

H97-175-10

Tom Long, Jr.

Harrie Hughes, interviewer

February 24, 1961

Fairbanks, Alaska

7" tape

Thomas H. Long's father came into Dawson with his two other brothers to mine in 1898. His uncle's names were John Long and Les Long. They mined together for one winter in Dawson. Les returned to the states. His father went Outside in 1900. He married Susie Long in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 1903 they went to the Phillipines and his brother, Donald Long was born in 1905. They then went to Panama where he was born in 1908. His dad was working on building the canal. In 1911 they moved to Oakland. In 1912 his father went to Ruby, Alaska as a deputy United States marshal. He was there for three years before the rest of the family joined him in 1915. They traveled through Whitehorse and waited in Dawson for break up on the Yukon River. Ruby was a large town at that time. Ruby was a supply center for the mining district around it. The mining started about twenty-eight miles behind Ruby on Long Creek. There were quite a few creeks bearing gold including Poor Man which was further away. Ruby had four or five grocery stores, saloons, a newspaper, and hotels. On Long Creek there were two or three saloons and a hotel. Poor Man was never as ever large as Long Creek but there was lots of activity on that creek. There were many boiler houses on Poor Man Creek. All the work was done by teams. There were lots of horses. All the wood was hauled by horses. All the freight was hauled by horses. Matched horses. There were fast horses for passenger service. Everything was brought into Ruby by boat in the summer. By the end of navigation that was the end of freight coming into Ruby. All your groceries were brought in and everyone bought in large quantities. They would have to turn the eggs to keep them. He attended school with white and Native students. They had a teacher from the states. It was rare to have the same teacher for more than one year. All the classes were in one room. He thought the teacher had time to give each student personalized attention. The student numbers varied up and down. There might be twenty or twenty-five students. Ruby was a bustling town. On the Fourth of July there was a celebration. They had games for the adults and children. There was a big dance, too. There were two dance halls in town, the Moose Hall and the Pioneer Hall. Everyone would dance together there wasn't any discrimination. The dance would go on all night. When he was a kid he would be the town cryer and tell everyone what was at the movies that night. He used to sell newspapers. Twenty-five cents was the smallest amount you could find. They used coins. Kids would run errands for a dollar. It was easy to make money. In 1920 he and his mother and brother went to the states for his brother's education. He remembers at Tanana they had Ft. Gibbon. Horner Hot Springs was about twelve miles above Ruby. They heated the roadhouse with heat from the hot springs. Mrs. Horner grew vegetables of all kinds. People would travel up to the springs by boat in the summer and dog team in the winter for a short visit. They traveled to Fort Gibbon at Tanana for a visit. The young men were assembled at Ft. Gibbon during WWI before they were sent out to the United States. He talked about the boats they had

on the river at that time. They would transfer to the larger boats at St. Michaels. The old Victoria was on the St. Michael to Seattle run for years and years. That was the boat they left on in 1920. He remembers the largest boat that went up the Yukon River. It was the y came up the Yukon River, the Eilson. The wood camps were an industry in themselves on the Yukon and Tanana River. The boats usually had one or two boilers. They boats might stop and load wood for two or three hours. Sometimes the passengers would load wood, too. They had to wait for three weeks for a boat at St. Michaels. His dad came out in 1921. Until 1926 they lived in Oakland, L.A. and Kirkland, Washington. They tried raising chickens in Washington. They returned to Alaska in 1926. He talked about the chicken business in Washington. They would use electric lights to keep them awake longer in the winter. They fed them a special diet to promote egg laying.

After returning to Alaska they moved back to Ruby. His father was a deputy marshal. Tom worked for the Alaska Road Commission. He was seventeen. He worked on the Richardson Highway and the Circle Highway. He remembers the trucks being pulled by horses to get over the summit. He talked about the different vehicles they used. They used tractors to clear the roads and they used a drag. All the vehicles were hand cranked. They would build a fire under the engine to heat it up. He once caught an engine on fire doing this. Tom talked about Rika W~~W~~alen. He freighted supplies to the road camps. He also hauled workers to and from camps. There was a lot of game from Chatanika to Circle. The caribou would come through during the fall migration for ten days or two weeks at a time. They would be thick. In the spring of the year the cows and the calves would come through in the hundreds. He didn't have a lot to do with fur bearing animals. In the fall of 1927 his brother drowned in Fish Lake along with Herbert Ingstrom. Charlie Anderson ran the roadhouse at Fish Lake. Tom's brother was freighting during September and tried to make it across Fish Lake at night. The boat capsized and both people aboard drowned. About one hundred men tried to find the bodies. The next spring Tom and Gus Ingstrom, the brother of Herbert Ingstrom, went to Fish Lake to look for the bodies. His father came up later and found the bodies. That was in late June. They brought them to Fairbanks to bury them. In 1928 Tom attended school on Cushman Street. He worked as a janitor at the school. He also raced dogs in Fairbanks from Chatanika to Fairbanks. They also had a race from Livengood and back. They had a forced rest in Livengood. Tom trained dogs after school and then worked at the school. They had to walk to school even if it was -50 or -60. They never closed the schools because of weather. They just dressed for the cold and went to school. He had mukluks made of reindeer and moose.