

The PAYSTREAK

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The Newsletter of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF)

In this issue:

AMHF New Inductees	Page 1
Induction Ceremony Program	Page 2
Previous Inductees	Page 3
New Inductees Biographies	Page 6
Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Directors and Officers	Page 19

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation

New Inductees

AMHF Inducts Three Pioneers of the Goodnews Bay Mining District



Per Edvard (Ed) Olson Born in 1898, Edward Olson was the eighth of ten children born to a farming family in west-central Sweden. Although separated by thirteen years, Edward was close to his older brother Andrew, who became mentor to Ed in mining activities and later business partnerships. After immigrating to the United States in 1905, Ed worked on family farms in Washington and Canada, and performed with a theater company. When the Great Depression arrived in 1929, Edward traveled north to assist his older brother Andrew with his placer gold mining operations in the Iditarod district. In 1934 Andrew Olson became President and Edward assumed the position of General Manager of the Goodnews Bay Mining Company. The firm was the largest source of platinum in the United States from 1934-1975, and considered to be one of the best managed mining operations in Alaska history.



Walter Smith Influenced by early prospectors, Yupik Eskimo Walter explored the mountainous areas of southwest Alaska during the early 20th Century. In the summer of 1926, Smith and a younger apprentice prospector, Henry Wuya, prospected a remote area north of Chagvan Bay. What they found in Fox Gulch were malleable, light gray metallic grains originally thought to be 'white gold'. Smith and Wuya had the suspected platinum-bearing samples sent to the U.S. Bureau of Mines in Fairbanks, Alaska. One year later, the platinum discovery was confirmed by the government's assay lab. After the Goodnews Bay Mining Company purchased Smith's claims, he continued to prospect, create art carvings, and work with archeologists that studied the Goodnews Bay area. He is honored today as the co-discoverer of platinum at Goodnews Bay and a contributor to Yupik history.



Henry Wuya Henry Wuya was born to Eskimo parents in Quinhagak, on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and began to prospect at an early age. Wuya was proficient in the English language at a time when few Yupiks knew English. Wuya's enthusiasm, language and boating skills landed him a mentorship with the older and more experienced prospector Walter Smith. Together the two men would make the discovery that led to the development of America's largest source of platinum during most of the 20th Century. The early miners of the Goodnews Bay district honored Wuya's contribution with the naming of 'Whuya Mountain' near Platinum Creek, although that name does not appear on modern maps. After the platinum discovery, Henry continued prospecting, herded reindeer, fished commercially, and served in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II. Henry Wuya spent the remainder of his days in the general Goodnews Bay area, where he passed away in 1982.

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation
Supported by the Alaska Miners Association

Induction Ceremony, November 3, 2005
Sheraton Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska

Program

The general public is invited to the jointly sponsored induction ceremony from 7:00 to 9:00 PM on November 3, 2005. There is no charge for admission. Refreshments will be served.

Introduction by Master of Ceremonies: Mike Martz **7:00-7:10 PM**

Pioneers of the Goodnews Bay Mining District

Presentation of Inductees: **7:10-7:45 PM**

Ed Olson by Chuck Hawley

Walter Smith and Henry Wuya by Tom Bundtzen

Recollection of the Inductees from the Audience **7:45-8:00 PM**

Refreshments and Coffee Break **8:00-8:10 PM**

Film 'The Goodnews Bay Story' by Mike Martz **8:10-9:00 PM**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Karen Olson, coauthor of *The Platinum King: Andrew Olson's Story*, wrote the biography of Edward Olson, using her extensive reference collections and information from Julia Olson Rowe Johnston's *The Olsson Brothers of Krokvag, Sweden: Their Ancestors and their Descendants*. Tom Bundtzen wrote the biographies of Walter Smith and Henry Wuya based on various published and private sources, but especially from phone and email correspondence with their relatives and friends. In particular, assistance from Marshall Lind, Robert Ackerman, John Wuya, Chuna McIntyre, and Betty Huffmon is acknowledged. The 'Platinum King', Andrew Olson, was inducted into the AMHF in November of 1999; however, because of the theme of this induction ceremony, AMHF is republishing an edited version of Andrew's biography in this Newsletter. Gay Ellen Heath Griffin, Tom Bundtzen, and Landon Kelly prepared the 2005 AMHF newsletter for publication.

Previous Inductees, Alaska Mining Hall of Fame

National Mining Hall of Fame Inductees

Six charter members of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation were previously elected into the National Mining Hall of Fame in Leadville, Colorado.

- Stephen Birch:** Founder and developer of Kennecott Copper Mines.
Frederick Bradley: Successful manager of Treadwell and A-J Mines, Juneau.
John Treadwell: Founder of Treadwell Mines, Juneau.
Alfred H. Brooks: Chief Geologist of U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska.
Earnest Patty: University of Alaska, and manager of Placer Dredging Venture.
Clarence Berry: Prominent Klondike and Interior Alaska miner.

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation Inductees

Fairbanks Spring 1998

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Yukon Basin Traders and Prospectors

- Alfred Mayo:** "Captain Al" well-known Yukon River trader, prospector.
Jack McQuesten: Known as the "Father of the Yukon" grubstaker for prospectors.
Arthur Harper: Well known and respected trader and prospector and promoter of the Yukon.
Howard Franklin: Fortymile prospector, discovered first "bedrock" placer gold in Alaska.
John Minook: Creole-Athabaskan prospector who discovered Rampart district.
Felix Pedro: Discoverer of Fairbanks district in 1902.

Nome Summer 1998

Induction Ceremony Honoring Pioneers of Nome Gold Rush

- John Brynteson:** A 'Lucky Swede'; an experienced hard-rock miner, discoverer of the Cape Nome district.
Erik Lindblom: The eldest of the "Lucky Swedes", a tailor.
Jafet Lindeberg: The Norwegian of the 'Lucky Swedes', president and manager of the very successful Pioneer Mining Company.
Charles D. Lane: Tough, honest, and wealthy miner who helped the Luck Swedes in their legal battles.

Juneau Spring 1999

Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Juneau District

- Joe Juneau:** Native of Quebec, a California 49er, co-discoverer of gold in Juneau district.
Richard Harris: Irish immigrant, co-discoverer of gold in Juneau district.
George Pilz: German immigrant who sent Juneau and Harris into the Juneau area.
Kawa./ee: Tlingit leader who brought rich gold samples from Gastineau Channel area to George Pilz
Livingston Wernecke: Geologist-engineer for the Bradley companies of Juneau.
Bartlett Thane: Promoter-founder of the world's largest gold mine, the Gastineau at Juneau.

Anchorage Fall 1999

Induction Ceremony Honoring Mining Pioneers of Southern/Southwest Alaska

Andrew Olson: Swedish immigrant, innovator at Flat; long-time miner of platinum.

Evan Jones: Welsh immigrant; father of Alaska coal mining.

Wesley Earl Dunkle: Kennecott engineer and innovative geologist, co-founder of Star Air Service, predecessor of Alaska Airlines.

Fairbanks Spring 2000

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early 20th Century Interior Pioneers

Emil Usibelli: Founder of Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc., civic benefactor at Fairbanks.

John B. Mertie Jr.: Leading U.S. Geological Survey geologist; world expert on platinum.

Fannie Quigley: Prospector, renowned for her bush skills, legendary Kantishna character.

Juneau Spring 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Government Role in Mining

Benjamin D. Stewart: State and Federal mining administrator, Alaska constitutional delegate.

Fairbanks Summer, 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring the Pioneers of the Large Scale Gold Dredging Industry of Nome and Fairbanks Districts

Norman C. Stines: Planned and supervised USSR&M activities in Fairbanks district.

Wendell P. Hammon: Installed the first three dredges in Cape Nome district.

James K. Davidson: Designed and built Miocene and Davidson ditch system.

Anchorage Fall 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Flat District

John Beaton: Co-discovered Iditarod district with William Dikeman.

Fairbanks Spring 2002

Induction Ceremony Honoring Successful Miners and Engineers of Early 20th Century

Frank G. Manley: Highly successful miner in Fairbanks, Hot Springs District, and Flat. Founder of the First National Bank, Fairbanks

Herman Tofty: Norwegian immigrant who worked prospects near Manley Hot Springs.

Chester Purington: Acclaimed international mining engineer; wrote treatise on Alaska placer fields.

Thomas P. Aitken: Arguably the most successful small scale mine developer during the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush; worked both lodes and placers in Alaska and Yukon.

Anchorage Fall 2002

Induction Ceremony Honoring Immigrant Pioneers

Peter Miscovich: Croatian immigrant who settled in Flat, Alaska 1910. Pioneered the use of hydraulic mining techniques.

David Strandberg: Swedish immigrant who joined the Klondike gold rush in 1898 and the Iditarod rush of 1910. Built placer mining dynasty Strandberg & Sons, Inc.

Lars Ostnes: Norwegian immigrant who mined in the Iditarod district and developed placer mines in remote western Alaska for over 50 years.

Fairbanks Summer 2003

Golden Days Induction Ceremony (also recognized during Fall AMA convention)

Kyosuke “Frank” Yasuda and Nevelo Yasuda: Japanese immigrant and his Eskimo wife, discovered Chandalar gold and founded the community of Beaver.

Anchorage Fall 2003

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early and Mid-20th Century Placer Miners

John Gustavus (Gus) Uotila: By 1915, Gus Uotila was known as a tough Iditarod teamster. He mentored placer mining operations throughout Alaska and became a respected overland freighter.

Simon Wible: He mined gold, built water canals, and became a wealthy man in California. When the time the gold rush came along, he pioneered hydraulic mine technology on the Kenai Peninsula.

Fairbanks Spring 2004

Honoring Early Pioneers Associated with USSR&M Dredge Fleet

Roy B. Earling: Built pré-World War II FE Company into one of the efficient and successful dredge mining firms in the world.

James D. Crawford: Well organized manager who acquired new dredge properties and guided FE company into successful post-World War II period of gold mining.

Jack C. Boswell: Engineered the development of the rich Cripple deposit; and helped build giant FE machines used to dig deep placer deposits. Published historian of USSR&M era.

Genevieve Parker Metcalfe: Breakthrough woman mining engineer who developed initial plans for FE Fairbanks operations, wrote a landmark thesis on Alaska placer mining, and was a champion athlete and scholar.

Earl Richard Pilgrim: First Professor of Mine Engineering at University of Alaska. Independent Kantishna miner and FE consultant; thought of as “Mr. Antimony” in the US for many years.

Anchorage Fall, 2004

Honoring those in the Mining Legal Profession, In Cooperation with the History Committee of the Alaska Bar Association

William Sulzer: Bill Sulzer became a prominent New York attorney and politician and briefly served as Governor of New York. The ever optimistic Sulzer mined copper in southeast Alaska and developed gold in the Chandalar district.

Joseph Rudd: Shortly after Statehood, Rudd drafted the State’s mining law on State lands, and was highly sought for his expertise on Natural Resource issues throughout his career. He was killed in a plane crash upon his return from Juneau after discussing with other Alaskans challenges to President Carter’s Implementation of the 1978 Antiquities Act.



**PER EDVARD OLSSON—EDWARD
OLSON
(1898-1988)**

Per Edvard Olsson (Edward or Ed Olson in America) was born on March 27, 1898 in the farming village of Krovåg in the west-central province of Jämtland, Sweden. He was the eighth of ten children born to his father Olof and the fifth of seven children born to Olof and his second wife Maria Melin. Olof's first wife Karin *nee* Edlund died following the birth of Edward's half brother Anders Olof (Andrew). Although separated by thirteen years, Edward and Andrew became very close. In America Edward was Andrew's mining protégée, then partner, and finally successor in the mining business.

Ed's first-grade schooling was interrupted when his father, Olof, then at the age of fifty-six decided to immigrate. Olof believed that his children would have a better future in America. Three of Olof's brothers and his oldest children, Ellen and Andrew, had already immigrated to the United States. Times were hard for farmers in Sweden. Over the centuries, farms had been divided again and again for the children's inheritance. The resultant small farms could not support large families. The Olsons were among more than a million Swedes, or twenty percent of Sweden's population, who left their homeland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in search of opportunity and adventure. Residents of Krovåg were especially susceptible to "America Fever." One-hundred eighty-six people, more than half of the village's population, immigrated and most of

them moved to northern Washington and adjacent British Columbia.

Olof and his remaining family left Sweden on May 29, 1905, accompanied by Johanna and Erik Westlin, Ed's aunt and uncle, and their children. The trip, across the Baltic and North Seas, the Atlantic Ocean, and the North American continent must have been a major adventure for seven-year-old Edward. The extended Olson family traveled by train to Gothenburg, where they boarded a ship for an intermediate stop in England. The small party sailed out of Liverpool for America on the *S.S. Saxonia*. The ship's larder had a plentiful cargo of onions, which the Olson children were told to eat like fruit. They ate heartily what was set before them but developed a lifelong aversion to onions. The *Saxonia* landed in Boston, where the Olsons boarded a train for their new home. Olof's family arrived in Stanwood, Washington, on June 26, 1905. They stayed with Andrew and Ellen at Olof's brother John's home in Stanwood for six weeks. Then Olof and Edward's uncle Erik bought land in Matsqui, British Columbia, and moved their families there. Ed continued his elementary education in Matsqui, attending school there for six years. In 1912, the Olsons left British Columbia and moved next to Ed's uncle in Avon, Washington. Olof, who had prospered in Canada, bought fertile land, built a large home, and farmed barley, rye, and flax and raised sheep and dairy cattle. As was expected, Ed and his siblings helped out on the farm. Ed continued his formal education for one more year and later took several correspondence courses in mathematics and electricity. As a young man, Ed built the dynamo that supplied electric light to the family farm.

Ed was technically gifted but also was an entertainer and a musician. In 1920 he traveled around the United States in a Model-T Ford truck performing an electrical act at theaters with Karlo and Company. On one of his jaunts, he met Hilda Klingenberg, an attractive Norwegian immigrant, at a Grange near the Olson farm in Avon. She played the piano and sang, and he played the slide trombone and also sang. They both were agile on the dance floor and loved to kick up their heels to a lively polka tune. Ed and Hilda were married on July 5, 1921. In 1927, the young couple moved to North Bend, where Ed built logging roads for the

North Bend Timber Company owned by Robert W. Vinnedge and William C. Weeks.

Depression struck Washington State in 1929 and Ed was out of work. In the meantime, Andrew was developing a prosperous mining business in Alaska that could use additional hands. Andrew and two friends, Axel Palmgren and Tony Lindstrom, had formed Olson and Company and had bought the Happy Creek placer claims in Flat. Earlier operators had failed at Happy Creek. Andrew's dragline operation with an elevated sluice proved a success. Ed and his youngest brother Fred (born Bror Sigfred) joined Andrew's gold mining venture at Flat in 1931. At Olson and Company, Ed was responsible for running the dragline excavator, while Fred tended to all the equipment in need of repair. Ed and Fred were assets to the company, and they received ever greater responsibilities over the gold mining operation.

In early 1932, Olson and Company needed additional funds to expand the operation at Flat. Ed and Andrew approached Ed's former employers at North Bend, Robert Vinnedge and William C. Weeks, who entered the Olson and Company partnership and put up the money to expand the mining operation. The new company, called Northland Development, consisted of Ed, Andrew, Palmgren, Lindstrom and the two Washington timber operators. Northland expanded operations at Flat and began to look for new ground.

By chance, Andrew met Walter Culver, a prospector-promoter, on the train from Seward to Anchorage in the spring of 1933. Culver told him that platinum had been discovered near Goodnews Bay, Alaska, by an Eskimo named Walter Smith. Culver encouraged Andrew to invest in the new camp. Under Andrew's direction, Culver bought out the lease claims held by eight-to-ten platinum miners, who were eking out a living by the rocker box method. Andrew, Ed, and their partners planned to use the same type of dragline operation that had proven successful at their Happy Creek operation. With a federal loan of \$250,000, the Northland Development Company purchased the equipment to run a full-scale commercial platinum mining camp at Squirrel Creek, a tributary of the Salmon River.

Ed stayed in Flat to run the gold mining operation. When Wylie Post, the famous aviator, crashed the *Winnie Mae* near Flat on July 20, 1933, Ed was there to assist. He devised the plan of building a tripod from spruce poles to right the plane. With help from Joe Crosson and his crew who flew parts from Fairbanks, Post was able to complete his flight and become the first person to solo around the world.

In late 1934, the partners of the Northland Development Company formed a new corporation, the Goodnews Bay Mining Company (GBMC), which was incorporated in 1935. The next year, Andrew, who was president of the company, asked Ed to assume a management role in the platinum operations. The partners expanded exploration and acquired new equipment. Substantial new deposits with high-grade platinum values were discovered under the Salmon River, but they were so deep that they couldn't use any of the machines on site to extract the ore. They could, however, be mined with a large floating bucket line dredge. GBMC received a U.S. Government Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan of \$600,000 to purchase a 1,400-ton Yuba dredge with 94 one-ton buckets. The large dredge arrived in pieces that had to be transported for miles to the Salmon River site where the huge machine was erected—a major task.

Alaska's new platinum industry and the Goodnews Bay Mining Company had attracted worldwide attention. Word of the GBMC findings and the plan for the dredge spread across the U.S. and Canada, setting off a stampede by air in late 1936 and early 1937. J.C. Roehm, Associate Engineer for the Territorial Department of Mines, and J. B. Mertie, Jr. with a field party of the U.S. Geological Survey came to study the deposits and prepare topographical and geological maps. The platinum rush also caught the attention of Ernie Pyle, the famous correspondent for *The Washington Daily News*, who wrote a series of eight articles on the platinum stampede in August 1937.

In order for the company to grow and keep pace with the demand, Andrew asked Ed to be vice president and general manager of the platinum operation in 1937. He saw that his talented brother had managerial as well as technical skills. Although they were both in management, they

participated in the physical labor as well. When necessary, they donned their hip boots and worked alongside the crew. It was no wonder they were well liked by their employees.

The camp was remote so it had to be self-sufficient for the mining season that lasted approximately 185 days. It quickly gained the reputation for being a good place to work with its comfortable living quarters, recreational facility, excellent food prepared by Ed and Andrew's sister Anna Brown, its family-friendly atmosphere, and strong ethics.

What Ed and Andrew lacked in formal education, they made up for with their intelligence, problem-solving abilities, and inventiveness. They strove to improve the mining process in order to make work easier for their employees and to make extracting and processing gold and platinum more efficient. At Flat, Ed developed and obtained a patent for a recovery improvement to the Yuba dredge later used throughout the world. He also invented many labor-saving devices for the platinum mine: an ice saw to remove ice around the dredge; the Olson Screen Section; a Revolving Screen for jigs; a vibrating hopper to clean sand and gravel from the heavier platinum and gold; a Coffey Dam; an 8-Ton Ripper; and a Lazy Swede, an automated hydraulic giant using water flow to move the nozzle.

In the fall of 1942, the U.S. War Production Board banned all mining operations not essential to the World War II effort. Gold, which was used mainly for jewelry and money, was not considered an industrial metal, so the Olsons had to close the gold mine at Flat. Platinum, however, was a strategic metal and the GBMC platinum mine received an exemption since it was the only source of domestic platinum, a mineral used as a catalyst in gasoline production. Furthermore, iridium, one of the platinum group metals, was used to make the contact points for airplane spark plugs.

Recognizing the importance of the platinum mine, the U.S. Army dispatched six soldiers to guard the dredge from Japanese attack. As the war progressed and fear of the Japanese lessened, Ed gave the soldiers jobs at the mine while they were not on guard and let them use the recreation center. The soldiers formed a bowling league called the G.I. Angels. Their toughest competition was from

Ed and his league of miners. The soldiers were happy to be working and to have diversions to keep them occupied.

In the summer of 1950, Ed returned to his homeland with Hilda and their children: Eugene "Sonny," who was adopted in 1941, and Karen "Kajsa," who was adopted in 1943. They also visited Hilda's native Norway. Twenty years later, Ed and Andrew were part of a delegation that traveled to the Soviet Union to investigate potential oil lands. They visited the cities of Irkutsk, Moscow, Tashkent, and Samarkand, as well as Lake Baikal.

When Andrew retired in 1970, Ed became president of GBMC—he actually handled daily operations of GBMC for many years while Andrew concentrated on exploration. Ed continued to manage the company until mid-season 1976 when the platinum mine ceased operation.

Sixty million cubic yards of earth and rock had traveled through the great dredge during its thirty-nine seasons of operation, yielding 645,000 ounces of crude platinum metals and a lesser quantity of gold. Ed calculated the amount of platinum mined to be a little more than a cubic yard. Although the platinum deposits had not been exhausted, those that remained were deep and too expensive to mine. Government environmental regulations and the increased costs necessary to mine the deep ground led to the company's decision to close. In 1979, GBMC was sold to Hanson Properties, owned by Raymond A. Hanson of Spokane, Washington. Ed and company partner John Weeks worked with a small crew during the transition to the new owners.

"It has been the most interesting life you can imagine. There were problems, sure, but that is what made it fun. If I were younger, I'd still be up there digging. But now it's time to quit," Ed remarked to Stanton H. Patty, journalist ("The bad news: No more platinum from the Goodnews," *The Seattle Times*, May 6, 1979, B8+).

In 1980, the University of Alaska in Fairbanks honored Ed for his outstanding talents in the mining industry. Earl Beistline, Dean of the School of Mining Industry, presented Ed with the Distinguished Mining Service Award. Beistline said, "Ed always credited the crew for the highly successful operation at Platinum. It was Ed, with

his highly inquisitive and inventive mind, that solved numerous problems that developed and designed many improvements in the various facets of the mining plan and equipment.” In 1983, the Seattle Pacific Science Center hosted an exhibition about Ed and his contributions to the mining industry.

Ed died on December 23, 1988, in Seattle, Washington. Hilda died 20 years earlier in 1968. In his latter years, Inga-Märta Ahman kept house and cared for him in his home on Seattle’s Magnolia Hill.

Ed is remembered as a devoted father and grandfather, who loved all children. He enjoyed serving ice cream cones to the children of miners and Yupik Eskimos at camp. In the 1960s, he drove a school bus there. People who worked at the mine and relatives say that he was a wonderful, thoughtful, and kind person and a caring employer. He and Hilda frequently entertained employees and former employees at their home in Seattle. One former miner said that Ed and Andrew were among the greatest miners of their time in Alaska.

By Karen Olson, coauthor of *The Platinum King: Andrew Olson’s Story*. Information was also obtained from *The Olsson Brothers of Krokvåg, Sweden: Their Ancestors and their Descendants*, by Julia Olson Rowe Johnston; and from personal interviews and numerous newspaper and magazine articles.



Ed Olson at the controls on the Goodnews Bay Dredge circa 1976. Photo by James H. Barker



Walter Smith

June 30, 1887-October 15, 1972

Yupik Eskimo Walter Smith was born in a coastal village of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region on June 30, 1887. He began prospecting when he was just 14 years old, under the influence of early day prospectors like Gordon Bettles, who prospected the Russian and Kilbuck Mountains east of Bethel during the turn of the 20th Century. Walter spent nearly 15 years prospecting in these areas as well as in isolated mountains to the south of Bethel in the Wattamuse and Goodnews River areas. In about 1920, he began to mentor a younger but equally enthusiastic Eskimo prospector, Henry Wuya.

Henry Wuya (sometimes spelled 'Whuya') was born on January 15th, 1904 to Yupik Eskimo parents in the village of Quinhagak on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. His mother died when he was young and he was raised by his father, also named Henry. Like Walter, Henry was influenced at an early age by the activities of the early 20th Century prospectors, and as a result spent his teen-to-early manhood years prospecting throughout the Kuskokwim and Kilbuck Mountains of southwest Alaska. Early in his life he became proficient in English at a time when very few Yupik Eskimos of the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta region knew the



Henry Wuya

January 15, 1904-April 7, 1982

language. Because of this special skill Henry Wuya was sought out by early explorers and prospectors to guide them in their ventures. For example, traders used Henry's bi-lingual skills in negotiating commercial sites with village elders.

Henry Wuya also became a very capable boatman at a very young age, and he built and operated boats for use during his many prospecting ventures. Henry's boats provided relatively easy access to many upland areas whose rivers drained into the Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim Bay, and Norton Sound regions of western Alaska. Besides Walter, another of Henry's early partners was Gilbert McIntyre, who held claims in the Kilbuck Mountains south of the newly discovered NYAC district. McIntyre served not only as partner but also helped grubstake several of the young Wuya's expeditions throughout southwest Alaska. Henry lived in Goodnews until he married Emma Foster on April 12, 1925, and moved to Eek.

In the early summer of 1926, Walter Smith and Henry Wuya embarked upon a trip that would secure both Yupik Eskimo prospectors a place in Alaska mining history as co-discoverers of Alaska's largest commercial platinum deposit.

They traveled up the south-flowing Salmon River, which empties into Kuskokwim Bay 16 miles north of Cape Newenham. Near the head of the Salmon River were several second order streams and pups that drained the south slopes of a distinct promontory known as Red Mountain. Sphinx Creek just north of the Salmon River had supported a small, two-man pick-and-shovel placer gold mining operation from 1910 to 1925, until the death of both miners. Since then very little activity besides desultory prospecting had taken place.

Much of Red Mountain is largely composed of the rock type 'dunite', named after the type locality at Dun Mountain, New Zealand. The name dunite is derived from the dun color produced by the weathering of the altered grains of olivine, which make up >90 percent of dunite. Vegetation rarely grows in areas underlain by dunite, and most of Red Mountain exhibits the classic dun color seen on dunite 'massifs' all over the world. Dunite is also a common bedrock source terrane for such elements as nickel, cobalt, chromium, and platinum group elements. When Territorial Mine Inspector and geologist Irving Reed investigated Red Mountain in 1931 to inspect the small surface placer platinum mines in operation, he published the following observation:

"various types of ultrabasic rocks have a rough zonal arrangement around Red Mountain, in which a gradational contact occurs between diorite, gabbro and darker, more ultrabasic rocks.....The theory is advanced that this arrangement is zonal, that, originally the less basic rocks lay next to the contact with sedimentary rocks and the more basic rocks lie towards the interior of the intrusion due to magmatic differentiation."

This remarkably accurate description would predate modern petrologic classification of the Goodnews Bay intrusion as a 'Ural-Alaska zoned intrusion' by nearly 50 years. The name 'Ural-Alaska' is derived from 'type localities' first studied in southeast Alaska and in the Ural Mountains of Russia. Platinum deposits associated with Ural-Alaska zoned intrusions, which have now been identified on all seven continents, have been the world's largest hardrock source of placer platinum for almost two centuries.

While Henry Wuya systematically prospected areas to the south and east of Red Mountain, Walter Smith systematically panned several gulches right on the south slopes of Red Mountain, concentrating on 1.5 mile long tributary which he named Fox Gulch. What Walter found there initially mystified him, for the bottom of his gold pan contained abundant grains of what he first described as 'white gold'. It wasn't shiny like gold and instead, Walter initially believed that the abundant angular grains must be silver. But Walter knew that silver was not nearly as heavy as gold, and the 'white gold' in Fox Gulch was about as heavy as gold. Smith also determined that the grains were magnetic, and this in particular puzzled him since he was not aware of any precious metal that was magnetic. Although disappointed that he did not find an economically viable gold placer, his prospectors' curiosity was aroused, so he sought additional advice and consultation from his partner Henry Wuya.

Walter returned to Fox Gulch with Henry where they both confirmed that the gray metal grains originally examined by Walter during panning were malleable like a native precious metal. In addition, Henry confirmed that the gray metal was about as heavy as or heavier than gold. This meant that the gray metal could not be silver. Smith also brought in an experienced prospector, Charles Thorson, to confirm their find. Thorson was an old miner that was familiar with small beads of platinum found in the Aorlic River basin north of Red Mountain. Although Thorson suspected the nuggets were placer platinum, he had never seen rough and dendrite forms observed in platinum like those in the specimens provided by Smith and Wuya. The placer platinum identified from the Aorlic River was worn down by water abrasion as it traveled away from the lode source; hence the platinum grains were quite rounded. In contrast, the platinum nuggets in Fox Gulch were practically lying on the bedrock that the platinum eroded out of, and appeared as rough and angular grains and nuggets that contained inclusions of 'country rock'.

Upon returning again to the coast, the threesome showed small nuggets of the native gray metal to prospector-trader-miner, Joe Jean, who lived in the nearby Yupik village of Mumtrak, later

to be known as Goodnews Bay. Joe Jean was a French Canadian who came into the North Country during the Cape Nome Gold Rush of 1899-1900. Jean would spend a long career placer mining on Wattamuse Creek northeast of Goodnews Bay, and had panned some placer gold in the general Salmon River basin. As a highly respected trader, Eskimo prospectors like Walter and Henry would frequently consult with Jean because they trusted him just like they trusted Gil McIntyre — a character trait that unfortunately did not always apply to other traders of the day. Like Charles Thorson, Joe Jean also suspected that the gray metal submitted to him by Walter Smith and Henry Wuya might be platinum but could not be certain unless it was tested by a qualified assayer. At both Jean's and Thorson's urging, Smith and Wuya mailed samples of the gray malleable metal to Paul Hopkins, of the U.S. Bureau of Mines stationed at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in Fairbanks. In the winter of 1927, nearly one year later, Hopkins contacted Smith and Wuya, and told them that they had discovered a good grade of platinum at Fox Gulch in the form of isoferroplatinum (Pt₃Fe). At the time platinum was selling on world markets for about \$115/ounce.

There was no immediate stampede into the region. In 1928, Edward St. Clair discovered platinum on Squirrel Creek and Thorson made a platinum discovery on Clara Creek, both within a few miles of the previous discoveries. By 1929, eight to ten prospectors made additional economically viable placer discoveries on Clara, Dry, Platinum, and Squirrel Creeks. A distinct promontory at the head of Platinum Creek was named "Whuya Mountain" by the early miners after the district co-discoverer Henry Wuya. Whuya Mountain is identified on photographs and maps issued by the Alaska Territorial Department of Mines throughout the 1930s. Unfortunately, Whuya Mountain does not appear on later US Geological topographic maps that were issued later in the 20th Century.

From 1927-1933, production from these placers yielded about 3,000 ounces of isoferroplatinum, all from shallow, hand-dug operations mined in the absence of mechanization. The early hand-mined ground yielded up to 0.085 oz/platinum per cubic yard, which was a good

grade considering that platinum in the late 1920s was worth 4-5 times as much as gold. However, during the early years of the depression, platinum prices plummeted to only about \$35/ounce, about the same price per ounce as gold. In 1933, Walter Culver and Andrew Olson entered into the district and began to systematically acquire claims from smaller scale operators, who by that time were willing sellers, and staked additional claims of their own. Culver, Olson, and others would form the Goodnews Bay Mining Company and introduce modern, systematic, mechanized placer mining methods into what became a nationally significant platinum producer in the newly recognized Goodnews Bay Mining district.

Walter Smith continued to prospect for platinum in the general Goodnews Bay area. His persistence was rewarded by purchase of his discovery claims on Fox Gulch by Andrew and Ed Olson in 1934. The compensation that he received allowed Smith and his family at the time to move and spend time in others areas of southwest Alaska. He resumed the search for new mineral deposits, albeit at a reduced level, until age prevented the demanding life style required of a prospector. Another career evolved, as Walter Smith became an accomplished wood and bone carver. His artistic skills were specifically applied to stylized, Yupik Eskimo masks that were successfully distributed through commercial outlets in Alaska.

Beginning in the 1960s, archeologists from Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman Washington, under the direction of Dr. Robert Ackerman, initiated a comprehensive survey of early man and abandoned Yupik village sites in the general Goodnews Bay Region of southwest Alaska. Because of his extensive knowledge of the area, Ackerman asked Walter Smith to assist in the archeological and ethnological studies of the region. The elderly Walter Smith, who spoke fluent Yupik but still knew little English, was frequently accompanied during his time with the WSU researchers by Betty Huffmon, who taught school at Goodnews. The bilingual Huffmon served as Walter's translator to provide ethnological background information of the general Goodnews Bay region for Ackerman's project. This not only involved the transcribing of much oral history related to Ackermans's team by Walter

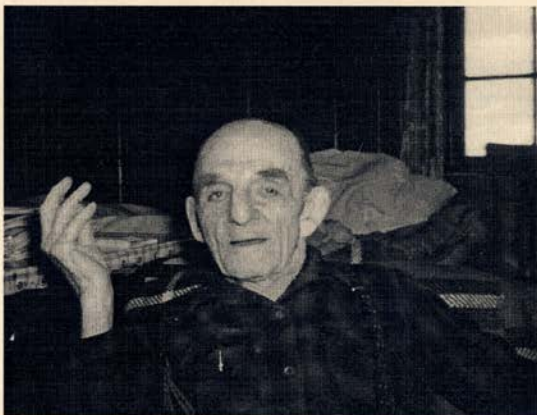
but also field visits to sites of Yupik ancestry. Walter was frequently consulted by other scientific expeditions that needed assistance understanding the geography, ethnology, and history of the area.

Betty Huffmon, who is Joe Jeans' daughter, expressed to the writer the view commonly held about Walter Smith. "Walter was everybody's friend. He never said a bad thing about anybody, and was a very special and unique individual". Walter Smith died in Goodnews, Alaska, on October 15, 1972, at the age of 85.

Henry Wuya continued to live in the general Goodnews Bay area. His skills with the English language continued to be invaluable to traders, store owners, geologists, and scientists who needed bilingual expertise in an area where most people only spoke in the Yupik Eskimo language practically until Statehood. Henry continued to prospect, herded reindeer, fished commercially, and served in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II. He was especially known for his construction of sailboats in which he traveled throughout southwest Alaska. Henry Wuya died in Eek Alaska on April 7, 1982 at the age of 78.

Written by Tom Bundtzen, utilizing references in bibliography and invaluable information provided by the following individuals: Marshall and Lois Lind, of Juneau, Alaska; James H. and Robin Barker of Fairbanks Alaska; Betty Huffmon of Redmond, Washington; Lynda Nicholson of Chugiak, Alaska; John and Charlene Wuya of Bethel, Alaska; Robert Ackerman of Pullman, Washington; and Chuna McIntyre of Rohnert Park, California.

Photo of Walter Smith, 1963, courtesy of Marshall Lind



Joe Jean, 1962, courtesy of Marshall Lind



Henry Wuya, circa 1920's, Wuya family collection



Henry Wuya and unidentified colleague, possibly Gil McIntyre, 1928, Wuya family collection



**Anders Olof Olsson: Andrew Olson
(1885-1981)**

Andrew Olson was born Anders Olof Olsson in Krokvag, Sweden in August 1885 to Olof and Karin *nee* Edlund Olsson. An older sister, Justina (Ellen) was often Andrew's best friend and confidante when he was motherless. Karin Olsson died at Andrew's birth. Andrew and Ellen's maternal grandmother Justina, called Mormor by the young Olssons, raised the orphaned children at the large family farm at nearby Backen.

By 1891, America Fever was strong in Sweden. It was often fanned by returning adventurers. At Backen, six-year old Andrew sat at the feet of roving sailor Nils Lövgren and heard tales of sailing the Seven Seas and prospecting for gold in America and Siberia. Beside the tales, Lövgren passed on a simple morality to Andrew: honesty and no liquor or cards. The early teaching stuck as did the memories of adventures. Andrew told his father, "I will sail away to America and dig gold just like Lövgren. With a rucksack on my back and a pick in my hand, I will search for big gold nuggets." Olof discouraged Andrew's youthful dreams but finally could not dissuade Andrew from immigrating. With \$100 from his mother's estate, eighteen-year-old Andrew

embarked for America in 1903. He had only a few years of formal schooling but knew farming and was experienced in logging skills. Andrew first settled in Stanwood, Washington where his father's brother, John Olsson, had established a home.

Olof, Andrew's father, had discouraged his son's dreams of America, but in 1905 following several poor years on the farm, Olof brought the rest of family to America. He had remarried after the death of Karin, and Andrew and Ellen had seven half brothers and sisters who would soon locate in the New World. Olof and family settled on a farm at Matsqui, British Columbia.

Andrew was ready to begin his gold mining career. The rugged young Swede attracted the attention of miners from Fairbanks who offered him a job. Andrew made the 400-mile trip from Valdez to Fairbanks by foot, and soon was making \$7 a day plus room and board, good wages for the time. His first mining tools were pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. Andrew's first employer was David Strandberg, who taught Andrew to prospect and later hired him again at his Flat operation.

Strandberg, who had arrived early in the Fairbanks gold rush and had a mine at Ester Creek, began to notice Olson's inventiveness. Andrew was familiar with gin-poles used to yard timber in northwest Washington and reasoned that with suitable rigging, the gin poles could cast large boulders out of the pits, replacing many hours of hard hand labor. Andrew also designed a system for dumping placer ore from horse drawn carts directly into the sluice boxes.

After Andrew returned to Washington from Fairbanks in the fall of 1908, he was run down by a team of horses. Injuries were severe and convalescence took almost two years, surprising his doctors who doubted that Olson would work again. As he recovered Andrew helped around the farm but he resolved to return to Alaska in 1912. This time Andrew and his cousin Daniel Olson walked from Seward to Flat, then at the height of a gold rush. In the meantime, David Strandberg moved his operation to Flat and was ready to put the hard-working young Swedes back on the payroll.

World War I was hard on the Alaska placer mines; there was a scarcity of men and equipment, but by constant work, combining farming, logging, and mining Andrew Olson was becoming established. In the late winter of 1919, he resolved to return to Sweden to see family, especially Mormor who was approaching her ninetieth birthday. Within a few weeks of his arrival in Sweden, Andrew made the acquaintance of an attractive cousin, Karin Hansson who enjoyed taking walks and listening intently to Andrew about his life in Alaska. By the time Andrew returned to Alaska for the summer of the 1919 mining season, he knew that he would return to Sweden the following winter with an eye on marriage.

Andrew's dreams of marriage were shared by Karin, but only if Andrew agreed to return permanently to Sweden, something that Andrew was not prepared to do. But he was ready to increase his knowledge both in agriculture and mining. At this time, Andrew and many young idealists were attracted to socialism and were eager to share the Russian experiment. In 1922, Andrew went to Russia where he worked for a time on a collective farm and signed up for mining studies in Moscow. As part of his geological studies, Andrew visited the Ural Mountains. At Ektarinberg, once headquarters of English mining companies in Russia, Andrew watched the efficiency introduced by mechanization of the mines. He also visited a northern placer mine where he first observed mining of platinum metals. On his return to Sweden in late 1923, Andrew proposed to Karin but he was rejected.

On returning to Washington, family and friends enticed Andrew to a church smorgasbord. The cook was Frida Tilly Stromberg, who was in America working to support two young sons, Alf and Bertil, in Sweden. After the meal was over, Frida listened to Andrew's story, then told him hers. Andrew solo mined in Alaska again in the summer of 1924, but on December 24, 1924, Andrew and Frida were married. In the spring of 1925, Andrew and Frida sailed for Alaska and Flat leaving Alf and Bertil with Frida's sister Emma.

In earlier years in Alaska, Andrew had worked with his half-brothers, cousins, or for

experienced mining men like David Strandberg and Frank Manley. By the late 1920s, Andrew was ready to take the next step forward. Andrew, with fellow immigrants Tony Lindstrom and Axel Palmgren, formed Olson and Company and, in 1928, bought the mining rights on Happy Creek at Flat from pioneer storekeeper Mrs. Fullerton for \$15,000. They also bought a 1 ½-yard dragline, of considerable size for that time, and a large pump from NC Company. The partners constructed an elevated sluice and pioneered a substantial mining operation. A slotted dragline bucket, invented by Andrew, served as a movable grizzly effectively separating large barren boulders from the finer-grained ore. An elevated trestle sluice, also invented by Andrew and his partners, simplified disposal of tailings. The dragline was used for both stripping and feeding the elevated sluice. It was an ideal system for the thawed ground at Flat and pioneered the operations that were used at Flat through the 1980s. The Happy Creek project expanded, and in 1931, Andrew brought up his Edward and Fred Olson to help with the operation, Edward with the dragline and Fred in the shop. Further expansion was accomplished in 1932. Olson & Company brought in Edward's former employers from the North Bend Timber Company as active and investing partners in Northland Development Company. By this time Edward was an experienced and creative placer miner capable of guiding the operation at Flat, allowing Andrew time to consider other ventures.

In 1933, on a train trip between Anchorage and Seward, Olson met Walter Culver, a prospector and entrepreneur. Culver was very familiar with a mining area at Goodnews Bay which had an interesting platinum discovery. Small operators were eking out a living with hand mining, but the ground was deep and needed mechanization to be worked profitably. Andrew was intrigued by the new district, and authorized Culver to begin quietly consolidating the ownership of claims. Culver acquired the claims based upon his knowledge of the known platinum-bearing creeks and a sure feeling of the location of richer deeply buried deposits. Culver and Andrew Olson trusted each other, and by the time Andrew could leave Flat in the fall and visit Goodnews, Culver had the district tied up and ready for assignment to the Northland Development Company, the successor of Olson &

Company. In late fall of 1933, famed bush pilot Oscar Winchell flew Olson to Goodnews. A dragline-mining outfit, similar to that developed at Flat, arrived at Goodnews on July 10, 1934. Mining operations began on the east flank of Red Mountain. Dragline operations on Squirrel and nearby creeks continued through 1936. A prospecting program to assess the larger potential of the area also began in 1934 with a six-inch churn drill. Exploration guided by Andrew in 1935 and 1936 indicated a major deep reserve of placer platinum in the Salmon River valley east of Red Mountain.

In 1935, Goodnews Bay Mining Company was incorporated under the laws of the Territory of Alaska to consolidate and operate the holdings of Northland Development Company. The reserve was sufficiently documented that the Goodnews company received a \$600,000 loan from the depression era federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation to purchase and install a large dredge on the property. The components of the dredge, a Yuba eight cubic foot bucket line dredge, arrived by steamship in early August 1937. The parts, in total weighing 1,400 tons were lightered ashore and hauled along shore to the mouth of the Salmon River, then up the Salmon to the first mining site. Assisted by experienced dredge constructor Jack Turnbull, erection of the huge floating plant was completed on November 10, 1937. The task was accomplished in a remote area served only by one or two steamships each summer and by occasional non-scheduled bush plane flights. The machine was huge and the men had to accomplish the timely freighting and building of the dredge from its component parts. Unusually mild weather allowed the dredge to operate until December 22, completing the RFC-required thirty day acceptance period.

The Goodnews Bay operation became ever more efficient as the crew adjusted to the large-scale dredging operation. On December 7, 1941, shortly after the operation shut down for the season, Japan struck America throughout the Pacific, and Andrew worried about the future of the operation. Knowing of the uses of platinum metals in oil refining and iridium in aircraft spark plugs, Goodnews petitioned the government. Their petition was answered quickly. Because platinum

is a strategic metal for the U.S. War Effort, The Goodnews Bay Mining Company was allowed to keep their work force and the call to military duty was rescinded. In fact the government mandated that the Goodnews Bay Mine must continue operation. A list of GBMC employees was sent to the draft board so that the employees would be removed from the upcoming draft orders. The government's decision relieved one of Andrew's burdens, but he soon had a much more serious one. Frida, always strong, weakened rapidly and by the time a stomach cancer was diagnosed, the cancer was inoperable. Andrew's constant companion died on March 31, 1942.

Andrew still had work to keep him occupied, but he slept poorly. In 1944, Andrew's widowed half-sister Martha moved into the big Washington home. Martha remembered a young lady named Dee Dodge who had worked in the kitchen at Goodnews in the 1930s. Martha's matchmaking skills paid off in April 1945 when Andrew married the much younger Dee Dodge.

During his years at Goodnews, Andrew was joined by his brother Edward, thirteen years his junior. Andrew was the president of Goodnews Bay Mining; in later years, Edward took over direct operations as General Manager, then assumed presidency of the company. The company continued prospecting and a second major ancient paystreak was discovered in the Salmon River valley. As ground deepened, the company brought in a 7-yard walking dragline, one of the two largest in Alaska, to strip ahead of the floating dredge. The company, including its direct predecessor Northland, produced platinum metals continuously from 1934 until November 1975. Total production was approximately 650,000 ounces of placer platinum.

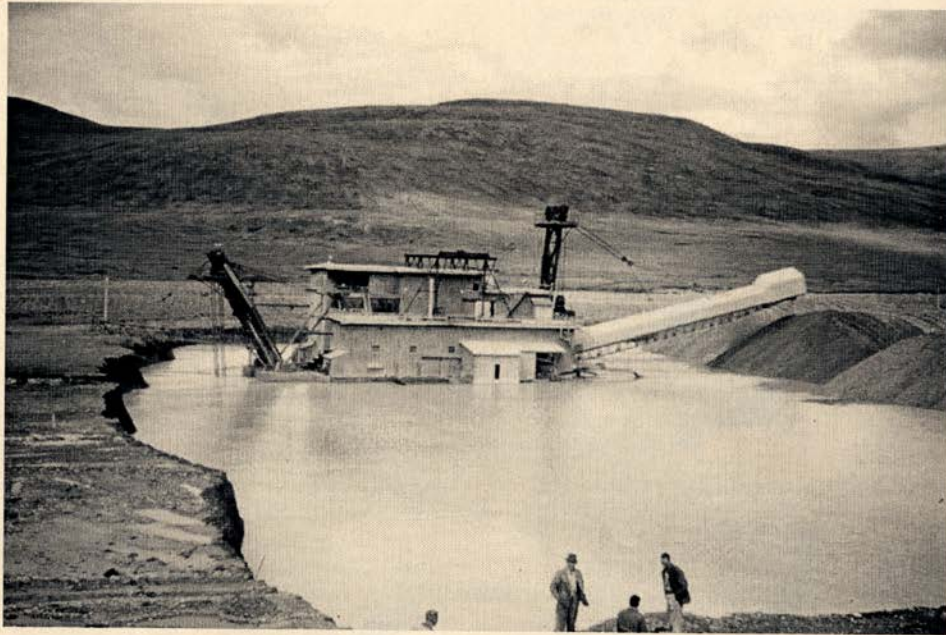
The Olsons' camp at Goodnews Bay was famous throughout Alaska for its amenities and hospitality. The camp had motion pictures and a 2-lane bowling alley. The amenities and style of management paid off for the company, as there was very little employee turnover for almost 40 years. With his Flat partners Tony Lindstrom and Axel Palmgren, Andrew also had placer operations at Deadwood and Harrison Creeks in the Circle

District. Company offices were maintained in the White Henry Stuart Building in Seattle.

Andrew Olson lived into his 9th decade, alert and innovative to the end.

Compiled and revised by C. C. Hawley, 2005, from the 1999 Paystreak article on Andrew Olson that in turn was based on published source material and an article prepared by mining engineer Joe Fisher, who was last operating manager for Goodnews Bay Mining Company. This brief summary especially benefited from the recently published, "The Platinum King: Andrew Olson's Story," by Jan Olof G. Lindstrom and Karen Olson (Book Publisher's Network, Bothell, WA, 2004)

Photo of Andrew Olson from Olson family collection



Goodnews Bay Dredge, 1958, photo by D.D. Trent

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Distinguished Alaskans Aid Foundation as '98ers

The Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation was incorporated as an Alaskan non-profit corporation on April 27, 1997. The Foundation was organized exclusively for educational and charitable purposes, including donations to organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. On September 17, 2003, the IRS confirmed the 501(c)(3) status of AMHF, and further categorized the organization under codes 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(6).

The foundation is a non-membership corporation that depends on services provided by its officers and directors, others interested in Alaskan mining, and on donations and grants.

The Foundation is especially indebted to fifteen persons who have each contributed \$1,000 to become 98ers, in honor of the first stampeder to Alaska in 1898 at Nome.

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Walter Johnson	Joe Usibelli, Sr.
Wallace McGregor	William R. Wood*
John Mulligan	

*deceased

Most of the 98ers are recognizable as miners of national or international reputation. The late William R. Wood was President, Emeritus, of the University of Alaska. Dr. Wood suggested the organization of the Foundation. The late Elmer E. Rasmuson was an Alaska banker and benefactor, long interested in Alaska natural resource history. Dr. Walter Johnson knew many pioneer Alaskans. His research has taken him to Sweden and Norway in search of the true story of the so-called "three Lucky Swedes" of fame at Nome.

The Foundation is seeking about ninety more 98ers, but it welcomes contributions at every level. For further information contact:

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