

INTERVIEW OF TONY GULARTE

Iditarod National Historic Trail Project

Sunday, March 22, 1992 (Anchorage)

On this day, Sunday, March 22, 1992, I contacted Tony Gularte by telephone (279-1846) and requested an interview. I met him at his home in Spenard at 1403 West 34th Avenue, Anchorage. The interview took place from approximately 6-7 PM.

As a condition of talking to me, Mr. Gularte asked me to sign a piece of paper saying I would not use his name in reference to the interview. I signed such a document, as it would have meant the termination of the interview if I had refused to do so. He then told me that he did not want people calling him. After the last historian, Sally Collins of McGrath, interviewed him, his phone did not stop ringing. He is clearly tired of receiving calls and requests for interviews about Iditarod. Given his attitude, I did not take any notes during the course of the interview.

[7DJ-031]

My primary reason for wanting to talk to Mr. Gularte was to see if he knew what the 9' by 10' feature is between the Moore Creek Halfway Cabin and the Takotna-Flat Winter Trail. I showed him aerial photos (Beck photos for 1970s) of the cabin, described the cabin, showed him a site map I had sketched, and showed him where it was on a USGS map. Mr. Gularte said he did not recall the cabin, that after so many years he can not remember a lot of specific details about such things. He did mention Elmer Cuturie was the person who had the cabin built, and that he worked for Mr. Cuturie at the latter's mine at Moore Creek. He also stated that he trapped in that area during the winters in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Mr. Gularte, who had spent the afternoon at the home of Ann Williams (a long-time seasonal resident of Flat and John Miscovitch's sister), volunteered information about the discovery of gold on Otter Creek in 1908. All of this is second hand information he obtained from others. He then asked me if I wanted to see his photograph collection. He has seven medium size wire-bound albums with photographs of Iditarod, Flat, Dikeman, Holy Cross, Fairbanks, and various members of his family. Many of the photographs are 8" X 10" copies from museums, showing Flat and Iditarod in the early days. He had a number of other photographs that looked like snap shots that may not be available elsewhere, including street scapes of Iditarod, Flat, Discovery, Dikeman, and photographs of people at social gatherings, schools, etc.

He indicated that the town of Discovery was built on the lower edge of the hillside, so that the valley floor could be mined. He said there is nothing left of the original town of Discovery. Otter Creek, he said, had the widest gold-bearing pay streak (1.25 miles) in the world. That is why all of the ground under Flat City has been mined, as all of the buildings have been moved. He had photographs of the Iditarod-Flat City Tram, which he said was built in 1911 to carry dredge parts from Iditarod City to Otter and Flat Creek. He has photographs showing horses pulling carts with railroad wheels over the wooden rails. The rails were made of two 2X4s nailed together, as metal rails were not available. Later

a gasoline engine was mounted on one of the cars. Mr. Gularte stated that there were about 200 head of horses in the Otter Creek valley. They were used to haul equipment and supplies during both winter and summer. There were also several cows, owned by miners to provide milk. The cows roamed freely, as all of the bears had been shot by miners. All of the trees had been logged for 40 miles around, as they used the wood to build cabins and other buildings, and as fuel for thawing the ground before mining it. He had several photographs of thawing operations and the Gugenheim dredge in the Otter Creek valley. He said Flat Creek was the richest of the Creeks, but Otter Creek paid well.

If Mr. Gularte could be interviewed again, he would be an excellent source on life in Flat and Iditarod. He went to grade school in Flat City, and spent much of his early life (up into and through the 1940s) in that area. He prospected in a number of areas, but never had a claim that paid a profit. Mostly, he worked for other miners and merchants. During the interview, he mentioned the names of people who mined in specific areas. He knew the people who delivered the mail by dog sled and by airplane. He was involved in the recovery and rehabilitation of Wiley Post's plane after it crashed at Flat. He knew and worked for a number of merchants at Flat and Iditarod, and he has a wealth of knowledge about the social life of Flat, Discovery, and Iditarod. A long time friend of his who is also from Flat is Pete Bagoy, whose wife developed the Anchorage business "Flowers by Bagoy." Pete and his wife lived in Flat for many years. Pete Bagoy likely has photographs of the area at his Anchorage home. Mr. Gularte thought Pete might be willing to talk about his years in the Iditarod area.

Tony Gularte appears to be in good health. He looks to be in his late 1970s. He is medium height, has white hair, and wears two hearing aides. He appeared to be very alert, and has strong opinions on a variety of subjects. But he is very weary of being interviewed, as many people have talked to him, and he claims he is tired of repeating his stories about life in the Iditarod country.

Rolfe Buzzell
Historian
ADNR/Parks/Office of History & Archaeology

LIST OF AUDIO TAPE INTERVIEWS
IDITAROD TRAIL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Phonotape-C

49-80-1	Gularte, Tony (Flat)	
49-80-2	Gularte, Tony (Iditarod)	Note: inaudible tape due to mechanical failure.
49-80-3	Morris, Jack L. (McGrath)	
49-80-3a	Morris, Jack L. (continued)	
49-80-4	Redington, Joe and Vi (Knik)	
49-80-5	Poling, John (Nome)	
49-80-6	Maloney, Mamie (Nome)	
49-80-7	Curran, Jr., Pete (Nome)	
49-80-7a	Curran, Jr., Pete (continued)	
49-80-8	Abloogalook, Mark (Nome)	
49-80-9	Hahn, Bonnie (Nome)	
49-80-10	Peterson, Andy (Nome)	
49-80-11	Baldwin, Bob (Nome)	
49-80-12	* Larson, Pete (Nome)	
49-80-13	Nollner, Edgar (Galena)	
49-80-14	Evans, Charlie (Galena)	
49-80-15	* McCarty, Billy (Ruby)	
49-80-16	Bahnke, Sr., John (Nome)	
49-80-17	Carlo, Charlie (Ruby)	
49-80-18	Kalland, Edgar (Kaltag)	
49-80-18a	Kalland, Edgar (continued)	
49-81-1	* Aulaye, John (Unalakleet)	

* Lacking use agreement; restriction on copying tape for distribution.

IDITAROD TRAIL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

IDITAROD TRAIL PROJECT OFFICER
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ANCHORAGE DISTRICT OFFICE
4700 E 72ND AVENUE
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99507

General Topics of Interview: Early history of Iditarod & Flat mining camps.
Roadhouses. First airplanes into Flat.

Date of Interview: July 12, 1980

Location of Interview: Flat, Alaska Length: _____

Interviewer: Tom Beck, Steve Peterson, BLM

Personal Data

Comments:

Narrator's Name: Tony Gularte

Due to mechanical problems, sound

Address: 1403 W 34th Pl. Anchorage

quality gradually deteriorates.

Telephone: 279-1846

Tape becomes inaudible at approx-
imately 13:00

Name and address of relative or friend: _____

Birthdate: 1908

Birthplace: _____

Interview Data:

Tape No.: 80-01 Side: A

Time: _____

Subjects: _____

00:05

INTRODUCTION

1:15

IDITAROD TRAIL ROADHOUSES: IDITAROD-DIKEMAN AREA

Shermiers R.H. Fritz's R.H. (Jerry Wynn-proprietor).

Phonotape-
49-

GULARTE

p: 2 of 2 Narrator: Tony Gularte 80-01

Time:

Subjects:

3:00

ARRIVAL OF FIRST AIRPLANE/FIRST AIR STRIP:

IDITAROD
ORAL HI

FLAT, AK. Building of first airstrip.

General

A.A. Bennett (aviator,) Wiley Post crash lands in Flat.

4:50

TONY ARRIVES IN IDITAROD VIA THE IDITAROD TRAIL: 1915

Location

Moore Creek Trail

Interview

6:00

FLAT MINING CAMP: 1920s, Wages. Social Life.

Personal

Mail Service by dog team. Roadhouses..

Narrator

8:45

EARLY MINERS/MINING CAMPS: IDITAROD AREA

Address:

Johnny Beatten & Wm. Dikeman. Mining camps. Parent family

Telephone

Crooked Creek.

Name and

Birthdate

Birthplace

Interview

Cape No.:

Time:

0:00

0:20

1:15

Notes

Tom Beck's Tape - Tony Gulartie, Side A

T = Tony Gularite, I = Interviewer

This is an Iditarod National Historic Trail interview with Tony Gulartie of Anchorage, Alaska. Interview is conducted at John Miscovitch's mining camp near Flat, Alaska on July 12, 1980. Interviewers for the Bureau of Land Management were Steven Peterson and Tom Beck. Tony was born in 1908. Came over the Iditarod Trail when he was seven years old in 1915. Tony spent much of his early life in the Iditarod and Flat areas. As the interview commences, Tony is examining a map of the Iditarod/Flat area prepared by the Bureau of Land Management, showing sites and segments along the Iditarod Trail. Mechanical breakdown during the tape causes gradual deterioration of sound quality. Tape is nearly inaudible at its end.

I. OK, now there's Dikeman. We're talking to Fullertons now. We kind of assume that the trail, _____ the trail to Dikeman more or less followed to the right-hand side here, this creek, and then at Shermeier's headed straight north.

T. Now this is, hey, there was, now have you talked to Tim?

I. No, Twitchell? Tim Twitchell?

T. Yes, he's over at the Pioneer Home.

I. In Anchorage?

T. In Palmer.

I. Yeah, he had the reindeer. He was reindeer

T. Now, Tim would know a lot about this country. Because he had reindeer all over this country.

I. You talked, what's this roadhouse you talking about 35 miles up from

T. Well, it would be out of Iditarod, see.

I. Now, there's Shermeiers.

T. There's, that's Shermeiers. Where's, all right.

I. And there is Iditarod.

T. No, out in here about 30 or 40 miles

I. On the Hunter Trail?

T. I don't know, I have never heard of the Hunter Trail. I don't know.

I. Well, it goes, it was that shortcut from Shermeiers to Ophir.

T. To Ophir. Well, it had to follow there then. Here is Fritz's, right there. That was the only two places.

I. Was that Shermeier and Fritz's.

T. Yeah, Fritz's Roadhouse.

I. And then

T. See, Jerry, see Jerry Wind run that at the last part of the trail and a little fellow

I. When was that, about in the 20s?

T. Yeah.

I. He ran Fritz's.

T. When did they last run the trail. Do you guys ever heard?

I. Well they are still running. I guess it's still a

T. No, no, no, no, I mean the mail trail. When was it

I. 26

T. Well it had to be about 25.

I. Then the planes started coming into McGrath, Eielson. Wasn't it Eielson?

I. Yeah, late 20s.

T. See, they run mail a couple years after the plane come in I believe. The first plane came into Iditarod, must have been in 25. A. Bennett.

I. Eielson ran the one, what was it, from Fairbanks to McGrath.

T. To McGrath. But A. Bennett was the first one in to fly it.

I. Or Iditarod.

T. Well, no we'll say Flat. Because he landed behind this mountain over here. See that was the old air. They made a little strip up there. This was a dug, see. Then after they dug down here, well then they made the strip right here.

I. Is that one of the old Alaska Road Commission's strips. In the mid 20s

T. No the people themselves made that strip up there.

I. Is that right?

T. Yes. It's right in back of this knoll. And then

I. They weren't paid to do it, they just

T. What?

I. They weren't, you know they did it, the Road Commission paid a lot of people to build small strips.

T. Well, no, we collected enough money and we put it in ourselves. Then A. Bennett come in, see. Then after that, then they fixed the field down here where it is now and it was 800 foot long.

I. At that time.

T. At that time, yeah. Because when old, old Post come in, he hit the end of the field, he hit the center field, and he hit the ditch. And that was the end of, but if he landed in any other place that plane would still of been there because he had everything here to fix him up. Joe Carlson brought him across and there was an old fellow, Patterson

I. This is Wiley Post?

T. Yeah, that was Patterson that had the blacksmith and he made his stuff for his landing gear. And thirteen hours he was gone.

I. You've been over these trails then? You've been over these trails yourself quite a bit?

T. Well, just that one time I went over the Iditarod Trail.

I. You came up over the pass, through Tokotna?

I. Through McGrath.

T. Through McGrath and then to Tokotna and then up Fourth of July.

I. Oh, you came up this route here. The old, old route. And then over Moore Creek.

T. And then Moore Creek.

I. You did that in the winter or summer?

T. No in the spring of the year, in March.

I. Is that right, so you took the old, not on the ridge but right down on the creek.

T. Yeah, see well the trail was still there in 37, 38, and 39. It was just the same as the day when we came over, you know. I used to trap in that country.

I. I know the Fullertons and Harrises were talking about all the snow they would get between

T. Well that's why they quit the trail was on account of that snow, see that is why they went to Ophir. And then they hit Jerry Wind's warehouse or there and then they hit Shermeiers and then they came up to up to Iditarod and then when I was a young fellow you know, well I used to go over and met the old dog mushers at Iditarod and bring the mail over to Flat so that would give them a little rest. A day or two. Well this is quite a lot of history in this country. There's a lot, a lot of history in Flat.

I. This whole area.

T. The best camp in Alaska.

I. Why do you say that?

T. Paid the best wages. We was getting a dollar an hour in the late 20s, where all the rest were only getting 50¢ and 60¢.

I. Is that right?

T. Yes. In the late 20s.

I. People are about working for that

T. And a good social town. I can remember when people from Iditarod would come to Flat in big hay sleds and horses and wore blankets and leave Iditarod and come to Flat and dance one night. Come up, see, there was a town over here called Discovery and then they would dance there that night and go back to Flat and then go back to Iditarod. That's right. And then they, the people in Flat would do the same thing and the people in Discovery the next month would do the same thing. Oh, it was quite a social. And they had good dance halls.

I. How often did the mail come in?

T. Once a week. Once a week, yeah.

I. If you are lucky, huh.

T. Once a week they would try to make it in.

I. Is it a big occasion when everybody.

T. No, no. Nothing _____. You know a lot of times they may be a little late because they had the snowshoes to break trail, you know the roadhouse man would go out and break trail as far was he could you know and then the other boy on the other end he would do the same thing you know, then the people along the trail, they break trail you know. And if they didn't make it that day, well then they went back to the same roadhouse and stayed over because that night the trails would harden up, see, so then the next morning they would get right out to where they could come in and the next day they would go on through.

I. Did the operators actually, how did they pay them? Did they get just so much a month or

T. You mean the dog mushers?

I. No the roadhouses.

T. Well you pay them just the same as you would go to a restaurant.

I. I thought maybe they were on a contract or something. Not even for the mail run.

T. No, no, no, no. The roadhouse belonged to the owner. He charged so much for a bed, and so much for your meals.

I. Did the mailman carry money with him a pay him and take it out of expenses?

T. As far as I know, yeah. I've got a picture of a beautiful dog team. Bill Duffy's team, or, yeah Bill Duffy and Ernie Beadie were together.

I. When was this?

T. What year?

I. Beadie and Dikeman where the ones that

T. No, no. Beaton and Dikeman.

I. Beaton and Dikeman.

T. I can tell you that story, too, about, because I got that one from Johnny Beaton himself when he discovered _____. I knew Johnny Beaton. In fact I've got pictures of him. I have got a picture

I. Where do you have that, in Anchorage?

T. Yes and then his daughter's Jean is at the home in Anchorage. Jean Beaton. But it's not Beaton now, it's Samanski(?) is her name now. That was her dad. And his son is down at Golden Creek.

I. Where is that at?

T. That's 30 miles or 40 miles below Tanana, down there with Joe Ramsted. But he's a fly-by-night. No Johnny made a lot of money _____ [Cannot hear] _____ You know it hard to realize how many [Cannot hear]

I. There's still quite a few

T. But in the early days, you know this _____ same as Flat Creek there was miners there, same as Willow Creek and then Chicken Creek was pretty well _____ mined and then French Creek was pretty. French Creek didn't worked until _____.

I. _____ Their father's been here quite a while.

T. Oh, yeah he's an old-timer here. Good lord I knew him back in 1918, 1919 very, very well _____.

I. Well we have been, what we have been trying to do is locate these trails and see how accurate they are and when they existed and when they stopped. It's really quite a honeycomb. We were talking to the Fullertons about them _____ south down to Bonanza Creek over to Crooked Creek and then the old highway survey that went over Georgetown.

T. This boy here is in Anchorage, too. He can tell you all about this country.

I. From Willow Creek?

T. He was born and raised in Crooked Creek, Sam Parrot. He can tell you all about that part of the country and about the trail. He can tell you all about that country. He took many, many hundred dogs between here and Crooked Creek. His dad had a store over there and they used to board dogs in the summer.

I. Oh, yes, that was Alice Harris and

T. That's her brother, Sam.

I. Yeah, we were talking to Don here the other day.

[Cannot hear]

T. He knows _____, he knows all that country.

I. Did they board dogs for people who ran out of Flat?

T. Well, yeah. You see, if you like you had five dogs instead of you taking care of them _____ Sam, I mean dad would come over and take a hundred _____ and then they would board them for \$5 a month. Then the following year they would bring them back, see.

[Cannot hear]

I. Do you know Jack Morris?

T. Over by McGrath. I just know him going through. He had the roadhouse.

[Cannot understand enough to make transcription worthwhile.]

Tom Beck's Tape - Tony Gulartie, Side A

T = Tony Gulartie, I = Interviewer

This an Iditarod National Historic Trail interview with Tony Gulartie of Anchorage, Alaska, conducted at the townsite of Iditarod, Alaska, on July 12, 1980. Equipment failure rendered the tape inaudible.

T. No, no, across the street, see there was a street going up here. See a sidewalk right through up here, see and the telephone exchange was right up the street. And this was a street, here, see. Then right across there was the woman's shoppe, right up there was the drug store. Then right across corner there was a saloon.

I. What direction was that? North, right?

T. See, this was all, hell, this was all level, there was warehouses out there, out there on the riverbank. All along the riverbank, you know, where the boats pulled up and they pull all their freight up, see on trucks in them days. But this is all sunk down now.

I. It wasn't sunk before that.

T. No, no, hell is was all level with the street, you know.

[Cannot understand enough to make transcription worthwhile.]