

Interview with Daniel Boone Reed on December 10, 1994

interviewer-Nancy Haag

This is Nancy Haag interviewing Daniel Boone Reed at the Senior Care Center in Kodiak Alaska on December 10, 1994.

NJH

Please repeat your name and where you were born.

DBR

I was born December 9, 1908, and I was born twins, mixed twins. My mother didn't have enough milk for two. I was living at Tumulik, mouth of the Tumulik River, and it was a landing port for the miners at Candle Creek and Mukluk. My grandmother was visiting my mother when she was having me and my sister. When she didn't have enough milk for two my grandmother bundled my up and took me to her home in Bucklun. About a week before I was born there was a woman who had lost her child and she became my nursemaid. The natives, the first born son became the grandmother's son and it was habitual when the son grew up would take care of Grandma so she wouldn't be put in an ice igloo to die of old age. That was one of the natural, with the natives, early in the 1900s, late 1800, they were still practicing it.

It was then when I was about 9 years old, when I was born my father was 50 years old. And when I was about 9 years old my mother and sisters would visit the native elders and learn supernaturalism for self-survival. You really can talk with a person on the other side of the earth if you concentrate and subject yourself to it. You can talk with the animals. A wolf will tell you when a herd of caribu is coming and in which direction. A bird flying, you can also visit with them and make a deal with them as a friend and they will need to help you survive.

NJH

When you were growing up, what animals did you hunt?

DBR

Rabbits, and trapping of fur bearing animals, that would be mink and muskrat, things like that. You could bargain with them, those in the spirit world. They believed in the spirit world and as I grew up they told me of a story of a cry-baby. It would float like a light, a glowing light ball going down the river. I told my father after I heard the story. He said well, that sounds like an owl roosting in a tree over a spring. The spring would be something like, I guess it would be causing a glow in the feathers. And when I told my father the story that was the owl hunting and making a noise to scare the rabbits feeding on the willows. And the story teller says you could put your thoughts on the wing of a bird and follow that bird on its maiden flight, or

any other flight to its extension. And he says a bird does not stay on the ground like we do, they defy gravity, and our thoughts can defy gravity. You can send your thoughts wherever you desire, and you have the ability to send your thoughts too. He said he sent his sent his thoughts to the moon in a sea mammals stomache once, and I was listening to the radio when the astronauts went to the moon. It reminded me of that native telling he had gone, his thoughts had gone to the moon in a sea mammals stomache.

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Followed a story about his father in Montana and a \$25,000 Indian grant his father recieved from the (state government?) for education of his children.

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And due to the fact that we moved from Kotsebue to a central part of Iowa, the teacher at a country school put me back one year in school.

NJH How old were you when you were put back?

DBR I had seven years of schooling in Alaska. Instead of putting me in the eighth grade class she put me back one year, I had to do the seven year over. That little incident alone was one of the factors of revenge. It stipulated the feeling of discrimination. It was in 1920.

NJH What town were you living in then?

DBR We were out in the country. Illinois Grove, Iowa.

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Followed a story about Iowa, and his grandfather when Iowa was a territory.

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Due to the fact that I was put back in school one year it went against the grain of good feelings and so forth. Due to that feeling I could notice even with my friends at school a discrimination of their thoughts, in their

feelings, in their association and when my mother died my father was left with small children. The youngest one was 6 months old and I got to thinking that maybe if I went out on my own maybe it would ease the burden on my father. But it didn't. Instead there was always a hint from future acquaintances that maybe I should have gone to college. Right from a little past 9 years old I began to notice discrimination feelings from my associates. Even with my native relatives.

NJH Are you Aleut, on your mother's side?

DBR My mother was an Eskimo.

I came to Kodiak in 1937 and I married a Aleut mixture woman and lived on Afognak a couple three years.

NJH Were you in the village of Afognak?

DBR Ya

NJH What year was this?

DBR 1938, 1939. In 1940 I went to prison. And I served 8 years in prison then came back here. I like Kodiak, for its climate. Especially after 1964, the Tustamina, Kodiak warmed up.

NJH You used to have more snow?

DBR You see, the only time there was a lot of snow was somewhere in 1951 or 2, 1952 I guess. That's the last time there was a lot of snow. Out at Westpoint, there must have been 2 or 3 feet of snow. We had livestock out, goats and sheep, we had to pertinently shovel pathways down through the brush for them to browse. Well, that's about all I can tell you of myself, other than lately I've had a major operation.

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followed Daniel telling of his health, and coming back from Florida for an operation. He moved back to Alaska because he can obtain free health care here.

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NJH

You know what's very interesting to me is your life growing up in a village, when you were very young. What the children were taught.

DBR

When I was growing up, they still believed in spirits, and I myself think they were correct. I have, I was taught, and I do have some of the ability.

NJH

Do you believe you would have to grow up close to nature to have this ability?

DBR

My father was old, my mother insisted that I learn it.

NJH

Who taught you how to communicate with the spirit world?

DBR

It was done by storytelling. Like the thoughts, put your thoughts on the wing of a bird. Or you're talking to a uncle whose spirit had been adopted by a weasel, or mink or rabbit or a flying bird. You can talk to them. You really can hear them. You can see the outline of them as a shadow image.

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Followed the story of an explorer which I lost part of because the tape needed to be turned over.

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At point Barrow, the elders were trying to tell him the different approaches to the weather. They were telling him correctly. But he said it was all superstition. The white man knows better. I guess now the white man can say he knows better, with his instruments and so forth. But the elders with their supernaturalism and their belief in spirits, they knew better than the white man then. The white man told them it was just superstition.

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Daniel then decided it was quitting time.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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