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Anaktuvuk Pass recording with Zacharias Hugo, David Hugo, Jacob Ahgook

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Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

Zacharias Hugo introduces himself and the interviewer asks if he has been hunting caribou in the Anaktuvuk Pass. He says he's been caribou hunting all summer long. He first went out for caribou about a month ago. The interviewer asks if it was in early August or late August, but Zacharias thinks it was in the middle of August. He went about 14 miles north of the village with Jack Ahgook and got two bull caribou. They went out by a Skidoo [snow machine brand]. Other equipment they had was a snow-go, binoculars, and a rifle. They also had their lunches. Zacharias has a 25-35 [Winchester?] model, which he describes as being pretty old stuff. The other guy had a .270. The types of bullets they use are [unclear]. It's a small bullet, but Zacharias has been shooting them for quite a while.

At 1:43 the interviewer asks how long he has been hunting caribou and Zacharias says he's been hunting by himself since he was 15 years old. He learned hunting from his father and Zacharias started hunting with him when he was 10 years old. After that he thought he could handle everything related to hunting and started going out alone when he was 15.

The interviewer asks Zacharias to tell about his trip with Jack Ahgook. They got two caribou of which they took hindquarters home and left the other halves that they will get later on. Zacharias can't say if they always take certain parts home, but when the interviewer asks if he likes tongue he says he does very much and that it's his favorite part. They mostly boil it and sometimes they put them into oven with onions, salt and pepper.

At 3:45 the interviewer asks how they set up camp on their hunting trip and if they looked for caribou with their binoculars. Zacharias says no. They just did a round trip and didn't stay there during the night so the whole trip took about 6 hours. Jack and Zacharias didn't have to stalk the caribou because they were so close they could be killed right away. They just walked with binoculars and when they spotted the caribou, they went after them. They were about 50-feet away when they shot the caribou.

The interviewer asks if there are any special techniques that they use in hunting caribou and focuses his question by asking what they do if the caribou are far away. Zacharias says the only way is to sneak them. They sneak up and that's the only way to get close to the animal. Zacharias has a 2 ½ power little scope on his rifle and so he can see close and far out and he could shoot a caribou 300 yards away. If he used more than full power scope it wouldn't be right for him because one has to be really careful about shooting. When he has a small scope he can steady the rifle and he has learned better how to shoot with a small scope.

6:30 Then the interviewer wants to know where Zacharias aims when he shoots a caribou. He tells that he has a 25-35 with 85-grain bullet just about 45 [unclear] light weight powder. The interviewer asks again where he aims on caribou's body if it's 100 yards away. Zacharias tells that he practices with his own rifle on close range, some 50 yards away, before he shoots anything else. He steadies first so that he can think. He can shoot 50 yards or 300 yards. The interviewer says that a light bullet travels on a straight trajectory and asks if Zacharias shoots the caribou behind the front

leg. He says he does, mostly. Every once in a while he shoots them from 300 yards and hits them right on the shoulder.

The interviewer asks Zacharias if he skins the caribou right after he kills them and he says it's easier to do right away. It's cold for his hands to cut the caribou in 10 Fahrenheit weather. Zacharias says it's not cold enough for him yet. It takes some 15 minutes to cut a caribou. He skins it first and doesn't use any axes or saw but just a pocket knife [Probably he refers to how inexperienced or not knowledgeable hunters use axes or saws to cut off legs but a skilled hunter can use a knife to dislodge the knee joints].

At 9:14 the interviewer asks if he cuts the stomach first. Zacharias says he takes the skin off first off the whole thing. If the guts are taken out, the caribou is harder to cut [skin?] but if it's left in for a little while, it's tighter and the caribou is faster to cut.

Then the interviewer asks where the caribou is put after it's taken back to town. Zacharias says it is put into cache that is above the ground. He hasn't got too many caribou yet, about 8 or 10. The best number of caribou to have for the winter is about 20. That's a good number to have for the year. [Somebody in the background asks a question about skins.] Zacharias says the skins are used for making masks and for cold weather mittens, pants, socks and parkas.

Caribou is much warmer than other material. When they have cool weather, they have to have warm clothes. When they have -50 below, they need warm and windproof clothes.

11:40 the interviewer asks if he wears caribou pants, mittens and boots in wintertime and Zacharias says he does. Pretty soon, in November, it's time to start using them again. He stops wearing caribou clothes around March.

The last question is to what direction the caribou are traveling now. Zacharias says they are heading south towards Bettles and towards the Yukon River. They stay there the whole year round. The interviewer asks if there has been many caribou coming through Anaktuvuk Pass this year

and Zacharias says there hasn't been too many yet. He is expecting more to come in October. They stop coming through Anaktuvuk Pass around the first part of November. The interviewer thanks Zacharias. [Break in the recording.]

13:16 The interviewer asks somebody [possibly David Hugo, but the person is never identified in the tape itself] how many caribou he saw up there. He says he didn't count them but he shot 2. [Sounds of somebody walking on snow. Dog is barking. Children's voices are heard.]

The interviewer asks what is going to happen with skin once it's taken off [perhaps they are skinning a caribou?]. David says he will take it to his mother. A woman's voice asks what she will do with it and David says she will use it for masks. She'll take the hair off first. The interviewer asks what will happen with the meat and David tells he will put it on top of his house. He used to live alone there. The lady asks if they shoot cows also and David says they do. They want any caribou because they need something to eat during the winter.

15:38 [David says something unclear.] The woman asks how many guys went out [caribou hunting] and David says there are too many, the whole family. [Dogs are barking in the distance.] [Break in the recording.]

[Recording resumes at 17:38.] The interviewer asks what happened today and what time people saw the caribou. A man's voice [Jacob Ahgook?] says it was around 3 o'clock and it took almost three hours to get where they could shoot the caribou. The place where they started shooting them is called [unclear]. That's where they stand and look for caribou. It's a high place. They got some 20 [caribou] up there and there was a whole bunch of people.

At 18:54 the interviewer asks how many people went up there from the village. Jacob says there were quite a few, 6 or 7 families. They got their ammunicions out and rifles ready. Mostly the caribou were let pass through

until somebody said it's OK to start shooting. If one shoots the first caribou approaching, they can all turn back and go to a different direction.

The interviewer asks how many caribou went by and guesses several hundred. Jacob says it was 300 or 400 caribou. He thinks they were mostly bulls. Jacob was using a .22 [laughter] and his dad had .270. Jacob has the .22 for ptarmigan and for wounding caribou. Their family, meaning Jacob, his dad and Weber [sp?] got 6 and she [unclear, who] was helping with skinning.

At 21:21 the interviewer asks how long it took for them to get 6 caribou and Jacob says it didn't take too long. They skinned 3 and their dad got 3 more after going after a bunch of caribou. He doesn't know how long it took and says there were caribou going by even when they were skinning them.

He saw other people shooting caribou too and could hear a lot more. After the caribou were skinned they put them away so that birds and animals couldn't eat them and they would be picked up later. They were covered with skins and scarecrows were made. They took ribs to their house and fat and some meat to be dried. They got back to the village about 15 minutes to 9 pm. It was about 7:30 when they started shooting the caribou and it was getting a little bit dark.

23:42 the interviewer asks if there are still people out there. Jacob says he supposes there are and says there are quite a few people skinning and hauling.

The interviewer inquires what the first thing is that they do with meat once it's brought home. Jacob says they cook fresh meat but most of it is dried. Then the interviewer asks how many caribou they'd need for their family but Jacob says he doesn't know since he hasn't hunted that long and can't tell how much is necessary for the whole winter. Of course one can kill some during the winter too, but it's scarce.

The interviewer says he noticed that Jacob brought tongues with him too and asks what is going to happen with them. Jacob tells that they are cooked and that that's a good, rich part of the meat. They boil the tongues and freeze some to be saved for later. The interviewer noticed that they brought in skins too and asks what is going to happen with them. Jacob tells they are very useful: the bull skins are cleaned and scraped and people make masks out of them. The small ones, calves, are made into mittens or socks or mukluks.

The interviewer asks if many people use caribou clothes in wintertime and Jacob says that a quite a few do. It's one of the warmest [clothing material]. The best skins are in the month of August.

At 27:05 the interviewer asks if Jacob thinks there will be more caribou coming through the next day. Jacob says there may be, and explains that nobody really knows because one can never know what happens to the other bunches. They might go around. He says that usually when a bunch goes through the rest will follow the tracks. The interviewer says he has noticed that there is about a foot of snow out and wonders if that will stop the caribou. Jacob thinks that nothing will stop the caribou from going through [the village?] if they go through. There's a possibility that they might wander out where there is less snow and their food would be easier to dig.

The interviewer asks where the caribou are passing by Anaktuvuk Pass. Jacob says they probably go right around and yonder and right through the tundra.

[End of the recording.]