

**IDITAROD TRAIL INTERVIEW - JOHN AULAYE (UNALAKLEET)**

October 21, 1981  
National Park Service Office  
Anchorage, Alaska

Interviewers:

National Park Service Historian Robert L. Spude  
Charles Blatchford

H83-16-22 UA oral history

OCTOBER 21, 1981 - JOHN AULAYE

(Tape No. 1 of 1, Side A)

INTRODUCTION

INTERVIEWER: This is an Iditarod National Historic Trail interview with John Aulaye of Unalakleet, Alaska. The interview was conducted at the National Park Service Office in Anchorage, Alaska, on October 21st, 1981. The interview was conducted by National Park Service Historian Robert L. Spude. John Aulaye's son-in-law, Charles Blatchford of Anchorage, assists with the interview.

(Off record at Log No. 0053)

(On record at Log No. 0068)

INTERVIEW

Q John, will you just explain that thing the way you explained it to me yesterday?

A Yeah. With Seppala, I know the flu well, and he's a dog musher. And the first medicine he carried by himself from Fairbanks to Nome. The second one is Willis to Willis until to -- when I met him on Isaac Point, between Isaac Point and Elim.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A First place, Henry supposed to take that medicine from Shaktoolik to Isaac Point, but his team is not there. He went my place, from his house to my house, he carried that medicine, just walking, you know.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And then that medicine, I understand he traveling night and day until he met Seppala. And I'm supposed to met (sic) Seppala on Isaac Point. Henry told me keep on going if you don't see him. And I keep on going, almost to Moses Point, I met him. He had 21 dogs and 2 of them in his sled. He's a dog man. He's not big, but he's got a head trained on dogs, you know. His dogs is small and blue-eyed, and Seppala is -- I couldn't -- he's not Lap. He's a Norwegian guy, that little guy. He's a real dog man. He take care of his dogs, summer and winter.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). And you met Seppala before Moses Point?

A Yeah.

Q Where did you start from? Unalakleet?

A From Shaktoolik.

Q Oh, from Shaktoolik.

A From Unalakleet to Shaktoolik, Marsha Unaguman (ph) take care of that.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And that Kaltag to Unalakleet, Edgar -- what's his last name?

Q Kalland?

A Yeah.

Q Yeah.  
A He carry that.  
Q Mm hmm (affirmative).  
A Both of them drove. Edgar explained that in Nome, when he go to Nome, a little bit about that medicine, but he never mentioned my name because Henry is there. The trouble is, Henry didn't report my name, and when I met Seppala, he didn't report my name. Just like Seppala, he think I'm Henry.  
Q Oh, I see. Now.....  
A That's the trouble I had. And then when I got back, Henry told me, 'You might get medal sometime.' But nobody report my name. Sure enough, after he died, his daughter got a medal. You know.  
Q Mm hmm (affirmative).  
A Because even his sister, Emily Brown, make a book out of them. Emily Brown was school on -- outside someplace. Emily been school.....  
Q Yeah.  
A .....all his (sic) life.  
Q I've met her. So you were raised in Shaktoolik or in Unalakleet?  
A When I got married, I lived on Unalakleet. Before that, I live on Elim and Moses Point and Golovin. I know his folks, his parents, was live on Golovin. That's my.....  
Q Their father was one of his best friends.  
A He's a best friend of mine.  
Q Did you work at the reindeer centers there? It sounds.....

MR. BLATCHFORD: Their father did.

Q .....like Elim and Golovin and all those were the reindeer ranches.  
A Anything like that, if white people, people that treats me like that, he would straighten out. He would go to Nome, here, and he would straighten out. I'm pretty sure of that. I'm pretty sure of it. He would.....  
Q What was your father's name?  
A .....straighten them out.

MR. BLATCHFORD: Charlie Blatchford.

Q Charlie Blatchford. And your name is.....  
A His name is Gaty Hawk (ph), Oscar Maneuska (ph). Two names.  
Q Two names. Oh, okay.  
A He's got two names.  
Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

MR. BLATCHFORD: Emily Brown is my wife's great aunt.  
MR. SPUDE: Oh, okay. Are you mentioned in the book?  
MR. BLATCHFORD: No.  
MR. SPUDE: No?  
MR. BLATCHFORD: I'm just in here just for my.....  
MR. SPUDE: Yeah, this is really.....

A When I met Seppala, when I give that medicine, got that big, canvas, heavy canvas, tie them up good. And they've got blue -- I mean, red ribbon, you know. Them time when you meet the team, Seppala know it. When I raise it, he stopped right now, turned around to me.

Q Oh. I see. He almost passed you then.

A Almost passed me. Good that sack had a red ribbon.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). So when you gave him the serum, did you go back to Shaktoolik, or did you.....

A No.

Q .....go ahead?

A I keep on going. It was about -- see, Puck (ph) and Moses Point, between there and -- about 13 miles only to go to Elim. So I keep on going to Elim. And when he take out, I think I had empty sled, and I see his dogs are small, blue eyes.

Q Little Siberians then.

A Siberian dogs. Well, most of the teams on the Norton Bay, I pass them. I promised myself I was going to keep on follow that guy. He always race and win. Well, I couldn't. I couldn't follow him. When he say it third time, I never forget up to this day, yup, yup, yup, yup, he's a Norwegian guy. Fast. And something like the yup, yup, yup.

MR. BLATCHFORD: That's how he commanded his dogs.

A And left them in -- (hand clap) -- go. My team, he's trained, hit the sled like this (slapping hands together) with a piece of stick. But Seppala has got to adjust his voice.

Q Oh, I see.

A When he say a third time, I hear -- I see his dogs just like a bomb.

Q Hmm.

A And I look at my dogs, just like a horse.

(Laughter)

A Like a brown bear. Just like brown bear. But his team, backbone is straight, it's just like a bomb, 22 dogs. Phew. And his dogs had no neck line, just a tow line. They was trained that much.

Q Wow. Can I ask you what type of sled and dogs you had on that run?

A I had -- mine is about 12 feet. Seppala got the real -- about the only basket about six feet only, because of the racing, racing sled.

Q Did you make your own sled or what.....

A Yeah. I make my own sled.

Q Did you.

MR. BLATCHFORD: Everybody did then.

Q That's fabulous.

A So my team was working dogs. Seppala's dogs is racing team,

no load.

Q Do you know what type of working dogs? Were they the malamute, or were they just mixed breed?

A Mine was malamute. Working dogs. And then the way, if I had my team, if I was younger, I understand those dogs, how to take care of them. Those racers, I see them. They're not -- they're smart.

MR. BLATCHFORD: He's talking about now. Right.

Q Oh, I see. Okay.

A The dogs, you got to take care of them. Those race -- how do they call that race now?

MR. BLATCHFORD: Iditarod.

A Iditarod team.

Q Iditarod.

A When they stop Unalakleet, I scratched my head. Shouldn't take care of them like that. They string them up, nothing in there. No hay or nothing never put in the barn. And every dog, when he want to leak, on the tow line, he wake the whole team.

Q Hmm. How did you care for your dogs on the trail? Did you.....

A Well, my train is, we had a barn.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And closer to barn after the traveling, they know they're going to stop in the barn, they'll run faster than before because that's going to the barn.

MR. BLATCHFORD: John, what he meant was how did you take care of them on the trail.

MR. SPUDE: Yeah.

MR. BLATCHFORD: When you spent the night out there.

A Well, I'll take -- now, Iditarod, I -- they complained 'cause of my team. It's -- what do they call them now? Oh, what's the name?

MR. BLATCHFORD: Beria (ph).

A Beria (ph). My dogs was Beria (ph). He's -- because he's not take care of his dogs, they eat snow. When it got too hot, they eat snow. Seppala and Nye would take care of them soon as they get sweat. Give them piece of meat, frozen meat. When they swallow, no more thirsty. And then those Iditarod couldn't understand what didn't take care of them.

MR. BLATCHFORD: Frozen meat makes -- it cools down inside their bodies, aye.

MR. SPUDE: Oh, okay.

MR. BLATCHFORD: It cools it because dogs can't sweat, aye.

MR. SPUDE: Okay.

A Yeah. Can't -- and that.....

MR. BLATCHFORD: Like us.

MR. SPUDE: And the frozen meat will.....

MR. BLATCHFORD: They don't perspire. It just gradually cools them.

MR. SPUDE: Yeah.

A They stop thirsty and sweat, you know.

Q How big was the meat?

MR. BLATCHFORD: Smokies.

MR. SPUDE: Smokies.

A About that big.

Q About two and a half, three inches around?

A Like hamburger, you know. It was just like -- almost like a hamburger.

Q Uh-huh (affirmative).

A Any kind of frozen meat is good for a dog when they run.

Q How did you bed them down for the night out on the trail?

A I put it on -- if I was traveling out in the country, I would put it branches.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A Never touch one -- if they have no branches, they get wet, they get cold. When they got branches or hay, they never get cold. And tie them separate, not in a tow line. When they're -- each dog, when they want to take a leak, his business right there; never wake the others.

Q Did you put them tied to one central pole, or would they just stay.....

A Yeah, a pole or a willow or a tree.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A Separate with a chain or.....

Q Okay.

A .....with their tuck line.

Q Did you.....

A Now.....

Q I'm sorry.

A Those Iditarod, when they're stopped, when they're overnight from their sled and tie leader over there, tie him.....

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A .....they mistake on that. They never give them grass or branches, you know -- or tree branches good too, real good. Never. When the dog laid down, roll up, they melt the snow, and they get frozen, and it's kind of hard for the dog. But















