

2014-13

Sally Hudson

Bill Schneider, interviewer

Dixie Dale, interviewer

June 3, 2002

Bill Schneider thanked Sally for the interview.

Sally Hudson said she will start with 1927. She said she spent most of her days with her grandmother. They were very close. In 1927 they went down a few miles south of Rampart to set their nets to fish for king salmon. With the help of Uncle Charlie and others they set up their camp. Her grandmother set up the net and they didn't get very many fish. One day a boat came down the river and she waved at him. She knew about where the man came from. Her grandmother asked who that was and Sally told her it was a floater. She started wondering where she came from and asked her grandmother. Her grandmother told her to come into the tent and she made tea. She told her what had been passed from one generation to another. Her people were at the mouth of the Yukon River. They didn't know where they came from. Little by little the people started migrating up the Yukon River and made their homes on the streams. Her grandmother's ancestors went up the Koyukuk River. They had canoes for the summer and walked in the winter. This was before they had dogs to pull sleds. It took hundreds of years to come up the river. Her grandmother's bloodline went up the Koyukuk. The rest went up the Yukon River. Her grandmother said the hardest thing was getting food. A lot of people starved.

Sally Hudson said they were at the university writing the Indian language when one of the linguists said where did the Athabaskan Indians come from? Sally told the group what her grandmother had said. The people said they didn't think so. Sally said if an elder tells a story you don't doubt their work because it is accurate. Dr. Krauss had a video to show them. She talked about the film. They found a skeleton of an Athabaskan lady in Siberia. The Bering Strait Land Bridge was also covered in the film. She was excited to see where they had found the skeleton. The Athabascans were here 25,000 years ago. The Eskimos came much later, about 5,000 years ago.

Dr. Schneider said someone was doing research on prehistory of people in the new world. Sally Hudson said she will talk about the man coming down with the camera. She said after they were at the fish camp they moved back to their village of Rampart. Another boat came down the river. There were two men and they had cameras. Sally asked them to take their picture. The men said no they wanted to take photos of older people. She has a photo taken by the men. They measured the bone of the Athabascans from the knee to the ankle and the jaw bone. Her grandmother had it done. There was a grave above Rampart that contained a medicine man. One of the men started to dig in the grave and they stopped him.

Dr. Schneider asked Sally what her grandmother told her about telling stories. Sally said her grandmother said to listen carefully. She told her not to interrupt the storyteller. They mustn't move around. They were supposed to listen closely and try to remember everything that was being said. There might be a time when they were called back and asked to repeat the stories of the storyteller. They wanted the stories to be told correctly in the next generation. Each person listening to the stories had to be sure of what they are saying when they repeat the story. She said with time and place some of the stories get mixed.

Dr. Schneider asked her how she felt when she heard the story from her grandmother. Sally said she was honest and we were here. She said she wasn't totally satisfied with the story because they didn't know exactly where they came from. Sally said she went to a DAR meeting and Mary Jane was appointed to speak on Indians. Mary Jane was off on a trip and asked her sister to talk. Her sister didn't have time to get organized so she volunteered to talk. She told them what her grandmother told her and about the film that Dr. Krauss showed her. She is anxious to repeat what her grandmother had said and what the archeologists have discovered.

Dr. Schneider asked her to describe her grandmother. Sally said she was a beautiful person. She looked sad all the time. She had lost most of her children to tuberculosis and other illnesses. A long time ago they didn't have illnesses. They didn't even have colds. Sally said she was very good to them. She always had something for them to eat. If you asked her something about history or how to make something she would always tell them. Even when they were eating dinner her grandmother would tell them history or short stories. She never was a type of person to give you a short answer. She didn't like it when they didn't pay attention. Sally said she is the same way. Sally said her grandmother's name was Lilly Pitka. She also gives her Indian name. Before her grandmother died she gave her some sewing materials, moose skin, sinew and photos. After the men took the photo they sent her a copy of the photo. Sally said she has taken good care of it. Sally told a story about killing a porcupine while they were along the river. She described what her grandmother did to prepare the porcupine. She saved all of the bones in one place. Sally asked her why she was keeping the bones. Her grandmother told her that you just don't throw the bones anywhere. You don't throw them in the river. They had to return the bones to the place they found it and say more porcupine come. They didn't dump just anything into the river. They just dumped the things that came from the river. Sally said one time her grandmother hurt her feelings. It was in the fall and dark. Sally heard an owl. Her grandmother told her to get a butcher knife from the table. Sally told her she couldn't because she was scared of the owl. Her grandmother told her that there was nothing to be scared of and made her go down to get the knife. It upset Sally. It was the only time her grandmother made her do something that she didn't want to do. Sally said her grandmother didn't want her to have any fear. She said don't panic. Sally said her grandmother had no fear. She was a good shot with the rifle. One time her grandmother asked her to go berry picking and Sally didn't want to go. Her grandmother told her not to be scared. Sally said her grandmother let her eat all the berries she wanted and did not admonish her for refusing to help pick the berries.

Dixie said she can visualize one of her stories because of the way she described it.