

Summary for H75-11

Charlie D. Jones, Dr. S. N. (Sig) Bredlie, R. H. (Bert) Ogburn, and Henry Apel are interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1947

SIDE 1

Charles D. Jones is interviewed by Al Bramstedt on 6/16/47 in Fairbanks, AK. He is in town for a medical checkup. He came to Nome in 1900 on the Centennial during the gold rush. The Three Lucky Swedes got Gabe Price from Golovin to come up and help them organize a mining district. In those days you needed 8 people to form a mining district. Dr. Kettleison was the recorder.

Jones was born in Zanesville, OH but was working in Chicago, IL when he heard about the strike. He was 23 years old at the time he decided to come north. Nome was in the building stage when he arrived. The freight was coming in hot and heavy. Jones counted 26 ships out in the harbor at one time. The freight was just piled on the beach—there were no warehouses. Those who had a tarp threw it over their pile; otherwise it just stood there exposed to the elements.

There were 68 saloon licenses. Jones put up a tent to stay in. Prices were 3-4 times as much as in Chicago. Jones thinks that prices are higher now (1947) than when he first came to AK. He used to pay \$15.00 per ton for coal in Nome in the 1900s; in 1947 the price is \$40.00 per ton. A side of beef was 16 cents/lb., now it is 26-32 cents/lb.

Plenty of money was made on the beach at Nome. Miners used every possible method to sluice gold off the beach. Jones describes sluicing for gold.

The courthouse was established in 1900 in Nome. It had a judge, D. A., a marshal, etc. On September 13th, 1900, the first big storm hit Nome. In 1934-1935 a big fire burned the town of Nome. The whole business section was ashes. The common belief was that a still blew up on the 3rd floor of the Golden Gate Hotel, causing the fire. A strong gale was blowing and that helped spread the flames. People brought some old shacks in from the hills for shelter and some of those have just been added onto.

In 1913, there was a flood in Nome, worse than the flood of 1946. The 1913 flood washed out the graveyard on the bluff. Jones doesn't think that Nome will ever be moved back. He thinks there should be an artificial harbor built at Cape Nome. A lot of gravel would have to be put down to stabilize the tundra in order for buildings to be built. Nome has a rosy economic future in Jones view, due to gold mining. Gardening's no good in Nome; it's too cold.

Dr. S. N. (Sig) Bredlie, born in Fairbanks in 1908, is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK on 2/12/47. His father was a shoemaker by trade, and came to the Klondike in 1897, to mine. He arrived in AK in 1906, and operated the Eleven Mile Roadhouse on the Tanana River on the Old Valdez Trail.

The first schoolhouse in Fairbanks was a 3-story building on the corner of 2nd and Noble St. It belongs to Mrs. Ford. The second schoolhouse was built on the site of the Old Main on 8th St. off of Cushman. It was a frame structure, which caught fire one night. School was held around town in temporary locations such as the Eagles' Hall and Moose Hall for the rest of that year.

The early Federal Building was located on 2nd Ave., the same as now (1947). The jail was located at the corner of 3rd and Cushman. The Federal Building was comprised of two buildings, in the back of the Federal Building was the old Washington-AK Bank building, that the government used as a storage warehouse for confiscated stills and other bootlegging equipment during Prohibition.

Bredlie worked with the Fire Dept. for 5 years. He stills responds on calls. There was a bad fire in 1918 on 1st St. from Cushman down to what was then Easy St. (now Blanchfield St.). It burned out Fairbanks Corner, Fowle's Men's Wear, Wechter's Meat Market, the Model Café, and the Arcade Café among others.

He used to work for Sheldon and Gibson Motor Stage, Inc., in 1922-1923. He used to drive to Chitna and Valdez in Model T open-air Ford cars; it was a 3-day trip to Chitna, and 3 ½-4 days to Valdez. They had to actually build the road in some places (cut down trees to form a corduroy road to get over the swampy places). Tom Gibson had some deluxe models that were Dodges. They were still open air, but a little more comfortable than the Fords.

When they were traveling empty, they would take gas and oil supplies and store them in the roadhouses along the way. Passengers frequently had to get out and help the stage over muddy spots. One of Tom Gibson's passengers once sent him a bill for \$199 for the expense of having his clothes cleaned and the time spent pushing the car. Tom had the bill framed.

Bredlie worked on the steamers Reliant and Tanana. Capt. Livingston was in charge. They used to go up the Kantishna River to Bearpaw and Roosevelt and haul ore down to the mouth of the river on barges. Bigger riverboats took barges down to the mouth of the Yukon.

In Fairbanks, it was a frequent occurrence for the Chena River Bridge to go out with the ice in the spring. Sometimes in the fall, the high water would carry driftwood that would take the bridge out. When the bridge was out, you had to ride the ferry across the river. One ferry started where the Model Café is and ran straight across to where the hospital (old St. Joseph's Hospital) is now. It was a toll ride. Mr. Creamer had a ferry that ran from Wendell Ave. over to Graehl. The present bridge (1947) was built in 1918.

The Tanana Valley Railroad ran from Fairbanks to Chatanika. Once the small engine was taking two flat cars of men out to Chatanika when they ran into a hill in the vicinity of Dome, AK. Everybody had to get off to help push the engine up that hill. The railroad was abandoned after the Steese Highway was built. It was much easier and quicker to haul supplies by road. Hardly anyone living at Chatanika and Cleary in 1947—there used to be about 30,000 people there in the early days.

Mr. Martin brought up an airplane by barge to the site of the present airport (Weeks Field possibly?). He charged admission to see it fly, and flew it for about 20 minutes. Everyone in Fairbanks was either at the airport or watching over the fence from the roofs of their houses. Martin landed the plane where the baseball diamond used to be (no idea where this is).

Carl Ben Eielson was a teacher before he became a pilot. Bredlie had him in school. Eielson got some of the businessmen in Fairbanks to back him and they brought up an old Jenny bi-plane. Ira Farnsworth put the plane together. Eielson flew the one summer, taught school that winter, and then got a contract to fly mail to McGrath. He

made about 7 trips; the contract was for 10. On the last trip, one of the wheels caught on the muddy ground, tipped the plane over, and broke a wing.

Although he wasn't supposed to carry passengers, on that last trip he was conveying a man stricken by paralysis to Fbks (?), whom he had loaded into the mail compartment. When the plane tipped over, they had to cut a hole in the fuselage to get the man. He fell to the ground unharmed, got up, and walked away. The accident had scared the paralysis right out of him.

Eielson was a flight instructor in the Army during WWI. He and Earl Borland were killed in an aircraft accident in Siberia in 1929. Bredlie used to help Eielson heat the oil and water for the engine so the plane would be warm enough to take off.

Bredlie is one of the youngest members of the Pioneers of AK. He's not sure how many chapters are left. He lived in San Francisco, CA when he was going to college. He thinks AK has a good future, and is in favor of statehood.

SIDE 2

R. H. (Bert) Ogburn is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK on 2/17/47. He left Seattle, WA in 1901, and landed in Dawson about a month later. His mother and father had gone north with the Klondike gold rush in 1897 (his father first, and his mother 2 years later in 1899). Both came out in 1900 and Ogburn went back with his dad. His mother followed shortly thereafter.

They took a steamer to Skagway, then a train to Whitehorse. Ogburn rode a bike to Dawson. He was just past 15 years old at the time. His father followed with a team (whether of horses or dogs is unclear). Ogburn made better time on his bike than the team. The route followed the river. The whole trip took about 10 days. Ogburn made about 20-66 miles per day. They lost 2 days on account of food poisoning. Actually, there were quite a few bikes on the trail during the rush. On the last day, Ogburn ran into a snowstorm, but got lucky and caught a freight team and rode the last 10 miles into Dawson.

Ogburn didn't see much of Dawson at first. He went right out onto Last Chance Creek where his dad had a mine (this was in April 1901). During the summers, though, he got to see more of Dawson, a lively town, with gambling houses and dance halls that were all running.

He did odd jobs for the miners out on the creeks, mostly hunting squirrels and rabbits. In the winter of 1901-1902, he dragged buckets down shafts for miners, windlassing for prospectors, and hauled ice with a dog team for drinking water. In the summer of 1902, he fired a boiler, and then went out to school that fall.

There wasn't much road except some makeshift roads up on top of the ridges. There was a snake road at the head of Beach Creek, so miners could haul their wagons down to the heads of the creeks.

There were social halls in nearly all of the communities, with no social distinctions—at one ball in Dawson, Mrs. George Black, the wife of the governor, and one of the town scavengers danced together, as did the wife of a minister and a professional gambler.

The family moved into Dawson from Last Chance Creek in the fall of 1905. In Jan. 1906, Ogburn's father came to Fairbanks. In spring of 1907, Ogburn worked for a

survey for Klondike Mines Railroad, which ran out to the creeks in Dawson. That fall (1907), he prospected at Walker's Fork in the Fortymile region. The next spring, he worked for Yukon Gold Company until they finished their operations in 1925.

The Yukon Gold Co. was the F. E. Co. of the Klondike. They started the firsts large-scale dredging operations in Dawson. They had dredges, thawing plants, hydraulics, and ditches. The thawing plants were mostly steam-thaw, because water-thaw was not yet developed. Hydrolyzing was hydrolyzing of gravel off the benches; different than in Fairbanks, where hydrolyzing involves removal of overburden that contains no gold. Ogburn stayed in Dawson most of the time, except for trips to Iditarod in 19018 and again in 1920. They were long slow trips both times.

Ogburn came to Fairbanks in 1925. He took a small boat with oars form Dawson to Circle, and mushed over the winter trail from Circle to Cassiar, about 50 miles out of Fairbanks. At Cassiar, he was met by a car that had been sent out from Fairbanks. His family had already gone out to Whitehorse. He apparently came to Fairbanks on Business, but what sort of business is not clear. Ogburn had intended to Settle Outside, but after reviewing the prospects the North looked pretty good, so he returned to Fairbanks in March 1926.

Fairbanks was just beginning to show signs of economic rebirth. The F. E. Co. was just starting construction. The town was till pretty dead, and property values were low and individual mining was down to almost nothing. The F. E. Co. provided jobs, pumped money back into the economy, and people modernized their homes.

Large-scale aviation, road building, and building with concrete got its start in Fairbanks in the late 1920s. The Great Depression was good for Fairbanks. It was experiencing a labor shortage in the 1930s and the bad economic times outside drove a lot of men up to seek work. The spring of 1926 was really the beginning of large-scale aviation in AK. That was the year Sir Hubert Wilkins and Ben Eielson made the first flights to Pt. Barrow. There was a lot of publicity regarding that flight.

The future looks dim for mining in Fairbanks. Government construction can out-compete mining operations for workers (fills all available accommodations; can offer higher wages). Most miners are very pessimistic about current conditions. AK has been good to Ogburn, and he is grateful to have spent most of his life here.

Henry Apel, the 81-year-old King Regent of the 1947 Fairbanks Dog Derby and Ice Carnival, is interviewed by Al Bramstedt in Fairbanks, AK on 3/5/47. (Apel is a laconic Scandinavian. The interviewer has a hard time prying information out of his. Apel is the oldest pioneer in Fairbanks (?) at the time.)

Apel was born just outside of the old town of St. Louis, MO. He was 28 years old when he first came to AK. He contracted malaria in MO and his doctors advised him to come north to have it "froze out of him." Malaria was widespread in the States long streams and bottomlands. Apel was advised to go north in 1893. He came to AK in 1894, and has been here for 53 years. He had a brother-in-law mining in the Fortymile area at that time.

Apel's route in 1894 took him first to Edmonton, then to Athabasca Landing on the Athabasca River. From there he traveled by canoe until the river froze up. Then he traveled by dogsled down to Ft. Yukon. The whole trip took a year to complete. He

bought whatever supplies he needed from a network of Hudson Bay Co. trading posts along the way.

Ft. Yukon was a small place, but it looked pretty good in 1895. Apel stayed with his brother-in-law for a month, then went trapping the next winter. In addition to trapping and mining, he worked for the AK Road Commission.

AK need more roads and better roads. Apel is most interested in a better road between Fairbanks, and Circle. Last spring (1946) he got stuck in a big mud hole on that road. So did the Road Commission boss.

Apel's real home is in Circle. He has lived in Fairbanks since 1941. He says we need a transportation link from AK to the States. Apel made one trip Outside in 53 years and that was in 1946. He stayed for 25 days. The large number of people in Seattle really surprised him. He flew out on Pan American and was in Seattle that night.

Jim Stewart, Casper Boulanger, Neil McDonald (Old Crow), and Herman Price, are all men who came north in 1894 and are still in AK today. There were quite a few white people in AK in 1894. There was lots of mining going on in the Fortymile and other areas, as well as trapping. Jack McQuesten had a small boat. Sometimes a trader would come up from St. Michael.

Blanche Cascaden is the 1947 Queen Regent.