

YUKON ARCHIVES SOUND RECORDINGS TRANSCRIPT

Title: [CKRW] Talkback - Riverboats - Rolf Hougen
Interviewer: John Dumas (JD)
Interviewee: Rolf Hougen (RH)
Persons Present: Unidentified Caller (UC)
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Abstract

See <http://yukon.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/FIL/LIST/SISN%209789?SESSIONSEARCH>.

Transcript

0:00

JD: ... our report on the boats 'Casca' and 'Whitehorse'. Drop in. It's a drop in show with Rolf Hougen. [reads note] "Anyone who may have an old torn tent or tarp - needed at the boats - drop off this afternoon." What's that all about Rolf?

RH: Well John the ... Just came back with Pat Burns, we went down to have a final look at the riverboats. Tomorrow's the last day of the program.

JD: There was no extension?

RH: Unless an extension is granted and I'm still hoping. But it is a - I understand a Treasury Board decision. The Treasury Board said that all programs end May 21. I'm informed that [Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean] Chrétien has sent a letter to the Treasury Board asking for an extension of this particular program. So I'm still hopeful but I don't think it will really happen so that we are closing down you might say and by tomorrow afternoon the program will stop. Now the 'Casca' is complete. The 'Whitehorse' another week would have done everything to secure it. But this little note that I dropped off is to ask if anyone has torn canvass, tarps, old tents, around if they want to get rid of them or want to contribute them they drop them down - the - Bernie Payment and Fred Hartt down there are trying to secure the decks on the 'Whitehorse'. And the grant is based on a 3:1 ratio, \$3 of labour to \$1 material, so a control has to be kept. We can't buy anymore material, paint, or anything else because it'll throw the ratio out. So whereas we've men to do the job we haven't got materials. They had materials right up till this morning but the last two gallons of paint are now being used and the canvas has all been used up and so on. So the program is sort of slowing right down. But that would help: canvas, tarp, anything.

JD: Anybody that has an old torn tent they don't want or a piece of canvas or so forth drop them down at the riverboats. They could be used to secure the decks of the riverboat 'Whitehorse'. Used for a good

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cause rather than throwing them out at clean up week they should be removed but why not make use of them. Drop them down to the steamboats. How much of the \$40,000 will have been spent by tomorrow night?

RH: Roughly \$20,000.

JD: Another 20 if the time were extended could be put to good use presumably?

RH: There's a ... The fence will cost \$10-12,000 and I would hope for the extension mainly because of the fence. Perhaps another \$3-4,000 would be spent on the 'Whitehorse' to secure it. And that's really - that would complete the whole program.

JD: Why couldn't another group or another crew have been working on the fence in the last month?

RH: Again it's the ratio: labour material. The fence costs \$4,600, so we couldn't buy the fence.

JD: But surely you could have logged the fence, and used logs and put ...

RH: You can go over logs. It has to be a chain link, pretty well barbed wire on top.

JD: I see.

RH: So really there wasn't any choice but to delay ordering the fence and hoping for an extension.

JD: Good morning "Talkback".

UC: Yes, I wonder if I could boost a local event?

JD: Sure can.

[break]

[0:03:28]

JD: ... kennel club dog show. It's going to be a biggy. Rolf the city council turned down the acquisition of the boats on behalf of the city. What happens to them once you get them fixed up?

RH: Well I was out in Faro when all this occurred. And I have only heard the news item. And well I appeared before council a week before and I emphasised at that time that I was not in any way pressuring them to take on the boats. That the - in my view the city owning the boats, as I think they should own log cabins and I think they should own other historical things as a base for building a tourist industry and keeping tourists here. The ownership of them isn't really important. If White Pass would retain them in the restored condition I would be happy. If the Historical Society would acquire them I would be happy. I'm prepared to form a society to take on the responsibility of the boats. In fact I told council I personally - in order to get the project going, without all the formalities and procedures and legal implications and all that. If we'd gone through all of that the boats wouldn't have been restored. So

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rather than cut - you know just in order to cut through the red tape I even offered to pay the cost of the insurance and maintaining the crossing as long as I was in business in the Yukon. I would undertake that obligation. Told White Pass accordingly and passed that on to city council. I don't want them feel they're being pressured. It's a decision they have to make on the basis of what good is preserving the boats ...

JD: They've made the decisions.

RH: ... to the Yukon. What good is it? And if they feel there is no value then I think that's a valid decision. And then other alternatives will be sought.

JD: I think you start a "save our history society" and you could include a lot of other things too that need saving. There's been so much taken out of the Yukon in terms of artifacts, antiques, and so forth and we see various business establishments: a Klondike bar that I was in for instance with artifacts from the Yukon. This bar I think is in Vancouver or something. But that type of thing and maybe it's going to take a private organization or a society ...

RH: Yes, I'm ...

JD: ... to be effective.

RH: ... I'm just so pleased at what has happened to date. The boats are saved that is a fact. This pleases me. All the arguments that go on - pros and cons and so on - fine, but the argument should continue. Good discussion on subjects of public interest are fine and I accept this very much. But I am not prepared to accept, from my own personal standpoint, sitting still any longer and watching our history being destroyed and damaged. We lost the old post office court house by a government decision that we no longer wanted it. It was an historical building of an architecture of a time when - right now tourists would be fascinated by the old platform in which the judge sat and so on. And all the old brass box post office boxes of the old ornate and little cubicles in which you walked up to get your mail. This to me was history destroyed and I for one am not prepared to sit back and allow it to happen and that's why the riverboat involvement. It just can't go on. Not only for the sake of our children who should see and know about our heritage and the background of the Yukon but from a business standpoint and building an industry. If we're going to bring in tourists, if we can keep them an extra day it's worth tens of thousands of dollars to the Yukon and the only way we keep them an extra day is to give them something to do and to give them something to do is to have a variety of things. I think the three storey log cabin should be acquired, those two lots by the city and developed as the old log church must be preserved. The riverboats, in spite of the 'Klondike' being restored and that's great, that's one place to go and travel through it, those riverboats on the river where they were built is just one more place that on the tours that tourists are taken on its history its of interest.

JD: Good morning "Talkback".

UC: Good Morning.

JD: Thanks for waiting.

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UC: Good morning Mr. Dumas. We're kind of interested in knowing is there a list published of all the win...

[break]

[0:07:51]

JD: So what's the next move then? Like I say, whose responsibility today or let's say the day after tomorrow when the program for restoring the boats is finished? Whose responsibility then to maintain, to look after them, to make sure people don't go on them, etc., etc.?

RH: They are secure. They're all boarded up. And no one can get on board without breaking in. There'll be barbed wire put around the paddlewheels themselves so they can't crawl up. They'll have to bring their own means of getting on board (a ladder, a great long plank, or something) and arrangements will be made that they will be - an eye will be kept on them so that if there is breakage the people can be prosecuted because they will be trespassing. These arrangements will be worked out. The next move, I don't really know. I'm certainly not prepared to drop the subject or drop the project. I intend to seek additional grants to continue the program and I would hope that some organization will take it in - take them on. But if necessary our riverboat committee that numbers some seven or eight people will form a special society for the purpose of preserving and owning those boats. See, White Pass has been most cooperative at all times in this whole program and Marvin Taylor I'm sure stuck his neck out a bit by saying "Look it, go ahead, proceed to do it even though we haven't got the paperwork completed." So we - we can - we'll find a solution - we'll find a solution to it. And the main thing is the preservation has been accomplished. The rest that might take another month, it might take six months, it might take a year. Not too important now. They won't deteriorate further. We've got the time to do something and this will have to do. I just hope that elected representatives of the future are imaginative people who think beyond tomorrow, who think to the future, who will plan accordingly. The tourist industry is a terribly, terribly important industry to the Yukon and to Whitehorse particularly.

JD: Are you suggesting that our present city council isn't that imaginative in view of the fact they've turned down the acquisition of the boats?

RH: No, I wouldn't relate anything about council to the boats. I think their decision is valid not to accept them and so on. I wouldn't want to imply any criticism of council because of the boat situation because of my personal concern and involvement in the boats. But if you can take that out of my comments in general I don't think they are an imaginative forward planning lot. I think we have to be looking five - ten years ahead in our city planning. We're way behind in planning a long range paving and sidewalk program. Which incidentally if this flip grant could have been used for such things, I think that perhaps it would have been well to put in sidewalks and alleviate dust conditions before restoring boats. You know that's an argument I'd be prepared to get into. But they have to be planning ahead. Not just for the next election. Not just for the day after tomorrow. They have to be thinking ahead. Do you recall John we had many arguments on recreation? And a few years ago there was no way city council would take on anything to do with recreation. The Civic Centre had to be run by a group of interested people. The

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swimming pool likewise. Recreation I argued at that time, and believe strongly in, is so important to the community. It is a responsibility to be coordinated and organized by the city because it's needed. It's as important as sidewalks, and sewer and water. And now we're doing that. The principle of the city involvement in recreation, with a lot of volunteers and organization, but the principal is there. I just hope the city council of the future will take a positive position and the EPEC (is it E P E C?) study on recreation and historical thing recommends in that report that the city become involved in the preservation of some of our historical things within the community. It's good business sense to do it. It's not only important for future generations, it's good business sense to do it. I just hope we have imaginative people in there in the future who can think and plan.

JD: You sound like a man who should be running for city council.

RH: If I ran for city council I wouldn't have a hope in Hell of getting elected.

JD: [laughs]

RH: And I know that. I recognize that. Because I am too involved in too many things and people think that I would be there for my own personal gain and therefore I would be at the bottom of the polls. Recognize this. But that doesn't mean to say that I am not interested on a voluntary basis of being very actively involved in any project that comes along from time to time.

JD: Rolf, thank-you very much for dropping in and having what turned out to be a very candid discussion with us.

[0:12:58]

RH: Well, all this started because I need some canvas.

JD: [laughs]. Right. [laughs] A tent, torn tents, or pieces of canvas. I think he deserves them. Would you drop them down to the sternwheelers.

RH: Even old paint. I'd settle for old paint to paint the decks.

JD: Old paint. Anything to conserve the decks.

RH: It must be there right after lunch because their running out of time.

JD: Is there any - could you have them picked up if somebody phoned? Is there any place somebody could phone? Like, no doubt there are people at home that may have it but have no way to bring it down.

RH: Okay, they can phone me at 7-4222 and I'll arrange for someone to pick it up.

JD: 7-4222 and somebody will pick up that old bit of canvas or paint or whatever you have that can help be used to help conserve the deck of the sternwheeler 'Whitehorse'.

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RH: And I'm still hoping for Jean Chrétien to phone / wire today or tomorrow and say "Carry on for 30 days" then we'll really complete the project.

JD: Rolf thanks very much for dropping in. And that has been our "Talkback" program and a wide range of topics with Erik Nielsen on cam... on the air with us and with Dennis Senger dropping in and Rolf Hougen. We covered a lot of areas. Tomorrow we're going to be talking about the proposed transit study which is taking place right now on a transit system for the Yukon. As well, hopefully the hostel setup down at Jim Light Memorial Arena and the hockey school which is being held in the same place this summer. So the program's "Talkback". The number is 7-7891. Be back tomorrow at 11 o'clock. Until then this is John Dumas saying "Thank-you for being with us and have a real good day."

0:14:34

[end of recording]