah, that goes over to Innoko.
Q When did Dave stop -- when did that roadhouse stop running?
A When I went outside to school, when I came back, it's -- the village was all gone.
Q When did you.....
A I came back in 1922. And he'd moved his store up to Ruby then.
Q So he -- did he run a roadhouse in Ruby too?
A He had a store in Ruby.
Q Did you ever travel the trail there from Lewis Landing down the Yuki Trail down to Dishkaket?
A No, we just went up there just -- we would always go up there with the boat to Yuki Trail. I've been up to Dishkaket on the Innoko River.
Q Mm hmm (affirmative).
A I camped up there below Ophir in the spring (indiscernible), and I came down the Yuki River all the way to Holy Cross.

(Side comments)

Q Do you remember the trail here from.....
A That's my daughter.
Q Do you remember the trail here from like Lewis Landing? Is this -- did it pretty much follow the bank along here?
A It did. It'd go right to the river. We went from Ruby, (indiscernible) made it out there, down to Nulato for a couple months.
Q Well, did the trail follow along the river? Here it shows it -- we show the rail -- trail cutting off right here at.....
A It's -- that was newer, but they never used that.
Q They never used this cutoff there?
A (Inaudible - simultaneous speech) it was Koyukuk when they go through that. And the people going camping around the river, and they all the time make (indiscernible), so they made them follow the river, and they'd stop at every place and pick up the Natives, (indiscernible) Natives.
Q Well, this -- so the -- when you ran it, it just pretty much ran along the river then.
A Mm hmm (affirmative). All down the river.
Q Where were some of the roadhouses or shelter cabins along here?
A There were quite a few of them down on the end. The Signal Corps had, you know, about every 10, 15 (indiscernible). You know, never used them. We had a shelter in (indiscernible) Bear Creek and one up in here somewhere.
Q To the east in here?
A Down towards Louden.
Q Louden's down here. Right here.

A Way up the trail.

Q Yeah, did the trail -- well, see, we're not sure where the trail was. We have the trail marked here, where we thought it was, which it went off.....

A Yeah, 'cause there's.....

Qthis way.

Aa river out there.

Q It went on the river all the time, huh? You actually went down to Loudon then.

A Yeah.

Q And then it followed all the.....

A (Indiscernible) to Galena.

Q There was a roadhouse in Loudon?

A (Indiscernible.) There was -- there's a roadhouse there. It started 1920, and then they moved the village on the hill. And he had a roadhouse here in Galena.

Q What was his name.

A Nollner.

Q Loller?

A Nollner.

Q Oh. Is that some relation to Edgar?

A Yes. That's Edgar's dad, too. It's my wife's dad, so it's Edgar's sister.

Q Let's see. How about up in here? This is between Bishop Rock here -- is that the same as Bishop Mountain?

A Yeah, that's Bishop Mountain.

Q And this is the river here. Did the trail just go along.....

A It followed the river.

Qthe river?

A It followed the river all the way. And it'd go from point to point on this. It didn't go into -- it weren't any farther, then you could cut across the portage and.....

Q Was there anything here at Bishop Mountain? Was there a village there, a roadhouse or anything?

A There's a little village there now.

Q Was there then?

A It used to be a mini cabin stop there. A little cabin stop at Koyukuk. Where's -- Bishop Mountain, Loudon, and then at Melozi up there, too, Melozi and Lewis Landing. And (indiscernible) must be up around here. Then there was a telegraph station too.

Q When you say there was a mail stop, was there a ca- -- a special cabin?

A Well, it's -- this'll be a cabin. He was a storekeeper (indiscernible). But they have stops right along.

Q Who -- do you remember who ran the cabin like at Bishop Mountain then?

A It was -- the church take one of those things, those things that it's under.

Q (Indiscernible.)

A Yeah, he was carrying (indiscernible), and I was (indiscernible).

Q Did he also take people in, like as a roadhouse?

A Well, he'd stop anywhere in -- he'd (indiscernible).

How much did he charge? Do you remember?

A A dollar a night then. A dollar for breakfa- -- no. It was six bits for breakfast and a dollar for dinner.

Q Sounds good now, doesn't it?

(Laughter)

A They run that till about 1927 when they raised the price to \$2.00 a night.

Q How long was that -- was he there at Bishop Mountain? Do you.....

A What?

Q How long was he running that cabin there at Joe?

A Oh, he just did it till 4:00 o'clock in the morning, cleaned it.

Q No, I mean.....

A Till the servants got there, then they would (indiscernible) went to Nulato.

Q But how long, like, you know, in the '20s did he stop doing that? Or did most of these cabins go out of.....

A They're all down there. (Indiscernible) they had 25 left. That cabin was still there in 1927, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Let me stop this if you want to.....

(Off record at Log No. 1602)

(On record at Log No. 1606)

Q You said you got down to Ophir on the Innoko?

A I went down (indiscernible). I went over (indiscernible). And we built a couple boats there in the (indiscernible). Then we came down the 525 miles down to Holy Cross.

Q Did you get to Ophir there?

A I did. I looked at it from on top of a hill there. They was camping about five miles from there, hunting beaver, and now, we'd just go up there. (Indiscernible) got some gas for me, about a kettle for me, for going through there and a two-horsepower (indiscernible - laugh). We used it all the way out the Innoko River, too.

Q Really?

A Save road.

Q Was that Innoko -- that was pretty winding, that river.

A Yeah, it's (indiscernible).

Q Did you ever get to Iditarod?

A Nice river. Hmmm?

Q Did you ever get to Iditarod at all, the town of Iditarod?

A No. They just (indiscernible). It was the first time. We never been on that river before going into (indiscernible). No maps far as it went into that Dishkaket. Max Simel had the store there. The lady used to go through there, Max Simel's place. I think they call it Fairview or something like that.

Q Fairview Road? Roadhouse or something?

A Yeah, Fairview.

Q That was in Dishkaket?

A Yeah.

Q How many people lived there, do you remember? Were there.....

A There was just the storekeeper, that's all.

Q Max Simel?

A Max Simel, yeah.

Q Do you remember where the trail went into -- from Lewis Landing down to Dishkaket? Do you.....

A Yeah. Could be now about 30 miles on that trail there, trapping martin. They used to have roadhouses out in (indiscernible) years ago.

Q Do you remember where they were approximately?

A No. I seen some boxes at one of them about 30 miles out. A cabin (inaudible).

Q Ask you a little bit, just a few more minutes, about that serum run. Were you -- you had something about going out 'cause it was so cold when -- I mean, that was -- that was usually colder than you'd be out running dogs, wasn't it, 60-some below?

A I used to go out there any time when -- when I had to go out. I mean, our cold weather didn't bother making -- 'cause I keep myself warm, but them dogs, there was -- you had to watch them. The dogs (indiscernible).

Q Could you -- did they have -- did you make boots for them, booties for their feet and stuff, like they do now in the race?

A They -- we did it in spring when they'd start bleeding, you know, thaw and freeze, cover up their feet. We'd use the canvas boots when -- I usually used caribou skin boots 'cause that's better.

Q Caribou skin?

A Yeah. It's soft, caribou skin. Their toenails, they go through the -- through the skin. Soon as it gets a little bit, their toenails go right through and they can't even walk.

Q Get a little traction on the.....

A Yeah, they'll slide around there. And they rest a long time, too. And that's the whole spring.

Q And what time did you start that run? Is that -- did you say in the early morning, you started that serum run?

A Four o'clock.

Q In the morning?

A Yeah. Pitch dark. It was dark all the way, at that time (indiscernible) at 8:00 o'clock, I guess, or 9:00 o'clock. But it started to snow by the time I got to Nulato.

Q Could you see the trail markings at all?

A No, but the dogs were seeing them. They were going by that open water. There was still open water on the river, and at least about half my dogs was going by there and Reed Coe (ph) let me know there's fog. And I was about -- the fog was about this high on me; I was holding the sled and couldn't see the dogs or anything, just see just like -- like above the clouds (laugh).

Q Hope they knew where they were going.

A And it's really cold. That fog go right through.

Q Could you -- if they didn't know where they were going, could you tell them?

A The dogs? They'd follow the trail, just by the trail. That was a good trail at that time. That's how they never beat our time, all those things of the serum drivers. They made a trip once; they went down to -- what is it? -- five days and seven hours, I guess, from Nenana to Nome. And when they were done, they was 15 days and they weren't there yet (laugh).

Q How come it was such a good trail at that time?

A Mail teams was running over it all the time. It was hard packed; it was almost like cement, icy, icy road.

Q Did you run the mails at all?

A Two months.

Q Once?

A Two months.

Q When was that?

A I think twice. It was in '26 because I think that Mitell (ph) got that contract, got started, had a hemorrhage, and it was 50 below.

(Interruption)

A And he had got married. They got married at that time, and then I had to take the mail for him to -- up to Whiskey Creek and Ruby and -- every two -- for two months. Then I quit. I didn't -- I just got married. I wouldn't be out on the trail all the time.

Q You got -- who was this who got a hemorrhage?

A Derrick, that contractor. He was a good friend of Giselle's daughter, and he asked me to -- if I'd take the mail for a couple of trips.

Q Was he okay or did he.....

A Hmmm?

Q Did he survive?

A He got -- yeah, he got over it, and he's -- I hauled him back up to Whiskey Creek, and for two weeks after that, and I made one more trip up to Ruby and back and then returned (indiscernible).

Q Did you ever get lost mushing dogs?

A Oh, yeah. If they get off of the trail or -- you always have a trail (indiscernible).

Q A lot more game back then?

A There's not a moose in the country around there. They moved in there in 1928, and I had just went up to (indiscernible). We loaded freight and moved. And I said what's that on that sand bar, something. I looked at it, and it was moose tracks. I never saw a moose track before then; it was just like a cow track.

Q Really?

A It's just like cow tracks. The people didn't know what cattle track it was -- they never seen moose before.

Q Wonder how they happened to just start moving in the area.

A (Indiscernible) they're moving out. Guys were there, and they'd never seen a moose in Kotzebue. Now, there's lots of

them up there. I think they're getting -- moving away from civilization.

Q There's lots of them around, I think, too. Did you used to trap a lot?

A I trapped every winter. After all, we can get any (indiscernible). Snare rabbits and eat it. (Indiscernible.) And lots of fish.

Q How much can you get for -- what did you do with the pelts?

A With what?

Q The pelts, the furs?

A Oh, some of the traders would trade out for groceries. No cash.

Q Where were the traders located?

A They was way down other end (indiscernible). It was where, sometimes when I got beaver, and I'd (indiscernible) 'cause I need some cash (indiscernible) get it.

Q Okay. Well, thanks for talking to me. I know you've done this before, so I appreciate your taking the time.

(Off record at Log No. 3208)

(On record at Log No. 3209)

Q Here's the map of Dishkaket area; here's Dishkaket.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q And this comes down here to -- let's see. Ophir should be in here. Ophir.

A It was far down -- comes through right and splits. That's as far as I been up there -- or down there that way, or even there. And I was camping down the road here, went across country there in (indiscernible).

Q Do you remember any of the roadhouses along here or in, in here?

A We're down the trail from the -- there's the -- down the Yuki? There was a store there, too. Where's that Yuki River? Dishkaket would be where?

Q This is Dishkaket here. Okay.

A (Inaudible comment) down here. I can't -- this map is (indiscernible), then McGrath was under -- this is (indiscernible) on that road from Nenana, and there was another one from Ruby, went over to McGrath too.

Q How did they go in the -- going from Ruby to McGrath?

A They go (indiscernible) and then all the way to (indiscernible) then up to Ophir.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). Here's.....

A Ophir and Tulavana and then McGrath.

Q Here's Fulder here, and this is Ophir down here. And they did come down this way? This goes up to -- there's two trails, apparently. Here's Ophir, and the trail is split.

A See, one trail, they carried horse -- I mean, with horses like from -- I don't think so. They had no airplanes in them days. They got their mail from McGrath -- or from Nenana.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And direct to (indiscernible) and then to McGrath, and then they went out of this (indiscernible). Them prospectors

This file is part of the a laerger series of interviews
about the Iditarod Trail Project.

See also:

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