

H97-66-11

Barney and Ole Hansen and Horace Biederman

January 1965

Fairbanks, Alaska

Barney introduces himself and his wife. He was born in 1894 in Napa County, California. His father, Peder Nicholas Hansen was born in Norway in February 1863. His mother, was born in New Zealand. Her parents (Cammell) were from England. His grandfather was the oldest son of the Cammell family who owned a large shipping firm. The Hansens have one son, James Henry.

Barney said his job has been mining with other odd jobs. He decided to come to Alaska in 1929. He was working for the Union Oil Company. He came down the river on the first boat of the season and landed in Eagle on June 4, 1929. The next day he started out for Alder Creek with his brother and Bert Bryant. They stopped at summit cabin. They were going to the Seventy mile District. They made it to Crooked Creek for the day. They met up with Art Frolick, Kumer, and Gus Douglas. They had a hydraulic outfit at Crooked Creek. They made it to the falls and stayed with Axel Johnson. They moved on to Barney Creek and stayed for three or four days. Bob Cameron wanted Barney to work on flume boxes. Jess Samish and Frog ground sluiced the ground around there. They made it to Charlie Youst's place. Ed Brasted and his wife came in during the winter to Alder Creek. They worked on Alder Creek that summer.

Ole said she was born in Norway. Her father drowned when she was nine months old. Her mother remarried and they came to North Dakota. She grew up on the prairies. It was a pioneer life and they lived in a sod house for a while. She attended school in Chicago. She had a friend who worked for BIA in Alaska. She influenced Ole and Ole sent in an application to the BIA. She received a job offer to teach in Eagle. She decided to go and within a week she was departing Seattle on the Alameda. She enjoyed the trip through the Inland Passage and then on to Dawson. She had missed the last boat of the season down the river. She found a small boat that was traveling to Fortymile Station. She stayed there nine days with Mr. and Mrs. Schultz in their roadhouse. The next part of the trip she traveled with Percy DeWolf who carried the mail. She thought Eagle was beautiful when she first saw it.

Horace Biederman carried the mail between Eagle and Circle for many years. He was born and raised on the Yukon River. He has two children. He is the NC agent at Eagle. He attended school in Eagle and at the age of 15 he started running the mail (in the winter of 1925-26). His father had frozen his feet the year before and he needed Horace to finish out the contract. He thought it was pretty rugged. It was a six day run from Eagle to Circle. They had a day off and then headed back to Eagle for six days. They worked

from November to April. The mail came from Dawson. They traveled from Eagle to Sheep Creek. From there it was twenty-five miles to Nation. From there to Charlie Creek it was another thirty miles. From there to Woodchopper it was twenty-eight miles. There was a roadhouse at Woodchopper. Then they had to camp out in a small shack. From there to Circle it was twenty-six miles. He said Slavin had a roadhouse at Coal Creek but they never stopped there. They had seven to eight dogs pulling the sleds. They were big mongrel dogs. Ole said that Percy DeWolf's dogs were part wolf. Barney said he came back one time on a sled from Whitehorse to Dawson. Even with wolf robes it was pretty cold. When they got to Dawson they came to Eagle with Percy DeWolf. Percy lived in Cassier. Barney talked about the clothes Percy would wear. He was known for going out no matter how cold it was. The stopovers between Dawson and Eagle were: Halfway (Percy's camp), Fortymile, and John Fanning's. Horace said the mail limit was 400 pounds and they usually left Circle with that limit. Before 1922 all of the mail for his area was routed around by way of the White Pass and Dawson. Sometime after the railroad arrived the mail was routed by way of Fairbanks and Circle and then they hauled it upriver. Ole said she remembers getting the mail through Dawson. They had mail three times a month and it was always on time. Horace said the mail was second class and even fourth class. Ole said in the winter time they couldn't always carry all of the fourth class mail.

Ole was asked about her life in Eagle. She remembers the Hansen brothers when they arrived in Eagle. When she came to the village she wasn't too sure about meeting with the Natives. When she walked up to the village for the first time she carried a club to keep the loose dogs away. On her walk up to the village she met up with two people. They knew she was the new teacher and they had been expecting her. She walked next to the river and they could see her before she arrived in the village. She was greeted warmly by the village. This was in the year 1925. She also handled medical treatment in the village. She delivered or help to deliver babies. One time they were all driven out of the village by a flood.

She stayed with the BIA for thirteen years and then she married Barney. She met him when he arrived in Eagle. She lived in the village in the teacher's quarters. They burned wood and got their water from the stream behind the village. They contracted for fuel and had gas lamps.

Horace said they started having regular flights into Eagle in 1938. Pan Am was carrying mail from 1930-1934, but their service wasn't very satisfactory. Horace carried the mail by dogsled again from 1934-1938 until regular flight service was started again.

Barney said his brother was with him the first year he was in Eagle. He said Pan Am would have someone haul mail down to the river. Max Goose had the mail contract to haul it down to Nation. Barney tells a story about traveling with Dick Bauer from Nation to Eagle.

Barney talked about Nimrod Robertson. He said Nimrod made a pair of teeth for himself. He said all of the old diaries were left behind in his cabin along with his first pair of teeth. He used bear and sheep teeth. He took the impression with balsam gum. Time meant nothing to Nimrod. Ole said that Nimrod could make anything but a living. Barney describes one of Nimrod's jobs. He made his own lathe, knives and watches.

Someone from the audience tells a story about Henry Appel. Henry took Nimrod's dog after Nimrod died. Nimrod had made a set of teeth for his dog.

Barney said he worked in partnership with several people on the Seventymile and worked for Dick Bauer on the Fourth of July Creek. One year he stayed in North Dakota and helped out his father-in-law on the farm. When he got to Fairbanks he stayed with Al Stout and his wife. He was offered a job at the power plant by Bert Ogburn. After that Jack Boswell and Barney had an assignment to build the mechanical point driver in the summer of 1944. In the fall he took the last boat with Art Peterson to Eagle. In the winter of 46-47 he freighted his stuff to Alder Creek and they started mining in the spring. He was there with his wife and son. They had high water and equipment problems.

Someone in the audience asked if Horace saw much game on the trips to Circle. Horace said that they would see moose along the river in the winter, but very seldom caribou. Barney said they would see large runs of caribou in the fall.