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Muktuk Marston Interview, 7/7/70, Interviewed by Suzy [last name unknown], Location Unknown

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Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master copy on CD.

The interviewer says she read the book and she thought it was great and Muktuk did a good job of paying his debt. Muktuk laughs.

Muktuk says he came down from Hudson Bay about 30 years ago. He was mining there and had a little airline. Up in Quebec he was working out of Rulan Norwanda [sp]. The war came and Canada went to war. The French government put 3 Frenchmen on his board of directors. He had been with a tashow [sp] government who had been in power for 60 years. He moved to Washington DC to get a job building underground storage for aircraft. The commission from England said they are going to go into diversification for planes and the planes were not going underground. He saw the Colonel and the Colonel told him they are not going underground but he could be used because they were going to Alaska and needed him because of his familiarity of the Arctic. He said he ran from home at 15 from Seattle and landed in Nome. He was sworn in as a Major because he had experience as a commissioner of the National Guard when he was at the university. He went to Alaska in the spring of 1941. He went to the Dutch Harbor and was the commander of the ship San Miguel, a reconstructed transport ship. The San Miguel traveled one weekend to the west and the ship sat in the setting sun for 7 days. They arrived at Dutch Harbor and had the cryptograph man send the message that he'd be leaving 1,000 men with the Marines. He sent another message and a message came back and the cryptograph man couldn't read it. He stepped off the ship in Dutch Harbor and he spoke to the Colonel and the Marines. He put 20 men on order to unload the ship. Muktuk says it was a long story. Muktuk took over command. The Colonel put him over Guard or Officer at midnight and they weren't feeding the men. The captain said the Steward is in charge. The Steward had a Filipino do the job of feeding the men. Muktuk said the pantry was stocked and told them to feed the men. He took over the command of the Dutch Harbor and Captain Ross was the Captain of the National Guard in San Francisco and was in charge of 1,000 men in the Dutch Harbor. Ross said all they gave his men was coffee. Muktuk went down to the Filipino assistant to make sure Ross's men got fed.

Muktuk met a man who carried side arms and wore a blue uniform and Muktuk thought he was Navy. He stopped to dance one night at midnight without consulting Muktuk. Muktuk stepped into the kitchen and the man with the guns said "You're using strong words." and tried to fight Muktuk and Muktuk knocked him out. He had the man put in chains and talked to Captain Wigyard [sp] who put the man in chains and worried about charges for later. He got to the Filipino and the Filipino was scared and

he said that the Steward said only give them coffee. Muktuk hit the Stewards door with his gun and told him to feed the men.

“Men of the Tundra” is mentioned and Muktuk says he had one big battle. Alaska is as big as 22 states down below according to Muktuk. There were 65,000 people in Alaska when he arrived. The population was half Native and half white. In Anchorage there were 3,500 people. They were railroad people. The town was quiet and sleepy. Muktuk was appointed three different jobs with the Air Force. One was provost. He decided to build a service quarters. They had men, trucks, and gasoline. He took a bunch of men to Palmer Standard Timber and they got a saw and he built a Kashim building, which means “men meetings place” in Eskimo. It was 40 feet wide and 100 feet long. He was a bull puncher in the woods wagon when he was 15. He drove horses in the state of Washington and used his canoe on the Puget Sound. They built the building. It was a great spot. The earthquake hit but they rebuilt it.

The building was finished by Christmas of 1941. They wanted to dedicate it and Art Richel was the Lieutenant and he said he could get Joe E. Brown to go up there. Richel knew Joe E. Brown from Los Angeles. Muktuk said get Joe E. Brown to Alaska. Joe E. Brown flew commercial and came in the night they dedicated the Kashim building. It was a great night. The Army went to Muktuk and told him to take him to every soldier in Alaska. Muktuk covered 30 days and 9,000 miles with Joe E. Brown all the way up to Dutch Harbor. Brown worked hard morning, noon, and night. Brown said he wanted to see Eskimos and he saw the soldiers.

He had worked the crew hard for 30 days and Muktuk told them they had a couple days off. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and Muktuk couldn't round up the crew because they were drunk. Colonel Cork was the pilot and Muktuk and Joe E. Brown were ok. Joe E. Brown and Muktuk took off. Muktuk got in trouble because they lost one of the two engines. They had an emergency landing on a lake on St. Lawrence Island. About 70 Eskimos came to the plane. Suzy is the interviewer. Muktuk wrote the “Defense of the Arctic by Eskimos.” He took Joe E. Brown over Alaska and over to St. Lawrence Island. The village council (4 or 5 of them) came and had a scroll and it was wrapped up. The scroll said Joe E. Brown was here on March 18th, 1942 and so they named March 18th Joe E. Brown day. These are great people.

For 10 years Muktuk said he walked with the Eskimos. He said they are the greatest people in the whole world. They lived off the land. Long haired people say they lived off the land but he doesn't know about that. When he asked them to defend their shores, no one said no. The missionary and the teacher got control of them. The Kashim was underground and made from driftwood and whale bone. They made homes made of ivory and whale jaw bones. The youngest soldiers were 13 years old at Point Lay. Some young hunters proved they could kill moose and Muktuk swore them in. A man from Androski was a snow musher and told Muktuk that an interesting man lived in Androski. The man [named Paul] was lying in a bunk at 2 in the afternoon with his Eskimo family around. Paul's father was a soldier at Saint Michaels and he was there and he was half Eskimo and half Russian. He was there when the Russian flag came down and the Stars and Stripes went up. Paul said his father decided to stay and free America and conquered the Yukon and Kuskokwim. Paul's father was a trader. Paul's father had a dog team and carry things in a sell it to the Eskimos. The father was killed by a New Lateral Indian because one of the

father's boys killed an Indian. Back then it was life for a life. Muktuk said "Paul, tell me about yourself." The man Paul told Muktuk to tell him about himself. Muktuk said he's here to organize Eskimos to fight 10,000 Japanese out in Kiska and Attu. Paul was 85 but could shoot. Muktuk got Paul a patch, a gun and ammo. Paul died 2 years later with his crew. The first Eskimo he signed up was at Kasigluk and the Kuskokwim River near the Bering Sea. He called him up at Kashim. They said they'd be happy to be with Uncle Sam. He knew a 16 year old named Ray Christensen who spoke Eskimo and English. Ray translated for Muktuk. Ray Christensen was seen at the Anchorage West Hotel years later and he was in flying commercial jobs working for Ray Peterson at consolidated airlines and was a member of the Territorial senate. Muktuk says Ray gave Muktuk all the credit.

26:40 the recording stops and then is restarted.

He discusses jade for a couple minutes.

He asked the Eskimos where they got the Jade and they said "From Jade Mountain." First chance he got he went. At the headwaters of Shomnack River was Jade Mountain. (Shomnack means Jade.) Muktuk took a 164 pound nugget and there was a rush to Jade Mountain and then turned into a multimillion dollar business.

He signed up 13,700 Eskimos and he put the age Uncle Sam wanted. They were a rugged crew. ATG picked up 22 [Japanese incendiary] balloons that hit Alaska. The balloons were about 100 feet in diameter. The balloons carried bombs. The Eskimos picked them up. Ohagumoot [sp] on the Yukon River sighted the first three balloons and he fired on them. Fortool [sp] Ledge on the map, ordinarily called Marshall, a captain at Marshall. His name was Marshall. They sent a message and the balloon was grounded at Flat. Ten days later Pete knew he put lead into one of the balloons. He cut the Japanese marking out and delivered it to Captain down the Yukon 33 miles down. Intelligence department went to the balloon and got the rest of them. An Eskimo was on the trap line and found a balloon. The next day they realized there was a live bomb in there the whole time.

The missionaries couldn't control the Eskimos in the Kashim that were underground. They let the Kashim die and that was fundamental to Eskimo life. Kashim was where everything happened for the men and boys. The young men were taught how to make create a kayak and learn the ways of the men. In Point Hope the Eskimos went to the BIA teacher and asked if they could have a dance and he teacher said no maybe next weekend. The teacher was making home brew and didn't want him there. Muktuk realized that and they began to build Kashims for the villages. Muktuk used surplus materials he got from Nome. 65 nice Kashims were built in 65 villages. Today there are 65 Kashims where social events happen.

He was called back into service this winter. The scouts were having difficult times. He spent 4 years in the National Guard. In 1946 he quit the service because the war was over and two years later they came to get him to take the ATG [Alaska Territorial Guard] people and transfer them to the National Guard. Muktuk was resigning. The general called and said there were difficulties. Muktuk suggested that they promote Major John Schaefer Jr., an Eskimo from Kotzebue, as head man in Nome. Muktuk thought this would be a good promotion because there would be no white man over Schaefer jerking

the strings because Schaefer would get tired of white people pulling the strings. Major John Schaeffer wanted Muktuk to go with him and visit the Eskimos and find out the problem. Muktuk took a plane with Schaefer and one of the generals of the National Guard. Muktuk made three motion pictures. One of the movies is about the early life of the Eskimo. The arctic lab [Naval Arctic Research Lab] in Barrow has one copy of the movie.

Muktuk had 900 single meetings with Eskimos. He got them together so he could talk to them. The trouble Muktuk saw was that the Eskimos had a white trader. The shippers and political people all had the Eskimo as an economic slave. In Selawik, Paul Ballet (the Lieutenant in charge there), wanted Muktuk to come to OPA [Officer of price administration]. Muktuk didn't go because he was a military man. They had the meeting and the OPA man [Steve MCutchen] came out and said the price was too high and the traders had to cut the price down. The white trader went right around that. The muskrat was big back then and worth 2 dollars a skin. The trader began saying that one pair of pants was worth 10 muskrats. The white trader was ruling the arctic and he didn't want anyone interfering with his income. Muktuk had problems with some whites because they didn't want him to organize the Natives. The Attorney General at the time was in the North Pole Bakery in Nome when Bob Butler ran for the delegate of congress. Muktuk went for breakfast at the North Pole Bakery and the Attorney General sat next to him and asked when Muktuk was going to start his political campaign. Muktuk told him to stand up and proceeded to tell the Attorney General the story of the Native people. Muktuk told the Attorney General about how he contacted 1,000 Natives and each one stood up to do their service. He told the Attorney General he didn't mind shooting him. He said he was going to organize the Native Army. The governor said Muktuk is the only man to see all of the Eskimos. His beat was 154th parallel west. That's a line from Barrow down to Kodiak Island. It is bordered by the Beaufort Sea to the North, the Bering Sea on the southwest, the Arctic ocean on the Northwest, and the Pacific ocean. It went from Barrow Island out to Attu. The first man killed was a teacher in Attu (the last island on the Aleutian Chain). Before he got there, Muktuk said he wanted info on the enemy. Suddenly the Japanese fleet arrived. On the Yukon the Ruby plane went down and they found all but the Sargent. The ATG Natives went in and found him. They knew the angles in the snow. The sergeant was found but he was dead. The Army says the Eskimo scout is the best soldier for arctic duty. That's the story of the ATG.

Muktuk says Alaska is a cold rugged country. He says "Suzy, we are a sovereign people" but they are not being treated as a sovereign people. He goes on about how people not from Alaska have good ideas about Alaskan decision making but they don't know what they are talking about. Walter "Wally" Hickel had a hearing about trying to give 10,000 acres down at Copper Center. That's as big as two small states. Muktuk is not all for it. He'd be for it if Alaskan organization could run it. He talks about the oil discovery on the North Slope and how that put us into a first class power. He says Mr. Hickel should have issued the order to put the pipeline in but the "birdwatchers" [environmentalists] got to him.

Muktuk's intensity and passion for Alaska is second to none in the last 5 minutes as he shares his opinions.

The book "Men of the Tundra" was to give the Eskimo a place in the sun and an image. There are 3,700 heroes recorded in the back of the book. Muktuk is asked how he get the nickname Muktuk. Muktuk

says Tim Magley [?] wrote the story. He came into Teller from Sinrock about 20 miles from Nome. On his dog sled and they went in for tea and it was 30 below zero. Muktuk dozed and got up to go out and the Eskimo told Muktuk that there was a shortage of tanning fluid. He said yours is just as good as ours and he handed a pail. In front of the women and children he contributed. Muktuk came into Point Hope about 65 miles and he had 14 dogs mushing and always had an Eskimo with him. He parked his dogs outside his friends place. Muktuk sat down to eat with the Eskimos. They were eating Muktuk meat and it was hot. There was a lot of visiting. In the arctic there are champion eaters. Muktuk got up and an Eskimo asked him if he was done and Muktuk said he was just getting started so the Eskimo said he was done and that Muktuk had won the eating contest. Muktuk didn't know he was in an eating contest. Mystery solved.