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Sally Hudson talks about her grandmother, Lilly Pitka

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Sally Hudson said she spent most of her childhood days with her grandmother. She adored her grandmother. In 1927 her grandmother took her to fish camp a few miles below Rampart. They had help from their uncle setting up camp. She said as long as she was with her grandmother she had no fear. Her grandmother told her if she hears something to think. It could just be something rubbing against something. While they were there at fish camp there was a person drifting down the river. This happened in the summer. Men would float down the river by themselves. Her grandmother was in the tent and asked her who was in the boat. Sally said it was a drifter. She was thinking she knew where he came from. She asked her grandmother where did we come from. Her grandmother was in the tent. She remembered how the tent smelled with the spruce boughs on the floor. Her grandmother was making tea on the Yukon stove. She was given a cup of tea and some crackers. Sally said when someone is going to tell you history they would get comfortable. We were taught not to interrupt because we were supposed to remember all of the things that the person was speaking of. They are to repeat the story back to this person to make sure it was correct. This was the only way to keep history alive. Sally said her grandmother said as far back as the Indians knew they were at the mouth of the Yukon River. Where they came from was not known. They lived there many years. Groups started to migrate up the Yukon River. They would settle on small rivers that they liked. Sally said her ancestors chose to go up the Koyukuk River. This took many, many years. They didn't have dogs so they walked or they traveled in birch bark canoes. It was hard for them and many people starved. They used bows and arrows to hunt moose. They used moose skin to make snares. They used rocks for axes and knives made out of bones. The Indians and Eskimos survived in the bitter cold temperatures with hardly any food at times.

Sally said they stayed in fish camp for the month of July and then returned to Rampart. Some floaters came down the river. She said the kids would meet all the boats that came down. There were two men with big cameras. They didn't take photos of children, they wanted to take photos of just the elders. They were trying to identify the true Athabaskans with bone measurements. Her grandmother had her photo taken. Sally has kept it for many, many years. In the 1960s a group of them and the linguistics had a program to write and read the Athabaskan language. She worked with intelligent people. They knew the old ways of living and the words. They made a dictionary in the Athabaskan language to use in schools. One of the linguists wondered where the Athabaskans came from. Sally told them the story her grandmother had told her. The linguists still were not sure. Dr. Krauss showed the video titled First Americans. The film showed a skeleton and tools of an Athabaskan person. The film had an explanation of the Bering Land Bridge. She said this tied in with what her grandmother said about their ancestors at the mouth of the Yukon River. The linguist came and apologized to her. Sally said you never doubt an older person telling history. They told it exactly the way it was.

Sally said this past year at a DAR meeting she was the speaker. She told them the story that her grandmother had told her and the information from the First American film. She got together with Bill Schneider. She said now they are researching who took the original photo of her grandmother at Rampart.