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Nick White

February 21, 1963

Fairbanks, Alaska

Harrie Hughes, interviewer

Harrie Hughes introduces Nick White who worked for Alaska Railroad. Nicholas V. White said he was born in Mazin, Yugoslavia. His father and mother were Raymond and Helen. He had one brother, Dan. He first came to Alaska in 1907. He landed in Valdez. There were a lot of people living there at that time. He didn't work very much there. He then moved to Cordova. He came back in 1910 and went prospecting. He then returned to Seattle. In 1916 he returned to Alaska and worked in Anchorage. He started working for the Alaska Railroad. He knew Sam Estes. He said there aren't any people left that he worked with on the railroad. He worked on the construction of the railroad. He worked on the Chickaloon-Matanuska branch of the railroad. Harrie talked about the hill that was part of that branch. Sometimes cars would break away on that hill above Sutton. Nick said he worked on the coast in the 1920s. He worked between Seward and Anchorage. He said there were a lot of sheep in that area. There were mountain goats, too. Harrie talked about John Markowitz who was a miner. Nick talked about Pete Carpel. Harrie said Old Man Strong had a mine around Indian. Nick said Tom Sapel had a prospect at Hope. Summer Smith mined at Chickaloon and Hope. Nick said he tried prospecting but he never had a strike.

He came up to Fairbanks in 1920. He talked about the people that worked on the railroad. Frank Leslie was a foreman in the yard. George Corli was a road master. Roy Lee was a section foreman. Barney Ed was a foreman at Grand View. Sam Wright was a foreman. Sam McNees also worked on the railroad at Moran and Joe O'Brien. Porter Creek had a man named Jansen. Between Porter Creek and Anchorage there was Jack Horman. In the Anchorage yard there was McCutcheon who was later a senator. Between Anchorage and Fairbanks there were people that changed all the time.

Harrie asked about the tunnels at McKinley Park. Nick said he never worked on those. He never worked farther than Curry. In 1922 he worked between Talkeetna and Healy.

Harrie asked what the railroad workers did for entertainment at that time. Nick said there were lots of places in Anchorage and it wasn't that crowded back then. There were cigar stores and pool halls. They played cards. Harrie talked about the places he went to in Anchorage. Nick said Koslosky, Ken Deasy, Ike Taylis, and Joe Ormino had stores in Anchorage.

Harrie showed Nick photos of Valdez that once belonged to Cal Townsend.

Harrie asked Nick if he ever went on a stampede. Nick said no he didn't. He worked in the Nelchina area and on Chickaloon Creek.

Harrie asked about early day roadhouses in that area. Nick said there weren't any in that area. Harrie asked about a roadhouse at Anchorage that was run by Jimmy Vail. Nick said there was a roadhouse at Talkeetna that was run by Mrs. Cortland. There was also a roadhouse at Hope.

Harrie asked about people in the McKinley Park area. Nick said he knew Morris Morlino, Andrew Dregich, and Jack Singleton. Harrie said those people are all gone. Nick said he never got married. In those days it was hard to get a job. He didn't get a lot of pay. He started at about three dollars a day. There were other jobs that paid less. He talked about trapping in the Chickaloon and Matanuska area. He trapped lynx, wolverine, and fox. He killed a few brown bears. Harrie talked about seeing brown bears in groups below Anchorage when he worked on the railroad. Harrie said he worked for Jimmy Vail, McGuire, Johnny Blackman, and Sid Sheldon.

Harrie asked for stories. Nick said he couldn't tell you much. Harrie asked about Joe Quigley. Nick said he knew him well when he had a quartz mine. They talked about Fannie Quigley. Nick said he worked on the McKinley Park Road. John Rominoff worked then, too. Harrie talked about the Kantishna area and Bill Taylor. They talked about Dunkle. Harrie and Nick talked about Koslosky and Johnny Swagler.