

**Call number: 00-00-178-06 PT. 3**

**George Edwin, Alfred Starr, and David Henry are interviewed on the history of Tanana, 6/9/72**

**Summary created by: Summer Dougherty**

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**Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.**

Alfred Starr says that the Nuchalawoyya which started in 1961, started a long time after the first chief's meeting in the area.

George says that J. Howard(?), an outside Indian from Montana, used to call for the square dance. George says that people used to square dance, but everyone who knew how to call died. All the people now dance the twist. J Howard(?) restarted the tradition of square dancing and taught people to call.

In the spring, Howard started asking about place names of hills and rivers in the area. George gives some of the place names. Howard talked about raising money with a turkey shoot or selling clothes to raise money to have the Nuchalawoyya in the springtime. Some people asked why not have it during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

The interviewers ask how the 4<sup>th</sup> of July used to be celebrated. The men explain that on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July they would have fun and games: canoe race, boat race, foot race, running broad jump, and standing broad jump. George says he beat all 40 people once.

George used to be pretty active. He tells the story of how he caught a red fox alive. He describes where he was camping with his first wife, Nora. There were no jobs for him. He couldn't catch anything all winter. He went out on Sunday. George decided to try and chase the fox and get him tired. Once George caught up with the fox, it dropped and turned over really quickly ready to bite him. George threw away his wool jumper, his pack sack, his gun. He only had his ax left, but he wanted to catch the fox alive. George knew the fox was almost done in, his tongue was so long. George tried to reach down but the fox was ready to bite. George wiped his face and the fox took off. George ran after the fox again and was catching up a little all the time. He saw that the fox was heading for some dirt on a hillside: the fox's den. George knew if the fox made it to the den George wouldn't be able to catch him. So George gave it all he had and jumped and grabbed the fox just as it was going into its den. He caught his breath, wiped his face, pulled the fox out and choked him to death.

He came home and told his wife Nora (she was younger then and hadn't had any children yet). She did not believe that he caught it alive. George explained that he had the advantage, running on snowshoes while the fox had to plow through the deep snow. She still did not believe him.

George skinned the fox and showed his wife how none of the feet were wounded from being caught in a trap: he really had caught the fox by chasing it. That is how fast George used to run.

Once there was a competition (on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July ?). Apparently, the army put up \$500. There were GIs from the military post that were going to compete against Natives. The Natives decided to try their best to win. The GIs were good athletes. There was even a young GI nicknamed "Chicken" who could walk a tightrope. They thought this man stood a good chance in the competition of walking a greased pole. However, the GI was used to walking a cable that his feet could stick to and not a slippery, greased pole. The GIs were also very good runners.

The GI came marching in and lined up to compete in the race. In those days, George was poor. His mother was poor and his uncle was sick. George was dressed in pants that were too big, and in floppy shoes. George couldn't run in these clothes and decided not to compete.

They came to George and asked him to compete because he was fast and had a chance to beat the GIs, but George didn't want to compete in his poor clothes; he didn't want people to laugh at him.

But Tom Patsy(?), from Nulato, came with slippers for George to put on. George put them on, took off his jacket and tightened the rope that served as his belt. He ran down to where the race was being held. George explains that the start of the race was signaled by a cannon blast. When the cannon went off, George started running. He is one of the smallest guys in the race. He keeps running. He doesn't hear anyone behind him. All the storekeepers cheer him on, shouting "Come on, George! You are going to get a \$10 bill!" Ten dollars was a lot of money in those days.

He got to the finish line and won first prize. The second and third place winners were Natives, too. George gives their names. None of the soldiers won. George won \$42 in prize money that day. He was so rich he did not know what to do. This was around 1912 or 1913, before the Nuchalawoyya, while the military post was still there.

In another competition, the greasy pole was put across a creek. It was greased with lard and other fats. The layer of grease was about a ¼ inch thick all the way around. The young GI, "Chicken", who could walk a cable high up in the air, tried and fell off.

The tape cuts out.