

Call number: 02-00-133-16 PT. 3

William Pitka talks with Roger and Karen McPherson about fishing

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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.

Roger McPherson asks a person [William Pitka of Steven's Village, as indicated in the tape case] if he is cutting his fish himself. He says he is, because nobody else is going to cut it for him. He's been camping on his spot from the 6th of July. He got maybe some 100 fish of which he has sold some. [Unclear.] Roger complements his smoke house and asks if he built it himself. He says he built it "this spring," because the one he had across the river had collapsed under the snow.

Karen [McPherson] asks how many fish he gets per day. He says he doesn't know, but today he caught 37. He has a calendar where he has marked his catch and says he has to turn it over to Fish and Game every month. Roger asks what his best day was in July, and he tells that one day he caught 50-something fish. Roger reads from the calendar that he got 57 fish on 15th of July. They have all been king salmon.

2:28 Roger asks if William started fishing on 6th, and he tells that he had a [unclear] way in June, on 28th or 30th. That's when the first king [salmon] was caught. He only had one net out then. He's got a 150-foot net and 100-foot net. One of the nets belongs to the Minto camp. [Somebody is whistling in the background.] They put a net in yesterday and got two fish "this morning." [Unclear talking.]

Karen inquires if there is a difference between [unclear, due to loud rustling]. William tells that stove is better than an open fire because it's closed. Open fire would be too hot, but a drum stove burns a long time. William loads it up in the evening and in the morning there's still fire in there. Karen asks how long it takes

to smoke fish and William tells it takes about 2 or 3 weeks. In the middle of August it will all be dried.

Karen asks if the fish are first hung up to air dry. William tells that he can leave the fish out all day long. If it starts raining, he's got a tarp that he can pull over the fish. Karen wonders if some pieces are for dogs, and William explains that they leave bones in for the dogs. Roger says that it would seem that bones would be hard on dogs, but the William says that dogs eat anything. The dogs don't eat fish guts but they eat fins.

5:59 Roger asks if they dry other parts of the fish besides the meat itself and if they keep the livers. William says they don't. When they get 20-40 fish a day, one has plenty of work to do and "no time to fool with those things." They [guts] are dumped into the river. [Unclear talking.]

Karen asks if the fish strips William sells are the ones that are already smoked. He tells that he gets \$3 dollars per pound. For green fish he gets \$0.30 cents per pound. He keeps 1/4th of the fish he catches and sells the rest. He gets about 400-500 pounds of strips, out of which he keeps 50 pounds for the winter. That big, dry fish he sells for \$1.5 per pound. The only difference with it and salmon strips is that the dry fish is not salted. The salmon strips are soaked in brine for 1/2 hour.

At 8:08 Roger asks if many people in Steven's Village depend on the fish that William catches. He says no, because most fish he sells "out here," in Fairbanks. He rather sells it "here" than hauls it up. If he hauls fish up, he'd have to charge \$3.50 for strips. Karen asks what he does with eggs, if he sells them or keeps them to himself, and William says that he sells them to a guy who has been buying them for a year.

William says he used to dry the fish eggs and put them in a burlap sack, but he has no dogs and this year he decided to give them away. "That's a lot of dead work for nothing."

If one puts fish wheel in just anywhere, one doesn't catch any fish. There are certain eddies where the fish hits. Fishing is best in eddies. Roger asks him how he chooses an eddy. He tells he tries them with nets. That's the only way he knows. The eddy he's at right now hasn't had anybody fish in it. [Break in the recording.]

10:26 [Knife sharpening noise.][Unclear talking.] A man's voice says that some people are great people because they go that far to get something to eat. [Unclear talking, knife sharpening noise.] People come hundreds of miles just to get a few pounds of fish. [Break in the recording.]

11:33 Roger asks somebody if he is from Minto. He says he is, and that he's been up and down the Yukon but has been fishing at Rapids. It's different there. One can have a fish wheel there, but "here" one just sets a net. Right now, they have 3-4 nets. The men who left the place and turned it over to the speaker have the papers [title to the land] and the speaker runs the place under his name. [The owner's name is] Matthew.

Roger asks when people first came from Minto to the Yukon River. The interviewee says that in early days people used to come from Tanana River and go fishing. Now they don't get as good [unclear] in the Tanana River. They drive the highway and spend a couple of night fishing. He tells that his group is going to fish until everybody gets what they need. It's their first year on the Yukon, and he suspects they might do better the following year.

Roger asks how the interviewee got "here" from Minto, and he explains that he came by car. It took 5 hours. People came to the Yukon about a week ago, in early July. The interviewee doesn't think people will be there for the whole summer, since they aren't prepared for it. They are just visiting, catching what they want and filling up their freezers. Then they'll take off again.

14:04 Karen asks how many fish they have been catching per day. The interviewee says they've been getting about 20 fish. Karen then asks why they use nets on the Yukon and fish wheels on the Tanana. He explains that on the Tanana, there are no eddies like there are on the Yukon, and one doesn't catch so many good fish there. It's easier to use nets in eddies in the Yukon.

Another man says that one can't catch salmon [in Minto?]. The interviewee says that right at the town site it's different. They are way off from the Tanana River. They just catch whitefish and pike with their nets and have to go to the Yukon to catch salmon.

Roger asks if some of the Minto people have nets in the Tanana right now, but the interviewee says they don't. They are too far, they are halfway. It's easy to go to the Yukon instead of going to the Tanana. They can come with cars and haul their boats "over here." There's more fish "over here" [on the Yukon] and there's a highway. In "our place" [on the Tanana] they have to go 100 miles for putting fishnets. They are seeing how their fishing goes and will see if they'll come back in later years.

16:18 They use different kinds of fish nets on the Yukon to catch salmon. Earlier, the speaker's group only got pike and whitefish.

Their smokehouse was built just yesterday and they also smoke the whitefish. They don't make a business out of it, but just get food for themselves. The speaker's name is Robert [Unclear]. [Break in the recording.]

They come from the new town site [of Minto]. Karen asks what fishing was like in Old Minto. Robert says it was "not as good as here." The Yukon is better. In Old Minto, they mostly got pikes and whitefish, not salmon like in the Yukon.

Roger asks how many families have come over to the Yukon River this summer. Robert says it's been just them and 6 other families. 7th family took off already. The big chief took off. The chief is Peter John. [Unclear discussion.]

[End of the recording.]