

H97-175-24

Patrick Savage, Tom Long

November 5, 1960

Fairbanks, Alaska

Patrick Savage came to Nome, Alaska in 1914. He was born in Ireland. He had always been thinking about coming to Alaska. He wanted to go when he was nine or ten years old. Stanish O'Sullivan had come to Alaska when Patrick Savage was a young boy. They were distantly related. He left Ireland in September, 1907. The harvest was finished for the summer and a cousin of his invited him to go to the United States. They had to wait a while to get a boat. There was a depression going on at that time. They both got a job outside of the town of Waterbury in a factory. He worked there for about a year. He then worked as a shipping clerk for a while. Next he worked for a blacksmith shop. He then worked for a packing company and then an insurance company. He then moved to California. He worked in a pipe mill making steam pipes. He also tended bar there. He came up to Alaska in the spring of 1914. He came by boat to Nome. They came on the Victoria. They had to wait a few days for the ice to break up before they could get into port. He stayed there for four or five months. He said the whole area had been washed out. The heating plant had been washed out. He worked in the plant for a while. He worked on rebuilding the plant. He didn't want to join the union because he didn't think he would have that kind of work for very long. The boss said that he would hire a union man if they found a qualified person to replace Patrick. Patrick worked on the job because he was the only qualified person. He then went up the river at the end of August. He went to Ruby and stayed there until 1915. Tom Long's father was in Ruby at the same time. He then went down the Yukon and up the Innoko to Iditarod. He stayed there and in Flat until 1954. He mined on Flat Creek. He started mining there from 1923 to 1931. He mined by hand and water. They shut down the mine and quit. He worked on the bridge on 1931 and 1932. He returned to Ireland for a visit and then returned to Flat. He started mining again for himself and mined until 1954. He moved to Ruby and lost a lot of money on mining. The area in Flat was later mined more extensively and was profitable. They had a lot of equipment to mine. He hopes to sell his gold mining machinery. Tom asked him what he thought of Trail Creek. Patrick thought it had a very good chance. Harrie asked him about the game in the area. Patrick said there were a lot of moose in the area. He said that they had a wonderful garden. Harrie asked what the average season was in the area he mined. Patrick said it was about one hundred days, from the 15th of May until the first of October. Tom asked what the population of Flat was when he first arrived. Patrick said there were about five hundred people in Flat. Now there are only about five people. Iditarod is a ghost town. When he first came into Flat they said that the camp was worked out. There are still outfits working there now and they all did well this past summer. The Micsovich family still mines there. There was a bank in Flat not very long ago. Tom asked if he remembered the Black Bear case. It was a mail robbery. Schermeyer was the name of the roadhouse that was involved in the case. Patrick talked about the case. Tom asked him if kept a dog team. Patrick said he had a dog team. Tom said it was the only mode of travel at one time. Patrick talked about the activity along the Yukon River. The money stayed in the country. Tom and Patrick discussed mining. Patrick talked about the bush pilots that came into Flat. Bill Banks, Barnhill and Bennette were

32:40

some of the pilots. The mail came by dog team from Fairbanks. They went from Fairbanks to Ruby and then to several locations and Flat. In later years the mail came from Nenana and Curry. Coke had the contract at one time. He later became a judge. He raised dogs in Nome. Tom asked about characters in Flat. Tom said they had the Dago Kid and the Scurvy Kid in Ruby. Patrick said they had the Blueberry Kid. The Blueberry Kid had been accused of murder on the Koyukuk. Tom mentioned Dirty Gurty. Harrie Hughes talked about recording the old timers. Tom said there were three big dogsled racing centers in Alaska: Nome, Ruby and the Iditarod races. In Ruby they raced from Ruby to Long Creek. Tom asked where they raced in Iditarod. Patrick said they raced from Flat to Iditarod and back. Tom and Patrick talked about the Going Kid who also raced in Canada. Sepalla used to go on the races, too. Tom said he knew the Going Kid well. He bred his own dogs. He drove with a whip. It had a long silk top to the whip. It was braided silk. The mail carriers at Ruby were Ben Vierek, Scotty Clark, and Milligan, Bill Burke. It would come in twice a week into Ruby. Patrick said they didn't come that often to Iditarod. Sometimes they would have to have four men on snowshoes making a trail for the dogsled. The mail would come in on time. The load limit was 800 pounds on the Yukon River and 600 pounds cross country. From Ruby and McGrath would transfer at McGrath. Tom said the musher was on skis or on the Ouija board. Tom explained how the Ouija board was used. It would put more pull on the dogs instead of skis. It was attached to the main tow line. They had a rough lock which was a chain that would hold the sled back when going downhill. Patrick said his dogs would turn around and look at him when there was a difference in the pull. Tom said fifteen or sixteen dogs was a common number of dogs on a team. Tom first starting driving dogs when he was seven years old. He can remember the country before the train and airplane came along. Patrick said it is nice to hop on an airplane and get to Fairbanks. Tom said he traveled 1200 miles by dog team to count 200 people in 1939-1940. He was counting trappers and wood choppers. He traveled five days to count just one man. There were no trails to follow, either. He carried a tent, stove, dog food and his own food. Harrie asked if they used a radio. Tom said the radio became popular in the 1920s. They had radios with big dry cell batteries. You had to erect a high antenna. You could get Fairbanks and a lot of foreign stations. Tom asked if he ever went to Fairbanks in the early days. Patrick said it was 1932 before he saw Fairbanks. Patrick knew Tom's father. His father would travel by dog team too. His father was a deputy marshal in Ruby. His uncle John Long was the first U.S. commissioner in Fairbanks. The three brothers came into Dawson in 1898. Les Long left after one year. Tom talked about his family traveling around. His father moved to Ruby in 1912. Tom and his brother and mother came in by boat in 1915. Tom asked Patrick how large the nugget was that he had at the university. Patrick said it was thirty-four and a half ounces. He sold it a few years ago. He sold it for seventy dollars an ounce for it. That was the largest nugget that he ever found. Larger ones have been found in Nome and Ruby. Patrick talked about a nugget taken from the Mascot Mine by Burt Walker. Tom asked about gold taken from the Long Creek site. Patrick said he got thirty-five dollars an ounce. They talked about dredges in Flat. Tom asked about the best producing creeks in the Flat area. Patrick said Otter Creek was the best producing creek. Flat Creek produced too. Patrick thought it would be worked out in three or four years. He said when he came in to the country in 1915 that it was considered worked out and it still produced. He thought Ruby will still produce gold. Tom asked if he got married in Alaska. Patrick said he met his wife in Flat. She was a school teacher in Flat and came from Nebraska. Tom asked how old he was when he came to Alaska. Patrick said he was twenty-five years old when he arrived in Alaska. Tom asked how many miles it is from Fairbanks to Flat. Patrick said it was 380

miles by air. It is 100 miles further by dog team. By dog team in the early days it would take about fifteen days to get from Flat to Fairbanks. From Ophir to Flat it would take three days. From Ophir to Ruby it would take four days. Patrick talks about getting mail only twice a month. Patrick reads one of his poems that he dedicated to the pioneers. He gives the pioneers permission to set it to music.

Pt. 2 is a duplicate of Pt. 1