

ORAL HISTORY 86-112

Eustace Ziegler

April 2, 1967

Seattle, Washington

Fergus Hoffman, interviewer

Recording starts in a middle of a conversation about prayer. Eustace Ziegler said he came up on the Yukatan with Captain Johnny O'Brien. It took eleven days for them to get here. He arrived on January 15, 1909 in Cordova. He said the mountains were beautiful and he thought he was in paradise. He met an Anglican minister who later became pastor to President Roosevelt in Hyde Park. They got off the boat and walked up to town. One of the ladies had a monkey and another had a parrot. He was twenty-five years old at that time and he had never seen that profession before. The minister was Edward Pearsons Newton wanted to stop to get decorations for a wedding that evening. He collected flowers at the saloon and artificial flowers from the milliner. They decorated the Red Dragon and had the wedding. That was the first day he was in Alaska. E.A. Hegg was the photographer in town who later became very famous. He saw some beautiful paintings on the wall at Hegg's. He met Sydney Laurence. Hoffman said it was hard to converse with Laurence because he was deaf and was a very sweet character. They were selling Laurence's paintings for \$7.50 to \$10.00. The Luxembourg Gallery bought one of Sydney Laurence's paintings. They only pay \$500 for any painting. Ziegler said Laurence taught him a lot of things about painting. He talked about Laurence painting Denali. He has a lot of admiration for Laurence. He talked about Laurence selling a painting for 10,000. Hoffman asked what school of painting Laurence belonged to. Ziegler said he is a naturalistic painter. He followed nature closely. He wasn't good painting anatomy. Ziegler said he needed to get a bit of help to paint boats. Ziegler said Laurence was not a drinker. Hoffman asked where the Laurence paintings came from that are in the Olympia brewery at Tumwater. Ziegler said they came from the Washington Hotel. Laurence went to California for a while. Ziegler thought Laurence gave Alaskans their great taste in pictures and said that Alaskans have more paintings per capita in the union. Ziegler said an artist is a condemned profession and he keeps quiet about it. Hoffman asked if Cap Lathrop bought one of Laurence's paintings. Ziegler said yes, one of them is hanging at the university now. He said the painting was exposed to sunlight and took some of the brightness from it. Lathrop gave it to Miss Dickey and she gave it to the university. Hoffman asked about technically what happened to the painting. Ziegler said it is a glaze that is a transparent film that you put over the painting. Laurence used a color called Rose Dora. It is not a permanent color. Very few colors are permanent. He paints just in black, yellow, red and white and nothing else. Laurence used a more elaborate palette than that. Hoffman asked about Laurence's technique. Ziegler said that Laurence painted with a brush and Laurence told him to spread it on. Ziegler studied painting at Yale and he learned from Sergeant Kendell.

Hoffman asked about Laurence's art training. Ziegler said he studied in France. He did paint in England. Ziegler met Laurence the first day he was in Cordova. Laurence lived there several months and then went to Mt. McKinley. People raised money for Laurence to go there and paint. The people who

donated money were given paintings in return. Laurence made three trips into Mt. McKinley. Hoffman commented that Laurence was not making a great deal of money when Ziegler first met him. Ziegler said Laurence wasn't making a lot of money, but after three years he was. Laurence never had a lot of money. Hoffman commented that the Simpsons in Juneau helped Laurence for a while. Ziegler said yes they were very good to him. One of the Mellans bought some of Laurence's paintings. Ziegler talked about some of the people that bought his own paintings. Ziegler said Laurence was a kind and gentle man. Hoffman asked if Laurence was a fast painter. Ziegler said he was a very fast painter and he himself is a very fast painter, but doesn't work many hours any more. Laurence worked mostly at night. His wife, Jeanne has a collection of his sketches.

Hoffman asked when he last saw Laurence. Ziegler said he saw him shortly before he died. Hoffman talked about imposters. Ziegler said he has seen several including one on an Alaska Steamship. Hoffman asked Ziegler about his work at funerals and a painting of one of them. Ziegler said Ted Lambert did that painting. When he came up to Alaska he came as a missionary. He tried to be a saint for a year and a half. He was in Cordova a few days and a poor Native came up to him. He took his coat off and gave it to the boy. They put this in the paper and Ziegler earned a good reputation. Ziegler said he made a rotten missionary. He ended up quitting. Neal Dillard told him that the bishop wanted to see him. The bishop told him that they could only be the best of friends.

Hoffman asked about Laurence in Cordova. Ziegler said Laurence never hung around saloons or anything like that. Hoffman said he believed that Laurence had a prior marriage. Ziegler said he wouldn't say. Ziegler said he left Alaska about thirty years ago, but has made about 30 trips back to Alaska. During the Depression he went to two different people and asked for financial support. He regrets asking people to buy his paintings. Hoffman asked about Laurence's excursions to paint Mt. McKinley and if he traveled heavy. Ziegler said he gave him a picture of his cabin and it was near the Peters Hills north of Cache Creek. Ziegler thought he made the cabin himself. Laurence was a pretty good carpenter. He was a magnificent marine painter. He had been a marine painter before he came to Alaska. Laurence was calm and didn't have any troubles finishing paintings. Ziegler talked about his own current painting habits. He comments about being satisfied with own's life.