

Call number: 00-00-178-01 PT.2

Eskimo Olympics, 1972 (KUAC) Interview of Gordon Killbear (Knuckle Walk), Jeannie Felder And Abe From Inuvik (Blanket Toss)

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Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.

The tape starts with a man saying that you cannot practice for the knuckle hop or you would tear your knuckles up each time you practiced. He suggests you could practice while wearing leather gloves.

The interviewer (sounds like Paul Quist) asks whether he does heavy work that toughens his hands. The man says he doesn't though he supposes one could. It takes muscles to keep yourself suspended but some people might be able to endure the pain when the knuckles start getting cut up.

The man, Gordon Killbear, says last year he cut his knuckles up during the knuckle hop and this year he has skinned them and went much further; he has lost some weight. The interviewer says that Billy [Killbear] said that because the interviewee is lighter, he is able to go further. The man being interviewed responds that he went further than Billy last year, too, even though he was heavier than Billy then. (See 00-00-178-01 PT 4)

Quist asks whether a lot of endurance is needed for the knuckle hop. A man says that, yes, endurance is surely needed to endure the pain. He made 70'5" this year in the knuckle hop, much better than last year. The man says he tried doing the knuckle hop as a kid but has never gone this far before.

The man describes the knuckle hop: you get on you knuckles and toes in push-up form and you hop forward in this position. You use toe and arm muscles.

He has played this game in Barrow during the Christmas games. He has one it several times.

He describes another sort of knuckle hop where you balance on your knuckles with your stomach and torso balanced against your elbows and your feet in the air and hop in this position. The speaker says he is not able to do this but John Harry(?) can.

Quist asks if endurance is a good part of the game to have. The speaker responds that it is a trait of the old people. They were good people and strong men. It is a part of the culture to see how long they can endure physically and endure pain.

Quist thanks the man for his interview. The tape cuts out.

Quist asks Jeannie Felder what she is doing at the Eskimo Olympics.

She responds that she is blanket-tossing for Barrow. It is important to have people who know how to hold onto the blanket because otherwise people might get hurt or killed.

She says on the first day that they started they had some guys didn't even know how to hold the blanket. She says they need to have Native boys that know how to handle the blanket. The second night was the men's competition. She says she will refuse to get on the blanket unless there are Native boys handling it that know what they are doing. They need to know how to throw a person up and when the person comes down they need to pull the blanket instead of letting it sag. If the blanket sags a person could break an ankle or an arm or something.

A man, Abe, adds that if the blanket is allowed to sag, the person being thrown could hit the floor. The blanket always needs to be tight. The man responds to Quist's questions and says that the blanket toss is done in Inuvik in July. He says that the way the people held the blanket last night, one side was too strong and one side was too weak, so he almost got flipped off the blanket.

Jenny says that she didn't do very well the first day because they did not have enough guys to hold onto the blanket and they did not know how. When she was jumping about four or five years ago in Seattle, the highest she ever went was 50 feet. She says that in Barrow she gets thrown pretty high, too, because the blanket has wood on four sides with ropes to hold onto. The guys there know how to throw a person and how to hold onto the blanket. The blanket toss is done in June in Barrow as a celebration for catching a whale. Jenny hopes to get another record tonight if they hold the blanket correctly. She reiterates that she won't even get on the blanket unless they people holding it know what they are doing because the first night it was scary; they let her touch the floor.

Quist asks Jenny and the man what they think about when they are being tossed. The man responds that you do not have time to look around when you are being tossed; you have to concentrate on keeping your balance and landing correctly. Your legs are most important for keeping your balance. Your feet must be apart and you must be relaxed when you land because the blanket is very hard. The tape cuts out.

The rest of the tape is a man announcing and the crowd, talking and applauding.