

ORAL HISTORY 2019-01-06

Mike Dalton with Libby Dalton present

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Karen Brewster, interviewer

Series: Kathleen "Mike" Dalton Life History Recordings

Mike Dalton talked about navigable waters. The RS 2477 issue is a statute that involved navigable waters. When Alaska became a state the Organic Act statehood act granted the state of Alaska certain assets. For example the former Copper River Railroad which was built by the federal government was granted as a right of way when Alaska became a state. There was also a right of way granted from Manley to Tanana. When a road was built there they didn't have to go through the federal for rights. It also granted the state of Alaska the right of ownership of every navigable stream in the state of Alaska. That includes every navigable river, stream and lakes. They could be small streams up to large rivers like the Yukon. There have been issues between the state and the federal about what is navigable. The Goodpaster is not navigable for large boats, but they can handle smaller vessels. Dalton said she didn't study the 1980 ANILCA Act, but it did cause problems. She said there were several people in territorial days who were debating the issues. It was a major issue for the newspaper. She had worked for the Fairbanks Daily news miner in 1961. She wasn't involved in the preliminary debates. Paul Williams from southeastern Alaska had been involved in this issue for many years. He was one of the first Tlingit lawyers. He had big leadership roles and knew a lot about Native land claims. Another person named John Borbridge was also active in the issue in the Tlingit and Haida area. There were a lot of organization efforts with the land claims. Don Wright, Mary Jane Fate, and Gerald Ivy and others were involved. Dalton said she was involved somewhat because she would write news stories. So that is how she became involved with the Fairbanks Native Association. They didn't have an office, officers or structure. Like some other organizations in Fairbanks they were working hard to organize their issues. They had little or no publicity.

When she worked for the News miner it was located on Second Avenue at the Lathrop Building. Across the street was the Nordale Hotel. John Butrovich had an insurance office there and the Pan American Airline offices were there. The city hostess Eva McGown was there. One of the people involved with land claims and related issues was Ralph Perdue. He had a jewelry shop there. Perdue was from Koyukuk and had been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Perdue in North Pole. Ralph was an accomplished jeweler. Dorothy Perdue worked in the shop after Ralph died. Ralph Perdue associated a lot with white people and was exposed to the white education system. He went out to high school, possibly Mt. Edgecumbe. When Paul Williams came to town Perdue met with him. Dalton recommended they not go the route of reservations such as the type she saw in Arizona. She talked about Rusty Heurlin who was also a good friend to Ralph Perdue and also guided Perdue on certain aspects of the land claims. Heurlin left the east coast and had been born in Sweden. Heurlin traveled to the west coast and spent time in Texas and might have spent time on the reservations. He advocated with the Native people. Heurlin recommended the local Native groups not follow the policy the United States government had set for other tribes in the lower states. She, Heurlin and the Perdues became good friends. Ralph Perdue position was anti-

reservation. Dalton thought he might have picked up some of these negative reservation aspects from her and Heurlin. She talked about the BIA in Arizona. Lauppe was up near Winslow, Arizona. She talked about the BIA school there and remembered seeing everyone stopping their lunch and reciting the pledge of allegiance and reciting the Lord's prayer. Icke's was the Interior Secretary at that time. Her father was working for the BIA at that time. He worked as a maintenance and construction person.

Dalton did not want to see reservations in Alaska. She didn't think the people were free. Perdue was very influential with the local organizations. Brewster asked about land claims and navigable waters. Dalton said it was a matter of debate. She was not an active participant. Koyukon villages would send a delegation upriver or downriver to discuss the issues. Dalton talked about the Natives in the Russian Far East. She said they looked just like the Athabascans. The ones up from Magadan look like they came from Alaska. She went there in 1991 with a group from Unalaska. It was the first time a group of white people had gone over to visit. They flew from Anchorage to Magadan and took some exchange gifts like fruit, vegetables and some art work. The purpose was to get to know some of the neighbors of the east coast of Russia. There were 55 people from Unalaska. A lot of them were associated with the fishing industry. Some were from Juneau and Yakutat. They gathered in Anchorage. They flew to Magadan and then to Petropavlovsk. She was living in Unalaska at that time. She was working for the city. Their hotels were pretty rough. The beds were very rudimentary. It was similar to the friendship flight. The idea for the trip was by someone dealing with art. In Russia artists are assigned. They don't choose their professions such as teachers. They didn't have art shows and art galleries. Being an artist was considered just a job. Discussion of a painting in Dalton's house by a Russian artist. They were there about a week. There was a big reception. The people really liked the soda crackers their group brought over. They visited schools and attended other public events. They were taken onto a cruise ship in the harbor. They also visited Vladivostok. It was a beautiful city with Russian Orthodox churches. They also visited some clinics. They had little or no medical assistance. The grocery store shelves were empty. Dalton said the people were very polite and happy to meet some Americans. She exchanged her cap with someone. She thought the living conditions were lower class. There were a lot of apartment buildings that were roughly constructed. There have been people crossing the Bering Sea from Russia over to Unalaska in 28-30 foot vessels. They were traveling out of Russia. In 1992 she and one other member of the Arctic Sisterhood went back to the Russian Far East. Dalton talked about her trip to Magadan. Russia opened its doors in 1992. The year before was the first time an American group had been to Petropavlovsk and Magadan. Luka Stepovich went with Dalton in 1992. Stepovich wanted to see the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Dalton talked about the trip on the railroad. She bought artwork in Russia. They were viewed as an oddity being tourists. Stepovich's Russian could be understood. They visited a church in Magadan and Stepovich donated money to the priest. A friend of Dalton's in Unalaska introduced the bed and breakfast concept to several people in Russia and that is where they stayed. She said it was hot and humid while they were there in July.

Brewster asked about navigable waters. Dalton said it was one of the major issues for the land claims and the major issue was the d-2 lands. They took action on the d-2 lands later. Brewster said navigable water started with statehood and there are still court cases about it. Dalton talked about the d-2 section of the land claims. Other issues cropped up such as navigable waters and subsistence issues. The Native groups, environmental groups, and fisheries groups organized many study groups. There were Native groups throughout the state having conferences over the years. There wasn't consensus with the Native groups. Environmental groups didn't want any open lands in the Arctic. She met with Paul Williams and

Ralph Perdue. She wrote articles in the newspapers about the Native meetings. She was invited to their meetings. One weekend they decided to have a large potlatch. She was invited. She made a large batch of beans and from then on, she was the bean lady. In 1965 when they had a potlatch she was called up with a couple of other people and presented with a plaque thanking her for her work.

Libby asked her mother to talk about when she worked with Doug Blankenship and others developing historical trails to include in R.S. 2477. Dalton said it was another major section of the 1980 Act. It was access across lands to navigable waters. She was working at the time for the Lt. Governor, Jack Coghill. He was responsible for the R.S. 2477 success in Alaska. She had to document all the trails. It was a massive and complicated project. Governor Hickel was governor at the time. The chief of staff was from McGrath, Don Harris. They would get together to discuss what they needed to do. Governor Hickel asked how much they needed to do the project and they got the money from the legislature. She moved to Fairbanks. Her office was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources. They picked up people who had worked on lands including highway department people. There were about fifteen to twenty people on the crew. Their assignment was to identify R. S. 2477 trails and right of ways. That was where the navigable waters came in. It was for the whole state. They had to prove legally that the lands had been used. They researched common routes used in Alaska. They ended up with about 800 trails. Some of them started in Barrow. They went to Anaktuvuk and various other places. People were interested in it. The miner's association was interested in it. They had some meetings. DNR had a budget for travel. They looked at various routes and tried to find information that would back that up. They used early USGS journals. One of her friends had come to Fairbanks by dog team from Flat. They started asking around and found a map or two showing early trails. Senator Stevens had the USGS send every map that had early trails. They ended up with close to 800 established trails they could prove existed by USGS maps, mining maps, or published stories. They looked at places like journals for information. Doug Blankenship was an attorney. The attorneys would help them with legal problems such as people contesting the information they had. They had to lay out the origin and the terminus and had to have documentation. It was important to have the trails identified and documented because for example some prospector or gold minter in the Fortymile area would want to go back to a certain gold prospect that had been prospected 45 years ago. They would have the legal right to use the trails. It provided access to mining and fishing properties. Senator Rick Halfer was helpful. The list of trails was written into a bill and it is now codified. Brewster asked about Mike Tinker. Dalton said Tinker was involved in the project. His background involved overland access. A group involved in the project was the Alaska Outdoor Council. Dick Bishop was very helpful. Joe Sullivan also worked on the project. Norm Piipsiman was from DOT. Dalton said the trails covered the whole state. They worked on the project for two and a half years from 1992 to 1994. The governor and Lt. governor wanted the project done. She credits Jack Coghill for the project. Dalton said the riverbed is owned by the state. She explained where the R. S. 2477 name came from. It gets its name from the 1972 mining act amendment section 2477. Dalton said the d-2 was the most volatile issue in the 1980s. Discussion about mining in the Fortymile country. Dalton talked about the amount of documentation involved in the trails project.