

H97-175-29

Carl Olsen with Harrie Hughes, Frank Young
Frank Jeske with Harrie Hughes, Frank Young
Jack Crook with Harrie Hughes
Fairbanks, Alaska
February 12, 1961

Side A

Carl Olsen came to Alaska in 1910. He was born in Norway. He left Norway when he was fifteen years old. He entered the country in Savannah, Georgia. He worked as a seaman. He worked on several ships that came to Alaska. He worked for the NAT & T Company. He stayed in Iditarod for a while and then went back to Dikeman. He worked in the mines at Flat. He worked for Ben Fuhrman who had a lease from John Holmgren. He stayed in Dikeman for two years. He then went to Ophir until 1942. He did a little bit of mining for himself and worked for John Collins. He then came to Fairbanks in 1943 and worked for the USBD. He worked out at Ladd Field for a while. He worked for Andy Suasdow in the wood cutting business, too. Frank asked why he was called the Singing Swede. Carl talked about singing for forty-eight hours at one time. Harrie asked if he cut wood when he worked the riverboats. Carl said the wood was already on the sides of the river. They talked about the different captains of the river boats.

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Frank J. Jeske was born in San Jose, California. There were only 25,000 people in San Jose at the time he lived there. He came to Juneau in 1919 and worked at the Treadwell Mine. He had worked for the Treadwell Gold Mining Company in San Francisco. He served in the army during the war. He decided to come to Alaska. He worked at the mine. It later caved in and was flooded by seawater. In 1920 he went to Skagway and got a job with the NC Company. He traveled over the White Pass and then waited for two weeks in Whitehorse for breakup. He went down to Dawson and was supposed to work for the NC Company there. About that time the flu epidemic was going through Alaska and several men died including Larry O'Keefe in Nenana. He accompanied Richmond down the river. He ended up in Ruby for a couple of months. They were still mining a little bit in Ruby at the time. He talked about the Fisher roadhouse that was in Ruby. The first airplane came into Ruby in 1920. They landed on a sand bar right above Ruby. He worked at the hot springs for a couple of months and then went down to St. Michael and stayed there for a couple of winters. He moved to McGrath in 1921-22 and continued working for the NC Company as a bookkeeper. The Treadwell had a hard rock mine in McGrath. Frank and Harrie talked about Frank Wiseman. Harrie became the agent in McGrath after working for the NC Company for ten years. Lee Guardman was also in the area. He flew reindeer meat into some of the mining camps. He said there were only about two boats a year that came into McGrath. He came to Fairbanks in 1942 after Harry Isle was offered him a job with the road commission. His first job was working on the steele bridge at Delta. Carl Loftberg was the superintendent of the road commission over there. Later on Carl had a store in Anchorage. Harrie asked if he had a dog team. Frank said the NC Company at McGrath had a dog team with seven dogs. They made trips for customers out to Takotna and out to the creeks sometimes. In 1923 Ben Eielson came

over with the mail. It was the first time people in McGrath saw an airplane. Eielson had a contract with the government to make ten mail trips from Fairbanks to McGrath. Harry Bennett came after that. Noel Wien and Joe ~~Crawson~~^{Eielson} also flew in there. Ben Fairbanks flew in there lots of times. Frank was asked about the prices for food at that time. Frank said flour was fifteen dollars for a hundred pounds of flour. Butter was 2.25 for a two pound can. Bacon was eight-five cents for a pound. Harrie asked him about the life of the Natives and the missionary priest that used to travel around. Frank said in McGrath there were no missionaries. It was too isolated. St. Michael they had a couple of missions. There were Russian, Episcopal and Presbyterian missions all along the Yukon. Harrie and Frank talked about Charlie Homeyer. Harrie talked about John Cross. Frank talked about the trading post at Berrys Landing. The name of the place was later changed to Medfra. He helped them take stock in the store. Frank said there weren't a lot of bush pilots at the time. They usually flew out of Fairbanks. Frank talked about Charlie Thompson and Ed Young. Frank said he worked for the road commission for five years. Harrie asked if he also worked at Ladd Field. Frank said he did work there starting in 1948.

Jack Crook was born in 1886. Much of the interview is difficult to understand. Jack talked about working at various places he worked in his hometown. He came to Vancouver, British Columbia in 1906. He was working at the docks, in a sawmill and delivering milk. He traveled to Japan on a ship and talked about his work on the ship. He took a boat to Skagway, Alaska. They left on the train for Whitehorse and came down on a riverboat to Dawson. They got to Dawson and he was sent out to a mining camp. He worked for Yukon Gold. He left that job and hauled logs for a while. This was in 1908. He then worked for the Yukon Gold Company again. He worked on various jobs in the mess kitchen at a camp. He left Dawson in early October and traveled back to Seattle. He returned to Dawson and worked for the Hyrum brothers. When he was traveling to Dawson he walked from roadhouse to roadhouse (they call them posts in Canada) with a Canadian and a Swedish man. He described the travel between each roadhouse. They stopped at one roadhouse before they got to the Yukon. It was twenty-two below and it was the middle of April. They stopped at many places including Selkirk and Eureka. The roadhouses were twenty-two miles apart. They finally made it into Dawson. He started working on Bonanza Creek. They were living in log cabins. After about ten days he was hurt and couldn't work. This was in 1909. He went out to look for another job. He went to Grand Forks and stayed in a cabin. He then went to Dawson and stayed at a hotel. He then went to work for Bill Paddock. He cooked and hauled wood during the winter. During the spring he started selling vegetables for Bill Paddock. He later sold flowers and vegetables in a store and went out to the creeks around Dawson to sell produce. He worked in a couple of cafes. He also worked at a bakery in town. He met Bill Idle from Fairbanks. Bill talked him into going to Fairbanks. He left on July 16, 1911 and traveled on a rowboat down the Yukon River. He made it down to Circle in five days. He sold his boat and walked over the trail to Fairbanks. The first place he stopped was at the Fairview Hotel. Bill Idle got a job waiting tables. Bill worked at the Model Cafe. Jack also worked at the Model Café for a while. He worked on a steamer between Fairbanks and Tanana. In the fall he started working in a restaurant in Tanana and came back to Fairbanks in the spring. There was an earthquake in Fairbanks that summer. He started working in the café in the Pioneer Hotel building. He worked for Mrs. Card. He worked

at the Model Café. In 1915 he went on the Julie B. and then returned in the fall. He started working for the German Café. During WWI prices started to go up. George Johnson talked him into going into a partnership and bought the Northern Hotel. They called it the Igloo Grill and opened up in 1917. He had to register for the draft. In 1918 his number came up for the draft. His dentist said he could get an exemption, but Jack didn't want it. He put in for limited service. On the last draft he was called up for duty. He traveled down to Tanana on a government boat. He stayed there all winter. He was on KP duty on Sundays. After a while he started working as a cook and baker. He was discharged in 1919 and he returned to Fairbanks.