

**ORAL HISTORY 02-00-62-34 SIDE B**

**Harrie Hughes talks with an unnamed lady**

**Date unknown**

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**Series: Harrie Hughes Collection**

**Notes: Original on 3 inch reel, Master copy on CD.**

A woman's voice is talking about places where no other white women have ever been and probably very few white men. They never made any money prospecting but they had a wonderful life.

Harrie asks her to tell about the people "around here." Around Pelly they are mostly Indians, there are around 150 around the settlement and they are mostly Selkirk. There are Wolves and Crows [moieties/clans] and they don't marry within the group. The lady tells that he had to help officiate a birth a few weeks ago and that was her first time to see a baby being born. They sent for her at the night and she sent for the nurse and didn't do much. One of the Indian women was very efficient as a midwife and everything came off nicely. She says she was scared. Harrie's opinion is that people should learn how to live, especially when they are, like her, far away from civilization. The lady says Mayo is their closest town, 70 miles away. They are due to spend government medicine for the Indian and Northern Health Service and they are glad to do so. Someone said they should be on pay roll but she says she wouldn't want to be. She doesn't want factual responsibility. She does everything willingly, as does her husband, but they call Dr. Clark for antibiotics and drugs. They give small medicine and dress wounds and burns and patch holes and such.

Their children need more leading than what they have but nobody shows much interest. They should have a missionary or somebody to lead them on how to be with white people. Just recently in February they were given full liquor license so they can buy all the liquor they have money to pay for. They like liquor a bit too well.

At 2:20 the lady continues to tell that the Natives trap, fish and just now the Indian Department is having them cut more logs for cabins for the village, but it isn't enough. But, the more you give to them, the more you spoil them.

They don't know how to live: fur isn't worth much, they can't live like an Indian, and they can't be white men no matter how they try. They send children to school who don't know how to wash dishes or sew a simple little dress. When they come back they don't know how to sew a moccasin. They don't know how to be an Indian and they don't know how to be a white people. According to her opinion, it would be nice if they were taught how to do everyday things, like how to make a loaf of bread, or a pot of stew or beans, but they don't even know how to fry an egg when they come home from school.

They have a vocational training in Whitehorse but who has the initiative to go in? One or two did and one of them took up CAT driving and is working at the highway and one took up diesel work too but didn't go on with it. He is a handsome boy and could make something of himself. The speaker argues with him all the time but hasn't made a dent. Then you see these lovely girls come home from school and they are all pretty, but what becomes of them. Their minds don't receive training like white girls and one loses patience with them. They just can't.

At 4:19 Harrie mentions a race problem going on in States, and how they are creating a worse condition than if they would restrict them back to normal. The lady says she believes it because there is a place for everyone, to which Harrie states that he believes that equality is earned, not given. The lady thinks Harrie is absolutely right. She always tells the girls that people are what they make out of themselves. One girl there is really sweet and she had a little bit bad luck but she didn't go on with it. She is so nice in the dining room, pretty, prim and smart, but there is still the background and one can't get away from it.

5:06 Harrie says the folk have given him a handful of old pictures from the area. The lady says they are from Atlin, B.C. "But in here everything is connected." Everyone knows everyone and it's too bad Harrie can't make it to Atlin because there are a few old-timers left and they won't be there for another year. They will know some people in the pictures, but the old-timers would know more. She has been in the north for 33 years. They came to Atlin on the last day of February, 1930 and it took them two days to make the trip from Carcross with horses, and they stayed at the most primitive little log shack. There were six men and she was the only woman and she was very highly honored. They had the most delicious supper with moose meat and home-made bread. They had sandwiches made for them in the morning. They got to a place called Pig Tail Lake and new horses were supposed to be brought out but they were not. One of the horses was sick and they had to stay there for a couple of hours until the horse was rested. They had some cold, boiled moose meat and a tin of tomatoes on the table with some cold potatoes. She could have eaten it all. They got to Atlin 9:30 at night and it was -50. On that trip, she saw her first four moose and ptarmigan. She couldn't get her eyes off the ptarmigan which she couldn't see before they moved. It was an interesting trip.

7:20 Harrie asks if they have trouble with tourists shooting up places since the highway through now. The lady says they shoot up the road signs on the highway but on "this road" they don't do it. On other highway people are ruffraff. Harrie says they wouldn't do at home what they do "here." On this highway people are nice and they can afford to travel. They are not looking for work or anything, but just out to enjoy it. Most people do enjoy it but some people are dragged along with their spouses and complain. Most of the people love the trip: flowers, berries that they can and take as souvenirs. She is talking about fireweed. The lady says she likes the North and the Yukon.

Harrie asks about Van Bieber. Harrie knows his two brothers who used to live in Alaska, but they have passed away. The brother who lives in Pelly visited one in 1942 and [unclear]. Mr. Van Bieber came from the states, originally, and is now 86 or 87 and they had a family of 14 children. She is not sure how many of them are alive, but they are all good people and there is not a bum among them. Talking about Alec, Ben, Pat, and Mrs. Israel. Van Bieber is married to an Indian woman whom everybody calls Shorty in love and respect. They like to argue for fun because it amuses people. He is fond of cigars, she likes soft

candy and they like beer. Everybody likes Van Bibbers. Mr. Van Bibber can tell wonderful stories if he is well enough but he is a little bit frail and bothered with asthma at times. A lady tells about a story where Van Bibber's partner shot himself accidentally and he had a terrible time getting him off from there. They went through terrible hardships and Van Bibber prayed for the first time in his life because he didn't want the partner to die since they would have thought he killed him. A man's voice says he heard that they had they had \$4000 worth of furs to sleep in but not a bite to eat. At one place they were on a difficult creek and Van Bibbers partner begged him to leave, but he wouldn't. Van Bibber dragged his partner out on hands and knees and saved him, and his partner lived for years. Mr. Van Bibber ran mail from Skagway to Dawson City and it took him three months to do the trip with dogs and there was no easy traveling then: no heated cars or even trails. His courage is wonderful. They also have a big family and a big garden and they are the closest-knit family the lady has ever seen in her life. The children and grandchildren come home on Christmas and Easter and for his and her birthdays and any occasion they can think of to go home. They always go to Dawson for 17<sup>th</sup>. They are a remarkable family.

13:44 Harrie says he is trying to make it there for a meeting but also Pioneers of Alaska has a grand meeting and they have their discovery day in 27<sup>th</sup> of July. The woman says Harrie is busy, and Harrie agrees but says he is having fun. The lady continues that they are going to sell their place and "gypsy for a while." They are talking about her age. She has had a good life.

Harrie asks if she can play the tape to the Board Members and she says yes if it helps anything. [End of the recording.]