

IDITAROD TRAIL INTERVIEW - JOE & VI REDINGTON

July 23, 1980
Knik, Alaska

BLM Interviewers:

Tom Beck
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JULY 23, 1980 - JOE & VI REDINGTON

(Tape No. 1, Side A)

INTRODUCTION

INTERVIEWER: This is an Iditarod National Historic Trail interview with Joe and Vi Redington of Knik, Alaska. The interview is conducted at the Redingtons' home in Knik on July 23rd, 1980. The interview is conducted for BLM by Terry O'Sullivan, Steve Peterson, and Tom Beck.

Joe is a longtime Alaskan. His father was a homesteader in the Knik area. Joe has long been an active and enthusiastic dog breeder and musher. He and his wife Vi have worked for years clearing the historic Iditarod Trail, which runs near their property. Their efforts were rewarded in 1972 with the permanent establishment of the 1,049-mile Iditarod Trail Race from Anchorage to Nome. Joe maintains his interest in dog mushing as the current head of the Iditarod Trailblazers Organization.

The initial part of the interview took place outside the Redingtons' home in Knik. The group then moved down the road to examine an old log structure nearby. Finally, the group toured historic Knik Hall.

(Off record at Log No. 0105)

(On record at Log No. 0150)

INTERVIEW - MR. JOE REDINGTON

A Hey, there's lots of kids and stuff here that Red Jack is the father of, especially Native kids I've known, quite a few men that their father was Red Jack. The Bartells at Tyonek was a couple of the strongest men I ever seen. Now, one time, Joey and I had took a diesel light plant into Tyonek, and we went down there, there must have been ten of us trying to lift it onto a pickup, and we couldn't get the damned thing up where we could get it up on the pickup. And it was Johnny Bartell and his brother Lee come over, and they said, 'You guys back off from that and let us get a hold of it.' And they loaded that damned thing. Now, that guy, around the waist, was probably that big around, wore big bib overalls, and his legs' about that big around, just -- I never seen such a man. His wife finally killed, shot him six times in the chest.

But anyway, he traveled this trail a lot. And in 19 and 51, I think, Bob Bacon and I went to Susitna. We seal hunted and went up there; we had about ten seals, and we skinned them out there at Susitna Station. And while we were doing that, they were tearing down the old post office. And I went over there and I picked up a letter that was laying in there, and the letter had never been opened and it was addressed to Lee Ellexson from Red Jack and he wanted some kidney pills. But evidently, Lee never got the letter. So I brought the letter back and give it to Lee. I said,

'Here's a letter that wasn't -- that was wrote in 1914 or something like that and hadn't been delivered. I'm delivering it now.' And he said, 'Oh, yeah. I remember that.' He said, well, they finally got him -- that somebody else come by and brought him some pills or something.

But those guys traveled the trail some. Now, the fellow that had the store there, that just had run the post office, his son is still alive.

Q What's his name?

A Well, I've got to get a hold of Vi. She'll know. But he's either in Anchorage or Talkeetna or somewhere here. And there's a possibility that somebody like that just might know something.

Q You don't mind. This doesn't bother you, does it, this recorder here, Joe?

A How do you find it? Here's that -- well, one was the people that had the store and the post office at Susitna. His son lives up at -- we knew he was married.

Mr. Redington: Wasn't this gal we knew that lived with Don?

Mrs. Redington: That was Sarah?

Mr. Redington: Huh?

Mrs. Redington: Sarah?

Mr. Redington: Sarah. Wasn't she married to him?

Mrs. Redington: Well.....

Mr. Redington: Huh?

Mrs. Redington: Yeah.

A Okay. There's where we went from Skwentna, and I don't know whether there's anything that would tell anybody, tells about Joe Deal from Skwentna, arrived by snowmobile, running trap lines. He had four beaver in his sled.

Q Says Paul Dunn's diary of.....

A This fellow got out of the service while he was out there, Paul Dunn did, came back into Anchorage and was killed the next couple of days in an automobile wreck.

Can you make a copy of that and then get this back to me?

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A 'Cause this is probably the only copy we've got of it.

Q Yeah, what we'll do is.....

A Now, I don't know whether.....

Q What's your address here? A mail box?

A I don't know whether it'd do us any good or anything, but -- the recon this afternoon revealed we had set up camp 150 to 200 meters from the Iditarod Trail in a little swampy area surrounded by hills on three sides and the Skwentna River on the east side. It might describe things that would help us. And John Hefner would have known. He was the one that had the -- okay. Vi, what -- when John come in, he stayed with....

Mrs. Redington: Lavelle and Dick.

Mr. Redington: Okay. What is their name?

Mrs. Redington: Best.

Mr. Redington: Betz. Okay.
Mrs. Redington: Betz or Best? Betz?
Mr. Redington: Betz.
Mrs. Redington: Betz? Yeah, but it's spelled different than
our Betz, isn't it?
Mr. Redington: B-e-t-z?
Mrs. Redington: I think so.

A They might know something. They're old-timers.

Mrs. Redington: I could copy that tonight over there.
Interviewer: Yeah, maybe what we could do is just go ahead
and I -- if that's the only copy, I'd be
hesitant to take it, but maybe we could read
it over and get some information, and if you
could xerox it and send us the copy, I'd feel
better that way.
Mrs. Redington: Yes. Okay. I can copy it tonight, I think.
Interviewer: But I would like to read it over before we
leave.
Mrs. Redington: Yeah.

A But we spent two weeks with these people.

Q In 1972?

A In '72, and that's where we found a lot of the trail. I got
pictures of a three-star general out there looking for the
trail.

Q Is that right?

A Yeah.

Q First time he'd been out in a while.

A Right. But there just might be some -- especially if
your -- if it has something to do with the -- why they had
the race and all. Here it speaks of Mountain Climbers
Roadhouse we found and dug that out.

Q Oh, that's -- we haven't found that yet. So that's.....

A I got pictures of that, where we found it and dug it out.

Q That's the one we flew around and around and around within
those bluffs and finally.....

Interviewer: Yeah. We've flown around and around and
around on a lot.

Q Yeah. We can probably, Joe, share with you what --
especially between here and Rainy Pass, show you the
roadhouses that we have found and stuff, and like those that
you have pictures of tucked away, we'll just at least make a
note that they exist and might be able to locate it on the
map a little bit.

Interviewer: Are those in those slides you were talking
about?

Interviewer: The Mountain Climber Roadhouse?

Interviewer: Mm hmm (affirmative).

A See, this gal got that to us -- to me after he was killed.

Q Hmm.

A Hickman, that was his girlfriend, I guess. Peak sure was spending government money. Government money (indiscernible) and hope the mushers like Dave and Joe will get the support they need to open the trail to mushers and campers alike and the Historical Iditarod Trail will be open once more.

Q We're getting closer.

(Off record at Log No. 0799)

(On record at Log No. 0800)

Q Is that right? I guess 1940. That's in pretty good shape.

A That's been a church -- when we first come here, they used it as a church. It's been a church; there's been several different families lived in it. Melby Orr and his wife lived in it, and one of the real estate guys here in Wasilla lived in it. We lived in it for a year or so.

Q When was that?

A Back in -- well, in the early '60s there when we were talking race here. And it's part of that national site. I mean, it's included in this national. But we're trying to get it restored before it goes bad. See, the roof is bad right now.

Q Yeah, if they keep that roof sealed on it, it.....

A But you want to tear off that back part. See, that was put on later.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And you can keep the rest of it. And there's an old trailer in the back that needs to be pulled out of there. But that log part of it was built -- so far as we could find out, two brothers built it in 1906.

Q Originally just as a home.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q A cabin. You know who they were, what their names were?

A Hmm?

Q Do you remember what their names were, the two brothers that built it?

A Vi probably knows.

Q There's a sign over the door that says bar. Was it a bar at one time too?

A Yeah, it was a bar for several years.

Q (Laugh) A church and bar.

A Church and a bar and a home, and it's been different -- it's had quite a history.

Q What kind of church was there? Was it just a local one?

A One of the -- it's still, I think, the same thing that's up here on the hill now, Church of God or something.

Q Joe, what is the historic site? Where are the boundaries, the two buildings here?

A No, it's this building here and this. But now we've acquired more land here. Now we got some of this lake front. We don't have this piece right here. The fellow fought all the time to keep this little piece right here, but we got the piece next to it. And we race through here on the race trail, went through here one year, on the

Iditarod.

Q And you've got the log place and the hall here.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). Now, we just recently done something to this. Some of the other pictures show this in pretty bad shape. The roof had a big sag in it, but about 1966, they restored it.

Q What did they do, put a new roof on it? Porch was on it?

A I think they just jacked it up in the middle, and it was all original boards and everything. They just jacked it up and straightened up the roof and fixed the inside. And this time, now, they went around it and dug it and put a foundation under it.

Q What about these porches on here? They look like they're almost a later addition, or were they.....

A They were like that in the early.....

Q Is that right? What was this, and when was it built?

A Oh, it was a dance hall and a roadhouse, and it had quite a history too. A pool hall; I think maybe the first was a pool hall. And then it become a dance hall, and then Lee Ellexson run the last roadhouse in Knik, was here.

Q This building?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q And was that Lee?

A Lee Ellexson.

Q The fellow up at Happy River in.....

A Yeah, Lee and Grace. They lived just across -- there was no road here then. There was a nice road right down to the beach here then, and this was the old road.

Q Oh, right through here. And this was built when?

A I think 1914. But I could be wrong on that. But they just spent quite a bit of money now with painting and restoring a lot of this. And we put in this heat 'cause there's pictures and stuff upstairs, and we needed some heat. But they've got everything piled on the porches now.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). Who's "they"? A local?

Mrs. Redington: (Indiscernible.) Federal, state, and borough grant. It's all three combined somehow. Oh, and it's been -- and then it was put out on bid, and it's a contractor who's a local (indiscernible). We got the best guys we could have -- gotten it. They got the bid; I was really glad because they're good and they're fast, and they did a lot of this extra work, you know. I'd move what I could, and then he'd help me with some. And they have like this thing, and they had them move everything around themselves to do anything. And we had tons of stuff in here, so they put it all out on the porches. I put a lot of it, and then they took the heavy stuff.

A You know, there's lots of old pictures and stuff that Meda's got in there at the Teelands, right at the corner there, Teelands?

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).
A Of these early days.
Q Hanging on the walls? Teelands?
A Yeah. Of his own personal collection.
Q Well, we'll stop there on our way out.
A Well, there's a lot of them that he's got that he was going to let the (indiscernible) copying them or something, wasn't it?

Mrs. Redington: Yeah. Supposed to -- Hugh Vay's supposed to make copies and then we're supposed to get copies for here.

A Of the old Knik. Now, the ones that they -- we use that as a headquarters for the Iditarod upstairs, and there are a lot of pictures there, but they're not the old pictures that -- of Knik. There's some -- is those still up where you can see them, the ones of Knik in the old days?

Mrs. Redington: I just brought that book down; it may have some in it, but.....

(Log No. 1386)

(Mrs. Redington away from the microphone)

(Log No. 1390)

Mrs. Redington: The other pictures are up there, but they're covered up. But this has some in it.

Mr. Redington: (Indiscernible) Wasilla, has that got some on it?

Mrs. Redington: It's got some of Knik, but it's got more of Wasilla at that time. I think I can find.....

(Simultaneous speech; Mr. and Mrs. Redington moving away from the microphone)

A (Indiscernible comment.) If you can.....

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

Alook at this and we'll -- there's one up here that shows this hill (indiscernible). There's buildings on both sides of it.

Q Hmm.

(Indiscernible side comments)

A Now, there's a picture of Lee and Grace Ellexson; it was taken in 1954.

Q Do they have any relatives around yet?

Mrs. Redington: No.

A Any what?

Q Relatives at all?

A I don't think so. I don't think they even had any up here at all, did they?

Mrs. Redington: Huh?
Mr. Redington: Have any relation.
Mrs. Redington: No. Grace's sister might be alive in Oregon,
which I don't think she even sent her up.
She might have been up here original
(inaudible).

A Yeah, they got a hotel that's in here (indiscernible - loud
background noise) one of the roadhouses. But everything
now, I don't know where it is.

Q You know when it was used as a roadhouse? The dates?

A Where the roadhouse is? Yeah. I don't know what date. Do
you, Vi?

Mrs. Redington: Up into the '30s. I have the book here where
they signed the district for the register.

A '14. 1914, '15, '16, somewhere in there.

Mrs. Redington: No, up into the '30s, Joe.

Q Yeah, but from then.....

Mr. Redington: It was later than that?

(No response)

Mr. Redington: Are those the pictures of.....

Mrs. Redington: Yeah. If I can get to them. God, I can't
believe how much stuff's coming out of there.
There's a salmon downstairs.

Interviewer: Get over there where we can see.

Mrs. Redington: Well, actually, I guess I took the guest
register down (indiscernible) again.

A Okay. There's that little building over across, and here's
the building we're in right now.

Q I see it. Oh, yeah. Next street. Yeah, there were quite a
few buildings, weren't there?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Were the same.....

A There's a corner of the little building, that little -- and
this must have been the big Bell barn.

Q (Indiscernible) Street, Knik, Alaska, July 4th, 1914. That
would have been right across from the.....

(Pause - Whispered comments)

Q Joe, have you ever seen any site plans showing the city
layout in those days? Was anything like that ever drawn up?

Mrs. Redington: They have one now, Joe. I saw it.

Mr. Redington: They do?

INTERVIEW - MRS. VI REDINGTON

- Q Right. Showing this -- the historic layout?
- A Some of the old-timers must have -- she got together with -- Kelly Fike was doing the history of the area. It was part of our oral history and stuff, and then she went ahead and went further with it. And I saw a map one day at a show she was putting on, and it had the layout of the town. And I said, 'Boy, I want that for the museum in Knik.' And it got away from me and I don't know who has it. I've got to get a hold of Kelly. She's been down in Juneau, but I hear she's back.
- Q Kelly who now?
- A Kelly Fike.
- Q Is she.....
- A Do you know Rose Palmquist? She's always in politics and stuff.
- Q Mm hmm (affirmative).
- A It's her daughter.
- Q And where would we find her, do you suppose?
- Q F-y-k-e?
- A F-i-k-e.
- Q F-i-k-e.
- A She -- I hear she's back in Wasilla again, so I've got to get a hold of her and find out what she did with that.
- Q Where would you get copies of these?
- A Now, some of the stuff that she did is over at our college, over at Mat-Su Community College.
- Q Mat-Su Community?
- A And I'm going to get with Lisa Mattson over there. I know. But most of it is the oral history, the tapes and that stuff, she has over there.

Interviewer: Well, we'd like to go over there.

- Q Yeah. That's what I'm doing as part of this project, is trying to, out on the trail, do some of the old -- interview some of the old-timers and get some oral history.
- A Oh, this would be -- this was more of -- what they did, the (inaudible - simultaneous speech) this area, Wasilla, Palmer, all of the colonists and that stuff. It had nothing to do with the Iditarod.
- Q Mm hmm (affirmative). Still might be interesting.
- A She might have some, but I think it was mostly like colonists and in that area up in there, that she has the tapes from. Perhaps an old school teacher from Anchorage, I think she had, some of them. Our Historical Society is working on them now. One of the guys is the historian, and he's trying to get the tape together and get them in some sort of order.
- Q What's his name?
- A Oh, boy. I met him once, I think. What was his name? John Cooper. John Cooper. His wife just was commissioned to do some kind of a big -- I don't know if it's weaving or what it is -- for Anchorage, something. Get (ph) Cooper. I saw

her picture in the paper the other day.

(Simultaneous speech - two groups having separate discussions)

Q Where is John Cooper? Is he in Anchorage?

A (Inaudible) Palmer. Probably Palmer.

INTERVIEW - MR. JOE REDINGTON

A According to Lydia, it went right through these buildings here.

Q Oh, is that right? Straight up behind here?

A Right out this -- right out back. That'd give you a straight shot right out of there.

Q Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think Tom would like to get a hold of him so they can kind of share information.

Mrs. Redington: 'Cause he's doing all the history for the Historical Society (inaudible).....

Mr. Redington: Why don't you check and see what they've got in there. If we can get.....

Interviewer: I see.

Q I can get that blown up and get you a larger print, too, if you want it.

A Real good.

Mrs. Redington: The museum at Wasilla.

(Off record at Log No. 2184)

(On record at Log No. 2186)

INTERVIEW - MRS. VI REDINGTON

Q Where do most of these artifacts come from, do you know?

A Oh, what we get, I got over the years. Some stuff that we had we would get from old-timers and things, you know. And then some that, like that, is from an old-timer here that has oodles of stuff and he's put some of his things in here and some over at Wasilla and some at Palmer. And then like the Ellexsons, I've gotten some stuff from them years ago. And we put all -- everything we had that was from around here, we put in here. And then different ones we'll either -- most of the stuff in here is on loan. But it'll probably be here indefinitely.

Q Yeah. It's kind of hard to keep some of this around your house, I would think.

A Yeah. This thing was out in somebody's back yard (inaudible - simultaneous speech). Got to get it all cleaned up.

(Mr. Redington talking in the background)

INTERVIEW - MR. JOE REDINGTON

A We had no problem, but people all around us with headaches and sick and everything (indiscernible). But we just finished the Iditarod Trail Race just before we went there.

Q Pretty good shape then.

A And it helped, I'm sure, the dogs and everything.

Q How do you -- do you find your dogs in pretty good shape by the end of the race, or are they ready for a long rest by that time?

A No, they get better all the time.

Q Did they?

A Yeah. In two or three days, they'd arrive back in good shape.

Q Uh-huh (affirmative).

A They're tough.

Q Yeah.

Interviewer: Some of the old mushers here?

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative), dog mushers.....

A You know, it might be smart to contact Dick Betz. He may have a lot of pictures and stuff.

Q Okay. Does he live in town here somewhere?

A Yeah.

Q In Knik or Wasilla?

A No, he lives in Wasi- -- in Anchorage.

Q Anchorage.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). And his wife is one of the 99 -- or one of them Flying Ninety-Niners, and I know that Hefner came in and stayed at their place before he died.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And it's very possible that they would -- they might just have something that would help, you know. I don't know how much Dick would know about that trail or anything, but he might have had something involved with Hefner (inaudible - simultaneous speech).

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A But he's in the phone book.

Q Okay. Dick?

(Off record at Log No. 2528)

(On record at Log No. 2533)

A But it was just made up from them talking to trappers, and there wasn't nothing they didn't scale.....

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Hearnings in 1906. Hennings. Hearnings?

Interviewer: Hearnings.

A Well, they had the store here, and they also had the store at Teelands. In 1947, Teelands bought the store in there from Hearnings, and Vi and I was in partnership with this boy Stanley. Now, he was born here in Knik; he lives in

now.

Q Stanley Hernings?

A Stanley Hernings. Now, I don't know what Stanley would have on any of this, but he was born here anyway.

Q Where did this name come from. Do you know who Churchill was?

A I've never known, no. The fact is, the only place I've ever seen it ever mentioned, right there.

Q Is right on there, huh?

A Yes.

Q Instead of Susitna. Hmm.

A There's an old house back this way about, oh, maybe five miles out of Susitna Station that a fellow by the name of Burns built. It was a two-story; he had quite a set-up there. They had a well and a two-story house and a basement dug and all kinds of stuff there. And I can't find anybody that even knows anything about it, but I went there, oh, in the early '50s, probably '53 or something, and I found the name Burns there, and it indicated he was the one that lived there. There was a package or something, the wrapping on it, it was sent to him there, and some more stuff there. But I don't know what would be there anymore, maybe nothing. But he must have been an old-timer when that.....

Q Any idea when the place was built?

A No, must have been a long time ago.

Q It was a long time ago?

A Mm hmm (affirmative). 'Cause it was old. Then there's one right out of Knik here just a mile and a half. Somebody that's interested in history, that guy had quite a set-up out here. And when Lee Ellexson came here in 19 and 4, he didn't know who had that place. And when I went there in '48, the inside of it looked as nice as this. It was walls, but it was just as nice and pretty, and there was trees growing right out of the roof of the house that big around. It's only a mile out here.

Q Is that right? A mile down the road here?

A Mm hmm (affirmative), a mile out the trail. But he had all that fenced, and he must have had livestock and chickens and cleared a lot of land, but it must have been done back in 1800 or something because nobody knows a damned thing about it. And a little rolled roof and a sawed roof and all that, no doors and stuff. But it would be real interesting. But I went to BLM and looked for a homestead or anything, and he never homesteaded, he just moved in there and built that stuff.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). And disappeared.

A Yeah. No, but he had quite a set-up, quite a lot of land. But Grace and them told me that they stayed all night in that cabin one of the trips when they come in here in the early days, and it was an old cabin then, and abandoned. But he had out buildings and all kinds of.....

Q What's still there now?

A Well, I think the building -- the house is still there. It may have caved in some now, since then, but it was two rooms. But in '48, it was still beautiful inside; the roof

hadn't leaked a drop in all those years.

Q Is that right? It must have been well built then.

A It had birch bark and sod roof.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). An old saddle-notch corner on that thing, log building?

A I think I've -- we've got pictures of that, too, of a long time ago, but if you ever want to see it, it's only a short distance out here, a mile, mile and a half, on the right-hand side.

Q On the trail?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q That just goes right out here? Hike out there (laugh). Go look at it. See, there was something else that I was going to ask you, too, and I can't.....

Q Joe, you were mentioning Halfway Roadhouse. That was actually different than Mountain Climbers.

A Yeah.

Q Is that right?

A Halfway is only 20 miles out here.

Q I'm trying to put some of these historical records together, trying to figure out -- there were so many roadhouses that were the same roadhouse or same location, but they had different names. So whereabouts -- can you point that out on the map?

A Right on the Little Susitna.

Interviewer: Terry, I'm going to maybe do my little survey thing.

Mr. O'Sullivan: Okay.

Interviewer: Of the building here.

Q Okay. Alexander Lake runs up here, the head of Alexander Lake. Skwentna River.

A Then you got to come through.....

Q Okay. Now, we had Mountain Climbers Roadhouse here somewhere in this area, about where Hays River comes out.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q The trail runs.....

A Right.

Q Here's One Stone and Shell Lake.

A Yeah, I'll dig that picture out.

Q Okay. Is that about the right location there?

A I think so.

Q Okay. An that was Mountain Climbers.

Q What year did you say that you guys found that one, 19- -- what year did you find that, in '50?

A In '72.

Q '72? And where was Halfway then? And Halfway was located where?

A On over on the Little Susitna near Knik. It's only 20 miles out of Knik.

Q Okay.

A Okay. That was the Little Susitna. Hmm. Okay. It's in this circle.

Q Okay.

A Probably right on that bend right there. It would have been on this side of the river.

Q Okay.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Okay. That was -- was it also called Little Susitna Roadhouse?

A It was Halfway House, they called it. It was halfway to Susitna Station, I guess, is where it got that name. And it was run by Lee and Grace Aleckson for a while. After they come back from Happy River, they run that.

Q So they worked in Happy River, Halfway, and the Knik Roadhouse.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q They operated those three.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). Now, the trail there goes right out of there, it goes up the river just, oh, a couple hundred yards, goes over and comes right to the edge of this old swamp.

Q Right about there?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Go ahead and draw it in.

A You want me to just draw it in there?

Q Sure.

A It goes there, and then it comes up and crosses somewhere right in there, I think, like that.

Q That's the historic trail?

A Mm hmm (affirmative), the Iditarod.

Q Right above -- what's that lake, Terry?

Q Yohn, Y-o-h-n, Lake.

A Now, there's a cabin there on Yohn's. They built a little cabin; it's fell in, too, right on that end there, but it had nothing to do with.....

(Off record at Log No. 3727)
(Tape Change - Tape No. 1, Side B)

Aold cabin just fell in the river, I understand, this last couple of months, of Cliff Forstberg's at Susitna Station.

Q Oh, is that right?

A The river cut it out. We lost the one down at the mouth of the Susitna. We helped move that once. BLM used to pay -- well, maybe it wasn't BLM. Maybe the Road Commission -- paid. Floyd was the last guy to move it back, I think. Right at the mouth, and, boy, it had all kinds of information, where different people had opened the thing and signed it in there, the old-timers.

Q Okay. Maybe we can just go up in there and we'll show you which roadhouses we know about, or have read about, and see if you know any more information, what conditions. There was the Halfway Roadhouse, the -- Reese Edmonson.....

A That was the first one out of.....

Q Okay. Then the Susitna Station would be the next one. And then we had Alexander Roadhouse. Some of the earlier records mentioned that. Do you know anything about that

one?

A I've never seen it or anything.

Q Okay. I'm not sure whether that's the one at -- let's see here -- maybe the one at Alexander Lake, but also seems that there may have been something else.

A Wonder who put this on the map.

Q Okay. I think that's the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation line. We've got this map that you and Patty worked up. See, it's the same map right here.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q This is the BOR line here, and this is the one that you basically applied; isn't that right?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Where's Division of Land saying that the lake -- or the Fish Trail Ridge.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q But then they say it goes by Otter Lake. Where are they saying that's going now?

A On the trail out of there?

Q Yeah. Where's Frank Mielke?

A Well, the problem is?

Q Yeah.

A It was in this area right here.

Q And they're saying it's going around this side of the lake?

A No, this end is going over Trail Ridge, I think, which is on that side.

Q Right. Okay.

A But you can see all these. It isn't possible. But it's even -- you know, it's even possible those days that they could have went on both sides of that.....

Q Sure.

Aand keep going, and then.....

Q Right. Yeah, somewhere between Alexander Lake and Susitna we have reason to believe that there was an Alexander Roadhouse, also called Alexander Creek Roadhouse. There was a -- we had a map from 1923 showing it there. It was abandoned in '23, so it probably wasn't around very long. There may not be anything out there.

A In '23? Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q The next one would have been.....

A You see, Tom Crowse went there in '25, I think he said. But I think you ought to get a hold of this one that his dad had the place at Susitna Station. What did I say his name was?

Q Okay. Was that Betz? Dick Betz?

A No. No, Dick Betz is the one that knows Hefner at the Twelve-Mile Roadhouse.

Q Okay. I don't believe we got.....

A We'll get that off of Vi. 'Cause he lives there in Anchorage, and he might just have some old stuff or something, you know, that his dad had there.

Q This roadhouse here at Alexander Lake was also Keller's Roadhouse, I believe.

A At Alexander?

Q Yeah, at Alexander Lake, yeah.

A Keller's. The ones that can give quite a bit of information

that was that Dario Cadwaller.

Q Yeah.

A And you're saying you got that, huh?

Q Sometimes you kind of find out what order they're in, but as far as a good geographical location, they're hard to place sometimes. But we feel fairly certain about that one.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Then we had a Lake View Roadhouse, was the next one in line.

A That one I'm not familiar with at all.

Q Yeah, there was a -- let's see. It went by another name, too, and I don't remember.....

A Keller still had something to do with that.

Q I'm not sure on that. This is kind of an older edition. But there is also a break in the trail from Lake View, went up towards Cache Creek and McDougal, in that area. Some of the maps show -- some 20, 22, 23 maps show the break in the trail there. And we don't have a location on that either, just a general location. When we get -- of course, the next one is old Skwentna Roadhouse.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). Now, that one can still be some of that restored, can't it?

Q Right. We haven't been -- Steve hasn't been on the ground yet, but we've flown over it, and it still looks like it's protected from the river pretty well, and there's still a good roof.

A Okay. And then what was the next one there?

Q Okay. The next one we've got is Mountain Climbers.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q And I think, you know, 1908 they called this Halfway Roadhouse also. Now, whether it was halfway between Skwentna and Rainy Pass or something, I'm not sure. But the good one referred to a Halfway House, and the placement would have been about right. And then Happy River.

A Have you ever located exactly where it was?

Q Happy River? Yeah. We landed there about two months ago. There's a.....

A Mm hmm (affirmative). And you found some indication of where it was, huh?

Q Found bottles; found where the structures were. There's about two logs high, partially fallen into the river, find old dumps. We went up above it and we found what we think may be trailblazes for when the trail left the roadhouse and went on up the hill 'cause it was, of course, navigable canyon there and they had to get up on top.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). Well, we went up that canyon with the race; right?

Q Right.

A I raced over that, I think.

Q Yeah. So that one we got -- Happy River we've got located. Steve done his architectural work up there. Then there was a series of roadhouses that Goodwin talked about in 1908 that.....

A Well, now the one -- the next one up there would have been the Rainy Pass. Right? Montella?

Q Okay. We've got -- it's pretty -- we have a hard time

because of the different names and everything, until we find out what's.....

A That one should have been right down below where Montella Lake there is now, I think.

Q Right. And there's a little cabin and its roof has fallen in right next to the creek?

A I think so.

Q Yeah. Now, that one we visited and have located.

A Now, that's where Lee Ellexson used to take the mail. He would turn around there. He would be three days from here to there and three days back and have one day in Knik, and then he'd leave again. And I seen one of his contracts; it called from the 15th of October to the 15th of May.

Q He had to run the mail?

A What?

Q He had to run the mail.

A Yeah. He ran the mail for several years out of Knik here.

Q Do you have any idea what year that was that he had that contract?

A I'll be damned if I know for sure. I can tell you 1912, but I could be wrong on that.

Q Okay. Beyond Montella's we've got names like Pass Creek Roadhouse, Rainy Pass Roadhouse, which was also.....

A I wonder if Rainy Pass -- where was that located at?

Q Okay. On the map -- okay. Montella's is right about here.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Let's see. That catalog talks about a Rainy Pass Roadhouse being nine miles -- and you talk about being at the Summit and going back down towards Knik and it'd be nine miles. Which would put it at about this intersection here, or the confluence of Happy River and Pass Creek. But that's also a good one called, I think, Pass Creek Roadhouse. And I'm not sure if those are.....

A Funny that they'd have so many of them so close together out there.

Q Yeah. Well, of course, think about the pass and the weather and over the years, one could have operated for a certain amount of years and then abandon it the next one in.....

A Okay.

Qwhich (indiscernible) the confusion.

A That would account for that, yes.

Interviewer: What about Anderson's cabin? Which one would that -- Anderson's Rainy Pass, is that.....

Q Anderson's Rainy Pass Roadhouse.....

Interviewer: Were those the same?

Q Yes. But there's also another Rainy Pass Roadhouse, at least in, I think, about the '20s, on the other side of the pass towards Farewell Lake. And I'll tell you, it's really hard to kind of sort out these names and everything. That's what we've been doing little by little, and every little document we find, we get her sorted out a little bit, a

little more information.

But that Anderson was supposed to -- when the Cadwaller went through in, what, 1917 and again in 1919, he talks about Anderson being in a position that he could look down the trail three or four miles and see people approaching. And they'd always have tea and the biscuits ready when they got there. It was kind of his little trademark. This location might be about right. You've got kind of a clear open spot, and it may have been just a little bit back.....
A That'd be about the only place they could do that along there.

Q It may have been -- this is the other one. It may have been just back here just a little bit so he had a little bit of elevation to do it. You know, we were into about two miles or so. We may know the final location on that, it just may have been destroyed or burnt up for firewood over the winters or what have you.

Then there's a series of -- there's some cabins up there. Pass Creek cabin, Alice Lynch found that a couple of years ago on her survey. Then there was another Rainy Pass Roadhouse just over the pass that I've seen on some maps. And then Dalzell Roadhouse, which, of course, we know where that is. And then Roan River. From that point on, we've got really good -- because of Alice Lynch's work, we've got a pretty good.....

A And they used the trail quite a bit more over there, for mining and so forth, after you get over past Roan. And then you -- but this -- where our trouble's going to be is all the way from -- well, from Susitna Station to Skwentna Crossing.

Q That's right.

A That's where our problem is. That is probably the least used, after they quit using the trail, than anywhere else because there was no mining in that area or any reason to use it. And the only one that would have used it is somebody living in that area, like Tom Crowse or somebody like that.

Q Could we set up a flight either -- well, maybe let Tom decide when -- either this week or early next week and have.....

A Yeah.

Qget a hold of you, and.....

A Yeah.

Qand you and Tom can go out and try to find (inaudible)?
A Okay. Who would you get to do that? Ketchum's? That's who did it before.

Q I'm not sure. We usually go through our logistics people and tell them that we need two passengers in a float plane for a day.

A 'Cause he knows exactly where we want to go, if you can get him.

Q Ketchum's? Okay.

A And he could fly in right here and pick me up. He let me off right here the last time.

Q Okay. We'll see if we can work it out that way.

A Yeah. Yeah, Ketchum.

Mrs. Redington: Craig.

Mr. Redington: Yeah.

Q That'd be a lot more convenient for you, too. You wouldn't have to drive into town.

A He knows right where we're going and everything.

Q He knows where we're going.

A Now, who run the store at Susitna? I can almost say it, but I can't.....

Mrs. Redington: Me too. I've been trying to think of that ever since they were asking. All I can think of is Sarah Edmonds, and that was Herman, and that was -- I know it's Willis. I went to grave stone over here with the name on it.

Mr. Redington: Hmm?

Mrs. Redington: There's a wooden grave thing over there with a name on it. I could go look there.

A You know, something that no one has ever mentioned, there's a grave yard right here in Knik. There's very few people that even know about it. And they've tried to bulldoze it under and everything else, and we've always fought. We're never going to let that happen if we could help it, you know, because they take out an area out of your land, you know, if you've got a grave yard on it. But there's one here where Hunter is buried on it, and he was buried, I think, in 1914 or something like that. And according to Lee Ellexson, that's the Hunter that they named the Hunter Trail that we use from -- going into Ruby, when we leave Ophir and go to Ruby.

Q Okay. The Hunter Trail, on the U.S.G.S. map, is marked like between Iditarod and Ophir. They've got that. Isn't that right, Tom?

Tom: Yeah, that's what they call the Hunter Trail.

A Okay. And it went on out to Ruby and up in the interior that way. Okay, that Hunter is supposed to be buried right here in Knik. There's a tombstone out over here in the woods, this right over here about, oh, half a mile, quarter of a mile.

Q Do you know any history behind him, other than what he was doing or why they named the trail after him?

A You want to take a look at it while you're out here?

Q Sure.

A It's just interesting that the.....

Mrs. Redington: We never did know what else was he doing.

Mr. Redington: Huh?

Mrs. Redington: Why did they name -- he wanted to know why they named the trail after him.

A Well, he used that trail, I think, and probably was the one that.....

Mrs. Redington: Probably was the one that broke it out or something.

A I don't know why, but those days, to have that type of (indiscernible), he must have been a pretty important person here; he's the only one that's got one. All the other graves don't have one. But I've never heard anybody talk about him here, have you?

(No audible response)

A Except when I found it, I asked Lee Ellexson about it.

Mrs. Redington: Yeah, Lee knew about it.

A And that's what Lee told me, that that was the man that was over in that Iditarod/Ophir area and established the Hunter Trail.

Q Hmm. So that went all the way to Ruby then.

A I think so. Up to Poorman, I think, and Bear Creek and that way, I think.

Q Well, if you think about how the trail developed with Alaska Road Commission, they had first originally intended to put the trail through from, well, basically McGrath on up to -- straight to Kaltag, and then when they actually started building it, they took that looped on down through Iditarod. And so what you're saying, the Hunter Trail, from, well, the Shermier's Roadhouse -- that's where it would have taken off -- on up crossing Ruby -- or crossing Ophir to Ruby, that'd be a natural progression for -- to get into that area.

A Mm hmm (affirmative). And that's -- I think that's included in this part of the Iditarod.

Q Yes, as part of the trail system, the whole thing.

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q I'd sure like to know more about that man.

Mrs. Redington: How about the old Dalton Trail that came in through here?

Mr. Redington: Hmm?

Mrs. Redington: How about the old Dalton Trail that came into here?

Mr. Redington: It came in here, too, you know, to Knik. A lot of people don't know that.

Mrs. Redington: There's a Dalton Trail. And we have Dalton's desk downstairs that.....

Mr. Redington: Yeah.

Mrs. Redington:old man Dalton had.

A As well as down -- the same Dalton that was down in -- Chilkoot Trail down there, he ran a trail out of here. I think it went to Chickaloon. It went up through -- well,

Florence knows about it; it goes right through their property at Wasilla.

Mrs. Redington: Yeah. Across there at Lake Wasilla, isn't it, somewhere? Going around Lake Wasilla somehow or something?

Mr. Redington: Yeah. Gee, I don't know.

Mrs. Redington: (Indiscernible) where it went up -- or up where old Fish -- where Fishhook Road is now, is that the one went up there? No, that wasn't the Dalton, was it?

Mr. Redington: I don't know just where it went out of Wasilla, but it went up across Cotton Wood Creek up there close to Florence Fleckenstein's.

A Then we had a Three-Mile Trail out of here that we lost. You know, that was a Gold Rush trail that they hauled supplies up to Willow Creek district. It went right out of here, a well established trail, right up to Three-Mile Lake and up close to Big Lake and up at Houston and crossed there and went on up. Well, they built a 360-lot subdivision right on it here, and we can't even use it anymore. We used to race our dogs on it and train our dogs on it and all. But that was a nice hiking trail. You could walk right on out of here and hike for miles. But I imagine it's gone forever.

Mrs. Redington: Well, they're trying to save it up there around Houston, and all through the city limits of Houston, they're trying to get out again now and save it.

Interviewer: Tom, do you have any more specific questions on any of this? Any gaps we need to fill in?

Mr. Beck: I don't really think so.

Interviewer: I think by the end of this field season, Joe, we'll have probably a map on our wall just showing the whole trail system and all these roadhouses, either the suspected location or the, you know, identified location. So it'll be a lot easier to look at the whole system instead of.....

Mr. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer:map by map, that it's kind of broken up that way. We'll probably get together again and share some information. There's information about the ex-isms (sic) or really good.....

Mr. Redington: You know, the.....

Mrs. Redington: There's not much written history about any of this.

A About, well, just a day or two before the race, I was called over here to the Borough to identify some land that the

State had given to the Borough that was supposed to be Iditarod Trail.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And I went over, and the day before the race, I didn't have much time, but I rushed over there and they was, oh, two sections off on the land that they was trying to establish as the Iditarod Trail. And until we get on the ground with a surveyor or something, there's going to be all kind of problems between here and even Susitna Station.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And about, well, two years ago I think the State decided to sell some land, and they did the right thing. They got a surveyor and give him one of these maps and sent him out here to survey it. And they was going to sell some land. Finally, he give up and come and got a hold of me and gave me the job of marking it. We went out and marked it, and the only way you can get through there was a dog team. You couldn't cross none of them swamps on foot or any other way. And we went out there and marked it. But he was two miles off. And we brought it back over and got it marked right.

But it's so easy to follow it off on something else, a seismograph trail or something, you know. It's all been (inaudible - simultaneous speech) through there.

Q Trap line or anything.

A Yeah.

Q Do you feel comfortable with your knowledge of old Knik and where that was and all that? You know the difference between Knik and old Knik?

Q It -- old Knik was on the other side?

A Well, old Knik, I don't think it ever had anything to do with the Iditarod. It was an Indian village.

Q Okay. Is that Eklutna?

A No, it's north of Eklutna, I think about where the bridge goes through there, it seems.

Mrs. Redington: Yeah, where the railroad bridge, I think (indiscernible).

A It was a Indian.....

Q There used to be an old roadhouse there too, I guess, for the mining trail.

INTERVIEW - MRS. VI REDINGTON

A Mm hmm (affirmative). I think Palmer had -- didn't George Palmer have a.....

Mr. Redington: At the (indiscernible) one, yeah. Yeah.

Astore there?

Q At old Knik?

A The Indians would come in and they'd just -- he'd just -- he'd be gone, and everything open and they'd come in and just take what they wanted and leave their money there, you

know, to pay for something.
Q So which railroad bridge are you talking about?
A Where the railroad bridge crosses the Knik River in those places now.
Q The old Knik Road there, you mean?
A Right where the railroad crosses over the Knik.

INTERVIEW - MR. JOE REDINGTON

A Well, I have never been to old Knik, but from what I've -- I think that even Bailey might know something about old Knik.

Mrs. Redington: He's told me -- he tells me whatever I want to hear. One day he'll tell me -- I'll say, 'Was it there where the railroad?' 'Yeah.' And then I'll say, 'Well, I heard it was over there near where the Knik River Bridge is.' 'Yeah.' He don't know where it was. (Laugh) He's just turning a tale.

A He moved in in 1934, but everything was pretty well.....

Q Knik was established in, what, 1914? Is that right? Or prior to that?

Mrs. Redington: No. This Knik?

Mr. Redington: No. It was.....

Mrs. Redington: 1898 it was a going town.

Mr. Redington: Yeah.

Mrs. Redington: It had stores, and I don't know when it was started, but before 1898.

A I've done a lot of assessment work and stuff for Patty Marion, and he came here in -- his first trip to Knik, the Knik here, was in 1898. And it was a going town then. I mean, it was.....

Mrs. Redington: And it was a white town. They call it an Indian village now. They got away with that; I don't know how they did it.

A Now, Patty, he came back here for 50 years straight. To Knik.

Q Is that right?

A He made his last trip, when, in 19 and 52 or something?

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative). Yeah, about. Knik died out when the railroad came in. That's what killed (inaudible).....

A It's a shame how.....

Mrs. Redington:in about 1917.

A And I'll tell you who knows him awful good is Stanley Herning.

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative).

A But he might be -- Stanley was born here in Knik, wasn't he?

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q This fellow that's in Seattle now?

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q He's the son of old Herning?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q There may be a chance that Tommy can get down to that area, Seattle, and talk to the old-timers down there. So maybe if that comes about, and we'll probably know within about a month or so, maybe we can try to address....

INTERVIEW - MRS. VI REDINGTON

A Where's old Barkall? He knew more about this layout of this town than any of them I've talked to. In fact, he lived right where we live now.

Q Who is this?

A Barkall. Chet Barkall. He was one of the miners up there.

Mr. Redington: You got his address?

Mrs. Redington: I know Dorothy does, I know. But I'm not sure -- I don't think I do. I don't know if he put it in the guest book. I might be able to find it.

Mr. Redington: You know, by checking with a lot of these people.....

Mrs. Redington: But I think I can get it from Dorothy.

Mr. Redington:a lot of times you can pick up little clues and things.

Interviewer: Well, that's just what this has been like, just a.....

Interviewer: Jigsaw puzzle.

Interviewer: It's a piece at a time.

Mrs. Redington: Mm hmm (affirmative).

(Off record at Log No. 2955)

(Interview concluded)