

H97-66-55

Grant Pearson

Most of the beginning of Grant Pearson's talk was not recorded.

Tapes starts in the middle of Grant Pearson talking about coming over a pass to his camp. They were digging through snow at an airplane accident. He talked about training J.D. from Kotzebue.

He was one of the first to attempt to climb Mount Hayes. They ran into bad weather and their rations were getting low. Andy Taylor was with him and they descended without making it to the top.

One time he was in the tent next to a river and his dog wouldn't stop barking. The river had overflowed at -40 and was headed his way so the dog was making a lot of noise. He talked about the importance of dogs, they were the means of transportation.

He talked about his trip in 1944 and George King. He said Sam White took him on a campaign trip up to Huslia and Allakaket.

Someone from the audience asked about caribou being counted at Mt. McKinley Park. Sam said it was mountain sheep that they counted. Grant said it was the first time they did a count. Grant said they made a history of McKinley National Park. Matt Niemenen and Cecil Higgins were the first two to fly over McKinley and took photos. They didn't have any oxygen flying over the mountain. They didn't plan to fly over the mountain they just did it on an impulse. Someone from the audience asked if there were any decreases in the wildlife at McKinley. Grant said the populations were going down for a while starting in the bad year of 1928 up until 1944. Now there are good healthy populations. The last aerial count they took of mountain sheep was 3800. The caribou was up, too. They had two bad winters and then wolves moved in. Adolph Murie said there were 482 sheep in 1944. They have increased ever since. When the sheep population is high they eat all the forage and get in a weakened condition. Then the wolves move in. He believes in the balance of nature.

Question about using oxygen when he was climbing. Grant said he never used oxygen. If you start at the bottom you gradually get used to the lower oxygen. He talked about climbing parties that had problems with higher elevations. He talked about his climb in 1947 when he ran into trouble at 19,200 feet. He had to come down to the 18,000 foot camp. Everyone reacts differently to the lack of oxygen.

Morris, Eugene B
He talks about Fanny Quigley. Morris and Father Fitzgerald were flying and had to stop at Kantishna because of bad weather. Fanny had them over for dinner. It was a Friday and Father Fitzgerald wasn't eating the meat. He said it was Friday and he couldn't eat meat. Fanny went out and got some more lettuce and said here eat grass all the jackasses do. When Father Fitzgerald asked her what kind of candy she liked Fannie said Schlitz. Father Fitzgerald sent her beer and whiskey as a thank you. Grant said Fannie was a good cook and a good frontier woman. She taught him many things. There was a good collection of old timers in the Kantishna area at one time.

He talked briefly about quitting the legislature and letting some Democrats in.

The next section is an informal conversation between Sam White, Grant Pearson, Jim Cassady and others during a coffee break with other conversations in the background.

Someone asked Sam about his cabin on the Mudhole. He talked about the reasons he built his cabin there. Grant talked about his cabin at Kantishna. Sam talked about how he discourages bears. Someone asked Sam about the hot springs on the Kanuti River. He said there was a good set on the Ray River. He said in the fall the bull moose hang out at the hot springs after fighting. Jim Cassady talked about being retired from the NC Company. Sam asked about a map that Nimrod made. He used it in 1925. Grant said before WWI the Indian Chiefs met at Tanana.

Grant talked about going to a meeting at Tanana which was attended by Hugh Waite, Secretary of the State was giving the introduction talk. He talked about many resources, better education for the Natives and the Rampart Dam which he said would flood some of the villages with sixty feet of water. When Hugh was finished with his talk the master of ceremonies got up to talk and said he found it interesting that they were going to educate the Natives and then drown them. Grant said Hugh could have avoided that by talking about how they were going to relocate everyone.

Many loud conversations together in the background. Grant Pearson and Sam White are holding a conversation but it is difficult to understand. They discuss different pilots in Alaska. Grant talks about Kantishna. Sam talks about the landing strip by Wonder Lake that was used a couple of times and then thawed out and slid down the hill. Sam had landed there to take Johnny Busmia out for medical care. Grant talked about the night that Johnny died. He had Grant pay off his bills for him before he died. He asked to be buried next to his old dog. He asked Grant to preach the funeral service. Grant had the mountain behind the cabin named after Johnny. Sam talked about the first time he ever met Johnny. Johnny had confessed that he had shot one too many caribou. Sam told him that he was more valuable out working on the land than sitting in jail living on the taxpayer. Grant said that Johnny couldn't read or write very well. When he was trying to write a letter to Sam he used a Sear's catalog to find the work white. Jim asked about the early days of Nenana and Portilla. Grant said he is working on the history of the area. Jim Duke had a trading post and roadhouse near the embankment of a group of Natives. His roadhouse was located where the depot is located now.

Break in recording

Recording starts again with Grant talked about Joe Quigley and Horn who were prospecting on Glacier Creeks. He talked about the claims on Moose and Eureka Creeks.