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Who donated all this stuff, Joe? Where did all this come from, just from various people?

Just different ... They started too late, you know we eh, there's so much stuff here in Knik at one time that just nobody told anything about it. Then about the time we had our Centennial race, then I started getting interested in it, and we started bringing some of this stuff in. Then they did a lot of work on this hall, but the fellow that bought this in 1950 kept it building, he wouldn't want to tear it down, I think, a lot of people wanted to tear it down ... it was all saved and it looked a mess but he just wouldn't allow it and he kept it and finally his wife after he was killed in an mobile wreck, his wife gave me the acre with this building on it and I turned it over to Roy ... and then it got to big for us and we turned it over to the borough. But somehow we managed to save it.

What's the original purpose of this building?

It was originally built as a pool hall, then it became a dance hall, then the Artsons in 1914 had it as a lodge, it was one of the last Bob was here in Knik.

Did they have a roadhouse here?

It was a roadhouse. Run by Lee and Grace Alexson. Some of the other, now like Hernies and them, some of the burned it down and George Palmer, I think his burned down and finally this wound up to be the last one here.

This was an actual roadhouse, then?

And various, down in lower Palmer there's got the register, when it was a hotel here of the different people that stayed in here and he's offered to give us a copy of it but we have never received it but it could be got.

Do you know the fellows name?

Alvinos I know if but I just can't think at the minute. Alvinos.

One thing that we plan on doing, not this summer but next summer is hiring a couple of college students or what not to go up and down the different villages or go up and talk, do a library research and find out people who have been connected with the trail and find out which of those are still alive and go do a week on oral history, you know, just to take a microphone and recorder along and see what they have to say, because all of these people die off and ...

Yes, fast disappearing, very fast. Now there's one person that would be very bad ... from learning.

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Where does he live?

Probably in Seattle now, but he was born here in Knik and his Dad owned a store here in Knik then later he ran the store and I was in Palmer with him in a gold mine in 1948.

Now is that the Gold Tealins and Store?

Eh, his Dad sold that to the Tealins. But he would probably have more information than anybody I know of. Now the only other person I know of around here is Thorn Smith and ... She came here when she was 14 years old, I think. She, but she never lived in Knik, but she used to come here and dance in this building.

What was her last name, Joe?

Florence Flecinstein. And she's just a mile out of Wasilla this way. And she's getting pretty old. I mean all these people are gone that would have, ... would have been perfect, they knew where everything, they came here in 1904 and they run this roadhouse and ran the one in Happy River and they ran the half way house.

Are they dead now?

They're both dead now. He had so much stuff that over here but his house burned and they were all ... it just made me sick, when I heard that, it was just so much pictures, they were great for pictures and old books and old maps and stuff that would have been priceless today, you know.

When we were we stopped by and talked to you of need to look at some of the maps that he, those two maps that he purchased.

Now here's one that No Name made first.

Right.

No Name made this one, this by talking to people and they stuck the old names on it, they are not even the same names now as they are on that one and it's not in scale or anything it's just from talking to prospectors and miners and different things they drew up that map.

Now you said that he has thousands of pictures, old negatives, that

He's got all of Tealin's and Tealin got them right from Hernie.

That would really be valuable to see what's in

He offered a copy of them but we never seem to get them for some reason, I guess we just stayed after it we would but

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He says he has only got the negatives now that he needs to send the negatives to the University of Alaska who's offered to make like a print out of it and if you could do that and get a copy of that and be valuable.

This is our first Iditarod Trail race that we had, that just went out the Iditarod Trail about Nine Mile Road and went over to Big Lake.

When was that?

In 1967. That was the first big money race in Alaska. We paid \$25,000 prize money. We had 59 mushers from, we had them from Point Barrow, ... and also from the New England States.

That's still pretty good money, \$25,000.

The winner got \$7,000, an Eskimo ... won it.

Well, let me, let me tell you, Patty might mention on the phones some of the things we want to talk to you about. Then right now, we are starting to work on the identification of where the old historic route was. We have a map that has the survey route, that was done in 1918, we think, anyways we think the trail that's on the map is the survey trail, is the original historic trail but, when Patty was going over the maps this week she said that some places didn't really make sense because it had it going over the mountain peaks and it just didn't make sense.

Well when they come out and surveyed it, last year they were off 2 or 3 miles and Susan and I went out and took the dog team down to were the surveyors, and we went out and marked his first five miles like it really is. Now the trail originally, when I first seen the trail, went back .. and went right out, we always used the lake because it was so much easier for us and we never used it in summer time, see. Because the trail went right out back here

The old ... trail, eh?

Eh, the old trail, but here's where the barn was, right all hooked up here.

Right here, Joe?

Eh, hooked up right back here and went right out the trail.

Do you think we, I don't know how much time we have but if you think we can sit down with you on these maps and go.

I doubt if I could, if I could ... on the map, but I could draw the trail and show you where it is. There are places now that I would even have to look because there have been a lot of bull dozers and stuff in places that tears it up and then you have to go a ways and start

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again. And I've been over it hundreds of times, in fact in 1953 we moved all that stuff out to Flat Land Lake which is just south of the trail then I cut it out to Susitna Station in that same in '53 but there are places now even since '53 that have built up to where it is hard to find. But the way we use it now, definitely we're not on the trail at all, ... But the old trail, Stanley are just a few people that know where it is any more and that is, there's Stanley Collins, probably knows pretty well. They never travelled it as much as we did but they had traveled. ... Tilman, Bob Baker those are homesteaders who used the trail.

They still around?

Yup. But they haven't used it, some, you know what I mean.

Well, I would imagine you know it as well as anybody.

No, I think between here and Susitna Station I probably know it better than anybody. And then I took jobs in 1956, I took a job with the Army Intelligence to recon the Iditarod Trail. And we went out and spent 10 days between Susitna Station and Squentna looking for the trail, and finding it, but that's been a long time ago. But we found a lot of the old blazes and a lot of the old tripods and everything that they used. But they were interested, and I finally kept them interested in the Iditarod even those days was it was interested, and the Army wanted to use it as training trail and I think 2 or 3 jobs with the Army and Air Force on the trail, you know, locating it for them. Between here and Squentna is going to be your biggest problem.

Finding the trail?

Yup, but it could be done.

Would you be willing to give us a hand in some of that, when?

In the fall and in the spring and then in the winter, winter is just as good as anytime to do it.

Because you can see the change in vegetation, I guess.

Well, its got to be a lot of this, in fact I dated, it hasn't been used in many year and Vye and I started out from Pot Horn and well 10 days before Christmas in 1953 we started out and finally wound up in the Mexican deal, we didn't come in, we ... trail, but I could only make a mile a day, ... the darn trail and it snowed three feet on us when we started out from Pot Horn and we didn't want to get off the trail, we stayed on the trail, a mile a day was the best I could do, you know, so 10 days there was only 10 miles or so out from Fish Creek and ... Mexican deal on that, they came looking for rescue and we c.a.p. found us and then they send out rescue and wanted to rescue us, we didn't want to be rescued, it's quite a story but it didn't trying to them, stand there and tell them both started at this end and that side there, ... Susitna because this part of the trail is no good but from ... Susitna ... that's why it was cutting out. Then of course we run out of dog food and had to kill some dogs to feed the other dogs and stuff to get in there, we didn't have airplane traffic we have today, you know, finally I got word to rescue unit I worked with them at that time and c.a.p. I finally got word to them and told them I needed dog food and they come out and they brought a C47 and had it loaded with dog food and they dumped sea rations the whole C47 load plus some dog food, we hauled sea rations all winter all over the trail ... behind trees, there're still some out there behind trees and stuff but had hundreds and hundreds of cases of sea rations that they dropped off.

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Now I had a little bit of experience on this end of the trail a long time ago but I would be glad to help.

Well, ah, Patty I think, maybe but I'm not sure what your schedule is Patty, but next week she's going to try most of the trail from the air you know and take the old map, the best information we have this isn't what she had in mind, the best information we have and seeing how it deviates from the air and if she get on the ground that's good it's hard to get in a lot of these places on the ground once you are in the air and then from taking those once she realize the trail somewhat the old historic trail best she can, I guess we will use that information and try to update that more and at that time maybe it will be useful if you know we could pick your brain and maybe go out in the field with you for a while. You say your schedule is the slackest in the spring and the fall. When is the best time for you?

Well, fall is good, fall or spring is, or anytime from now on, just so it doesn't interfere with my fishing and I've got to have June, July and August for fishing. I got to work those three months to make a go and the rest of the time it. Well now the rest of the year you know Seven Mile Lake we marked that last year for them.

You think that's the same route as the historic route, pretty much.

Now that's right from here to there, it's exactly right, but there's I've never seen any map where it's right.

That's the whole problem, you know, we just don't have the correct information.

Well these other trails and things Iditarod too that, see they always went over to Big Lake for dog food and when they took pictures of it and stuff well all of these trails showed. And they just ... Iditarod, but it wasn't the Iditarod. And when I first started going the trail there were a lot of tripods.

Those are all gone now.

I don't know of any now. The first trip I had out this trail was 31 years ago. And when I was with Lee Alexson to trapping camp ... uses one of the roadhouse and that's run into the river since then at the little Susitna but we got a early snow that year and then October he took me out there.

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One reason why it's critical for us to get this trail identified where the historic route is, you know, BLM is just starting to convey some of the land to the natives now and we reserved easements on where we think the trail is but nobody has been out to look at it they just identified it the best they could, people sitting in an office and there is a very good opportunity for BLM to reserve these easements before the land's conveyed and if the easements, it's nice to have the easements where the trail is which is a problem we are not exactly sure if the easements are in the right place.

The only real problem you are going to have is two places. One is between here and Squentna, that's going to be tough it will take a lot of time, it could be found and the other is from Nome to Erwill(?) Lake. But I've seen that one a lot of times and...

Now is that across the old burn, that burn up there, the burn ...

No, this side of the burn. Between this ... out of Nome, when we crossed the river like we did, you know. And then the trail, it should have gone to the left on Post River there going like we did, well the trail goes on the spring time, well I've flew and seen it many times and I was on it one time years ago, and you can find it and it's definitely a better trail than what we go. I'd like to see it used. There's about 20 miles that are going to be a little tough. And the very toughest that we are going to have is between Alexander Creek and Twelve Mile crossing.

You mean finding the old trail?

The old trail.

You think it would be better to try to determine where the trail is in the winter time than this time of year.

Well, after freeze up, right after freeze up is good because you still got the old go down in the tundra, you know.

So October, November...

And also there are moose and different things use the trail a lot because it's open, you know, so it's kept dug down, you know, but stuff grows over it.

So it would most ... Alexander Creek, and ...

Alexander Creek and Twelve Mile crossing that's that ... Now there are buildings and all there, you know at Twelve Mile Crossing not on the time I lived there 15 years after the trail stopped being used it still had a road out there.

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I'm not sure how critical it is to get an exact precisely where the trail is because on those easement we are identifying by sections, is that right, closest sections, you know ... mile so we reserve a whole section on the easement, just to have a route on those inch to mile maps that we can identify, you know.

There's been some things said that I don't agree with and that is the trail moved a lot. You don't do that. It's always been almost exactly the same spot, they didn't, it might have gone around certain parts of the river or something, but that trail wasn't a floating trail like a lot of them try to make it appear. I mean one time it was out some where different ... I'm not sure. The reason why it is harder to find on this end because it's never been used as much so now after you get to McGrath the trail was used quite a bit by miners and different things right on up through the 40s and the 40s and still marked in places, you know, with tripods and

Tripods still up?

... But this was never used after they once quite, there was no reason

to go from here to Squentia ... Pass.

There's a lot of spurs on the trail that are associated with that same period, period, you know.

Ya, they were out and ... camps and different things.

Right, and I think there was, there was some concern a couple of these meetings that we have because people didn't know exactly where the route was, some people felt that some of these spur routes were significant like the Forest Service down in the Chugach Forest felt like maybe this wasn't the Iditarod Trail that they, it was so closely associated with that gold rush during the turn of the century that they ought to include it in the national system, you know in this designation. And I think the way that we read the legislation, you know, that to include the Iditarod in the National Trail System, we have the flexibility to do that, you know, if you want to include some of those spur routes that's one of the things ... on the map, try to determine where the spur routes are at. I guess Patty had mentioned to you too, that we had a letter from the mayor of Nome, Rasmussen, well actually it came to our, to Senator Goodwell and routed down through our Washington office, but he is recommending that the official historic route be extended past one of the spurs be was located past Nome.

Ya, we ... on the Candle trail

Candle that's right

Because they wanted to run a dog race on it. But I've got nothing against that but I think the Iditarod ought to be taken care of first.

Well I think what they are trying to say is that Candle Trail is part of the Iditarod

It is.

But you said.

It's the same trail from Troyette(?) long, it's the same trail, but from Coryette(?) to Dime Land, you know the Candles was the

Is a different trail.

Is a different trail all together. I've been over it, I mushed over it years ago when they were putting a new line, I had jobs that, well I worked for the Air Force and also for Western Electric and traveled that trail a lot during that time. Leave the dogs out there a lot in 54, 55. I've got a lot of pictures of that part of the country too.

Good, we might ...

Like Granite Mountain and stuff like that. I spent 26 miserable days there one time, hauling stuff into Granite Mountain. That's on the old Candle Trail, the old telegraph lines is on that, tripods every 100 yards when I was there with telegraph wire on it.

That was the old telegraph route, though, the old telegraph route, at Candle

It ran right on up to Candle.

That wasn't part of the Iditarod, that was.

No it's not the Iditarod, that what they want to put the spur.

Well he wants, you know, I guess our feeling is that he wants, I don't know how you would say it, maybe part of the action of this national historic trail and

Well I think they should have it because

We can make it as a spur

You know, the Iditarod, if you was in Nome and going to Iditarod, you was on the Iditarod trail. And if you was in Anchorage and going to Iditarod you were on the Iditarod and if you were in Fairbanks then they used another trail because it mainly first a Hunter trail. Now old man Hunter is buried right over here in a cemetery that, probably nobody knows where it is, in fact I have a heck of a time keeping them from bull dozing it under, there's a tombstone there about 6 feet high that's Hunter's and there's a man that the trail was named after, now the Iditarod went on up to Fairbanks, ... now that should all be included too but I feel that the Iditarod, mainly the Iditarod should be first and then get all of these others, you know.

I think that's right and that's, I guess that's where we're going from.

Because you can, there's all kind of trails out of here, Old Balsam(?) trail run right out here, right up through, Blanch will tell you it goes right through her land. And somewhere here is a desk that came out of, I think that one came out of Dulson's office here in Knik, now a lot of people when they think of Dulson trail, they tell you that ... down in that country, you know, but he had one here too. You'll find all kinds of trails ... the Iditarod.

This is the Iditarod sledger, this is?

That's one sledger that Dick Wilmar used from McGrath to Nome that year that he won.

This is typical of the one that used now.

No, I don't know if I've got, I think I've got one here ... I guess mine are out getting fixed. Here's a couple that were used on Mr. McKinley we broke up three sleds going to the top of Mr. McKinley.

Was that a pretty tough run?

That was the toughest that I ever had. We thought it would take 20 days it took us 44.

These two went up McKinley.

We broke three sleds, the other one is up at the house. Now that's tough going.

Was it tough because of the steepness? Tough because of the steepness?

Yes. It was tough on everything. Here some pack, it's tore up too.

I'll say.

Fell and drug about a half of mile. Like a pack, you see we carried packs as well as mushing, we had packs on our back and then had stuff in the sleds too.

How many dogs?

We only had seven but they were too many, too much power.

They were too lively, weren't they.

Ya, too eager. I had only like shadow ... you would get into spots where you couldn't handle it.

Which ones went to the top with you, which dogs?

My dogs, my whole breed dogs. Heckle and Buster and a little dog called Ruffus, he was a mistake to take because he was scared. He would looked down over those banks and stuff in any backhole this side then there was another one down this way and all this, but the others, now we had Candy along, she didn't mind it, Heckle didn't mind it, Buster didn't mind it and that's well as the others. I had four, named Buster, Ruffus, Heckle, Candy.

That's four.

The others, we left at fourteen thousand, we had ... cable in our tow lines but we had them tied to that and Mary Bird chewed the line in two the cable and all they got loose and they headed right up towards us. And when we were coming down the fixed line here they was went up to where it was so steep they couldn't go no farther and they tangled up and there they made kind of the nest and there they was waiting for us.

Waiting for you.

Well that's not dog country I do my mountain climbing the Iditarod dogs but the dogs pulled the sled a long way they was in front of the sled even on a fixed line where we would only go a foot and a half at a time they would have to change everything. Why, ah, there's four hours going four hundred feet and the dogs, you'd just say mush, go, mush, go, mush, go and you'd change ...

Well did you enjoy it? Did you enjoy it?

Well some of it, yes. Some in places was tough. Susan, there, her feet were freezing and we couldn't do nothing about it. When you are just so steep you could take off your boots, you couldn't do nothing. She was climbing, her feet was freezing and here we are half way up the fixed line, you can't go back and you can't stop and you are having a hard time going on, you know. She froze her feet some on that, it was about 20 below zero and

She had vapor barrier boots on? Still froze them?

Oh yes, it would drop to 40 below even in May. Now Sep(?) was anxious to spread that out here on the trail too. By going out the lake so that's why the trail wasn't was always like you'd see part of the main trail.

Right out here.

Right as soon as you go walk the lake. Just about a hundred, hundred and fifty feet up there. Mrs. Sepler would come out here and she didn't go too far up the trail. She was getting pretty old, you know, most 80, I think.

67.

Ya, and she's pretty ... around the trail in 67.

All right, I don't know if you know where we are at in that advisory committee, the advisory council, but we are trying to get a charter approved in that that has to go back to the Secretary of the Interior before we can formally nominations on that, but I, we're all certainly hoping that you are interested in being a key member of that advisory council.

I'd like to be on it.

We have your nomination up already from Senator Gorvell and he's the only person that's he's not, you're the only person that he's nominated he says you're the only one he has in mind.

I'd enjoy being on it, I mean, it's took a lot of my life been on that trail

Well I think we all know that if it wasn't for you there probably wouldn't be an Iditarod race and there certainly probably wouldn't be a Iditarod National Historic trail now so.

Well, I hope got, I think I have helped with it. Something that was needed it's a shame to let this stuff go by, pretty soon you just don't have nothing left, there ain't nothing ... All this stuff we need to keep and that trail is one of them.

That's right.

Now the next two years are going to spent drawing up the plan for the, a management plan for the trail, I sure, you know, that the purpose of the advisory council there is to guide us as we are writing the plan to be sure we are going in the right direction. It's really important during these next couple of years just so we can preserve that trail, you know, you know for so long that we can preserve it for every, or for future generations by that management plan. It's really important, these next two years are really important for the trail, I think.

One thing that bothers me a little bit, I noticed in the report there that there's a difference between historical and recreation. Now is there such a thing that we get sold as historical and we can't use it.

I don't think so. I think those are the things the plan has to talk about, you know, the reason that the trail was nominated was for it's historical significance because when people in Congress are voting on this trail they think of a recreation trail as something as the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest trail where people, hords of hikers are going down it, well this, just because it's been a historic trail doesn't mean that they can't use it for recreation, I think that's your question and no it's not true at all.

We've been on all the races here on the trail and then other places on the trail they, you know, use snow machines like the Eskimos and some of those.

Ya, no that's still

Then a lot of them now are going to dogs again. Eventually I would like to see them all go to dogs, ... gas and safety and everything else. I've several good friends that have actually killed with snow machines by failure, engine failure, out of gas and different things.

Can't help those.

It would never happen if they had dogs.

Well the act specifically allows motorized use, so the, they can use snow machines, I think part of the legislation with political when they were passing, trying to get the act passed that the natives wanted to be sure they could go from village to village on this trail and that's understandable.

Ya, it wouldn't be right to cut them off because a lot of them use the trail especially between like ... and ... and other places that used ... and those places are used constantly but sometimes I hate to see it but still they have a right to it and a lot of times are worried that that problem might happen if we ever got the trail to where they couldn't use it, I think the only ones that was it was Eland, Eland was always been first it, to get the trail into a national trail system.

I think what one of the big jobs we got in front of us, we appreciate