

ORAL HISTORY 2019-01-04

Mike Dalton with Libby Dalton present

November 16, 2018

Fairbanks, Alaska

Karen Brewster, interviewer

Series: Kathleen "Mike" Dalton Life History Recordings

Mike Dalton said her son was born in September 1954. In 1957 she returned to Fairbanks from Barrow and was pregnant with Libby. She lived in Fairbanks after that. She did work one winter in Camp Lonely. She did general office work, kept track of daily cat trains and personnel locations and handled a lot of secretarial work. They had very few staff there.

Dalton said when they first cleared their land there were no spruce trees. She has named a lot of her trees. She named the trees in memory of special people she has known. She named one of the trees after Jack McQuesten's daughter, Crystal McQuesten Morgan. Jack McQuesten established trading posts. He came in in 1876 with Harper and Mayo. Crystal was born in 1891. McQuesten had established trading posts at Circle and Fortymile. When the big stampede started in the Klondike, he knew that his trading post would be wiped out by the stampeders so he decided to take his whole family out of state where they would be safe and there was food. A lot of miners would go down to California during the winter. McQuesten wanted to take his family to a safe place. McQuesten was afraid of starvation and hard times and was concerned there would be no food left at his trading post. Crystal was born at Fortymile in a tent outside of their cabin. Dalton had heard that Crystal was still alive and called a contact with the Alaska Pioneers. They had an address for Crystal. She talked to two of her friends, Alaska Linck and Vuka Stepovich. One of them already knew Crystal. Alaska Linck also wanted to meet her. They decided to go to Fortymile to celebrate Crystal's birthday.

Dalton talked about their trip down the Fortymile River. They hired a guide in Eagle. They got into the Fortymile about forty miles up from the Yukon River. There were serious rapids on the river. They camped out and went down to Fortymile and camped for two days. They cooked over a campfire and made their own bread in a washbasin. They made fry bread and fried bacon. Alaska Linck used the bread pan later to wash her socks. Everyone was a good sport on the trip.

Brewster asked her about her work at Camp Lonely. Dalton said the Department of the Interior had returned to Camp Lonely to clean up what the Navy had left and there was some exploration going on. It was 1978. Her kids were grown by then. It was the year Ann Stevens died. She was there just for the winter. Ann Stevens died in a plane crash in December 1978. Dalton said she served as a pall bearer at the funeral. Dalton had worked for Ted Stevens for seven years. Dalton talked about visitors the previous day.

Dalton talked about her years working for Senator Stevens. She said she started working for him about the first of April 1972. She had worked for the News miner until April 1970. She had a telephone call from Senator Stevens and he wanted to meet with her. She had met him before that. She had been active in Steven's campaign. He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1962 and was not elected. Gruening won the election. He ran again in 1968 and was defeated. He had run against Elmer Rasmuson in the primary.

Bartlett was ill at this time with heart problems. Nobody wanted to lose Bartlett. Bartlett died in office in December 1968 and Walter Hickel appointed Ted Stevens to fill out his term. Gravel was serving in the Senate at that time. Bartlett was a well-loved man in Alaska. He did a good job as senator. When Bartlett passed away many Republicans wanted to be appointed. Hickel appointed Stevens even though they had a serious falling out in 1964. Dalton once asked Hickel why he had appointed Ted Stevens. Hickel said Stevens was the best man for the job. Hickel was looking for somebody who would represent Alaska fairly and equitably. Hickel thought Stevens was more qualified for the job than any of the other candidates. He was the senior senator. He filled out the last two years of Bartlett's term. At this time Dalton was working for the News miner. In 1969 they had the lease sales. Ted Stevens ran for office in 1970 and won the election. Dalton was active in Ted Stevens' campaigns. She thinks Snedden recommended Dalton to Stevens. She met with Stevens and he told her he wanted her to work in his local senate office. Dalton knew a lot of people at that time. She had been elected to membership of the Fairbanks Native Association in 1965 as an honorary member. They were working hard on the land claims and he needed someone who could translate their messages back to Stevens. She took the job in Ted Stevens' office. First, they had to find an office. There was a small office in the marshal's office in the federal building located on Cushman between Second and Third Avenue. By this time, she had covered the beginnings of the road to the north. The state of Alaska had put together a cat train and crew and headed north. They got just past Livengood in 1970. The pipeline was needed to get the product out. This was during the oil shortage. They had to get a lot of permits from the federal government. She believes the oil shortage put pressure on to get the road and pipeline built. The cost of gas was very high. The oil supply to the world was shut off. The state and the oil companies worked together to get the road built. They formed a coalition which they named the Alyeska Pipeline. It was made up of the major producers and the state. The federals were involved, too. A lot of the money that went into the road was federal money. They had to get permits. By the end of the oil embargo Congress was involved. They were stressful days for the state. There was no income for the state. Karen Brewster said now the Haul Road is named the Dalton Highway after Jim Dalton. Dalton said her husband was working in the Arctic at this time on exploration Philips Petroleum and Colorado Oil and Gas mostly out of Umiat. There was gas discovered up there. There is an oil structure out of Umiat named Gobik. They were developing that. She isn't sure why they named the road after her husband. There was a senator named Charlie Parr who proposed naming it the Dalton Highway in 1980. He requested the governor sign the resolution. Governor Hammond wouldn't sign it. Dalton said her husband had knowledge about working in the Arctic and he knew a lot about permafrost. He was a graduate in mining engineering. Her husband passed away in 1977. He was used as a consultant in different administrations. A lot of people involved in oil knew him. Dalton didn't know Parr was thinking about naming the Haul Road after her husband. In 1981 he presented the idea for the road name as a statute and passed the legislature and then the governor signed it in 1981. Dalton said she made at least twenty-six trips up the Haul Road. She looked for signs about the name of the highway and there wasn't anything about Jim Dalton. On one of her trips she stopped at Yukon River at a BLM information platform. She could see some plaques and they were about Ed Patton and the bridge. Even at the visitor center there was no information. The road was closed to the public at the beginning. She drove up several times with a permit. The first trip she made was in 1975. Sometimes she went up the road on business for Ted Stevens.

Brewster asked her what kind of things she did when she worked for Senator Stevens. The first clients in the office were four Eielson Air Force airmen. One of the airmen was overweight and he was contesting the rules about weight. He wanted to stay in the Air Force. She never saw him again. This was

constituent work. She would type up the information and pass it on to Senator Stevens. There was a man who had a problem. He was a federal employee in the Department of Labor. He had appealed on a problem and they ruled in his favor, but they never came through. She then called the Department of Labor and was successful in solving the problem within a short period of time. Dalton talked about the lack of telephone lines in Alaska. Gravel had an office in Fairbanks, too. Their offices and the BLM, Veteran's Affairs and a couple of other federal offices competed for a telephone line. There were only seven lines out of the state for the G.S.A. There was a problem with Gravel's office misusing the lines. After a while they finally got a fax machine in about 1974. This was all before computers. She used an IBM selective typewriter. Dalton said because of the oil embargo they were running out of oil. The first part of March 1968 there was the discovery of oil on the North Slope. It was the largest oil province in the world at that time. Vice-president Agnew was called into the Senate to vote for the pipeline permit. The contractors had lined up equipment and pipeline in Fairbanks years before. They were anxious to get going. People flooded into Fairbanks after the pipeline work started. It was a hectic time. Alyeska was anxious to get going and they had to have a way to get there so they had to deal with the state. The Native Land Claims Settlement Act was passed in 1971. The environmentalists were also part of the delay. The oil companies didn't want everyone driving up the road. The federal government didn't want to deal with the traffic. There were new people and vehicles in Fairbanks. There were lots of meetings between the different groups. It took up a lot of her time. After meetings she would return to the office and type up the critical points. Senator Stevens had the telephone numbers for all the CEOs of all the outfits. He communicated with the CEOs and Native leaders. She accompanied Stevens on some of the trips. She arranged a lot of the trips. She described a typical trip and preparation. He might also meet for a constituent problem. She would sit in on a lot of those meetings. If he was coming in to Fairbanks he would have many stops and visits. It was always just Dalton working in the office alone. After she quit the job she went to Washington. She described helping the man with the problem with the Department of Labor. Since she had lived in the Arctic for almost seven years when there were major visitors to the Arctic she would try to get up there. She didn't have a budget she would have to find her own way. Going north to Prudhoe Bay it was a challenge because there was not a major airline providing flights there.

In March of 1968 when Arco announced their discovery she managed to get a seat on a DC-3 going north. It was easier going from Prudhoe south. She was working as a reporter at that time.

She worked for Ted Stevens until 1978 and then quit. It was a stressful job. She enjoyed the job and liked working for Senator Stevens. Stevens had contacts all over the state.