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Sig Wold

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The recording starts with Sig Wold telling the crowd that any time he really wants to get fouled up he just takes notes. Sig says "We buried Howie Foster." It wasn't long after that Foster who reported the man dead committed suicide. They call it suicide and everything was considered suicide. Wold says it couldn't have been suicide because they found out later because the Nizina River would overflow every spring and the floor was full of silt. He had a pair of white woolen socks and his shoes were by the door. They took a flag stick and put it through the bullet hole and they figured in order for him to shoot himself he would have had to pull the trigger with his thumb. They didn't find any bullet holes in the bunk so they finally called it suicide. One of the men [Bob] in the crowd says it is difficult to believe that a human would shoot himself and then lay the gun on the table. Sig says that that is possible. Sig says if you shoot yourself even though it goes through your heart you can run 25 feet before you fall. Sig says 6 months later they found a man dead in his cabin and was in there for a month before anyone discovered it. They called it suicide. He had a bunk and right along the side of the bunk was a trap door. When they found him he had his head under the trap door and the trap door was over his face. They claimed he tripped and knocked himself out with the door. A man in the crowd asks if they ever found the owner of the clean socks. Sig says that the socks belonged to Howard Foster. Foster was a real nice fellow. A man in the crowd named Jimmy asks what the name of the original truck was. Sig says he sold that with the business and the fellows had it there for years. Jimmy says he finally put a Ruxel axle in it instead of a chain drive.

At 3:34 of the recording a man in the crowd asks about the fellow who ran 25 feet after he shot himself. Sig says there was a young fellow who worked at Kennecott and he lived downtown and had to drive to Kennecott. He rented a car from a man named Henry Olson and it was an old beat up Chevrolet. The man's parents didn't want anything to do with him and they didn't like the girl he had married. One night Sig was delivering laundry and he went to the gentleman's house and the wife was sitting in the front room on the davenport. Sig collected the laundry and talked to her for a while and as he walked out the door he noticed that there were flat tires on the car. Sig turned around and there was Buster sitting in the garage and he had an old satchel from suit case. As soon as Sig walked in buster closed the satchel really fast and Sig asked if he knew he had flat tires and Buster said he knew. Sig left and went to deliver the rest of the laundry and just making the rounds to the grocery store and Sig's wife came running out of the house and said Buster shot himself. Sig didn't believe her because he just came from there from delivering the laundry. Sig ran over there to the marshal's office and the marshal said he heard the noise but he was waiting for someone to come down. What Buster had done was he was looking for his gun in the satchel. Buster went into the bedroom and it was one of those part way partitions with a bookshelf underneath. Buster took two shots at her and she screamed. Sig says they

thought Buster thought he killed her so he turned the gun on himself and ran from the bedroom to the living room to the kitchen and dropped dead. He didn't hurt his wife at all. One of the men in the crowd discusses what happened to Rummy Hought. He had an interesting story that the historical society should have a tape on. Hought was accused of robbing the post office and the sentiment was so strong that his attorney, Mr. Markham, asked for a change of venue and the trial was held in Juneau where he was acquitted. That story is worth recording for posterity too because a lot of people don't know anything about it the man knows all about it because he was in it. The man was on the legislature the year the trial was being held. Brother Young [Frank] could tell about that. All of those things are incidents like the Black Bear Case. Bill Brick is the former early day mail carrier and he knows all about the Black Bear Case. Brick has made a tape for Harry Hughes. It was one of the most interesting mail robberies Alaska has ever had. It was 1922.

At 8:20 of the recording the man in the crowd asks Sig how he got from Chitina to Fairbanks. Sig says he saved out one of his dodges and drove it from Chitina to Fairbanks. The man in the crowd says it show you that the men who finally became wealthy start at a very low level in a stinking business. He says the people started from the grass roots and maybe even a little below the grass roots. Sig says his name is Sigurd Wold. His father's name was Peter Wold. He doesn't remember his mother's name. He had a sister by the name of Austry and a brother by the name of Martin. Then came Agnes, Ruth, Margaret, and Arnold. Sig says there are three of the siblings left: the oldest brother and his sister Margaret. He also has a half-brother and half-sister alive in Duluth. He was born in Duluth Minnesota on April 24th in 1896.

At 11:25 a man name Bob says the date in January 24th, 1963 at the Tanana Yukon Historical Society. Sig Wold is giving experiences of his life in the Alaska area. The recording cuts off and starts again. There is inaudible noise in the background. Bob says he has been asked to introduce to the Tanana Yukon Historical Society a man who came to the country after Soapy Smith was killed. He's been in the country ever since. Sig Wold is introduced and there is clapping. Sig says Bob how long he wants him to talk and Bob says when they start yawning. Sig says he was born in Duluth Minnesota. When he got of age and worked a civil service job for the city power and light the First World War came along and he went to work for Uncle Sam. He went to Kelly Field Texas near San Antonio. He met a guy and they hit it off perfect and they went overseas on the Hellrow [?] and Mallory. It took 215 days for them to Crow and they landed in Boudreaux. They were a casual/replacement squadron and about the time big Bertha had dropped her big bomb in Paris they sent a bunch of troops for what they called Evacuation Conville Paris. Before the war Sig bought a motorcycle. They were asking for motorcycle dispatch riders. Out of about 500 men there were 50 who stood out in front. They got leather fatigues and helmets. They'd go down the street and the poor rookies saluted them because they thought they were officers. They went to the service and was wounded and finally caught up with his outfit and met the same guy from earlier and during the time the guy always had money to spend. Sig said he'd wash the guy's socks and underwear and he'd get a little pay for that and every once in a while he'd get 20 francs. When the armistice was signed the man's dad got busy and applied for discharge. The guy got out for Christmas. Sig got out in July on the 2nd on the Holbrook in New York. The Salvation Army came along and gave them each two telegrams so he sent one to his dad and one to the guy Denning in Bellingham. Sig says

he had no intention of going to Bellingham because he didn't really know who the guy was. He was home for four days and he got a letter from Denning. He said by now Sig should have his fares taken care of. All they got was a 60 dollar bonus and he had spent that in a couple days. Sig showed the telegram to his dad and his dad asked who the guy was and so Sig told him the guy was someone he met in the service. His dad said he didn't want him to leave and said that Sig should go down the Water and Lake Department and see the manager. Sig went to the office and everyone was glad to see him. He went to his desk and there was a girl sitting there. He asked the clerk if that girl had taken his place and the clerk said yes. Sig told him he didn't want the job. Sig had to go see manager Reeves so he did and he talked to the manager. Sig says unless he can get a job working outdoors he doesn't want the job because anytime a girl can take his job he doesn't want it. The manager tired explaining that this was a case of war and the men had to go. Sig had gotten a taste of the outside and had put on 20-30 pounds. So he said he wanted to read meters. Sig didn't go back to work; he went to work in a shipyard. He lasted there for a month and he got a job as a machinist helper. His job was to get under the deck and hang on to those great big nuts that they fasten the wenches with. That didn't last long. Sig got promoted and had the big wrench. One day he pulling on the nuts tightening them up and there was a rivet fastener and a fellow catching the rivets with a bucket. They had talked back and forth and it just so happened when he was passing this one rivet it didn't let go in time and Sig's lip got split open. That was the end of his job with the shipyard. While Sig was resting he got an infection in the tonsil. He got a night telegram from Bellingham in September. The man had wired him \$120 dollars and told Sig that they would meet him at the New Washington Hotel in Seattle on the 21st of September. Sig's dad was asking how the people are. Sig said he thought the guy was a fisherman. Sig got to Seattle and they went up to the hotel and they had a suite of rooms. The guy was married when he was in the service and had a daughter by the name of Catherine. With him at the hotel he also had his mother. When Sig went up there and he got the room he thought it was the president's room. After breakfast the next morning they asked him to take a ride and a limousine pulls up with chauffeur. They went for a ride and they went to Portland. They stayed in Seattle for a couple days and they went to Spokane. They decided it was time to go home to Bellingham so Sig stayed with them and lived with them. Sig found out that the guy's father was the president of the Pacifica American Fisheries in Alaska. Every once in a while he'd hit him up for a job and the guy told Sig not to worry because they had been in the army for a couple years and were entitled to a little rest. Sig says he was getting tired of getting money for free and he wanted to pay the guy back. Sig got a job at the cannery and the spring of 1920 came along the family figured that Sig would go work for the brother in law who was the superintendent of Excursion Inlet Cannery at Juneau. He went to work there and the first thing they did was start him at the filling machine. Then the weighing machine. Then the vacuum machine. Then where they cooked the fish. Then the boiler. Then the fertilizer plant. They were breaking him into a foreman. At the end of the season that was the first time he had saved any money. He had brought 80 acres from him before he went to the service so he paid him back from that and the clothes. The fall came in the latter part of August and the cannery shut down. Sig asked if he could stay on any longer and the foreman said the only thing they had now was the pile driver crew. Two days before the boat was ready to come in they had a telegram from Bering River Cannery a fellow by the name of Captain Davis. The cannery was on Cordova across the flats in the Katalla area. The supervisor told Sig this was his chance to stay in Alaska a little longer. He wanted Sig to work the vacuum. He went to Juneau on a mail steamer and then he

had four days to work for the Northwestern to come along. He had been in canning all summer so most of the money he had was gone. He got into Cordova and didn't realize there was another wait because it was stormy. He used to smoke cigars and he'd go to Rosslogs Cigar Store. He was careful not to spend money. He'd buy about 6-8 cigars and Jenaveve Rosswog [?] was there. Sig told Jenaveve he was waiting for the cannery job and he was going to Bering River. Jenaveve said she had a boyfriend that is over there. He said his name was Earl Means. She asked Sig to do a favor a bring a box of candy over there to him. Sig knew that once he got there that ear means was the guy he was going to discuss vacuum procedure with. He went over there and met him and he and Earl became good friends. He didn't have a bit of trouble and everything worked out fine. The deal with the cannery is you get your fare paid both ways. One of the guys asked Sig to stay for the winter because there isn't much going on in Bellingham anyway. He told Sig that his girlfriend would find a girl for him. They went down and he went out a couple of times and it just didn't click. He spent all his money looking for a job and he was ashamed to himself because he hadn't written to Dennings and they were expecting him on the last boat. He went down to the employment office at Copper River northwestern and applied for a job. They told him they'd send him to Kennecott Copper. He told them that he was a machinist helper. There was a big line going up to Kennecott. There were two coaches going up to Kennecott with people. They were standing in line from early morning to late afternoon. Jim Douglas was the superintendent. Douglas told Sid that they didn't have anything for a machine helper in Kennecott and that they would have to send him up to Jumbo Mine. The job was underground and Sig told him he wouldn't work underground. Douglas told Sig to go to the back of line and let other people interview for jobs. When it was Sig's turn again Douglas told him that they probably will have an opening at the machine shop but the only thing he could get at the lower camp was a laborer's job. His job was to unload cars and sweep snow and what not. They had a little dam up there and they had to keep the water boiling to make sure it didn't freeze over and there was an old timer who sent sig out there. They had a 6 foot crosscut saw and it took a couple days for him to learn how to use it. Sig got promoted to bucket chaser and that was 3.5 miles up in the mountains. That was the only way they could get their ore down and out to their supplies. Every one of the bucks hauled 1,000 lbs. of ore. A bucket would come in every minute. There was a rubber mallet and they'd hit the clip and the bucket would tip over. He had that job for about 2-3 months. His job opened at the machine shop and instead of being a machine shop helper he was a plumber helper. A man by the name of Gus Carlson [?] was about 6'4. Sig would help him. They had the leeching plant there and one of the pipes had broken and it was a 6 inch pipe that had to be replaced. They had to get the pipe up out of the rack and the leeching plant was down about 4 blocks down the railroad tracks. Gus put one end on his shoulder and expected Sig to do the same. He started down the track and the thing was heavy. He told Gus that he couldn't go any further but he kept going and keep going. Gus kept telling just a little farther. Sig let it go and the minute he dropped it he knew he was in trouble. He told the foreman what had happened and Gus was mad. That was the last time he went for work as the plumber's helper. He got transferred into the warehouse.

At 30:45 of the recording Sid begins discussing rooming with a man named Con Miller [Of North Pole Santa Clause Fame] and he was an old timer. The fellows around the bunk house noticed that Sig and Con were becoming friends and they told Sig to watch out for Con Miller because any time there is a young fellow who comes here to work and he saves his money, Con Miller is watching and tells them

that he has a gold mine. Con then tells him that the fellows need to put up money so they can go prospect. Sure enough, about December Con says he's just short \$500 dollars. Con Asked Sig if he wanted to put up \$500 and Con would put up \$500. Sig told Con sorry he couldn't do it because he sent the money to his father. Con didn't speak to Sig for two months and they were living together. Con went to McCarthy and it was a playground for the miners. It was 1500 men who they employed there between Kennecott and Greenview. Con came back at about 5 in the morning and woke Sig up. Con told Sig he has a proposition. He said that Joe Burns and his wife split up and his wife left him. Joe wants to sell his restaurant and rooming house. He had 21 rooms upstairs. Con said he is a good cook and that he knew Sig had been a bookkeeper. Con told Sig to keep the books and wash the dishes, make the beds, etc. Sig talked it over with the gang and then went downtown with con and they made the deal to buy the restaurant and rooming house from Mr. Burns. He said he couldn't even cook coffee but he had plenty of work to do. His first job was to haul water. He got a hold of two dogs and a 55 gallon barrel. He'd pump the barrel full of water and the dogs would pull that to the hill. In the kitchen they had two 110 gallon barrels and upstairs they had the same thing. The next job was to get the wood in. Then he'd wash dishes. This went on and pretty soon he learned to fry eggs and bacon. He learned how to make coffee and sour dough hot cakes. He had to go to Cordova for a trip. They were paying a land lady 100 dollars rent for the building. On one side there was a drugstore and then there was a lobby downstairs and 21 rooms upstairs. When he came back from Cordova his partner had rented the upstairs to one of the girls in town. He was renting the room for \$75 a month so all it was costing was \$25 for the downstairs a month. All of his work was through then because he didn't have to make beds. She was the wrong type so the marshal came to him and told him that something had to be done. The marshal said if Sig works with him then he will work with Sig. They dropped the goods on the person and they railroaded her and he got the upstairs back and he and his partner split up. He got a hold of three women that helped him. One would make the breakfast and the lunches and the other would come on at 11 and take care of the table. Sig did all of the heavy work. That was quite a problem the chemical toilets.

At 36:15 Sig discusses how he ran the restaurant for another year or so. He went back and worked at Kennecott and he hadn't been there for too long and there was a young guy who had a taxi cab and he wanted Sig to go in on the business with him. He went in on the business against his bosses wishes. They only lasted a year and after he brought him out a fellow named O'Neill had a mercantile store. He had a Model-T Ford with the chain drive and rubber tires. The fellow told Sig he would sell him the truck all he had to do was haul the freight and they would take the money from work from the truck. Sig went around like the pool hall and the swimming house and made them a proposition to haul. He had also gotten into the wood business at that time. The girls had come in and stayed there in the summer time and left in the winter. The only time you could get winter was in the winter with the horses. He was running the taxi cab and he would take some of the fellows up to the mine. He'd hop out of the taxi and jump into the Model-T Ford and put the 5 gallon cans in the truck from the alley. He would get 40-50 cans twice a week. One day about 5 in the am there was a poor old soul sitting on the edge of the bank. He asked Sig if he had a drink. Sig told him if he wanted to wait a while he has a bottle up in the garage. Sig went up to the garage and he gave the man some slugs. He then got into the ice business because they had all this home brew and no ice. They had a hole in the kitchen floor and that's where they

would put their beer and moonshine. Sig said he got the idea to sell them ice so he did. He got 20 tons of ice and this happened to be the day of his ice delivery. At about the third house he came to there was his old friend who he had given the drink to in the morning. He told Sig that he saved his life. While he's doing all the work the fellow was looking out the window. The fellow asks Sig if that was the same truck he was using to haul the toilet waste earlier in the morning and sig said "By golly it is" and the man said he didn't want any more ice after that. Doctor Lester was the health inspector and a good friend of Sig's. Sig went to Dr. Lester and said he was concerned and the Dr. told sig that that moonshine will kill him anyway.

At 41:15 of the recording Sig says from there a lot of things happened while he was there. The mine shut down in 1930 and it was down for two years. In that time there was no taxi business. There was a bridge across the Nazena River that used to go out every year in the month of July. There was a fellow name Pete Brenwick who had 15 horses. On the other side of the river was Dam Creek that was a plaster mine and Sugartooth. Sig asks Ed if he has ever been up there. There was the road commission who had a camp and an outfit name Hammond that came down from Nome. There were all kids of freight across the river. Before the lake breaks and takes the bridge they started out at 3 am and get to the river at 5 am and they would have to Wrangell the horses. The willows made them soaked before they ever got started. They got their horses packed by 11 o'clock and that's how they spent the summer. During that time there was no doctor at Kennecott. The tape is flipped over. Sig asks if they are getting bored and everyone says no. Sig says during the two years when the mine was shut down there was no doctor and a bunch of the old timers were found dead. The commissioner of Kennecott appointed Sig as the undertaker. He'd go out and get them. They always had a coroner's jury along. One time Sig said he will never forget. A man came in from the creeks and reported to the commissioner that he found Lee Yency dead at Dan Creek cabin. The commissioner had to wire Juneau and give the information. The commissioner appointed the 6 of them as the jury. Sig took his pickup out and he had a 1922 and 1918 touring car. There was Lee there with a double bunk. On the table was a little revolver. There was one shell gone. Lee was laid out on the bed with his hand on his head. Sig thought to himself that is too bad, old Lee. They wrapped him up and carried him a mile up the road. They brought him up to the AB Hall. There was a young fellow who was a new doctor after Dr. Gillespy left. The commissioner told Sig to get Dr. Wilson and help him with the autopsy. Dr. Wilson started to get the autopsy going and Sig took Lee's socks off and Lee didn't have any shoes on. The first thing Sig thought was that Lee had nice clean socks on. He pulled the one sock off and there was a silk sock underneath. He told the doctor to wait a minute. Sig said that the body isn't Lee Yency. The body was Howard Foster. The doctor put the gloves down and walked out the door. Sig thought the doctor was going to have a cigarette but the doctor never came back. Sig went to go get the doctor outside and the doctor said he wasn't going to touch the body because the body isn't lee Yency. Sig went and told the commissioner. Sig found Howard Foster's partner name Al Dubeck. Sig told Al that he wanted to have a talk. As soon as Sig told Al that was Howard Foster everyone left the pool hall. On the way down to the commissioner's office he stopped at another pool hall and everyone left that one. He went to the commissioners and the commissioner was an old timer and was very angry because of the mistake. Sig said it was dark in the cabin and they took it for granted that the body was Lee's. They got it straightened out and Sig had to take the doctor back. The doctor moved to Ketchikan and Sig hadn't

seen him since. When sig was down in the pioneer's convention at Ketchikan Sig went to see Dr. Wilson. Sig said they reminisced and had a party. Dr. Wilson has two boys and one of them is a partner of Dr. Wilson's. Sig told the kid the story.

At 49:17 Sig says he got wind that Kennecott was shutting down for good. Sig got busy and got a fellow to buy him out. He told them that the mine was shutting down in 1938 and they didn't believe Sig. Sig sold out in 1937 and came to Fairbanks. Chip Spencer was putting a saw mill up at Garden Island back at the old Standard Oil station. Sig would go over there every morning and he went over to the Sourdough Express to get a job. Finally a fellow told Sig to buy in on this thing. He asked Chet for a job and worked there for a week. Saturday came and there was no money. He asked Chet how much he needed. Chet said to come up to Bill Mccartey. Mccartey was a stock holder and another man named George Christenson. Sig loaned them 2500 dollars and it was just like grabbing a straw. Sig and they had a logging camp at standard then. Doc Lespee had a chance to buy the apartment house on 3rd and Cushman from Ms. Macintosh. Doc told Sig he wouldn't buy it unless Sig went in on the apartment. Sig ran the saw mill until 1942 and in 1941 Romie Hought dropped dead in his house. He always kept an eye on that fellow because of the gadgets he had on his car. In the meantime a fellow who worked for Ernie Shermer his name was Larry Reid had beat Sig to it and talked to her. Sig had friends who new Mrs. Hought and they put a plug in for him. Sunday was December the 7th when they bombed Pearl Harbor. He thought he made a bum deal. She called him and thought he was going to back out so then she told sig that if he didn't back out shed knock off another \$500 from the car. Sig said no a deal is a deal and paid the original price. The recording ends.