

IDITAROD TRAIL INTERVIEW - PETE LARSON

August 19, 1980
Nome, Alaska

Interviewer:

Tom Beck

H83-16-14 UA oral history

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(Tape No. 1 of 1, Side A)

INTRODUCTION

INTERVIEWER: This is an Iditarod National Historic Trail interview with Pete Larson of Nome, Alaska. The interview was conducted at Pete's home at the Senior Citizen Housing in Nome on August 19th, 1980. The interview was conducted for the Bureau of Land Management by Tom Beck.

Pete was born in Teller, Alaska, and came to Nome around 1905. He mushed dogs for many years and also worked for the U.S. Smelting Company.

(Off record at Log No. 0052)

(On record at Log No. 0152)

INTERVIEW

- Q So you were born in Teller.
A Yeah.
Q And came down here to the Nome area when?
A Oh, well, I came '05 or '06.
Q To Nome?
A Yeah.
Q Did you ever run dogs around these trails at all?
A Oh, yes. Dog mushing.
Q Did you?
A Yeah. But lately I haven't.
Q Yeah. We're trying to sort of.....
A Uh-huh (affirmative).
Q We're trying to get -- establish some of the trails and where the trails were, like from Nome to Golovin. And did you go in that area?
A That trail's all right. But sometimes I go by White Mountain, like from Golovin to White Mountain then over to Solomon then on the ice.
Q Yeah
A From Solomon to Nome here.
Q Mm hmm (affirmative).
A And latter part of March or first part of April, if the lake -- yeah.
Q The ice was -- was the ice bad around in that Golovin Bay there sometimes?
A Oh, yeah, the ice is all right. Only thing, sometimes, high water along the edges makes it kind of -- if it's not too cold, it makes it kind of watery along the edges of the beach or lagoon or whatever it is. Yeah.
Q You never ran the mail then? You never carried mail?
A No. Not me.
Q Hmm. Pete did.
A This guy over here used to carry mail.
Q Yeah.
A Pete Curran.

Q Yeah.

A Yeah. All the way from Unalakleet to Nome here.

Q Did you ever stay in any of the roadhouses there? Do you remember those? Between here and, say, Golovin?

A I was at -- in Golovin. And Safety Roadhouse, now, down there, that used to be the roadhouse, early days.

Q Yeah, the Safety Roadhouse?

A Yeah.

Q That was old.....

A It's down there now.

Q That was old Charlie.....

A It's about 22 miles. Were you down there?

Q Yeah. Mm hmm (affirmative). Now, is that Charlie Dalquist that ran that down there?

A Yes. Yes. Years ago, yeah.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A Over 20 years ago.

Q When you came down here in 1905 or so, did you come right down to Nome, or were you down in.....

A No, I come -- like I told you, I came from up that way.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). But did you stay -- settle here in Nome, or was it some of the other villages around?

A No, I been living here.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative). Do you remember any of the other roadhouses down there? Well, of course, Pete Curran's dad had one, didn't he, down at Solomon there?

A Yeah. Yeah, they used to have one there. His father, Pete Curran, Sr.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A I don't know how long ago he died, 10, 15 years ago maybe.

Q How about at Topkok, was there one there? Topkok Head? Do you remember?

A No. There was some people living there all right at that time. It was 20 years ago.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A Or more.

Q How about did you get to Bluff?

A Huh?

Q Get to Bluff at all? You ever been to Bluff on dogs?

A Yeah, I been down to Bluff. Over the hill, yeah. Not around the bluff, no.

Q Hmm. You don't remember whether there's a roadhouse there, do you?

A No.

Q Yeah.

A Used to be some farmers there, but I don't know if there's anybody down there or not now. I don't know.

Q Somebody said, I think it was.....

A Huh?

Q I think John Bahnke was saying that there was one called Sharuk (ph). Do you know where Sharuk (ph) is, or Sharook (ph)? Somewhere around, I think, Topkok? You remember that name at all?

A That man is -- they've been there around -- by Bluff, I guess, years ago.

Q Yeah.
A That's all I know.
Q Do you remember a place called Sharuk (ph)?
A No. No.
Q Did you work in the -- do any mining here, or work for the mining company or anything?
A Years ago I did. I used to work for them.
Q Did you? U.S. Smelting or.....
A Yeah. U.S. Smelting and Refining Company at that time. They've been changing their name so many times now, I don't know.
Q Hammond and then something else, huh? Yeah.
A They've been changing that name so many times.
Q Is that Alaska Gold Company now? Is that what that is?
A Yeah. That's what they go by now, according to the paper. Of course, I never go there no more 'cause I'm not working there.
Q Yeah. What else did you do around here besides mining? Did you have any other jobs?
A No. I'm not looking for no job now.
Q No, back then, when it was.....
A Let the young fellows do the job now. There's lots of them laying around town on their bum.
Q Yeah.
A Give them a job. Let them work. Let them earn their living instead of learning how to be a bum.
Q It's different these days, huh?
A They don't want to work. Some of them young fellows, they don't want to work. They want welfare, unemployment, BIA. They don't want to work, some of them. They want to live on that food stamp, welfare.
Q Why do you suppose that is?
A They're spoiled. They don't want to work. Lots of fellows around town, 'Can you spare four bits, or two bits?' Yeah. I said, 'Go earn your money.' I tell them. I get rid of them that way quick.
Q And they don't go out and hunt and fish as much anymore, do they?
A No. No.
Q Did you used to do a lot of fishing down there?
A (No audible response.)
Q Did you have a camp?
A No.

(Off record at Log No. 0895)

(Interview concluded)