

Peterson Tape #7, Side A

(Uncertain of people talking. May have some listed incorrectly)

CHARLES RAINWATER, ALASKA F.E., 1980

\_\_\_\_\_ section house located at Girdwood on highway. First gravel road passed the townsite of Girdwood going to Anchorage. Up the gravel road, tool shed on left and old section house on right.

A. Section house, fed the train crew.

S. Like a mess hall, huh?

C. This was a construction camp here?

A. Well, I don't think it was; I think it was just, well it could have been but I don't know but when I came here it was a closing station, kind of a yard because they had just finished the branched end to Whittier and were using it so this was kind of like a terminal point.

S. Staging area like?

C. When did you come here Charlie.

A. 1948.

C. Working on the railroad?

A. Yes.

C. Was this the original route that we are on now?

A. Right.

S. Has the bed changed that much over the years? Do you know if there has been a lot of straightening to it?

- A. Well, not a lot but we have had to raise it a lot you know.
- C. Because of the earthquake?
- A. Yes, would'd be right down in the mud here you know so as years \_\_\_\_\_ we keep raising it a little bit.
- T. Somehow this doesn't even seem natural.
- C. One of the laws of nature.
- S. A camper or something?
- A. That's a rail saw. Lots of fishermen come here and catch rainbows, dolley, and \_\_\_\_\_ with those poles. But there was a crew in there that were building concrete culverts and they built 24 inch up to 5 foot diameter and they were used all along the railroad and replacing old wooden structures that were rotten out and finally they got the authority or saw it was more economical to buy corrugated metal pipe so they started buying those and they shut this pipe making operation down.
- S. Pipe, round, regular, round concrete pipe, huh?
- A. Yes, just like the, just like drain tile or you know.
- S. Like two foot stuff or
- A. Or these were four foot diameter, they were four foot long.
- S. Great big stuff.
- A. Or five foot long or so forth.
- T. There never was like a roadhouse site or anything. We don't have any information at all on Spencer.

- A. No, I don't ever remember being a roadhouse there or not even a section house.
- T. Is this, former water supplies \_\_\_\_\_ 1919.
- S. What was the section house actually, just housed the railroad crews.
- A. When I first came here there was a section foreman, usually his wife or the main occupants of the house, she cooked for the section crew and they raised anywhere from two extra men to four extra men and sometimes in the bigger ones like where there were lots of problems there would be five or six men. But she was the cook and he was the section foreman and the section foreman and his wife usually had a bedroom and a livingroom and then the kitchen was more or less theirs unless she left there sometimes. Prepared the meals and fed the crew and she worked seven days a weeks \_\_\_\_\_ in these isolated places these people appear all the time so it was a real good job, you know, man and wife both making money.
- S. Did they, then there was a bunkhouse separate or something for the people?
- A. Oh, sometimes there were, like when they had the big crews. There was an extra house or bunkhouse that a lot of the cases like Kern, Girdwood, Indian, Potter, they lived in the house, the same house.
- C. Oh is that right, this is a permit area?
- S. Are there really old-timers yet that know a lot about this stretch of trail, the railroad?
- A. I was kind of locating someone the other day that knew something about the Matanuska \_\_\_\_\_. There's one guy there in Anchorage that was working on that crew but he must be on vacation because I tried three or four days to get him at home you know. No one ever answered the telephone.

S. \_\_\_\_\_

A. This is the gravel pit.

S. Where was the section house and such?

A. I don't ever remember there ever being a section house.

S. Oh, the, just the construction site only, huh?

T. Water supply and construction site.

C. When was this used, do you recall?

A. It's been off and on. It was really in use in 1948 when I came here. It was the main source \_\_\_\_\_ southend.

S. Never had like a site engineer shed or anything like that, huh?

A. No, not really. They had shovels and things for loading \_\_\_\_\_ cars. I think that the fellows that were working these, building these pipe, they had outfit cars.

S. Oh, I see. Just pull off and live in those. Terry do you have any idea how they used to, you know when they would come in off the Iditarod how they made the connection here, would they just load everything on the train and go, or would they actually run the track.

T. (Cannot understand most of what was said.)

S. Just wondering if like they had corrals or anything at the other end where they keep the horses, dog barns or anything.

T. \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Fellow that used to work on the bridge crew, name was Jim Larson, he used to drive a dog team on the Iditarod back when he was a kid. He's retired and moved to Redding, California, I don't know, he was pretty old. They made him retire at 72 and that was 20 years ago so I imagine he's passed away by now.
- S. Saw the Rainy Pass section.
- A. I don't really remember where but I'll \_\_\_\_\_.
- S. \_\_\_\_\_ bridge. You have the made here. Is it located on there? Cast iron bridge.
- A. Glaciologist, biologist, anthropologist, whole group up here studying this area.
- S. Pictures of snow shed and glacier, mile 53.
- A. This one fellow brought an orchid from off of this terrain down here showed, never dreamed there were orchids in Alaska but there are.
- S. Want to get a picture in here.
- A. I got one real good one that, one of these here with icicles hanging \_\_\_\_\_.
- S. Now which tunnel is this.
- A. I think #7.
- S. Tunnels between #5 and #4.
- A. \_\_\_\_\_ we went over from steam to diesel which were able to make the grades and the glacier receded so it gave you more room to \_\_\_\_\_.

- S. So about that time they also put the bridge improvement in. Are there any old wooden left on the railroad at all?
- A. Yes, but they're not, they're not old any more, there is no bridges; they have been replaced with creosote treated pilings and we're still in the process of changing some of them out, but even the oldest we have are in the early 50s any part of
- S. Is that right, so you have wooden bridges from the 50s and you also have the steel bridges from 51, huh?